

## NHRC Hosts National Interfaith Dialogue to Combat Hate Speech



Participants of the interfaith Dialogue

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In a bid to address the rising tide of hate speech and promote unity and religious tolerance, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), with support from UNESCO through the Peace Building Fund Project 'Infrastructure for Peace', in July 2025, convened a one-day National Interfaith Dialogue at the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Centre.

Historically, The Gambia has been known for ethnic and religious tolerance in West Africa, with adherents of various faiths coexisting peacefully.

However, in recent years, the increasing prevalence of hate speech, especially on social media, and the emergence of religious, political, and tribal bigotries threaten peace and harmonious co-existence.

Held under the theme: 'Fostering Social Cohesion Through Interfaith Dialogue and Action', the dialogue brought together religious and traditional leaders from across the country and different faiths to discuss the urgent need for tolerance, mutual respect, and social harmony.

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## NHRC Hosts National Interfaith Dialogue to Combat Hate Speech

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In his welcome remarks, the Chairperson of the NHRC, Mr. Emmanuel Daniel Joof, reminded participants of the peaceful coexistence that The Gambia was known for.



Emmanuel Daniel Joof

**"The Gambia has for many decades been known as a country of peace, tolerance and religious harmony. Ours is a society where Muslims, Christians and adherers of traditional African religions have coexisted for generations in mutual respect,"** Joof remarked.

The NHRC Chairperson further stated that the social fabric that kept us as a united community is gradually being strained by the rising phenomenon of hate speech.

**"We are witnessing worrying trends. Our democracy is under threat from hate speech. Let us build a Gambia where we are not judged by our tribe, gender, faith, or political affiliation, but by our respect and tolerance for others,"** he stated.



Participants from different religious background

In her remarks, Ms. Yvonne Masarakufa, representing the UN Resident Coordinator, recalled that in 2021, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution on 'Promoting Inter-religious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in combating hate speech.' She said this resolution serves as a global call to action, urging all countries to address hate speech as a threat to peace and development.



Yvonne Masarakufa

**"The Gambia, like the rest of the world, faces growing concerns over the spread of hate speech. If left unchecked, hate speech can derail the country's democratic journey and undermine the transitional justice process,"** she remarked.

Sheikh Alhaji Essa Darboe, President of The Gambia Supreme Islamic Council, praised the initiative as a timely response to emerging threats to national cohesion, highlighting the importance of dialogue and collaborative action in countering hate speech.



Sheikh Alhaji Essa Darboe

**"Hate speech, whether religious, ethnic, political, or cultural, poses a serious threat to**

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social cohesion. It breeds division, fuels conflict, and undermines the harmony we have long cherished in our nation,” he warned.



Bishop Bannie Manga

Bishop Bannie Manga, President of The Gambia Christian Council, reflected on The Gambia’s longstanding tradition of unity and mutual support.

**“If we cannot live in peace, how can we truly support one another?”** he asked. He reminded the audience of the shared origins of Islam and Christianity. **“We all came from Abraham. Islam came from the lineage of Ismail, and Christianity from the lineage of Isaac, both sons of the same father. When I look at each one of you – male or female, Imam, Bishop, Reverend - I see not a label, but a human being,”** he stated.

Delivering the opening statement on behalf of the Minister of Lands, Local Government and Religious Affairs, Dr. Ebrima Sisawo, the Permanent Secretary, underscored the urgent need for collective action to address the growing threat of hate speech in The Gambia.



Dr. Ebrima Sisawo

**“Hate speech is not just a source of discord and disharmony; it is a clear violation of human rights. When we fail to address hate speech, we become complicit in the weakening of our sense of unity as a nation,”** he cautioned.

Dr. Sisawo reminded participants that combating hate speech is not the responsibility of the Government alone, but a shared national duty.

**“Everyone here has a collective responsibility to rely on our individual wisdom, conscience and sense of humanity to combat hate speech in all its forms,”** he said.

Dr. Sisawo called for a renewed commitment from all sectors - Government, civil society, religious leaders and the media - to promote peace, tolerance and mutual respect.

There were presentations on the NHRC 2024 Hate Speech Study and the 2025 Follow-up Study, and a Panel Discussion on the role of religious and traditional leaders in addressing hate speech. The Panelists were Pastor Francis S. Forbes from the Abiding Word Ministries, Sheikh Alhaji Omar Bojang from the Supreme Islamic Council and Chief Alpha Maram Khan, the Chief of Jokadu District. They emphasised the critical role of faith and traditional leaders in peacebuilding and urged both religious and traditional leaders to serve as agents of peace and unity and to counter divisive narratives in their congregations and communities.

Other representatives from the Muslim and Christian faiths echoed a shared commitment to peaceful coexistence and called for stronger collaboration.

As the country continues its democratic transition, stakeholders stressed the urgent need for proactive measures to preserve The Gambia’s legacy of peace and ensure respect for diversity.

## NHRC Assesses the Impact of Climate Change on Human Rights in Vulnerable Communities



NHRC staff and data collectors inspecting Basse Badala, an area very prone to flooding due to rising river level

There is a strong linkage between climate change and human rights. Climate change not only affects the environment but also threatens the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, especially in vulnerable and marginalised communities. In the NHRC's Revised Strategic Plan, Strategic Objective 4 seeks to advance the realisation of Economic, Social, and Environmental Rights. This objective also aims to promote human rights in climate change response interventions.

In its efforts to enhance the understanding of the Commission and stakeholders on climate change, climate justice and human rights, the NHRC conducted a five-day (20<sup>th</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> July 2025) nationwide data collection in areas most affected by climate change.



NHRC data collectors

The data collectors were divided into different teams and deployed to different communities to collect comprehensive data on climate change and human rights.

The findings of the research show that climate-related hazards vary from one community to another, with some seriously affecting people's health and livelihoods.



Ebo Town

The effects of the torrential rains on some communities have been devastating. **"The floods cut off our access roads and the stagnant water become a breeding ground for mosquitoes,"** said Ndey Fatou Nyass, a resident of Ebo Town Badala.

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## Impact of Climate Change on Human Rights in Vulnerable Communities

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In Lower River Region (LRR), some communities continue to grapple with the devastating impacts of climate-related hazards such as bushfires, flash floods, erosion, windstorms and salt intrusion into farmlands and rice fields, and rampant tree felling, which many believe have affected the rainfall pattern.



Isatou Touray

Isatou Touray of Sankandi Village recounted how flash floods and salt intrusion devastated her rice field last year. **“My harvest was almost gone. Then wild pigs destroyed the little that was left. While I was recovering from that misery, my mud house also collapsed after a heavy downpour,”** she lamented. To survive, Isatou has now turned to petty trading and dry season gardening as alternative sources of livelihood. Siltation is another pressing challenge in the region. The heavy accumulation of sand in rice fields and farmlands has disrupted crop production and reduced yields.



In Jataba Village, Musa Ceesay lost a large part of his cashew plantation to wildfire believed to have spread from a nearby village. **“Every December, we now come together to build firebreaks to protect our community and farms,”** he said.

Urban communities are also not spared the impact of climate change. Tobacco Road, a swampy area in Banjul, experiences flooding during heavy rainfall. Fatoumatta A. Conteh, a resident of the area, blamed recurrent flooding on the poor drainage system and inadequate consultation of the residents in its design.



Bond Road, a swampy area in Banjul

**“Two years ago, our entire compound was flooded due to poor drainage system, poorly planned road construction and the backfilling of the swamp which is allocated to private companies for development. These activities have blocked water channels, worsening the area’s vulnerability to floods. The authorities should have engaged the elders of Banjul before constructing the roads. They know the challenges here,”** she stated.



Fatoumatta A. Conteh

Across the country, flash floods continue to damage homes and endanger lives while deforestation, erosion and salt intrusion destroy crop production and adversely affect agriculture. The findings of the data collection will inform policies and programmes, and link environmental protection with the protection of human rights.

## NHRC Launched a Nationwide Dialogue Between Duty Bearers and Right Holders



Participants of the interface in Banjul

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in collaboration with TANGO, with support from the European Union (EU) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, launched a nationwide initiative to foster dialogue between rights holders and duty bearers. The interface, which kicked off in Banjul, promoted citizen participation in shaping and evaluating the country's development and reform agendas.

The discussions centred on several priority issues, including the transitional justice process, particularly the implementation of the Government White Paper on the Report of the TRRC, the Recovery-Focused National Development Plan 2023-2027, Security Sector Reform, legal and institutional reform, the state of human rights and human security in the country. In each of the regions, there was interaction between the community members and their Local Government representatives and National Assembly Members.

In her welcoming remarks at the launch of the Town Hall Meeting in Banjul, Mrs. Jainaba Johm, Vice Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), underscored the

importance of fostering meaningful dialogue between right holders and duty bearers. She described the interface as a vital platform where relevant stakeholders would discuss national reform issues.



Commissioner Jainaba Johm

**“It is our firm belief that citizens have the right to actively participate in public affairs. Through engagements like this, we will be able to deepen our understanding of the role citizens play in shaping and influencing the reforms that the Government undertakes”, she stated.**

Madam Johm emphasised that the Town Hall Meetings would focus on key national priorities

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## Dialogue Between Duty Bearers and Right Holders

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such as the implementation of the White Paper, the National Development Plan (2023 – 2027), and the ongoing Security Sector Reform, and also facilitate dialogue between the electorate and their elected representatives.

**“Let everybody know that transparency and accountability are the only ways in which democracy can survive,”** she affirmed.



Participants of the interface in Banjul

Delivering a statement on behalf of the European Union Delegation in The Gambia, Mr. Raphael Brigandi, Deputy Head of Mission, applauded the NHRC for coming up with such a timely initiative. He stated that The Gambian CSOs are dynamic and increasingly mobilised as stakeholders, reinforcing human rights the rule of law and good governance for the benefit of all Gambian citizens.



Mr. Raphael Brigandi

**“The townhall meetings (interface) will represent a concrete step, fostering participatory governance by creating relevant spaces for dialogue on major development and governance**

**topics at both the national and local levels,”** he remarked.

Mr. James Monibah, speaking on behalf of the UNDP Resident Representative, stated that the UNDP firmly believes that citizens have the right to participate in public affairs and that the Government has the duty to ensure these rights are realised. **“Such forums are so crucial as they aim to build bridges between the state and society and foster regular dialogue, transparency and accountability,”** he emphasised.

Delivering her opening remarks, the Lord Mayoress of Banjul, Ms. Rohey Malick Lowe, commended the NHRC and its partners for facilitating such engagement to enhance the knowledge and participation of ordinary citizens in the development and reforms being implemented by the Government.



Ms. Rohey Malick Lowe, Lord Mayoress of Banjul

**“This engagement is crucial to ensure that Councillors representing their various Wards can constructively dialogue with their representatives, National Assembly members and central government officials on the development plans, efforts and initiatives taken as duty bearers,”** she highlighted.

The Mayoress further stated that the Interface is fundamental as it enhances the lives of the people in Banjul and gives direction for the strategies that can be put in place to ensure participatory, sustainable and impactful development in Banjul and beyond.

During the discussions, residents of Banjul raised concerns over issues affecting the City, such as sand mining and flooding.

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## Dialogue Between Duty Bearers and Right Holders

*Cont'd from page 7*

The Councillors dilated on the work of the Council and the challenges they are facing in the execution of their functions, such as limited resources that hinder certain development initiatives.

Honourable Abdoulie Njie, National Assembly Member for Banjul Central, raised concerns about the ongoing sand mining activities in Banjul. He stated that, according to information provided by the Minister, the mining was based on research conducted by a foreign team, which recommended that the area be mined. However, Hon. Njie explained that when he consulted the National Environment Agency (NEA), he was told that the research was not substantial enough to justify the activity.



Honourable Abdoulie Njie

Mr. Omar Tasfir Demba Ndow, a resident of Banjul, stressed the urgent need for decentralisation. "However, decentralisation can only work if the Local Government Act is amended. As it stands, it has disempowered the Councillors and Alkalolos," he said. Mr. Ndow further noted that Banjul needs its own Local Government Service Commission to enable it to appoint its own Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and other senior staff. He also expressed concern that Councillors do not receive salaries like National Assembly Members and urged the Ministry of Local Government to address the matter with urgency.

Mr. Ndow also questioned the pace of implementation of the TRRC recommendations. **"The TRRC made several recommendations, but the implementation process has been very slow, and there is little public awareness about what is happening. There cannot be reparation without justice. Victims are fed up,"** he stated.

Amadou John, a youth leader in Banjul, expressed concern over the ongoing structural developments in the city, particularly along Bond Road in the swampy areas. **"When you visit Bond Road, you will find several commercial structures, yet none of those companies are paying royalties to the Banjul City Council. Moreover, this is a swampy area with mangroves and aquatic species. When construction begins, the mangroves are cut down, affecting those species,"** he lamented.

Ms. Jabou Ndure pointed out that party politics and political divisions are hindering key development initiatives in Banjul. **"Too often, we prioritise the interests of our political parties over the development needs of Banjul. This has slowed progress that the Council and the City as a whole should be benefiting from,"** she remarked.



Participants of the interface in Banjul

The interface was also expanded to the other Local Government Authorities to ensure that the voices of all Gambians are heard and reflected in the country's future. In all the discussions that ensued, participants highlighted several pressing governance and service delivery challenges in their areas.

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## Dialogue Between Duty Bearers and Right Holders

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At the Kerewan Area Council, challenges facing persons with disabilities were prominent during the discussions. The participants also raised concerns about the inaccessibility of public facilities to persons with disabilities due mainly to their non-consultation in the construction of such buildings and facilities. Other issues discussed included the construction of certain structures, such as markets, without community consultations.

In the Mansakonko Area Council, community members lamented the frequent water shortage in Jikoko Ward and the lack of space for women to sell their garden produce and other goods. Other concerns highlighted by community members included waste management problems, rampant road accidents, and the awarding of contracts to non-residents, especially awards for the construction of markets.



**Interface in Mansakonko**

Issues raised in Kuntaur Area Councils were limited sensitisation about the Council's sittings, which community members and the need for increased youth and PWDs engagement in the Council's engagements. Other issues raised were the unavailability of a community radio station, which is said to affect their access to information.

In Janjangbureh, the participants lamented the ineffective functioning of both the Village Development Committees and the Ward Development Committees.

They also stated that political bias in service delivery is affecting some communities, especially in Saare Chewto. It was also raised that some residents refused to pay taxes or their compound rates due to their distrust of the Council.



**Interface in Janjangbureh**

The issue of corruption was key during discussions in Basse, which many of the participants linked to the Council's manual payment system. They recommended that its payment systems should be digitised. Community members also talked about the poor road infrastructure, which they said makes it difficult for sick people to have quick access to health facilities, and the non-inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. While the Area Council was commended for enhancing access to water by providing boreholes; it was raised that some communities continue to be affected by water shortage.



**Interface in URR**

## One person's blessing could be another person's disaster: The Story of Alieu Sowe



Alieu pointing at his abandoned canoe

While many people hailed the construction of the new bridge in Basse as a milestone for enhancing connectivity, easing the movement of people and goods between the town and neighbouring villages, for some, like Alieu Sowe, the project marks the beginning of the collapse of his river transportation business.

Talking to a team of data collectors during a data collection exercise on climate change and human rights, commissioned by the National Human Rights Commission, Alieu, a father of six, once relied on his canoe service at Basse Badala to ferry passengers and goods, as his only source of income.



The new bridge in Basse

**"I used to make good money from my boat business. But after the construction of the bridge, people were no longer using canoes,"** he recalled, pointing to his boat now abandoned in the water. **"I had to look for an alternative. That was when I started selling secondhand clothing."**



Effects of serious flooding in Basse Badala

Alieu's shift to petty trading proved short-lived. Basse Badala is highly prone to flooding, worsened by heavy rainfall and rising river levels. Last year, the flood swept through the area, destroying houses, shops and other structures, including his stall.

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## The Story of Alieu Sowe

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**“My stall and goods were destroyed. Some shop owners and petty traders were also affected. I relocated my family from Basse Kabakama to Kerewan Badala, where someone allowed me to live on his empty land. I built a mud house there”,** he stated.

After losing his business, Alieu found work driving a tricycle for a local businessman, delivering an amount of D1,600 every four days. But the arrangement is precarious. **“When the payment period is due and I earn less than the agreed amount, I have to look for other ways to top it,”** he explained.



Sowe now faces an eviction threat. The owner of the land where he currently lives with his family

has indicated plans to sell it for D250,000, a sum far beyond Sowe's means. **“How could someone struggling daily to feed his family get that amount of money?”** he asked.

His wife sells fruits to supplement the household income and farms during the rainy season. But the family's challenges go beyond money. Residents of Basse Badala lack access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation. **“There is no tap in the area. People drink water from the river. The water is not salty, but sometimes they experience stomach ache and diarrhoea. We use a pit latrine, and when it is full, we drain it manually and pour the waste into the river.”**

Sowe said neither the Government nor the Area Council has provided support since the flood. **“They assessed the damage, took our contacts, and told us that support would come, but nothing has happened yet,”** he lamented.

As Sowe continues to navigate an uncertain future, he hopes authorities and organisations will intervene, not only for his family, but for all the residents of Basse Badala who have had similar experiences. **“We hope that something will be done about our current situation,”** he appealed.

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## Access to Justice through the District Tribunals



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Participants of the training

## Access to Justice through the District Tribunals

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in partnership with ActionAid International The Gambia (AAITG), organised a three-day capacity-building for selected members of District Tribunals on human rights and laws protecting the rights of women in The Gambia, at Kakuba Lodge in Kudang, CRR South. The training brought together Tribunal members from various Districts in the West Coast, North Bank, Central River and Upper River Regions.



Participants of the training

District Tribunals are key judicial and decision-making bodies in the Districts that deal with various civil cases, including disputes arising from customary marriages, and minor disputes between individuals, families or communities.

At the opening ceremony, Commissioner Halimatou Dibba delved into the mandate of the National Human Rights Commission in promoting and protecting human rights in The Gambia. She remarked that partnership is key in the work of the NHRC, and as such, collaborating with ActionAid International The Gambia to train members of the District Tribunals is very significant. She also highlighted the pivotal role played by ActionAid in supporting the inclusion of women in the District Tribunals.



Commissioner Halimatou Dibba

**“In certain communities, women and children are often voiceless, and for them to access justice, it has to be channelled through the District Tribunals. This training is important to build the capacities of members of the District Tribunals to ensure the rights of vulnerable groups are protected and justice prevails”,** Commissioner Dibba remarked.

Commissioner Dibba also stated that while all the Districts have District Tribunals, only a few have women in their Tribunals. Therefore, the NHRC and AAITG want to work together to promote the inclusion of more women in District Tribunals.

Mrs. Tabu Njie Sarr from the West Minister Foundation and a former Women’s Rights Manager at ActionAid International The Gambia, recounted the nationwide caravan conducted by AAITG together with the Rural Women’s Assembly, to promote the inclusion of women in District Tribunals. As a result of that caravan, the number of women in the Tribunals increased from eight to twenty-two.



(L-R: Ms. Tabou Njie Sarr and Governor Sainey Mbye)

**“This training is very important because there are some members of the District Tribunals who have never received any training on their roles and duties, as well as training on relevant national laws,”** she underscored.

Delivering the opening statement, Mr. Sainey Mbye, Deputy Governor of Central River Region, commended the NHRC and AAITG for organising the training, stating that the Government alone

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## Access to Justice through the District Tribunals

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cannot do it. Therefore, it is important to have partners to complement the Government's efforts.

The Deputy Governor mentioned that it takes resources to organise such training. He urged the participants to concentrate and learn so that the knowledge will help them execute their duties as members of the District Tribunal effectively.

**"The inclusion of women in the District Tribunals is very crucial because there are certain sensitive issues that women bring to the Tribunal; they are more comfortable confiding in their fellow women, and those cases are more carefully handled by women,"** Deputy Governor Mbye stated.

Mr. Mbye further delved into the importance of the work of the NHRC, citing an example of a particular community that approached him pleading for the banishment of a woman from their community. He commented that, faced with this request, he informed the community that such an action falls out of his responsibilities and that the NHRC will confront him. He concluded his statement by emphasising the importance of the training, highlighting that it is dangerous to preside over cases in the tribunal without the prerequisite knowledge, before declaring the training open.

The opening ceremony was followed by various presentations. Ms. Aishatou Leigh from the Ministry of Justice took the participants through the District Tribunal Act of 1933. Her presentation generated a lively and lengthy discussion, as many of the participants admitted to having little knowledge of the Act or even of its existence before the training.

This was followed by other presentations on Child Sensitive Interviewing Techniques and Skills including a role play by Mr. Fallu Sowe, National Coordinator of the Network Against Gender Based Violence (NGBV);

Enhancing Women's Leadership in the District Tribunals by Ms. Tabou Njie Sarr, Country Director of West Minister Foundation for Democracy; and Using Advocacy to Promote Greater Respect and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children in Communities by Commissioner Halimatou Dibba of the National Human Rights Commission.

At the closing ceremony, Fanta Kura Mbye, a Tribunal Member from Niamina East District and one of the first women to be included in the District Tribunal, urged both the NHRC and AAITG to continue such training to build the capacities of all District Tribunal members.



(L-R: Mr. Saiba T. Suso and Ms. Mansata Fatty, member of the District Tribunal in Niamina East)

Delivering the Closing Remarks, Mr Saiba T. Suso, AAITG's Local Rights Programme (LRP) 8 and 11 Manager, highlighted the significance of collaboration and commended the NHRC for initiating the training which enhanced participants' understanding of basic human rights principles and key national laws, including the District Tribunals Act.

Mr. Suso underscored AAITG's commitment to advocate for the inclusion of women in District Tribunals and described the training as both timely and essential.

**"There is a need to strengthen our partnership with the NHRC to empower District Tribunal members. It is important to note that some Districts are yet to include women as tribunal members. We will continue to work with the NHRC to enhance the capacities of Tribunal members, promote greater inclusion of women and advocate for the amendment of the District Tribunals Act of 1933,"** Mr. Suso stated.

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## Access to Justice through the District Tribunals

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Mrs. Mansata Fatty and Mrs. Musukebba Kanteh are also among the first women included in the District Tribunals.



Participants on a group work

“The importance of this three-day training cannot be overstated. We were introduced to what we never knew before such as the District Tribunals Act. This has increased our knowledge and understanding. It has strengthened our role as members of the District Tribunal. In the District Tribunal, we use customary laws, Shariah and the Constitution. We have learned that when the Constitution clashes with either the customary law or Shariah, the Constitution prevails depending on the circumstances.

The training allows us to know what our limit is when it comes to presiding over cases in the District Tribunal. Therefore, the training is very important, and I thank the NHRC and AAITG.”  
Mansata Fatty

“The training is important to us, and the knowledge gained will help us to effectively perform our duties as members of the District Tribunal. The training has given us more courage to do our work and I would like the NHRC and ActionAid to expand it so that many members can benefit from it.” Musukebba Kanteh

Mrs. Isatou Badjie, a Tribunal Member from Foni Kansala, stated: **“Presiding over cases in the District Tribunal and making decisions or ruling without knowledge is detrimental. Therefore, we need continuous capacity building trainings”.**



Isatou Badjie receiving her certificate



## Strengthening the Capacity of the National Advisory Council on Disability Rights Monitoring



Participants of the training

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) organised a two-day training on Disability Rights Monitoring for members of the National Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities (NACPWD). The training enhanced the Council's capacity to conduct rights-based monitoring, produce evidence-informed reports, and engage in effective advocacy to advance the rights of persons with disabilities in The Gambia.

In his opening remarks, Commissioner Emmanuel Daniel Joof, Chairperson of the NHRC, underscored the importance of ensuring that laws and policies are not only enacted but also effectively implemented and monitored.



(L) Mr. Emmanuel Daniel Joof, NHRC Chairperson

**“Laws and policies must be accompanied by effective implementation, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms if they are to truly change lives,” he stated. “Strengthening the capacity of the Council to serve as an independent monitoring mechanism is not only timely but necessary. These tools will help you fulfil your mandate and elevate the voices of persons with disabilities, ensuring that they are heard, seen, and respected in every policy and programme.”**

Speaking on behalf of the UNICEF Country Representative, the UNICEF Child Protection Officer, Mr. Markus Penda Mulandula Angula described the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021 as a landmark in The Gambia's journey towards equality and inclusion.

**“Through monitoring, the Council ensures that rights are not just promised but protected, that services are not just available but accessible, and that inclusion is not just an aspiration, but a reality for persons with disabilities in The Gambia,” he emphasised.**

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## Strengthening the Capacity of the National Advisory Council on Disability Rights Monitoring

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(L) Mr. Muhammed Krubally

On his part, Mr. Muhammed Krubally, Chairperson of the NACPWD, commended the NHRC for organising the training, describing it as timely and essential to the Council's work.

**"Since the establishment of the Council pursuant to Section 8 of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021, our capacity to effectively monitor the implementation of our rights has been limited. This training is therefore crucial in strengthening our ability to hold duty bearers accountable,"** he stated.

Delivering the opening statement on behalf of the Minister of Gender, Children and Social

Welfare, Mr. Ismaila Danso, Deputy Permanent Secretary emphasised the Government's commitment to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.



(L) Mr. Muhammed Krubally

**"The Government of The Gambia has gone further to approve an allocation of four million dalasi for the National Disability Fund,"** Mr. Danso announced, highlighting ongoing efforts by the Ministry to improve the welfare and inclusion of persons with disabilities across the country.

The training forms part of the NHRC's ongoing efforts to build institutional capacity and ensure that human rights mechanisms in The Gambia operate effectively, inclusively, and in alignment with the obligations of the State.

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## Tackling Corruption Through Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)

In a concerted effort to advance the fight against corruption through a human rights lens, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), held a one-day workshop on anti-corruption for NHRC Commissioners and Staff.

The training was designed to enhance the capacity of the NHRC Commissioners and staff to promote the use of United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms in addressing corruption and its impact on human rights. The session also focused on the importance of establishing and strengthening networks among State actors, NHRIs and CSOs to foster a coordinated and effective response to corruption.



(L-R) Mr. Emmanuel D. Joof and Mr. Pradeep Wagle

At the opening of the training, Mr. Pradeep Wagle, OHCHR Head of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Section under the Thematic, Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division, stated that corruption is

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## Tackling Corruption through HRBA

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not only a governance issue but a profound human rights concern that undermines the rule of law, erodes public trust, and deprives individuals of their fundamental rights.

**“Corruption impacts societies at every level. It diverts resources meant for public services – healthcare, education, housing, and social protection, thereby denying people access to their basic rights”, Mr. Wagle remarked.**



NHRC staff on a group work

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), to which The Gambia is a party, provides a global framework for preventing and combating corruption. While legal frameworks are vital, they must be complemented by a human rights-based approach centred on transparency, participation, accountability, and non-discrimination.



Mr. Lamin Jallow, NHRC Internal Auditor making a presentation



Participants of the Regional Workshop on Corruption

A two-day Regional Workshop on Human Rights-Based Approaches to Anti-Corruption was also held from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025. The activity brought together stakeholders from across Africa, including representatives of National Human Rights Institutions, Civil Society Organisations, and international partners, to discuss the linkage between corruption and human rights the impact of corruption on human rights and, the use of United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms in addressing corruption.

In his opening remarks, the Chairperson of the NHRC emphasised the far-reaching consequences of corruption, calling it one of the most deeply rooted barriers to human rights realisation.

**“Corruption is one of the most deeply entrenched impediments to the realisation of human rights, good governance, and sustainable development. It undermines the Sustainable Development Goals. It diverts resources from essential services, erodes public trust, and perpetuates inequality and injustice”,** stated the NHRC Chairperson.

Participants were engaged in a series of presentations, discussions, case study analysis and the use of the United Nations Human Rights mechanisms to combat corruption and its widespread impact.

## The Anti-FGM Law Still Stands!



A scene from the NHRC's video documentary on FGM

While many human rights advocates and activists were celebrating the National Assembly's decision not to repeal the Women's (Amendment) 2015 which prohibits the practice of FGM, and many thought that the practice is dead and buried, two women were arrested and detained by the Police for performing the practice that led to the death of a one-month-old baby.

This incident is a grave violation of the child's fundamental human rights and a reminder of the urgent need to eradicate this harmful traditional practice from our society, as provided by law. FGM not only inflict severe physical and psychological harm on victims but also constitutes a grave violation of the rights to life, dignity, health and freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, all of which are guaranteed by the 1997 Constitution, the Women's Act, 2010 as amended and the Children's Act, 2005.

The Commission, with support from the EU through International IDEA, has produced a video documentary that addressed the harmful effects of FGM. The character-driven documentary featured a survivor of FGM who is working for the Girls' Agenda. The film opens with Mariama recounting her personal ordeal and the harsh realities of FGM that transformed

her from a victim to an activist. Later, she is shown engaging with different stakeholders to discuss the effects of FGM from different perspectives.

The documentary was aired on QTV and Paradise TV. Prior to this airing, a panel discussion was held on QTV during which the panelists urged the Government and other stakeholders to strengthen the implementation of the anti-FGM law.

In August this year, a one-month-old baby girl passed away at the Bundung Maternal and Child Health Hospital after undergoing FGM at home. Two women were arrested for their involvement in the practice, which resulted in the baby's death.

FGM is a criminal offence under the Women's (Amendment) Act 2015, and perpetrators of this heinous act must be held fully accountable under the law. The NHRC, in its press statement on the death of the baby, urged the Inspector General of Police to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation into the incident, and arrest and prosecute all those responsible. The Commission also urged the Government to intensify and expand community awareness programmes on both the dangers and the illegality of the practice.

## The NHRC Hands Over Civic Education Textbooks to MoBSE



Participants at the handing over of the Textbooks

In a landmark step towards strengthening civic and human rights education in The Gambia, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in April, officially handed over newly developed Civic Education Textbooks and a comprehensive Teachers' Guide for Upper Basic Schools to the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MoBSE). The ceremony took place at the Ministry's headquarters in Banjul.

Speaking at the handing over, NHRC Chairperson, Mr. Emmanuel Daniel Joof, described the initiative as a significant milestone in strengthening civic and human rights education in The Gambia.

**"This process, from the development of the textbook to today's presentation, marks a vital step in promoting civic and human rights in our schools. It will equip our children with values and norms, respect for human rights, the rule of law, tolerance, and respect for diversity",** Chairperson Joof remarked.



Delivering a statement on behalf of the Minister, Mr. Louis Moses Mendy, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), expressed satisfaction with the progress made in implementing the pilot phase of the project.

**"I am pleased to inform you that the Principals in the pilot schools have already received orientation, and teachers have been trained to begin implementation." PS Mendy** revealed.

He emphasised that the manuals do not only represent teaching tools, but they also embody a collective vision to build a society rooted in democratic values, respect for diversity and the promotion of human rights.

**"As we received these documents today, it is essential to recognize the valuable role of all the institutions involved in this process,"** Mr. Mendy noted while acknowledging the contributions of the Directorate of Curriculum, Research, Evaluation and Development (CREDD), the Directorate of Standards and Quality Assurance, the In-Service Training Unit, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE), the Conference of Principals for Upper Basic Schools, The Gambia University of Education, UNESCO – Natcom, practicing teachers, and

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## The NHRC Hands Over Civic Education Textbooks to MoBSE

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members of the Gambia Association for Civic Education Teachers and the Youth Movement for Civic Education.

In her statement, Her Excellency Immaculada Roca I Cortes, the European Union Ambassador and Head of Delegation to The Gambia, described the newly developed civic education materials as an important milestone in strengthening the country's education system and promoting democratic values among young people.

**"These materials represent an important step forward for the education system of any country, and in the case of The Gambia,"** Ambassador Roca I Cortes stated. **"They will provide a clear and structured approach to teaching civic education, and help students gain a sound understanding of their rights and obligations,**

the structure and functions of Government, and the core values that underpin democracy."

The presentation of the textbooks was the result of extensive review and consultation with curriculum experts who convened for a rigorous workshop in September and December 2024. The initiative was made possible with support from the EU through International IDEA, as part of a broader partnership aimed at promoting human rights education in The Gambia.



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## NHRC Deepens Engagement with School-Based Human Rights Clubs Across The Gambia



School based human rights clubs from Niamina East, Niamina West and Niamina Dankunku visit the NHRC

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) continues to strengthen its engagement with young people through a series of interactive sessions with school-based human rights clubs across the country. The initiative, which forms part of the Commission's mandate under the NHRC Act 2017 to promote and protect human

rights, aims to cultivate a strong culture of human rights awareness and advocacy among students.

Through these engagements, the students

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## **The NHRC Deepens Engagement with School-Based Human Rights Clubs**

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gained practical understanding of fundamental human rights principles, key national laws and international human rights instruments, and the role and function of the Commission.

Since the beginning of 2025, the Commission has hosted several school-based human rights clubs eager to learn more about its work and mandate. These visits provide students with firsthand experience of how the NHRC operates and contributes to building a culture of human rights in the society.



**Members of Nusrat Senior Secondary School Human Rights Club visit the NHRC**

In June 2025, the Commission welcomed a delegation of students representing various school-based human rights clubs from Niamina East, Niamina West and Niamina Dankunku in the Central River Region. The students, accompanied by their teacher coordinators and officials from ActionAid International The Gambia (AAITG), were taken through sessions highlighting the NHRC's mission and its complaint-handling processes.

The visit, organised and facilitated by AAITG, was part of a broader effort to promote civic education and encourage youth participation in human rights work.

In the same vein, members of the Human Rights Club of Nusrat Secondary School also paid a courtesy visit to the Commission as part of their continuous engagement in human rights education. Led by their Teacher Coordinators, Ms. Fatou Sarr and Mr. Lamin Manneh, the students

held discussions with NHRC officials on possible areas of collaboration between the school and the Commission, particularly in human rights education and capacity building.



**(L-R) Mr. Lamin Manneh and Ms. Fatou Sarr, Teacher Coordinators from Nusrat Senior Secondary School**

Nusrat Senior Secondary School is among the eight selected institutions in the Greater Banjul Area and West Coast Region that benefited from a human rights capacity-building training organised by the NHRC last year.

In welcoming the visiting students, both the Executive Secretary and Director of Programmes of the NHRC reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to advancing human rights education at all levels. They emphasised that empowering young people with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities is key to fostering a society grounded in respect, tolerance and justice.



**NHRC Executive Secretary addressing the students**

Students and teachers from SOS Hermann Gmeiner Lower and Upper Basic School also visited the Commission for an educational tour. They learned about the Commission's structure,

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## The NHRC Deepens Engagement with School-Based Human Rights Clubs

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functions and complaint procedures which are part of their school's Civic and Social Studies Curriculum.



Students from SOS Hermann Gmeiner

The NHRC's continuous outreach to schools underscores that human rights education must begin at an early stage to build informed and active citizens who will champion the cause of human rights in their communities.

**"Young people are the future custodians of human rights. By investing in their education and awareness, we are shaping a generation that values equality, justice and human dignity."** Dr. Saikou Kawsu Gassama, NHRC Executive Secretary.

The Commission has pledged to expand its outreach to more schools across the country in 2026, working closely with partner organisations to promote human rights education in schools.

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## NHRC Commemorates International Workers' Day with Walk-For-Health Fun Day



Staff on walk for health at the beach

As part of the activities marking this year's International Workers' Day, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2025, organised a Walk-for-Health Fun Day for Commissioners and staff.

The event, which featured outdoor activities, provided the NHRC family the opportunity to interact, relax and strengthen team spirit outside the office setting. The initiative also promoted the staff's physical fitness and mental well-being,

which the Commission regards as vital for a healthier and more productive workforce.

The Vice Chairperson of the Commission, Commissioner Jainaba Johm, described the Fun Day as an important step towards staff bonding and workplace wellness.

**"The Walk-for-Health Fun Day is very significant because it helps us strengthen our**

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## NHRC Commemorates International Workers' Day with Walk-For-Health Fun Day

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**bonds as colleagues, improve our mental health, and build stronger work relationships,"**

Commissioner Johm said. **"We can only deliver effectively on the NHRC mandate when we have unity, stability and wellness at the workplace."**



Commissioner Jainaba Johm, NHRC Vice Chairperson

The day's activities included ludo, card games, long-distance walking, other recreational exercises, and music. Commissioners and Staff also shared meals and refreshments, creating a lively atmosphere of camaraderie.

The initiative will not only foster healthier lifestyles but also enhance teamwork and morale within the institution as it continues to champion the promotion and protection of human rights in The Gambia.



Staff playing games



## NHRC Commemorates the Day of the African Child 2025



Participants from the Children's Assembly The Gambia

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) commemorated the Day of the African Child 2025 on the theme **'Planning and Budgeting for Children's Rights: Progress Since 2010,'** at its Head Office in Kotu.

The Day of the African Child honours the memory of the children who were massacred during the 1976 Soweto Uprising in South Africa, where thousands of students marched in protest against the poor quality of education under the Apartheid regime.

Delivering her welcome remarks, the Vice Chairperson of the Commission, Mrs. Jainaba Johm, gave a brief background on the mandate of the Commission and the significance of the Day of the African Child. She reminded the participants that the Day is for the remembrance of the tragic event of the Soweto massacre, where children who were protesting to make sure they received quality education, lost their lives.

**"This is a day to listen to you the children and hear what recommendations you have for us as a National Human Rights Institution, to present to the Government on your behalf",** she stated.

The Vice Chairperson further highlighted challenges faced by school children in the 'Majalis' (Quranic Schools) and children who are

often loitering in the streets or selling fruits when they should be in school.



**"June 16<sup>th</sup> should be a reminder to the Government to do more for children, especially on quality education,"** she added.

The Vice Chair concluded her statement with a quotation from Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, which reads:

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## Day of the African Child 2025

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*‘We must put the best interest of children at the heart of every political and social decision-making, as well as the centre of our day-to-day activities and engagements. We can build a world favourable for children if each one of us does our part and considers that the welfare of children is our own responsibility.’*

The opening ceremony was followed by a presentation by Mr. Basiru L. Bah, Senior Legal Officer, on the work and mandate of the Commission and the protection of the rights of children in the national laws and international human rights instruments. Ms. Mam Ndeban Jobe, Director of Programmes and Resource Mobilization, also made a presentation on the theme **“Planning and Budgeting for Children’s Rights: Progress Since 2010”**.

The commemoration also featured poetry recitation by selected representatives from school-based human rights clubs within the Greater Banjul Area and the West Coast Region, and a panel discussion by members of the Children’s National Assembly-The Gambia on the theme and other challenges faced by children.

The young participants actively contributed to the dialogue, sharing their perspective on the theme and other human rights issues ranging from education, health care, and protection from violence and exploitation.

This year’s theme, ‘Planning and Budgeting for Children’s Rights: Progress Since 2010,’ is a call for all AU Member States to reflect on the commitments made to their children and the actions taken in allocating resources towards upholding their rights and welfare over the past 15 years.

The recommendations from the participants included the following:

- Planning and budgeting for children should include children. Any planning and budgeting for children without children is not for children.

- Teachers and school leaders to create a safe, inclusive, and empowering school environment, and let children learn with dignity, free from fear, discrimination and abuse.
- Parents to value education as a right, not a privilege.
- Parents to protect their children from forced labour, early marriage and violence so that they can grow, learn and dream.
- Government and Policymakers to ensure that budgets reflect real priorities and make children’s rights visible in national, regional, and local planning.
- The Government to invest in systems that support holistic child development, including provision of clean water and digital learning tools.
- Civil Society and Development Partners to hold institutions accountable, support local innovations, help build bridges where gaps exist and ensure every dalasi spent translates to real impact in a child’s life.



The 2025 Day of the African Child is not only a moment to celebrate progress but also a call to Government to recommit to empowering children to actively participate in the planning and implementation of every policy, plan, and budget that is for and about children.



## The Use of Music in the Promotion of Human Rights



**Pa Modou Sarr (3<sup>rd</sup> from right) receiving a copy of the 'Study on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in The Gambia' from NHRC Chairperson**

The President of the Gambia Music Union, accompanied by Union members, visited the National Human Rights Commission to explore avenues for collaboration in promoting human rights through music.

The meeting focused on the vital role of arts, particularly music, in advancing human rights education and advocacy. During the discussions, Mr. Pa Modou Sarr, President of the Gambia Music Union, emphasised the Union's commitment to using music as a powerful tool to sensitise the public on critical human rights issues.

**"We are looking forward to establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Commission," Mr. Sarr stated.**



**"We would like to get human rights training from the NHRC so that important human rights issues can be effectively woven into our songs."**

Officials from the NHRC welcomed the initiative and expressed their readiness to partner with the Music Union. They highlighted the importance of empowering artists with the knowledge and tools to promote human rights, including issues such as sexual abuse which continue to disproportionately affect female musicians in some places.



The Chairperson of the Commission presented a copy of the 'Study on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in The Gambia' to the President of the Music Union.

## The NHRC Conducts Four-Day Training on the Illegality of Enforced Disappearances for Justice and Security Personnel



Participants of the training

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), with support from the UNDP – OHCHR Post TRRC Project, successfully concluded a four-day training workshop on the illegality of enforced disappearances for members of the Judiciary and security forces. The training forms part of the ongoing efforts of the Commission to support the implementation of the Government White Paper on the Report of the TRRC.

In her opening remarks, NHRC Vice Chairperson, Commissioner Jainaba Johm, underscored the importance of institutional reform and human rights awareness among state actors. She noted that during the former regime, enforced disappearances was used as a tool of repression and fear.

**“True compliance means ensuring that every law enforcement officer, judicial officer and public servant is not only aware of the legal framework but is also trained to prevent, investigate and respond to such violations decisively,”** she stated.

Commissioner John reaffirmed the NHRC’s commitment to strengthening the rule of law and building a culture of human rights within the country’s justice and security systems.

Representing the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), Mr. Benjamin Hounton, Deputy Regional Representative, highlighted OHCHR’s ongoing support to The Gambia’s transitional justice process.

**“OHCHR reaffirms its commitment to supporting The Gambia’s transitional justice process, the implementation of the TRRC recommendations, and the pursuit of truth and accountability. Together, we can ensure that the past is acknowledged, justice is served, and the future is protected,”** he said.

Also speaking at the event, Ms. Mandisa Mashalogu, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), reiterated the UNDP’s support for accountability and systemic reform in the post-TRRC period.

**“Preventing enforced disappearances requires more than knowledge; it demands a resolute commitment to systemic change. Change in laws and policies, change in institutional culture, and change in the ways we relate with and serve the public,”** she noted.

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## Illegality of Enforced Disappearances

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Delivering the keynote address on behalf of the National Security Adviser, Mr. Omar Bojang stressed the Government's commitment to human rights and institutional transformation within the security sector.



He recalled that The Gambia's ratification of the UN Convention on Enforced Disappearances in 2018 reflects the State's commitment to ensuring accountability and preventing the recurrence of past violations.

**"The security forces have embarked on a transformation from regime-centred to a human-centred approach. These reforms are a reality we continue to witness, and it is important that we sustain this positive change,"** Mr. Bojang emphasised.

The training brought together participants from various law enforcement and justice institutions, providing a platform to deepen their understanding of the legal, ethical, and institutional dimensions of enforced disappearances and their prevention.

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Meet our dedicated team of logisticians and drivers who keep the wheels turning, ensuring the Commission runs smoothly every day.

