



PRESS STATEMENT
COMMEMORATING INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

6 FEBRUARY 2023.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) joins the rest of the world to commemorate the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The 6th of February has been earmarked by the United Nations to amplify the call to eliminate FGM as part of efforts to deliver the global promise of Agenda 2030. The theme for this year's commemoration is "***Partnership with Men and Boys to Transform Social and Gender Norms to End FGM***".

According to the United Nations, a girl is one-third less likely to undergo FGM today than 30 years ago. While this global statistic is encouraging, it is not even across countries. FGM remains unevenly practiced geographically, with girls in some parts of the world more vulnerable to fall victims of this harmful traditional practice than others.

Despite significant progress registered in the formulation of legal frameworks and policies, girls in The Gambia are still vulnerable to FGM mainly due to existing social and gender norms. According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2018, 50.6 per cent of girls 0-14 years have undergone FGM and it remains widespread in certain parts of The Gambia, such as Upper River Region and Central River Region. The practice also remains highly prevalent amongst certain social settings, especially those based on ethnic and religious lines. While some continue to secretly engage in the practice, there have been instances of public knowledge without any legal repercussions, despite the enactment of laws banning it as a human rights violation against women and girls.

In The Gambia, women and young ladies have mainly been the ones at the forefront of the fight against FGM, challenging patriarchy and other social norms which make their struggle difficult. The Commission, therefore, welcomes the theme of this year's commemoration which highlights the need for men and boys to join the promotion and protection of the rights and freedoms of women and girls, refrain from any actions that encourage and perpetuate FGM and be at the fore in the advocacy to end FGM. It is evident that when men and boys get actively engaged in the fight against FGM, we would be able to collectively address the multi-faceted socio-cultural norms that perpetuate the practice and guarantee a holistic approach to countering FGM both as a human rights violation and a development constraint that hinders women and girls from achieving their full potential in the political, social and economic spheres.

As women's rights are human rights, the Commission calls on all fathers, brothers, uncles, including political, social, economic and religious gatekeepers, to become actively involved in the advocacy for the elimination of FGM in The Gambia and to be a vigilant keeper of their sisters and daughters. Women and girls form more than half of the population of the country and their protection, participation and empowerment are necessary for the development of The Gambia.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emmanuel D. Joof', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and somewhat abstract, with several loops and overlapping lines.

Emmanuel D. Joof
Chairperson