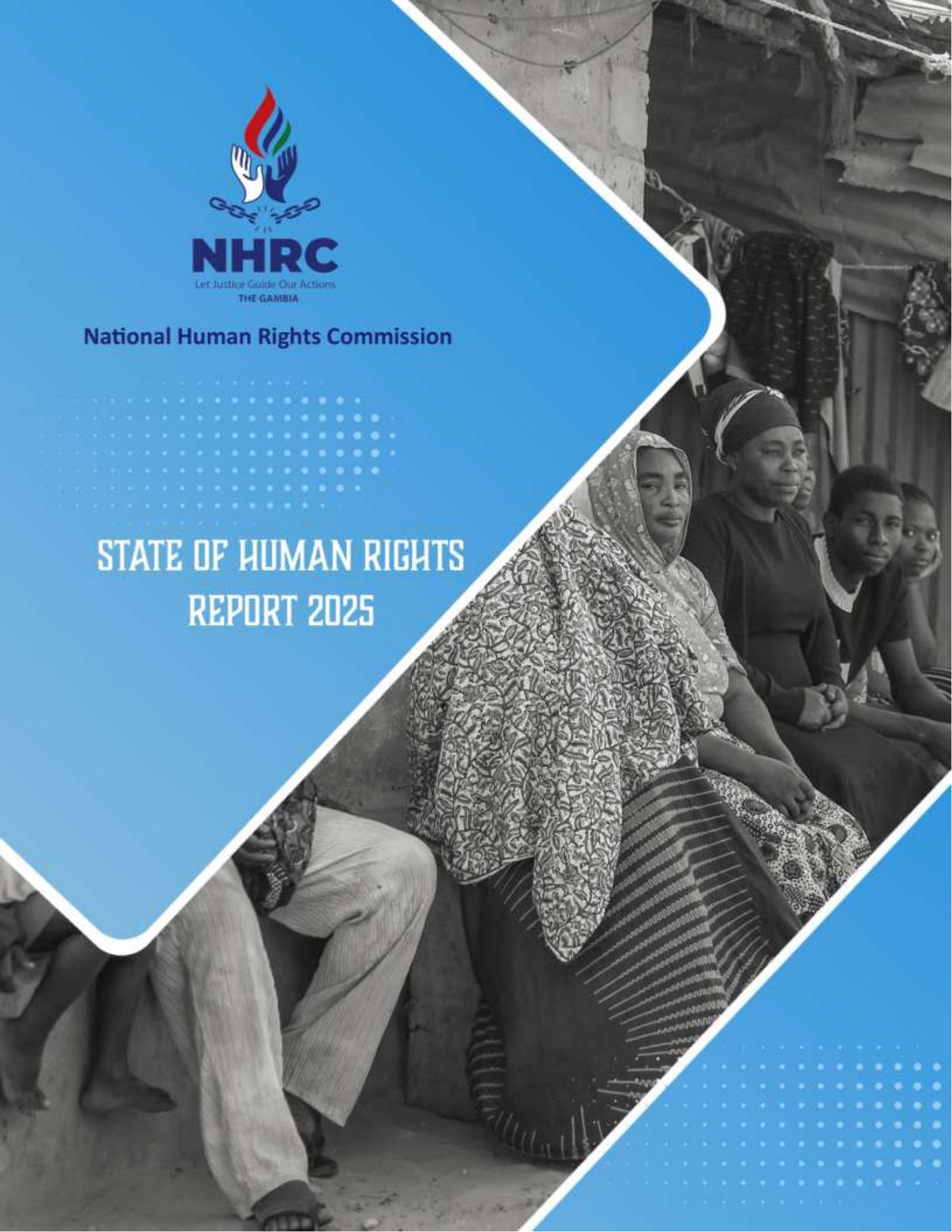




National Human Rights Commission

**STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS
REPORT 2025**



National Human Right Commission

STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

2025

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
AComHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADRS	Alternative Dispute Resolution Secretariat
ANEKED	African Network against Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances.
AU	African Union
CAT	Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CED	Committee on Enforced Disappearance
CoPG	Coalition of Progressive Gambians
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRMU	Child Rights Monitoring Unit
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DLEAG	Drug Law Enforcement Agency- Gambia
EFSCRJ	Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice
EFSTH	Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital

FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting
FLAG	Female Lawyers Association The Gambia
GAF	Gambia Armed Forces
GALA	Gambians Against Looted Assets
GANHRI	Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GID	Gambia Immigration Department
GPF	Gambia Police Force
GPS	Gambia Prisons Service
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IDLO	International Development Law Organisation
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
MCA	Medicines Control Agency
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MFWA	Media Foundation for West Africa
MoBSE	Ministry of Basic, Secondary Education
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad
MoFEA	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
MoH	Ministry of Health

MoHERST	Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology
MoGCSW	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoTIE	Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment
NA	National Assembly
NAO	National Audit Office
NAATIP	National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons
NALA	National Agency for Legal Aid
NANHRI	Network of African National Human Rights Institutions
NANHRIWA	Network of National Human Rights Institutions of West Africa
NDMA	National Disaster Management Agency
NEA	National Environment Agency
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NMIRF	National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-ups
NRA	National Road Authority
NSPA	National Social Protection Agency
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
ONS	Office of National Security
OPCAT	Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
OPDs	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

PIU	Police Intervention Unit
PURA	Public Utilities Regulation Authority
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RC	Reparations Commission
RSF	Reporters Without Borders
TANGO	The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
TTPD	Tanka Tanka Psychiatric Department
TRRC	Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWEDD+	Sub-Saharan Africa Women's Empowerment and the Demographic Dividend
UDP	United Democratic Party
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGPs	United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WAVE	Women's Association for Victims' Empowerment
WILL	Women in Liberation and Leadership
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

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The NHRC further acknowledges the tremendous support of our partners, including International IDEA, British High Commission – The Gambia, UNESCO, UNICEF, OHCHR, UNFPA, UNDP, UNODC, Action Aid International, The Gambia, European Union delegation in The Gambia, Peace Building Fund, WHO, U.S. Embassy – The Gambia, Danish Institute for Human Rights, Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), Network of National Human Rights Institutions of West Africa (NNHRIWA), Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA) and IDLO. The technical and financial support of the Government and our partners significantly enhanced our capacity and expanded our reach, enabling us to address a broad range of human rights issues and realise the objectives we set for ourselves in 2025. Our achievements in human rights promotion and protection, advocacy for policy and legal reforms and institutional strengthening are a testament to the power of collaboration, synergy and shared commitment. We will continue to cherish

these shared commitments towards a Gambia where everyone enjoys their fundamental human rights and freedoms.

NHRC would like to express its sincere appreciation and gratitude to all the institutions and organisations that collaborated with us during the reporting period, in particular the following:

- National Assembly
- Office of National Security
- Attorney General's Chambers and Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare
- Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
- Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources
- The Gambia Police Force
- The Gambia Prison Service
- The Gambia Armed Forces
- Drug Law Enforcement Agency- Gambia
- The Faculty of Law, University of The Gambia
- Gambia Immigration Department
- WAVE WILL
- ANEKED
- TANGO
- Tostan
- American Bar Association
- ChildFund The Gambia

The NHRC looks forward to nurturing and strengthening these partnerships and forging new alliances as it continues to deliver on our mandate to promote and protect human rights in The Gambia.

Foreword

This Annual Report is a statutory report that provides an assessment of the human rights situation in The Gambia from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. It documents the state of human rights human rights in the country, including complaints of violations of human rights monitored by the NHRC. The Report also highlights challenges and provides recommendations to the State. During the reporting period, The Gambia made notable progress in some areas of human rights, including the enactment of the Criminal Offences Act 2025 and Criminal Procedure Act 2025, which largely align the country's penal and procedural practices with human rights standards and best practices.

The year was also marked by engagements between the State and several human rights mechanisms, namely the Universal Periodic Review Working Group, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. The State subsequently received numerous recommendations from these mechanisms to enhance the enjoyment of human rights in the country. However, the implementation of these recommendations is affected by the absence of a dedicated body to lead the process and monitor the implementation. As recommended to the State, the NHRC recommends the establishment of a National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRF) to enhance the implementation of recommendations from human rights mechanisms.

Commendable efforts have been made in the implementation of the Government White Paper on the Report of the TRRC, with

many activities in the Implementation Plan implemented by the various Government entities, while others are ongoing.

In April 2025, the President swore in the members of the Reparations Commission (RC) who have commenced their duties in earnest. The Government's allocation of D30 Million to this Commission is contributing to the advancement of the right to remedy for the victims.¹

Furthermore, The Inspector General of Police also granted some permits for public assemblies, which passed off peacefully. The confirmation of the appointments of members of the Anti-Corruption Commission by the National Assembly (NA) in December is expected to strengthen the fight against corruption, which adversely affects the enjoyment of human rights.

Despite these noteworthy gains, the reporting period recorded cases of murders and persistent public concerns over security and safety due to criminal activities following a similar trend in 2024. The year in focus also saw the highhanded handling of protesters by the Police Intervention Unit (PIU) who were protesting for more Government effort to address corruption, hate speech and political rhetoric. The Report also highlights adverse effects of climate change on the human rights of affected communities as documented and highlighted in a National Assessment on Climate Change and Human Rights conducted by the NHRC. This Report calls for continued Government commitment and collaboration among stakeholders to address the highlighted human rights issues effectively. It is hoped that

¹ Attorney General's Chambers and Ministry of Justice (11 September 2025) *Government Allocates D30 million to victims to Advance Justice for Victims*

<https://moj.gov.gm/government-allocates-d30-million-to-victims-reparation-commission-to-advance-justice-for-victims>

the findings of this report will be used by Civil Society Organisations to advocate for legal, policy and institutional developments and reforms, and by the Government to assess and ensure compliance with national legislation, policies, and international human rights standards and best practices.

Human rights protection is a shared national responsibility requiring sustained commitment and action from the Government, the NA, public institutions, civil society, communities and the public. The NHRC urges all stakeholders to act decisively on the recommendations contained herein, so that human rights move beyond aspirational and become a lived reality for every person in The Gambia.

We extend our gratitude to the Government, stakeholders, and all partners who have contributed to this Report and continue to support the promotion, protection and realisation of human rights in The Gambia.



.....

Commissioner Emmanuel D. Joof
Chairperson

Executive Summary

This statutory annual report highlights the state of human rights in The Gambia in 2025, progress and challenges to the enjoyment of human rights, steps taken by the State to address these challenges and recommendations to the Government for enhanced protection and guarantee of rights and freedoms for all.

This Report covers a broad range of thematic human rights issues as well as specific civil, political, social, economic and environmental rights. It recognises the legislative progress in the enactment of a new Criminal Offences Act, 2025, which removes the death penalty as a form of punishment that the Courts can impose. However, it also notes public concerns over numerous incidents of murder in the country and the outcry over the use of force by the police, leading to the death of Omar Badjie, a resident of Mandinary village in the Kombo North District, West Coast Region, during a violent police pursuit. The Report also recognises the increase in the number of permits granted by the Inspector General of Police to some organisations to hold peaceful assemblies. However, the Report notes with concern that in August 2025, several youths were arrested when The Gambia Police Force (GPF) disrupted a protest against the mobile data price floor introduced by the Public Utilities Regulation Authority (PURA), organised by Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice (EFSCRJ), Team Gomsa Bopa and Gambians Against Looted Assets (GALA).

In 2025, the NHRC received 11 complaints of alleged torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment against the security

institutions. This represented an increase of 7 cases compared to 2024. In addition, 5 complaints of alleged violations of the right to liberty and security of the person were registered.

On Business and Human Rights, several reports of overfishing and its impacts on small-scale and artisanal fishing communities made headlines on various news outlets.² Communities such as Kartong, Sanyang and Gunjur in Kombo South were affected by low fish stock for their consumption and for sale. The effects of industrial fishing impacted people's rights to food and employment, as well as environmental rights.³ Illegal sand mining also affected many coastal towns, which led to tensions in Kartong and other places.⁴

In terms of access to justice, the Judiciary registered progress, which included the construction of the complex for the Special Criminal Division of the High Court in Mile 7, and the establishment of a Commercial Division of the High Court to accelerate the resolution of commercial disputes. The enactment of the Judicial Officers (Conditions of Service) Act 2025, which provides for improved conditions of service for the Bench, is expected to further strengthen judicial independence and integrity. The Judiciary also operationalised a Mediation

² The Battle to Preserve Gambia's Marine Ecosystem <<https://www.dw.com/en/the-battle-to-preserve-gambias-marine-ecosystem/video-73562172>> accessed 13 January 2026; Mustapha Manneh, 'Gambian Villagers Are Being Priced out of Fish' (Dialogue Earth, 3 October 2025) <<https://dialogue.earth/en/food/gambian-villagers-are-being-priced-out-of-fish/>> accessed 13 January 2026; 'The Gambia: A Small Nation with a Big Fish Problem' (Change The Chamber) <<https://www.changethechamber.org/news-research/the-gambia-fishing>> accessed 16 January 2026.

³ As above

⁴ Madiba Singhateh and Hatab Nyang, 'Gambia: Alleged Illegal Sand Mining Sparks Controversy in Kartong' FOROYAA Newspaper (Serrekunda, 4 August 2025) <<https://allafrica.com/stories/202508040742.html>> accessed 16 January 2026; The Republic 'Amidst Ineffective Regulation, Secrecy, Mining Devastates Environment, Hurts Gambia's Economy' (30 April 2025) <<https://therepublic.gm/amidst-ineffective-regulation-secrecy-mining-devastates-environment-hurts-gambias-economy/3042>> accessed 16 January 2026.

Centre staffed by trained mediators and constituted a Committee to review the Land Dispute Adjudication System to enhance transparency and accessibility in the adjudication of land-related matters. However, the NHRC notes with concern the continued slow disposition of cases, manual recording and transcription systems, limited Courts in the rural areas, and persistent case backlogs.

While some successes were registered in the promotion and protection of human rights of persons with disabilities, the Report notes that the implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021 remains slow. Older persons also continue to face both economic and social challenges, with no specific domestic law or policy to address their needs, despite the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa in 2024.

This Report also notes some progress that has been registered in the implementation of the Implementation Plan to the Government's White Paper on the Recommendations of the TRRC 2023-2027, including the swearing-in of the Reparations Commissioners who have commenced work in earnest. However, it highlights challenges inhibiting the effective implementation of the Plan, including inadequate funding and notable delays in the implementation of justice and accountability-related recommendations.

This Report shows that there are no empirical data to track the prevalence, impact and burden of mental health in The Gambia. What remains clear is that mental health-related illnesses are resulting in human rights harm, as patients continue to face stigma, discrimination and inhuman treatment. This is exacerbated by the archaic legal framework that governs mental

health in The Gambia and the absence of adequately equipped facilities to treat mental health-related illnesses.

With regards to trafficking in persons, it was reported that in 2025, twenty-two (22) trafficking cases were investigated by the State, including at least one alleged fraudulent labour recruitment. While the State initiated six prosecutions, only two alleged traffickers were convicted to 15 years' imprisonment each.

On climate change and human rights, the Report reveals the unfortunate death of a child in Giroba, URR, who drowned in a trench allegedly dug by the National Road Authority (NRA) in 2025 to divert rainwater from the newly constructed Basse-Farato Road. This unfortunate incident highlights the need for human rights consideration in the implementation of initiatives and the need for Government action in disaster risk reduction.

Female Genital Mutilation or Cutting (FGM/C) continues to be practised in The Gambia, in contravention of the Women's (Amendment) Act, 2015. In August 2025, three women were arrested after reports emerged of the death of a one-month-old baby girl, allegedly as a result of female circumcision. This case is before the High Court. Hearing in the application brought before the Supreme Court of The Gambia in 2024 challenging the constitutionality of the Women's (Amendment) Act 2025 commenced during the year under review. In the exercise of its mandate, the NHRC was granted amicus curiae status by the Supreme Court following an initial rejection of an application by the NHRC to be made a party to the case.

In May 2025, the Ministry of Health (MOH) reported that at least 57 children had been diagnosed with scabies at Daara Madina Suwaneh, a Quranic School in Brufut in the West Coast Region.

The outbreak was linked to factors such as overcrowding and unhygienic living conditions. This case highlights the need for regular monitoring of learning institutions and residential care facilities to ensure their compliance with basic health and safety measures and child protection standards.

The fulfilment of the reporting obligations of the State to international and regional human rights mechanisms and treaty bodies was also assessed. One of the key challenges observed in this regard is the absence of a dedicated mechanism to oversee and coordinate the reporting process, as well as monitor the implementation of recommendations from these mechanisms. As a result, the NHRC is calling on the Government to establish a NMIRF.

The NHRC continues to exercise its protective mandate. During the reporting year, the NHRC received 60 cases/complaints of human rights violations, out of which 32 cases were completed/resolved, 3 were referred to the relevant mandated institutions, and 25 are being addressed.

This Report points out the main challenges of the NHRC during the reporting period, including difficulties in accessing information from Government institutions and verifying media reports through official data sources, a lack of recent or up-to-date data on key indicators such as the number of persons with mental health issues, and recurrence of rights violations. It proffers several recommendations under each thematic area addressed, which, if implemented, would contribute significantly to the advancement of human rights in The Gambia.

Country Profile of the Republic of The Gambia

Population	2.8 Million ⁵
	51% Female 49% Male
Literacy rate	55.5%
	Literacy-Female 47.6% ⁶
	Literacy-Male 63.9% ⁷
	Youth Literacy (15-24)74.7% ⁸
Population Density	285 Km ²⁹
Population Growth	2.25% ¹⁰
Fertility Rate	4.76 births per woman ¹¹
Life Expectancy	63.83 ¹²
Socio- Economic Indices	
GDP	\$2.5 billion ¹³
Inflation	6.6 ¹⁴

⁵ UNFPA 'Gambia Population 2025 - United Nations Population Fund'

<https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/GM> accessed 1 February 2026.

⁶ <https://www.gambiarising.org/education-in-the-gambia>. Accessed 5 March 2026.

⁷ As above.

⁸ https://knowledgehub.adeanet.org/en/country-profiles/the-gambia#:~:text=Table_title:%20Sources:%20Table_content:%20header:%20%7C%20%7C%2015+years:%2058.67%25%20%7C%2015%2D24%20years:%2074.70%25%20%7C. Accessed 5 March 2026.

⁹ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/gambia-population/>. Accessed 10 February 2026

¹⁰ As above.

¹¹ <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/GMB/gambia/fertility-rate> accessed 12 February 2026.

¹² <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/GMB/gambia/life-expectancy> accessed 12 February 2026.

¹³ <https://www.worldometers.info/gdp/gambia-gdp/> accessed 12 February 2026.

¹⁴ Central Bank of The Gambia <https://www.cbg.gm/current-inflation-rate> accessed 10 January 2026.

1. Key Human Rights Instruments Not Ratified by the State

The Gambia has taken noteworthy strides to ratify international and regional human rights instruments, as evidenced in this Report and previous State of Human Rights Reports. However, there remains other important human rights instruments that The Gambia has yet to ratify, as indicated below:

s/n	Instrument	Organisation	Description
1.	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT)	United Nations	It supplements the 1984 CAT and establishes an inspection system for places of detention.
2.	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	United Nations	It establishes complaint and inquiry mechanisms for the CEDAW.
3.	Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure	United Nations	Recognises that children have the right to appeal to an international mechanism specific to them when national mechanisms fail to address violations effectively.

4.	Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	United Nations	It enables victims of economic, social and cultural rights to present complaints to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
5.	UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education	United Nations	It highlights States' obligations to ensure free and compulsory education, bans any form of discrimination and promotes equality of educational opportunity.
	ILO Convention Concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work	International Labour Organisation	It is the first international treaty to recognise the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence. It applies to all sectors, public or private, covering employees, interns, and volunteers,

			addressing issues arising during, linked to, or resulting from work.
9.	African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls	African Union	It is designed to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in Africa. It covers public, private, and digital spheres, providing a comprehensive framework for prevention, survivor protection, and accountability.
10.	Protocol on Amendments to the Protocol on the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights	African Union	It empowers the African Court of Justice and Human Rights to try international crimes (genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity) and transnational crimes (corruption, terrorism, trafficking).
11.	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and	African Union	It guarantees the right to a nationality,

	Peoples' Rights Relating to the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa		prevents and eradicates statelessness, and encourages the protection of stateless persons in Africa.
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2. Constitutional Reform

A second attempt at the adoption enactment of a new Constitution for The Gambia failed when the NA on 7 July 2025 rejected the Constitution (Promulgation) Bill 2024 at its second reading, marking a major blow to the country's constitutional reform process.¹⁵ While opinions differed as to the reasons for the failure of the second attempt at constitutional building in The Gambia, perceived Executive overreach, lack of public consultation, and political polarisation stood out as the main factors. The current gaps in human rights protection in the 1997 Constitution can only be appropriately addressed by the enactment of a new Constitution that not only caters for civil and political rights but also creates the framework for justiciable socio-economic and environmental rights and aligns constitutional provisions with international human rights standards.

¹⁵ S Nabaneh 'Constitution Bill rejected at Second Reading: Halting the reform process in The Gambia?' *ConstitutionNet* available at <https://constitutionnet.org/news/voices/constitution-bill-rejected-second-reading-halting-reform-process-gambia> accessed 3 March 2026.

The constitutional recognition of the death penalty in the 1997 Constitution, claw-back clauses on key human rights provisions, limitations on rights to assembly and expression, and the lack of justiciable protection of the right to health, right to water, right to food, and other socioeconomic rights reveal the gaps in human rights protection and promotion. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (AComHPR) has interpreted Article 1 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) to create the obligation on State Parties to "recognise" the rights, duties and freedoms enshrined in the Charter, and "to adopt legislative or other measures to give effect to them."¹⁶ Such measures include providing for the protection and realisation of economic, social and cultural rights through constitutional rights and institutions, legislative, policy and budgetary measures, educational and public awareness measures and administrative action, as well as ensuring appropriate administrative and judicial remedies for the violation of these rights.¹⁷ It is, therefore, necessary for The Gambia to continue pursuing constitutional reform to enhance the legal framework for human rights protection.

Recommendations:

1. Political parties to have multi-lateral discussions to charter a way towards a more agreeable constitutional reform agenda.
2. NA Members to prioritise reasonable compromises to overcome the political deadlocks that resulted in the rejection of the Draft Constitution.

¹⁶ ACHPR 'Principles and Guidelines on the Implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights'.

¹⁷ As above.

3. CSOs, media houses, and community leaders to continue advocacy and civic education for constitutional reform.

3. Security, Unlawful Killings, and the Right to Life

In 2025, The Gambia enacted the Criminal Offences Act, 2025, to revise and consolidate the law relating to criminal offences and for other connected matters.¹⁸ This legal instrument and the Constitutional protection of the right to life not only prohibit unlawful killings but also lay down an accountability mechanism against transgression on the right to life. General Comment No. 36 on Article 6 of the ICCPR imposes an important obligation on States Parties, where they know or should have known of potentially unlawful deprivations of life, to investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute the perpetrators of such incidents.¹⁹ In this regard, the NHRC is calling the attention of the State to the below mentioned cases a number of outstanding that require investigation and/or prosecution.

In January 2025, the GPF initiated an investigation into the suspected murder of one Musa Bah, a Senegalese national, whose body was discovered on 29 January 2025, in Bansang.²⁰ Initial Police investigations revealed that Mr. Bah was visited by two individuals who claimed to be his relatives. He is said to have left with these visitors but never returned home until the

¹⁸ Criminal Offence Act, 2025.

¹⁹ OHCHR General Comment No. 36 n Article 6 ICCPR: Right to life [3].

²⁰ <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/senegalese-national-allegedly-murdered-in-bansang> accessed 16 February 2025.

discovery of his body. At the time of preparing this Report, the suspects remained at large.

On 10 March 2025, a 63-year-old Gambian man, Mr. Rueben Andrews, was found dead by his wife at their residence in Brufut Heights. According to Police reports, Mr. Andrews had been bound and strangled, indicating possible foul play. Preliminary investigations revealed signs of forced entry and the theft of valuable property from the home. The household watchman and maid, who were present with the victim at the residence, disappeared following the incident and remain persons of interest as the Police continue their investigations.²¹

In December 2025, Isatou Fatty, a 20-year-old Gambian woman, was tragically stabbed to death at a forex bureau in Brusubi, West Coast Region, where she worked as a cashier. Investigations are still ongoing in this case. This incident marked the second killing of a forex bureau employee in two years, following a similar pattern of attack.²²

In September 2025, one Omar Badjie of Mandinary, Kombo North District of the West Coast Region, lost his life following an alleged pursuit by the police, which resulted in his death. This incident was followed by days of protests in the community and the use of force by the Police. Consequently, on 28th September 2025, the Gambia Police Force announced that four officers who were “directly involved in the pursuit of the late Omar Badjie”

²¹ Maid & watchman at large as police probe death of retired banker *The Point Newspaper* 12 March 2025 available at <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/maid-and-watchman-at-large-as-police-probe-death-of-retired-banker>. Accessed 5 March 2026.

²² Momodou Jawo, ‘Another Bureau de Change Staff Killed’, *The Point Newspaper*, December 2025 < <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/another-bureau-de-change-staff-killed#:~:text=Dec%2022%2C%202025%2C%2011:.,The%20GPF%20statement%20reads:>
>

were suspended, arrested and detained²³ pending the institution of an independent Coroner's Inquest by the State.²⁴ Following an application by the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Justice under the Coroner's Act, the Chief Justice in October 2025 ordered the holding of a Coroner's Inquest into the death. The inquest is ongoing at the Brikama Magistrates' Court.

Recommendations:

1. The GPF to thoroughly investigate all reported cases of unlawful killings.
2. The Ministry of Interior (MOI) to equip the GPF with appropriate and adequate forensic and personnel resources to effectively investigate unlawful killings to ensure accountability of perpetrators.
3. The GPF and the Attorney General's Chambers, at the conclusion of the Coroner's Inquest in the case of Omar Badjie's death, to swiftly take both legal and administrative steps to bring the perpetrators to justice.

²³Kemo Kanyi, The Voice, *Four Police Officers Detain in Relation to Omar Badjie ' s Death* <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/10/03/four-police-officers-detain-in-relation-to-omar-badjies-death/>

²⁴ https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/chief-justice-orders-coroners-inquest-into-death-of-omar-badjie#google_vignette

3.1 Abolition of the Death Penalty

In January 2025, the High Court of The Gambia passed the death sentence as punishment for a murder that occurred in Manjai.²⁵ While the NHRC recognises that Section 18(1) of the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia allows the imposition of the death sentence as a form of punishment, it is important to highlight that in 2018 the Government placed a moratorium on the execution of the death penalty. This highlights the ongoing legal complexities surrounding the death penalty in Gambian law, as the 1997 Constitution recognises the death penalty, while the Criminal Offences Act 2025 has no death penalty as a form of penal punishment. Recognising the ongoing calls for the abolition of the death penalty as it has the potential to violate the right to life, the State should consider amending section 18(1) of the 1997 Constitution to give greater effect to the removal of the death penalty in the Criminal Offences Act 2025.

Recommendation:

1. The MOJ to work with the NA to amend Section 18(1) of the 1997 Constitution to remove the death penalty as a form of punishment that the Courts can impose.

²⁵ <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/01/16/man-sentenced-to-death-sentence/>

4. Protection from Torture, Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment

In 2025, the NHRC received a total of eleven (11) complaints of alleged violation of the rights to protection against inhumane treatment and torture. Eight (08) out of the eleven cases were reported against personnel of the Gambia Police Force, one (01) case against the Gambia Armed Forces, one (01) case against the Drug Law Enforcement Agency and one (01) complaint against the Gambia Immigration Department. This is a sharp increase compared to the four (04) cases that were registered in 2024. Two (02) out of the eleven cases of alleged inhumane treatment and torture have been completed and resolved, and two (02) cases have been referred to the Police for further management. By the end of the reporting period, legal opinions were prepared on two (02) cases, while five were under investigation.

One of the cases completed and resolved was that of a male complainant who alleged that he was assaulted and subjected to other forms of inhumane treatment by personnel of the Police Intervention Unit stationed at the Governor's residence in the Lower River Region. The Regional Police Command at the time was contacted and notified of the investigation. The perpetrators admitted to the act and pleaded for mercy. The complainant, through the intervention of the Regional Police Command, was compensated and his medical bill reimbursed, while the officers concerned were redeployed to Kwinella for further appropriate disciplinary actions. The complainant informed the NHRC Regional Office in NBR/URR that he was satisfied with the steps taken by the Regional Police Command and that there was no need for further action.

The second case was filed against personnel of the Gambia Armed Forces (GAF) stationed in Farafenni by the General Transport Union (GTU) on behalf of a union member. Three days into the investigation of the complaint, the NHRC received another letter from the complainant requesting a discontinuation of the case. The letter indicated that the case was amicably and satisfactorily resolved between the GAF, the Union and the complainant.

The death of Omar Badjie during a police operation in Mandinary on 26 September 2025 raised serious concerns of possible torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. While the GPF reported that he “fell during hot pursuit”, eyewitnesses alleged that he was beaten by Police Officers during arrest.²⁶ In response to these conflicting accounts, the Government announced the immediate institution of a Coroner’s Inquest to ascertain the circumstances of his death.²⁷ In October 2025, a Coroner’s Inquest was ordered by the Chief Justice and is ongoing as at the time of the publication of this Report.²⁸

ARTICLE 19 reported that during a peaceful protest against the PURA data floor price held on 22 August 2025, several protesters were subjected to brutal assaults by police officers, both during and after their arrest.²⁹ Multiple protesters were beaten in full view of the media, and others were allegedly

²⁶ <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/d5d33728-82ac-11f0-98c6-02a8a26af761#:~:text=PRESS%20STATEMENT-,THE%20MANAGEMENT%20OF%20PUBLIC%20ASSEMBLIES:%20THE%20SITUATION%20SINCE%2022nd%20AUGUST,ensure%20humane%20conditions%20of%20detention.>

²⁷ <https://www.gambiadaily.gov.gm/index.php/mandinary-incident-govt-institute-coroners-inquest-death-omar-badjie>

²⁸ <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/chief-justice-orders-coroners-inquest-into-death-of-omar-badjie>

²⁹ ARTICLE 19, *The Gambia: Authorities must release protesters and protect their rights* <https://www.article19.org/resources/the-gambia-authorities-must-release-protesters-and-protect-their-rights/>

assaulted inside Police pick-ups and vans out of public sight. Security forces also used tear gas on individuals who had gathered peacefully at the Kanifing Magistrates' Court to show solidarity with the detained protesters, resulting in injuries that required hospitalisation of some of these individuals, including an activist and at least two other protesters.³⁰ 27 of the protesters lodged a complaint with the NHRC alleging ill treatment and heavy-handedness by police during the protest. The matter remains under investigation as of the end of the reporting period.

These reports indicated possible cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of the detained protesters, raising serious concerns regarding excessive use of force by the Police, unsafe arrest procedures, and violations of the right to bodily integrity in the control of peaceful assemblies.

Recommendations:

1. The MOI to promptly and effectively investigate all allegations of torture and inhumane treatment by security officers against the protesters, ensuring accountability in accordance with the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act 2023.
2. The Judiciary and MOJ to expedite the Coroner's inquest into the death of Omar Badjie and to make its findings public to strengthen transparency and public trust.
3. Law enforcement institutions to provide continuous human rights and safe-arrest training for their officers to prevent torture and the use of excessive force against right holders.

³⁰ As above

4. The GPF to integrate the Guidelines on the Policing of Public Assemblies in The Gambia, jointly developed by the NHRC and the GPF, into the curriculum of the Police Training Academy and to ensure continuous training on it.

5. Right to Liberty

The NHRC received five (05) cases of alleged violations of the Right to Liberty and Security of the Person. Four (4) of the five (05) cases were complaints of arbitrary arrest and detention against the GPF, and one complaint of unlawful detention against the Drug Law Enforcement Agency-The Gambia (DLEAG). As of 31 December 2025, two (02) of the complaints were completed and resolved, one (01) was referred to the GPF for the necessary administrative action, a legal opinion is being prepared on one (01), and one (01) is under investigation.

One of the cases completed and resolved was against a Police Officer deployed at the Highway Patrol Unit. The complainant alleged that the officer stopped him in traffic, impounded his vehicle and went away with his car keys. Upon the intervention of the NHRC, the Complainant got his vehicle back and received an apology from both the officer and the GFP. He thereafter requested a discontinuation of the case.

The second case was a complaint about the detention of a male adult at a Police Station who alleged unfair detention. Investigation by the NHRC revealed that the detainee was charged with assault causing grievous bodily harm. Since the duration of the detention did not exceed 72 hours at the time, the detainee was granted bail by the Police accordingly. Consequently, the investigation into the case was discontinued.

It is being monitored closely to ensure the detainee's human rights are upheld in the course of the Police investigation.

Recommendations:

1. The MOI and the MOJ to initiate the repeal of Section 5 of the Public Order Act and replace the current permit regime with a rights-compliant notification system for public assemblies.
2. The Gambia Police Force to strictly adhere to Sections 19 and 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia 1997 by ceasing all unlawful arrests and detentions, and ensuring that any restriction of individual liberty is lawful, necessary, and proportionate, with full respect for due process guarantees, including prompt information on reasons for arrest and timely judicial oversight.

6. Access to Justice

During the reporting period, notable institutional strengthening efforts were undertaken in the Justice sector. The Judiciary, the National Agency for Legal Aid (NALA), and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Secretariat (ADRS) have all developed Strategic Plans and Communication Strategies aimed at improving justice delivery nationwide. These reforms reflected a continued commitment to addressing longstanding systemic challenges that have hindered access to justice in the country.³¹

³¹ The Voice, 'Judiciary Extends Strategic Plan to Deepen Justice Sector Reforms -' (19 December 2025) <<https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/12/19/judiciary-extends-strategic-plan-to-deepen-justice-sector-reforms/>> accessed 19 January 2026; 'UNDP The Gambia - UNDP Supported ADRS to Validate its Strategic and Communications Plans' <<https://www.facebook.com/UNDPGambia/posts/undp-supported-adrs-the-ministry-of->

The Judiciary completed the rehabilitation works of the Special Criminal Division of the High Court in December 2025. This development is expected to accelerate the completion of the prosecution of serious crimes linked to past human rights violations documented by the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC).³² In May 2025, the Chief Justice exercised his constitutional mandate under sections 131 and 143 of the 1997 Constitution to establish a Commercial Division of the High Court to accelerate the resolution of commercial disputes.³³ The enactment of the Judicial Officers (Conditions of Service) Act 2025 is expected to improve the conditions of service for the Bench, thereby strengthening judicial independence and integrity.³⁴ The Judiciary also operationalised a Mediation Centre staffed by trained mediators and constituted a Committee to Review the Land Dispute Adjudication System to enhance transparency and accessibility in the adjudication of land-related matters.³⁵

justice-for-the-validation-of-their-strategi/1296425242517367/> accessed 22 January 2026; 'NALA Validates Strategic Plan and Communications Plan' <https://www.facebook.com/gambia.moj/posts/the-ministry-of-justice-congratulates-nala_gambia-on-the-launch-of-its-20262030-/1208841874672283/> accessed 22 January 2026.

³² Aminata Kuyateh, 'Special Criminal Court For Jammeh-Era Crimes Inaugurated' *The Standard Newspaper | Gambia* (27 January 2026) <<https://standard.gm/special-criminal-court-for-jammeh-era-crimes-inaugurated/>> accessed 29 January 2026.

³³ 'Kexx Sanneh - Judiciary Establishes Commercial Division of the High Court' <<https://www.facebook.com/kemeseng.sanneh/posts/judiciary-establishes-commercial-division-of-the-high-courtthe-judiciary-has-ann/10000142556711966/>> accessed 22 January 2026.

³⁴ 'KERR FATOU - The National Assembly Has Passed the Judicial Officers Conditions of Service Bill' <<https://www.facebook.com/Kerrfatou/posts/the-national-assembly-has-passed-the-judicial-officers-conditions-of-service-bil/1240387928115982/>> accessed 19 January 2026.

³⁵ David Collins, 'The Gambia's Democratic Revival: Chief Justice Jallow Judicature' (15 May 2025) <<https://judicature.duke.edu/articles/the-gambias-democratic-revival-chief-justice-jallow/>> accessed 19 January 2026; Judiciary, 'Inaugural Meeting of the Committee on the Review of the Land Dispute Adjudication System in The Gambia'

A joint initiative of the Judiciary, MOJ, and Ministry of Interior (MOI) was launched to develop an Integrated Digital Case Management System intended to address case delays, improve recordkeeping, and strengthen institutional accountability.³⁶ These developments represent concrete steps towards modernising justice processes.

However, as consistently highlighted in previous State of Human Rights Reports, significant barriers to access to justice remain. Slow disposition of cases, manual recording and transcription systems, limited Courts in the rural areas, and persistent case backlogs continue to undermine public confidence in the justice system. While the Computer Aided Recording and Transcription System (CATS) and the electronic case management system have been piloted with support from development partners, full implementation and expansion across all Courts have not yet been realised.³⁷ Reflecting on the 2025 caseloads of the Judiciary of The Gambia, the Chief Justice indicated that 9,942 new cases were filed in 2025, representing a 49% increase from 2024.³⁸ This highlights the volume of cases that are filed per year and the resultant backlog.

<https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid023RvpfhWhRjcsHSuWLMPrerEfqd62LdtHV9ZEA5hAzFk16zkDaqkNPFaEERQcQTT3l&id=100087529307876&rdid=hv2SXaS4nF00JWbF#> accessed 21 January 2026.

³⁶ The Judiciary, 'Validation of the Integrated Digital Case Management System Consolidated Report' <<https://www.facebook.com/100087529307876/posts/the-integrated-digital-case-management-system-consolidated-report-has-been-succe/952690097658625/>> accessed 22 January 2026.

³⁷ Yankuba Jallow, 'Gambia: Justice Slows as Courts Shut Before Time' *FOROYAA Newspaper* (Serrekunda, 7 July 2025) <<https://allafrica.com/stories/202507070787.html>> accessed 19 January 2026; Collins (n 24).

³⁸ I Sonko 'Gambia's Judiciary 'handled 9942 new cases in 2025' *The Point Newspaper* <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/gambias-judiciary-handled-9942-new-cases-in-2025>

In 2024, the NA enacted the Special Accountability Mechanisms Act and the Special Prosecutor’s Office Act to support the prosecution of crimes revealed by the TRRC. Despite assurances by the Attorney General that the Special Prosecutor would be appointed by June 2025, this commitment had not been fulfilled by the end of the reporting period.³⁹ The operationalisation of both the Special Prosecutor’s Office and the Special Tribunal requires substantial financial investment, and the State is encouraged to intensify resource mobilisation to ensure the timely delivery of justice within the transitional justice framework. Progress is noted in the operationalisation of the Reparations Commission, whose Commissioners were appointed in April 2025.⁴⁰

Legal reform was also advanced with the enactment of the Criminal Offences Act 2025 and the Criminal Procedure Act 2025, which replaced outdated colonial-era laws.⁴¹ The Criminal Offences Act 2025 modernises crime definitions and sentencing, expands extraterritorial jurisdiction over offences committed abroad by persons who later enter The Gambia, and addresses longstanding gaps in the legal framework.⁴² The Criminal

³⁹ ‘Gov’t to Identify Special Prosecutor in June 2025 - The Point’ <<https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/govt-to-identify-special-prosecutor-in-june-2025>> accessed 22 January 2026.

⁴⁰ ‘Reparations Commission Announces Commencement of Reparations Payments — Askanwi’ <<https://www.askanwi.com/news/reparations-commission-announces-commencement-of-reparations-payments>> accessed 21 January 2026; ‘President Barrow to Preside Over the Swearing-in Ceremony of The Reparations Commission’ <<https://op.gov.gm/president-barrow-preside-over-swearing-ceremony-reparations-commission>> accessed 21 January 2026.

⁴¹ The Voice, ‘National Assembly Concludes 1st Ordinary Session of 2025 -’ (2 April 2025) <<https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/04/02/national-assembly-concludes-1st-ordinary-session-of-2025/>> accessed 22 January 2026.

⁴² ‘Assent Copy - Criminal Offences Act 2025 - Passed 28th March 2025’ <<https://moj.gov.gm/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Assent-Copy->

Procedure Act 2025 introduces non-custodial sentences such as probation, parole, plea agreements and alternative sentencing, clearer bail rules, and sets mandatory timelines for prosecutors and Courts to strengthen the right to fair and speedy trial.⁴³ Effective implementation of these Acts by the Judiciary, MOJ, the Office of the Inspector General of Police and NALA will be key in ensuring meaningful improvement in justice delivery.

Despite these reforms, the full implementation of the Legal Aid Act 2008 remains hindered by inadequate institutional capacity and insufficient funding for NALA. The absence of a state-determined minimum wage required to set eligibility for legal aid, continues to undermine access to legal representation for indigent persons. Nonetheless, during the period, NALA engaged in capacity building for its staff, including training legal officers on plea bargaining.⁴⁴

The Gambia SDGs Survey 2025, conducted by the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), indicated a significant increase in access to civil dispute resolution mechanisms. According to the Survey, national access rose from 46.4% in 2021 to 66% in 2025 and rural

Criminal-Offences-Act-2025-Passed-28th-March-2025.pdf> accessed 21 January 2026.

⁴³ 'Assent Copy - Criminal Procedure Act, 2025 - Passed 28th March 2025' <<https://moj.gov.gm/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Assent-Copy-Criminal-Procedure-Act-2025-Passed-28th-March-2025.pdf>> accessed 21 January 2026.

⁴⁴ UNDP The Gambia, 'The EU UNDP GREAT Initiative Partnered with NALA to Launch a Three-Day Training on "Strengthening Access to Justice through Plea Bargaining."' <<https://www.facebook.com/UNDPGambia/posts/the-eu-undp-great-initiative-partnered-with-the-national-agency-for-legal-aid-na/1111604364332790/>> accessed 22 January 2026.

access improved immensely from 43.3% to 76.1%, while women’s access increased from 49.1% to 62.2%.⁴⁵

ADRS continued to expand its role in enhancing access to justice, with staff receiving training in mediation, negotiation, arbitration, conciliation, and plea bargaining.⁴⁶ Notwithstanding, the institution is faced with numerous challenges impacting the fulfilment of its mandate.

Recommendations:

1. The Judiciary to expand automated recording and transcription to all Courts to address slow proceedings and backlog.
2. The MOJ to expedite the operationalisation of the Special Prosecutor’s Office and Special Tribunal in line with transitional justice commitments.
3. The MOJ, Judiciary and NALA to ensure full enforcement of the Criminal Offences Act 2025 and Criminal Procedure Act 2025.

⁴⁵ ‘The Gambia SDGs Survey 2025 - Gambia Bureau of Statistics - GBOS’ <<https://www.facebook.com/GambiaBureauofStatistics/posts/the-gambia-sdgs-survey-2025-access-to-dispute-resolution-sdg-1633access-to-dispu/1224015096430301/>> accessed 19 January 2026.

⁴⁶ UNDP The Gambia, ‘The EU-UNDP GREAT Project in Partnership with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Secretariat (ADRS) Has Launched a Four Day Specialized Training on “Building ADRS Capacity in Alternative Dispute Resolution for Enhance Accessible Justice in the Area of: Negotiation, Mediation, Arbitration and Conciliation.’’ <<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1043508634411628>> accessed 21 January 2026.

4. The MOJ to determine and publish the minimum wage required for legal aid qualification under the Legal Aid Act 2008.
5. ADRS to expand and decentralise mediation, conciliation and negotiation services to support early resolution of disputes and reduce court caseloads.
6. The Judiciary, MOJ and MOI to continue developing and implementing the Integrated Digital Case Management platform for coordinated justice sector data.
7. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA) and the NA to provide sufficient budgetary allocation for justice sector institutions, to support infrastructure, automation, and service delivery.

7. Freedom of Expression and the Media

Freedom of expression is guaranteed under Section 25(1)(a) of the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia, including freedom of the press and other media. The guarantee applies to all persons within the country and reflects a broader commitment to civil and political liberties. In addition to its constitutional framework, The Gambia is a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which affirms under Article 19 the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers.⁴⁷ By ratifying this treaty, The Gambia has undertaken binding international obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil these rights.

⁴⁷ Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Freedom of expression is not an absolute right. Both domestic constitutional law and international human rights law permit certain restrictions, provided they are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society.⁴⁸ Such limitations may be justified on grounds of national security, public order, public safety, public morality, or for the protection of the rights and reputations of others. However, any restriction must satisfy the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality.⁴⁹

In practice, however, concerns have arisen regarding the full protection of this right by the State. Certain statutory provisions, such as laws on sedition and criminal defamation, have criminalised speech considered to bring the President, the government, or public institutions into hatred or contempt.⁵⁰ The Information and Communications Act 2009 also contains provisions imposing substantial fines and custodial sentences for the dissemination of false information or derogatory statements, including via digital and online platforms.⁵¹ More recently, aspects of the Criminal Offences Act 2025 have attracted criticism from media practitioners and Civil Society Organizations, particularly provisions relating to false publication, insults against public officials, and other broadly defined offences that may carry imprisonment.⁵²

The vague and broadly worded nature of certain laws, such as the Criminal Offences Act 2025 and the Information and

⁴⁸ Section 25 of the 1997 Constitution, Article 19 of the ICCPR, and Article 9 of the ACHPR all recognise the right to freedom of expression but also permit restrictions on its exercise.

⁴⁹ United Nations Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 34 (2011) provides an authoritative interpretation of Article 19 of the ICCPR.

⁵⁰ Section 48(2), 49 and 50 Criminal Offences Act 2025

⁵¹ Section 173A of the Information and Communications Act, 2009 (as amended by the Information and Communications (Amendment) Act, 2013) of The Gambia.

⁵² Section 50 of the Criminal Offences Act 2025.

Communications Act, 2009, grants law enforcement significant discretion, which can create uncertainty. As a result, individuals may hesitate to exercise their rights out of fear that their actions could be deemed unlawful.

During the reporting period, although few cases relating to alleged infringements of freedom of expression were recorded, below highlights instances when this freedom was impacted:

In March 2025, Information Minister Dr. Ismaila Ceesay called in Newspaper Editors, proprietors and media regulators over what he characterised as misleading coverage of an Afrobarometer survey on public trust in institutions.⁵³ The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) condemned the move as an act of intimidation and an abuse of authority, calling on the Minister to uphold and respect press freedom and media independence.⁵⁴

In August 2025, one Mr. Abdoulie Sanyang was arrested and charged with arson and interference with judicial proceedings following statements he made during a live interview on West Coast Radio. During the broadcast, he allegedly described certain court proceedings as “clandestine” and controlled. He was arraigned before the High Court and remained on trial through the reporting period.

Several reports of harassment and assault of journalists were also recorded. In May 2025, the Fatu Network reported that one of its cameramen was confronted by security officials while he was covering a GALA protest in Banjul. The report alleged that the cameraman was grabbed by the collar as an officer

⁵³ Tendeng, ‘Civicus Warns New Gambia Laws Threaten Press Freedom, Expression, and Digital Rights’ *The Gambia Journal* (October 24 2025).

⁵⁴ As above

attempted to drag him into a security vehicle.⁵⁵ During the second GALA protest in September 2025, the Gambia Police Force cautioned journalists against ‘engaging in activism under the guise of reporting’ and warned that unauthorised gatherings would not be tolerated. During the protests, some journalists alleged they were harassed, while one was detained together with the protesters.⁵⁶

Despite the challenges, there have been some positive developments with regard to freedom of expression. In 2025, The Gambia was ranked 58 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), with a score of 65.49.⁵⁷ This position reflects the country’s continued progress in safeguarding press freedom since the democratic transition in 2017. The Gambia recorded a press freedom score of 65.4 out of 100, in the World Economic Governance Index, indicating a moderately strong level of media freedom compared to many countries in Africa.⁵⁸ This suggests that journalists generally operate with a reasonable degree of independence and freedom of expression.

⁵⁵ www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1227399888778914&set=a.658024599049782

⁵⁶ [Gambia: Activists, journalists arrested while protesting Auditor General's removal – Media Foundation For West Africa](#) 16 September 2025.

⁵⁷ The World Press Freedom Index 2025 available < <https://rsf.org/en/index>> (accessed 5 March 2026).

⁵⁸ World Economics Governance index Governance Ratings Governance Factors: 2026 available < https://www.worldeconomics.com/Indicator-Data/ESG/Governance.aspx?utm_source=> (accessed 5 March 2026)/

Recommendations:

1. The MOJ to amend the Criminal Offences Act 2025 and the Information and Communications Act to eliminate provisions that criminalise speech such as sedition, false news and criminal defamation, and ensure that domestic legislation is fully aligned with the 1997 Constitution and international human rights standards.
2. The State to create systems to safeguard journalists from harassment, arbitrary arrest, and violence. This can be done by strengthening oversight bodies to investigate abuses against journalists and hold authorities accountable.
3. The Ministry of Information, Media and Broadcasting Services (MOIN), in collaboration with the MOI, to sensitise the Police and other security forces on respecting freedom of expression, including press freedom.
4. The Gambia Police Force to always protect journalists and other media practitioners who cover protests and other public assemblies.

8. Access to Information

The Gambia's Information Commission, as part of its functions, has developed a framework for the implementation of the Access to Information Act 2021, namely the Access to Information Law Implementation Roadmap, which was validated in January 2025.⁵⁹ Further, the Commission also developed the Access to Information Regulations 2025. These instruments are meant to guide and ensure a coordinated and effective implementation of the law. However, several challenges remain. Many institutions are yet to identify designated Information Officers or meet the classification of information obligations as stipulated under the Access to Information Act 2021.⁶⁰

Recommendations:

1. Public Institutions to designate Information Officers to ease access to information as provided under the Access to Information Act 2021.
2. The Information Commission to intensify the implementation of the Access to Information Law Implementation Roadmap.

⁵⁹ <https://gamna.gov.gm/access-information-law-implementation-roadmap-validated> accessed 20th February 2026.

⁶⁰ Updates from The Gambia Press Union.

9. Freedom of Association and Assembly

During the period under review, The Gambia witnessed several public protests organised by Civil Society Organisations and youth groups. These assemblies raised concerns relating to governance, accountability, corruption, economic regulation, and constitutional reform. The NHRC observed that State authorities adopted both facilitative and restrictive approaches to public assemblies, with implications for the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly as guaranteed under Section 25(1)(d) of the 1997 Constitution and relevant regional and international human rights instruments ratified by the State. While recognising the progress registered in terms of the permits granted by the State in the reporting year, it is worthy to note that the recognition of the right of peaceful assembly imposes a corresponding obligation on States to respect and ensure its exercise without discrimination.⁶¹ Furthermore, The Gambia should consider amending section 5 of the Public Order Act to replace the permit requirement with a notification requirement. This is in line with the African Union’s Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly, which require that ‘any legal framework put in place or other steps taken relative to the rights to freedom of association and assembly shall have the primary purpose of enabling the exercise of the rights.’

As seen below, the current requirement was used on several occasions to either deny assemblies or forcefully disperse them. The Inspector General of Police on 7 May 2025 denied a permit request by the youth-led group, “Gambians Against Looted Assets” (GALA), who sought to protest the handling of assets

⁶¹ Human Rights Committee General comment No. 37 (2020) on the right of peaceful assembly (article 21) para 8.

belonging to ex-President Yahya Jammeh.⁶² Despite the refusal, GALA proceeded with the protest on 8 May 2025 in Banjul. Police Officers disrupted the assembly and arrested at least 12 individuals, among them media practitioners, and charged them with offences related to unlawful assembly. Civil Society Organisations criticised the disproportionality of the police response.⁶³ In anticipation of further protests, security personnel increased deployment across parts of the Greater Banjul Area and issued warnings against unauthorised assemblies. However, a subsequent GALA-organised protest held on 23 July 2025 at Westfield received approval from the GPF.⁶⁴ Police facilitated the procession, and no arrests were reported.

On 22 August 2025, youth activists and CSOs held a protest outside the Headquarters of the PURA in response to the introduction of a mandatory internet data price floor. Police dispersed the protesters and arrested 23 individuals who were charged with participating in an unlawful assembly. The case remains before the Kanifing Magistrates' Court.⁶⁵ Civil society expressed concern about the necessity and proportionality of the police response. In contrast, an unauthorised protest

⁶² Jankey Ceesay, 'Group vows to protest despite permit denial', The Point Newspaper <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/group-vows-to-protest-despite-permit-denial#google_vignette>

⁶³ <https://www.facebook.com/Kerrfatou/posts/statement-from-the-the-gambia-police-forcepolice-arrest-a-group-of-individuals-f/1122664426555000/>; <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2025/05/14/the-beginning-of-a-new-revolution-gambian-youth-protest-state-corruption-face-mass-arrests/>; <https://www.askanwi.com/news/crackdown-on-dissent-gambias-public-order-act-blocks-peaceful-protest>

⁶⁴ 'GALA Secures Police Permit for Major Anti-Corruption Protest on July 23' Alkamba Times <https://alkambatimes.com/gala-secures-police-permit-for-major-anti-corruption-protest-on-july-23/>

⁶⁵ Momodou Jawo, '23 PURA protesters refused court bail, remanded at prison' The Point Newspaper <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/23-pura-protesters-refused-court-bail-remanded-at-prison>

organised by members of the United Democratic Party (UDP) on 23 August 2025, proceeded outside the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and along the Bertil Harding Highway without interruption. Police maintained order and facilitated the protest even though no permit was granted to the organisers.⁶⁶

On 15 September 2025, the members of GALA organised an impromptu Press briefing outside the premises of the National Audit Office (NAO) as the Police removed the Auditor General from the National Audit Office (NAO) following the appointment of a new Auditor General by the President. Police dispersed the assembly and arrested about four youths who are currently facing charges of unlawful assembly. The incident reflects ongoing concerns like those documented in the 2024 State of Human Rights Report, where the denial of permits and forceful dispersal of assemblies under the Public Order Act raised questions about fairness, equality, and non-discrimination in its application.

In November 2025, the Coalition of Progressive Gambians (CoPG) was granted a permit by the Inspector General of Police to hold a protest in Banjul for the reinstatement of the 2020 Draft Constitution. The protest proceeded peacefully under Police supervision, with no arrests reported.

Overall, public protests in 2025 demonstrated heightened civic engagement, particularly among young people. While some assemblies were facilitated, others were met with restrictions, arrests, and detentions. The NHRC reiterates that the use of force during public assemblies and any limitations imposed on the

⁶⁶ ‘UDP Youth Wing Protests ID Card Issuance Abroad Near IEC Headquarters’ The Alkamba Times <<https://alkambatimes.com/udp-youth-wing-protests-id-card-issuance-abroad-near-iec-headquarters/>>

right to peaceful assembly must comply with the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality in accordance with national law and international human rights standards.

Recommendations:

1. The Ministries of Interior and Justice to expedite the amendment of Section 5 of the Public Order Act to transition from a permit requirement to a notification requirement, in line with previous recommendations.
2. The Gambia Police Force to ensure that the use of force during public assemblies and restrictions on public assemblies comply with the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality.
3. The Attorney General and Minister of Justice to consider withdrawing charges against individuals prosecuted for participating in peaceful assemblies where there is no evidence of violence or threat to public order.

10. Mental Health Rights

Mental health remains a concern in The Gambia. A recent Report published by the MOH indicated that around 1 in 7 Gambians is said to experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives, with depression and anxiety being the most common.⁶⁷ The Report further states that in 2024, the total cost of mental health conditions and suicide was estimated at GMD768 Million (approximately US\$ 10 Million), equivalent to about 0.3% of the Gross Domestic Product. The sizeable burden of mental health on the economy and society continues to adversely affect service delivery in the mental health sector.

The Lunatics Detention Act 1948 still exists as the current legislation governing mental health in The Gambia. The Act is outdated and is incompatible with human rights standards and best practices. However, there is a current Mental Health Bill 2025, which is yet to be submitted to the NA.

Another major challenge in the mental healthcare sector is the lack of regulation and training of traditional healers. Reports have shown that human rights abuses occur in some traditional healing settings, where patients are exposed to dehumanising conditions. An audit report by the NAO further revealed that some healers physically restrain patients, a practice that may exacerbate aggressive behaviour rather than promote recovery.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Prevention and management of mental health conditions in The Gambia: the case for investment. Ministry of Health of The Gambia; 2025. <available [the-gambia-mental-health-investment-case-report-2025.pdf](#)> (accessed 3 February 2026).

⁶⁸Performance Audit Report: Provision of Mental Health Care Services by the Ministry of Health available < [MoH_Povision-of-Mental-Health-Care-Services.pdf](#)> (accessed 3 February 2026)

Limited accessibility to mental health services remains a major barrier in The Gambia. While general hospitals and major healthcare centres offer mental health care, Tanka Tanka Psychiatric Unit under the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH) is the country's only inpatient facility. This Unit faces significant challenges, including a shortage of trained personnel, inadequate funding, and poor infrastructure. Moreover, its location makes it difficult for rural populations to access, leaving many families with little choice but to turn to traditional healers for treatment. The Gambia currently has only about seven psychiatrists serving the entire population, one of the lowest ratios in the subregion.⁶⁹ The most recent audit of mental health services further revealed that nine out of ten major public health facilities lack the required number of psychiatric nurses.⁷⁰

The absence of rehabilitation services presents a significant challenge within The Gambia's mental health sector, as rehabilitation is a crucial stage in both recovery and reintegration. Without these services, patients often struggle to achieve long-term stability and reintegration into society.

⁶⁹ Jankey Ceesay, 'Dr. Samateh vows major overhaul at Tanka Tanka' The Point Newspaper <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/dr-samateh-vows-major-overhaul-at-tanka-tanka>

⁷⁰ Performance Audit Report: Provision of Mental Health Care Services by the Ministry of Health available < [MoH_Povision-of-Mental-Health-Care-Services.pdf](#) > (accessed 31 March 2026)

Recommendations:

1. The MOH to expedite the submission of the Mental Health Bill 2025 to the NA for enactment.
2. The MOH, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Technology (MOHERST) to invest in the training and development of mental health professionals, including the expansion of training programmes, recruitment of qualified instructors, and the establishment of specialised educational facilities.
3. The MOH to work with the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital to decentralise the services of Tanka Tanka Psychiatric Unit.
4. The MOH to prioritise the establishment of rehabilitation centres to support patients struggling with mental health conditions. These centres would play a vital role in facilitating recovery and reintegration into society and reducing the risk of relapse into mental illness.
5. The MoFEA and the NA to provide adequate budgetary allocation to the MOH for effective and nationwide mental health service delivery.

11. Business and Human Rights

While The Gambia does not have major multinational corporations or industries engaging in large-scale businesses, the activities of small and medium businesses in fisheries, sand mining and other sectors continue to significantly affect the enjoyment of human rights. In 2025, reports documented serious adverse impacts of businesses on livelihoods, food security and the environment, exacerbated by weak enforcement and governance gaps.

The Government has yet to take concrete steps to popularise or implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). The Principles remain largely unknown among critical stakeholders, including businesses, Civil Society Organisations, the media, and affected rights-holders, limiting their preventive and remedial potential. However, the NHRC organised a major forum with national actors to popularise the Guiding Principles and develop a consensus on how to domesticate them. In the year under review, the Office of the UN Coordinator supported a National Baseline Assessment on Business and Human Rights. The Government should follow this Assessment by developing a National Action Plan to provide a coordinated framework for addressing the impacts of business operations on human rights in The Gambia. The absence of these foundational measures continues to hinder effective oversight and accountability within the business environment.

In August 2025, Deutsche Welle reported on the environmental and socio-economic impact of a foreign-owned fishmeal factory in Gunjur, highlighting polluted waters and declining fish stocks that threaten marine life and reduce income for local fishing

communities.⁷¹ Similarly, Dialogue Earth reported in October 2025 that fishmeal factories in Sanyang, Gunjur, and Kartong were diverting fish meant for local consumption, causing scarcity and price hikes.⁷² Fish, once a staple food for coastal communities, is now a luxury for many living in these areas, undermining the right to food and economic security. Overfishing by foreign trawlers further depletes stocks, threatening sustainability and livelihoods.⁷³

The Associated Press reported in August 2025 that foreign-owned commercial fishing vessels continue to encroach on Gambian waters using illegal fishing gear and operating beyond authorised zones.⁷⁴ These violations have led to equipment losses for local fishermen and violent confrontations between the local fishermen and crews of these vessels, including arson and sabotage, that have resulted in injuries and deaths.⁷⁵ At least 11 people have died in such clashes over the past 15 years.

⁷¹ *The Battle to Preserve Gambia's Marine Ecosystem*

<<https://www.dw.com/en/the-battle-to-preserve-gambias-marine-ecosystem/video-73562172>> accessed 13 January 2026.

⁷² Mustapha Manneh, 'Gambian Villagers Are Being Priced out of Fish' (*Dialogue Earth*, 3 October 2025)

<<https://dialogue.earth/en/food/gambian-villagers-are-being-priced-out-of-fish/>> accessed 13 January 2026.

⁷³ 'The Gambia: A Small Nation with a Big Fish Problem' (*Change The Chamber*) <<https://www.changethechamber.org/news-research/the-gambia-fishing>> accessed 16 January 2026.

⁷⁴ 'A "sea War" Brews off Gambia as Desperate Local Fishermen Attack Foreign Vessels, and Each Other' (*AP News*, 28 August 2025)

<<https://apnews.com/article/gambia-fishing-conflict-foreign-vessels-investigation-ccc244072c92291bbd1f54ab0bec7182>> accessed 15 January 2026.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*

In July 2025, Foroyaa reported on a dispute in Kartong over alleged illegal sand mining, which has deepened divisions within the coastal community. Local truck operators were accused of unsanctioned extraction without Government approval, accelerating coastal erosion in a village highly vulnerable to flooding.⁷⁶

In April 2025, The Republic published an exposé which revealed environmental and socio-economic harm caused by black sand mining. Mining sites near the shoreline have devastated ecosystems and destroyed forests, causing income losses of up to 60 per cent for women gardeners and tourism operators.⁷⁷

Persistent regulatory failures across the fisheries and mining sectors continue to undermine public trust in state institutions tasked with oversight and enforcement. Weak, inconsistent, and often inadequate regulation, coupled with the absence of transparent, formal licensing processes, has created significant accountability gaps that allow harmful practices to endure. These systemic weaknesses collectively signal a regulatory environment that too often prioritises private or commercial interests over environmental protection, human rights safeguards, and community welfare, reinforcing the urgent need for strengthened institutional capacity, transparent oversight, and a rights-based regulatory framework.

In response to the challenges in the fishing and sandmining industries, the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources presented three Bills before the NA, namely

⁷⁶ Madiba Singhateh and Hatab Nyang, 'Gambia: Alleged Illegal Sand Mining Sparks Controversy in Kartong' *FOROYAA Newspaper* (Serrekunda, 4 August 2025) <<https://allafrica.com/stories/202508040742.html>> accessed 16 January 2026.

⁷⁷ As above.

the Coastal Zone Management Bill 2025, the Climate Change Bill 2025, and the Environmental Management Bill 2025, which are all currently at the Committee Stage.⁷⁸ Together, these Bills aim to regulate coastal development, strengthen climate resilience, and enforce sustainable environmental practices.⁷⁹ The Fisheries Act 2007 and Regulations are also under review.⁸⁰ Additionally, the Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (GCCPC) initiated a review of the Competition Act 2007 and Consumer Protection Act 2014, consolidating them into the Competition and Consumer Protection Bill 2025, which seeks to safeguard consumer rights through enforceable penalties and stronger regulatory oversight.⁸¹

Labour rights violations also featured prominently in 2025. In May, the Gambia National Trade Union Congress (GNATUC) condemned worsening labour abuses across the country, including persistent violations of workers' rights and weak enforcement of labour laws, leaving employees vulnerable to

⁷⁸ The Voice, 'National Assembly Sends Coastal Zone and Climate Change Bills to Committee Stage -' (2 December 2025) <<https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/12/02/national-assembly-sends-coastal-zone-and-climate-change-bills-to-committee-stage/>> accessed 13 January 2026; The Alkamba Times, 'Parliament Refers National Environment Management Bill 2025 to ABC Committee for Review' (*The Alkamba Times*, 1 July 2025) <<https://alkambatimes.com/parliament-refers-national-environment-management-bill-2025-to-abc-committee-for-review/>> accessed 13 January 2026.

⁷⁹ Times (n 16); The Voice, 'National Assembly Sends Coastal Zone and Climate Change Bills to Committee Stage -' (n 16).

⁸⁰ 'Fisheries Stakeholders Review Fisheries Act and Regulation' <<https://gambiadaily.gov.gm/fisheries-stakeholders-review-fisheries-act-and-regulation>> accessed 15 January 2026.

⁸¹ The Alkamba Times, 'New Consumer Protection Bill to Enforce Penalties, Promote Fair Markets in The Gambia' (*The Alkamba Times*, 27 May 2025) <<https://alkambatimes.com/new-consumer-protection-bill-to-enforce-penalties-promote-fair-markets-in-the-gambia/>> accessed 13 January 2026.

abuse and job insecurity.⁸² In August, The Point reported that the staff of a manufacturing company staged a protest, accusing management of exploitation and maltreatment, citing poor working conditions, unpaid overtime, and lack of contracts.⁸³

Recommendations for the Ministry Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters:

1. To strengthen monitoring of foreign industrial trawlers and enforce compliance with designated fishing zones.
2. To annually publish the details of licensed fishing vessels in The Gambia with their names, IMO number, call signs and the total Turnage.
3. To prepare an annual report of the Gambian fishing situation, which should include progress, setbacks and challenges.
4. To introduce a Bill that protects Gambian fisheries and observers.

Recommendations for MECCNAR:

5. To prioritise the enactment of the Coastal Zone Management Bill, the Climate Change Bill, and the Environmental Management Bill to curb destructive sand and black-sand mining.

⁸² The Voice, 'GNATUC Boss Condemns Worsening Labour Abuses -' (2 May 2025) <<https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/05/02/gnatuc-boss-condemns-worsening-labour-abuses/>> accessed 16 January 2026.

⁸³ 'Bell Company Staff Protest, Accuse Management of Exploitation, Maltreatment - The Point' <<https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/bell-company-staff-protest-accuse-management-of-exploitation-maltreatment>> accessed 16 January 2026.

6. To ensure mining companies rehabilitate sites after their license operations end.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE):

7. To enhance workplace inspections and ensure employees receive written contracts, fair pay, and safe working conditions.
8. To promote awareness and application of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights among businesses and civil society.
9. To spearhead the development of a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights to address recurring sector-wide abuses.

Recommendations for the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy:

10. To ensure transparent and accountable sharing of mining royalties with local communities guided by clear and equitable allocation criteria.
11. To ensure all mining activities undergo proper licensing.

12. Trafficking in Persons

The 2025 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report of the US Department of State placed The Gambia at Tier 2, meaning that there is still room for improvement in the country's fight against trafficking in persons.⁸⁴ The TIP Report acknowledged the positive efforts made by the Government to combat trafficking in persons in The Gambia, which included increased funding for anti-trafficking efforts, capacity building for law enforcement and other frontline officers and the creation of a new shelter dedicated to trafficked victims. However, it noted that there are still lapses that need improvement in the areas of prosecution, protection and prevention.

The TIP Report indicated that in 2025, twenty-two (22) trafficking cases were initiated by the State, including at least one alleged fraudulent labour recruitment.⁸⁵ The State initiated prosecution of six alleged sex traffickers and two of whom were convicted and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment and a fine. One of the convicted traffickers was also ordered to pay D500,000 in restitution.

The TIP Report also indicated the positive steps taken by the State to combat trafficking in persons, including the identification of 38 victims of human trafficking, the majority of whom were identified as Nigerians.⁸⁶ Other positive steps included NAATIP's continued implementation of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and the Standard Operating

⁸⁴US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report of The Gambia available <[Gambia, The - United States Department of State](#)> (accessed 10 January 2026).

⁸⁵ As above

⁸⁶ 24 were sex trafficking victims, 10 labour victims and 4 were unspecified forms of exploitation.

Procedures (SOPs), and the continuous training of frontline officers on the two frameworks.

With regards to prevention, the TIP Report indicates that there was an additional GMD 9.4 million to support NAATIP's activities. The Agency currently operates a dedicated shelter for victims of trafficking.⁸⁷

Recommendations:

1. The Judiciary of the Gambia to revive the Tourism Offences Tribunal to expeditiously handle cases of sexual offences against children in the travel and tourism industry.
2. The MOJ to deploy a State Counsel to NAATIP to be responsible for the legal affairs and prosecution of the Agency.
3. NAATIP to initiate the review of the NAATIP Act 2007 to bring it into full compliance with best practices.
4. The Department of Labour to effectively implement the Labour Act 2023.
5. The Government, through the MOJ, to provide adequate budgetary allocation to the NAATIP to enable it to carry out its mandate effectively.

⁸⁷Response from NAATIP provided to the Commission on the request for information in relation to trafficking in persons in The Gambia

13. Rights of Children

In January 2025, The Gambia underwent its 4th UPR cycle. It received 309 recommendations, out of which 273 were accepted. A good number of the recommendations concerned the protection of the rights and welfare of children, including protection from violence and harmful practices and ensuring universal birth registration, social protection, and quality and inclusive education.

On 28 February 2025, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (the “Committee”) published its Concluding Observations after it duly considered The Gambia’s combined 4th to 7th Periodic Reports submitted under Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The NHRC also submitted a Complementary Report, highlighting the need for the Government to take robust steps to fully implement the Children’s Act 2005 and Women’s Act 2010 as amended.

In May 2025, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) published its Concluding Observations on The Gambia with concrete child rights recommendations on birth registration and adoption. The Gambia also submitted its combined Initial and First to Fifth Periodic Reports on the ACRWC to the ACERWC in November 2025. In December 2025, two important institutional developments occurred that aim to progress child rights in The Gambia. The NHRC, in partnership with UNICEF and the MoGCSW, established a Child Rights Monitoring Unit (CRMU) to strengthen child rights monitoring, evidence generation and data analysis across all domains of rights in the CRC and ACRWC.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/NHRCGambia/posts/official-launch-of-the-child-rights-monitoring-unitthe-national-human-rights-com/1324870633012504/>

Similarly, UNICEF Gambia and MGCSW collaborated with the University of The Gambia to establish a Child Rights Centre to serve as a national hub for child rights research.⁸⁹ The Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations Office on Violence against Children, Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid visited The Gambia and held engagements with stakeholders, including the Children's National Assembly, on child protection and children's rights.⁹⁰

The MoGCSW during the year developed a new National Child Protection Strategy and Plan of Action 2025–2030 and a National Children's Policy 2025–2030. However, there is no Child Participation Policy or National Plan of Action on Violence Against Children (VAC).

In December 2025, the MoGCSW and its development partners validated a comprehensive Legal Gap Analysis of the Children's Act 2005.⁹¹ This exercise, supported by UNICEF, is expected to lead to the drafting of a new Children's Act.

In May 2025, the MOH reported that at least 57 children had been diagnosed with scabies at Daara Madina Suwaneh, a Quranic School in Brufut. The outbreak was linked to overcrowding and unhygienic living conditions.⁹²

⁸⁹ <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/utg-unicef-launch-africas-second-child-rights-centre-in-gambia>

⁹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/unicefgambia/posts/this-morningwe-welcomed-the-special-representative-of-the-secretary-general-of-t/1331851662318245/>

⁹¹ Mariama Darboe, "Gambia validates legal gap analysis to reform 2005 children's act" (The Point Newspaper, 2025), available at: <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/gambia-validates-legal-gap-analysis-to-reform-2005-childrens-act>

⁹² Ministry of Health <https://www.facebook.com/100063560141099/posts/-public-health-alert-scabies-outbreak-response-at-daara-madina-suwaneh-brufut-he/1271690738292919/>; UNICEF Press Release <https://www.unicef.org/gambia/press-releases/scabies-cases-continue-rise-institutional-care-settings-gambia-unicef-calls-urgent>

In July 2025, the GPF reported that a fire incident at a Quranic School in Sinchu Alagie resulted in the death of a 12-year-old boy and critical injury of an 11-year-old boy. Police investigations discovered that the school lacked fire safety measures and that two children were chained and locked in the room where the fire emanated, which prevented their escape from the facility.⁹³

During the reporting year, child sexual abuse remained a cause of grave concern. Several alarming cases were reported, including the rape of a 12-year-old girl in Sare Gillah on 14 August 2025⁹⁴; the rape of a three-year-old girl in Brikama Jalamba on 25 August 2025⁹⁵; and the rape of a 10-year-old girl in Abuko on 12 October 2025.⁹⁶ A related tragic case occurred in Old Yundum, where a 60-year-old woman was killed while intervening to protect a 12-year-old girl from an attempted sexual assault.⁹⁷ All the cases are ongoing. The GPF reiterated its commitment to pursuing sexual offence cases and protecting vulnerable children.⁹⁸

⁹³ <https://www.facebook.com/PolisoMagazine/posts/update-police-investigate-deadly-fire-incident-at-sinchu-alagie-daaradate-july-8/1016597977351232/>

⁹⁴ Keur Fatou, 'Police Launch Manhunt for Suspect in Alleged Rape of 12-Year-Old Girl in Sare Gillah' August 19 2025 <https://www.kerrfatou.com/police-launch-manhunt-for-suspect-in-alleged-rape-of-12-year-old-girl-in-sare-gillah/?fbclid=IwY2xjawQL5FVleHRuA2FibQlxMQBicmlkETJFUXQ3UFcyMnNOV2tJenJjc3JOYwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODlwMDg5MgABHkzXx0ICSHFhT-ZpUXB9kPw-VGJeWXqZ9n4-PyD3i8Fugg3BE644ALA1Sx8o_aem_G05fpXYZ7Tfenb4rZFN_rw#> accessed 25 February 2026.

⁹⁵ The Voice, 'Magistrate Transfers 3-Year-Old Rape Case to High Court' September 16, 2025 <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/09/16/magistrate-transfers-3-year-old-rape-case-to-high-court/> accessed 25 February 2026

⁹⁶ Landing Ceesay, The Point, '24-yr-old footballer to appear in Court for allegedly raping 10-yr-old' girl <<https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/24-yr-old-footballer-to-appear-in-court-for-allegedly-raping-10-yr-old-girl>>

⁹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/focusongambia/posts/the-police-in-old-yundum-are-investigating-a-suspected-case-of-murder-involving-/694846643213192/>

⁹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/PolisoMagazine/posts/16-days-of-activism-against-gender-based-violencegender-and-child-protection-uni/1136047795406249/>

Harmful traditional practices, particularly FGM/C, continued to impact the girl child. In August 2025, a one-month-old baby girl reportedly died after having undergone female circumcision.⁹⁹ Following this incident, two other infants were reported to have died as a result of this harmful practice.¹⁰⁰ These incidents highlight the ongoing risks children face and the need for strengthened protection systems, expedited prosecutions and expanded support services for survivors. Following the petition in *Almamy Gibba and 7 Others vs. The Clerk of the National Assembly and the Minister of Justice*, which challenges the constitutionality of the Women’s (Amendment) Act 2015, the hearing of the application began before the Supreme Court, with the NHRC participating in the case as an amicus curia, and the Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG) added as a defendant along with the Attorney General’s Chambers.

Recommendations:

1. The State to increase the budgetary allocations of the MoGCSW and NHRC to enhance their capacity to effectively address the violations of children’s rights in all settings.

⁹⁹ Pap Saine, “ Gambian police charge three women after death of newborn girl linked to FMG” (Reuters, 2025), available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/gambian-police-charge-three-women-after-death-newborn-girl-linked-fgm-2025-08-14/>; see also, Fatou Jawo, “ ‘cut in secret’: Gambian anti-FMG activists fear babies targeted despite ban”, (Al Jazeera, 2025), available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/29/cut-in-secret-gambia-anti-fgm-activists-fear-babies-targeted-despite-ban>

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/fatunetwork/posts/police-in-basse-are-investigating-the-death-of-a-3-week-old-baby-girl-from-bobou/1325720365613532/>; <https://www.facebook.com/networkagainstgbv.org/posts/the-recent-deaths-of-a-one-month-old-and-a-three-week-old-infant-are-a-heartbrea/1226906882980608/>

2. The State to adopt adequate measures and mechanisms to effectively implement all the UPR and CRC Concluding Observations to fulfil the rights of all children in The Gambia.
3. The MoGCSW to work with relevant stakeholders to implement laws and policies protecting women and children.
4. The MoGCSW to operationalise the Strategy and Action Plan and the development and adoption of the Children's Policy.
5. The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), in collaboration with the MoGCSW and MoH, to enforce the Minimum Standards for Quality Care for Child Care Centres and Private Residential Care Homes for Children in The Gambia, and in all residential and Quranic learning centres, with regular inspections and corrective orders for non-compliance.
6. The GPF, MOJ and the Judiciary to expedite the investigation, prosecution and speedy trial of offences of a sexual nature against children and apply child-friendly procedures throughout the justice process.

14. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Other Violations of the Rights of Women and Girls

In August 2025, three women were arrested after reports emerged following the death of a one-month-old baby girl, allegedly as a result of Female Genital Mutilation/Circumcision (FGM/C). The Gambia Police have since charged and are currently prosecuting the three women, including the baby's mother, for the death of the one-month-old baby.¹⁰¹ At least two other babies have reportedly died due to complications arising from the harmful practice.¹⁰²

Section 32A of the Women's (Amendment) Act 2015 criminalises the act of FGM/C and is punishable with life imprisonment. Despite the ban, reports suggest that the practice is still prevalent in The Gambia, as evidenced by the tragic deaths of three babies allegedly due to FGM/C. The practice poses a severe risk to the life and health of the victims, and some mothers have stated that "they are constantly on edge, wary of leaving their daughters in the care of a family member."¹⁰³

In April 2025, an Independent Parliamentarian and 7 other plaintiffs filed a suit before the Supreme Court of The Gambia on

¹⁰¹ Pap Saine, "Gambian police charge three women after death of newborn girl linked to FMG" (Reuters, 2025), available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/gambian-police-charge-three-women-after-death-newborn-girl-linked-fgm-2025-08-14/>; see also, Fatou Jawo, " 'cut in secret': Gambian anti-FMG activists fear babies targeted despite ban", (Al Jazeera, 2025), available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/29/cut-in-secret-gambia-anti-fgm-activists-fear-babies-targeted-despite-ban>

¹⁰² <https://www.facebook.com/fatunetwork/posts/police-in-basse-are-investigating-the-death-of-a-3-week-old-baby-girl-from-bobou/1325720365613532/>; <https://www.facebook.com/networkagainstgbv.org/posts/the-recent-deaths-of-a-one-month-old-and-a-three-week-old-infant-are-a-heartbrea/1226906882980608/>

¹⁰³ Fatou Jawo, " 'cut in secret': Gambian anti-FMG activists fear babies targeted despite ban", (Al Jazeera, 2025), available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/29/cut-in-secret-gambia-anti-fgm-activists-fear-babies-targeted-despite-ban>

the constitutionality of the Women’s (Amendment) Act 2015. The NHRC appears as amicus in this suit. The Supreme Court of The Gambia is yet to decide on the matter.¹⁰⁴ An August 2025 Al Jazeera Report, which included the interview of at least five women, point to the “underground” continued existence and prevalence of the secret cutting of babies, with one woman anonymously quoted as saying, “this is not the first time, babies are cut in secret around here, some only a few days old. It is heartbreaking because no one speaks out.”¹⁰⁵ Since the historic ban in 2015, only two recorded cases of prosecution have been registered,¹⁰⁶ highlighting its low enforcement rate and the inefficacy of the ban.

On 18 July 2025, The Gambia signed the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.¹⁰⁷ However, it is yet to be ratified.

¹⁰⁴ AFP, “Gambia Top Court Hears Case To Overturn Female Genital Mutilation Ban” (AFP News, 2025), available at: https://www.barrons.com/news/gambia-top-court-hears-case-to-overturn-female-genital-mutilation-ban-5d4a5c3e?gaa_at=eafs&gaa_n=AWETsqc_zF0rMaXtB8DI41mwX7c8idrg9k2AUaKNvzEbXPx6679jdnwdeULSYoUi_E%3D&gaa_ts=6996b0a9&gaa_sig=fsgjDR1-oq1eMVJjFwsfUKIFkV6EZ9b49bycKYi-8SUG7fz_3iyWakpFxb9Yb-EkhCIFY0BKVfCjMmmHdU6wcv%3D%3D; Sarah Johnson, “Attempt to overturn Gambia’s Ban on FGM heard by Supreme Court” (The Guardian, January, 2026), available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/jan/09/the-gambia-female-genital-mutilation-fgm-supreme-court-case-overturn-ban>; see also, Mariama Jobarteh, “Law Culture and Social Change: The FGM Debate and Gender Justice in The Gambia”, (Atlantic Fellows, International Inequality Institute, 2026), available at: <https://afsee.atlanticfellows.lse.ac.uk/en-gb/blogs/law-culture-and-social-change-the-fgm-debate-and-gender-justice-in-the-gambia>

¹⁰⁵ Kaddy Jawo, “‘Cut in secret’: Gambia anti-FGM activists fear babies targeted despite ban” (Al Jazeera,

¹⁰⁶ Amnesty International <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/gambia-continued-ban-on-fgm-is-good-news-but-authorities-must-urgently-address-its-root-causes/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CHowever%2C%20since%20being%20outlawed%20in,to%20empower%20women%20and%20girls.%E2%80%9D>

¹⁰⁷ ACHPR, “Joint Press Statement on the Signing of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls by Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Liberia and The Gambia”, (July, 2025), available at: <https://achpr.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2025-07-18/signing-african-union-convention-ending-violence-against-women-girls>

In 2025, the new National Gender Policy 2025-2034 became operationalised.¹⁰⁸ The new policy establishes a clear framework for identifying, implementing, and coordinating interventions that advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in The Gambia. It serves as a guiding tool for all stakeholders in planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring to ensure gender is effectively mainstreamed across all sectors and levels of national development. In October 2025, the MoGCSW and its development partners launched the “Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions”, which is being pioneered by the Ministry of Public Service (MOPS) and the National Audit Office (NAO). The goal of the “Gender Equality Seal for Public Institutions” is to ensure the full integration of gender equality into the country’s public service delivery.

In June 2025, the MoGCSW launched the SWEDD+ Regional Initiative to empower adolescents and young women between 15 and 24 years to have improved access to quality reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health services and address sexual and gender-based violence. The initiative also seeks to provide young women with access to a small grant scheme for entrepreneurship development and vocational training, among other things.¹⁰⁹

Notwithstanding these gains in the empowerment of women and girls and their protection against FGM/C, women’s representation in political decision-making bodies remains limited. Only a small percentage of women are in the main

¹⁰⁸ Marima Marong, “Ministry Lanches National Gender Policy 2025-2024), (Foroyaa Newspaper, 2025), available at: <https://foroyaa.net/ministry-launches-national-gender-policy-2025-2034/>

¹⁰⁹ Fatou Krubally, “Gambia to launch SWEED+ Project to Empower Girls and Young Women” (the Voice Newspaper, 2025), available at: <https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/06/11/gambia-to-launch-swedd-project-to-empower-girls-and-young-women/>

political decision-making bodies, women hold 10.5% of Ministerial positions, and 10.4% of the NA seats. This low representation of women is not only due to the limited knowledge of their rights, but also mainly due to the national gender context, which is still characterised by sexist stereotypes and social norms which make it difficult to apply the legal framework and measures taken to promote gender equality¹¹⁰. Although the Women's (Amendment) Act 2021 makes it mandatory for every public institution, authority or state-owned enterprise to reserve 30 per cent of appointments to political and public offices for women, this has not been adequately popularised by the Government or effectively implemented.

According to the Brief on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,¹¹¹ in The Gambia, 6 out of 10 women, or 57.3% of women, participate in the labour force and contribute to the country's economy. Also, only 16.29% women compared to 32.45% men are in paid work.¹¹²

Recommendations:

1. The MoGCSW to maximise efforts to prevent, address and eventually eradicate the practices of child marriage and female genital mutilation, ensure the effective implementation of the Women's (Amendment) Act 2015 and strengthen awareness raising among religious and traditional leaders on the dangers of FGM.
2. The MoGCSW to work with relevant stakeholders to implement laws and policies protecting women and children.

¹¹⁰ [250218-GenderBrief-Gambia_En.pdf](#)

¹¹¹ Published by The African Development Bank Group in February 2025

¹¹² [250218-GenderBrief-Gambia_En.pdf](#)

3. The MoGCSW to strengthen collaboration with women's organisations and CSO's that work on promoting gender equality and empowerment.
4. The GPF to strictly implement the Women's (Amendment) Act 2021 and other laws prohibiting harmful traditional practices.
5. The MoGCSW to popularise the Women's (Amendment) Act 2021 and ensure its effective enforcement.

15. Rights of Older Persons

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa, which came into force in 2024, has enhanced protection for older persons in Africa by prohibiting age-based discrimination, ensuring access to healthcare and social protection, and protecting dignity. Issues affecting older persons are often cross-cutting in nature and intersect with several other thematic areas addressed in this Report, notably health, access to justice, climate change, social protection, and economic security. In addition to the specifics provided under this heading, older persons suffer vulnerabilities that transcend other thematic areas, even though it is difficult to quantify the numbers affected due to a lack of data. The population of older persons in The Gambia is estimated to be around 4%.¹¹³ Given the low sources of income for older persons and limited access to social protection, The Gambia should

¹¹³ Gambia Population 2025 - United Nations Population Fund available at <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/GM> accessed 20 February 2026.

prioritise the rights of older persons to ensure economic independence and reduce the impact of poverty on this vulnerable group.

In April 2025, The Gambia, as a member of the Human Rights Council, co-led the successful adoption of a resolution establishing an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group (OEIGWG) tasked to draft an international legal instrument focused on the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons.¹¹⁴ In June 2024, The Gambia ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa. However, until the end of 2025, The Gambia had not deposited the instrument of ratification of this Protocol to the African Union Commission,¹¹⁵ nor has it domesticated the Protocol.

Currently, there is no specific domestic law addressing the needs of older persons in The Gambia. The rights and welfare of older persons in The Gambia are primarily addressed through the National Social Protection Policy (2015–2025), which recognises older persons as a priority vulnerable group disproportionately affected by poverty, social exclusion, and limited access to basic services, particularly in rural areas. The Policy provides a framework for income security and social assistance for older persons through non-contributory cash transfers, healthcare fee

¹¹⁴ 'Gambia Co-Leads Adoption of Landmark UN Resolution on the Rights of Older Persons' (*Kerr Fatou Online Media House*, 7 April 2025) <<https://www.kerrfatou.com/gambia-co-leads-adoption-of-landmark-un-resolution-on-the-rights-of-older-persons/>> accessed 26 January 2026.

¹¹⁵ 'Working Group on the Rights of Older Persons and People with Disabilities in Africa - 85OS' (*African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights*, 23 January 2026) <<https://achpr.au.int/en/intersession-activity-reports/wgrights-older-persons>> accessed 26 January 2026.

waivers, nutrition support and access to social welfare services, especially for poor and labour-limited older person-headed households. While these commitments signal recognition of the specific vulnerabilities of older persons, the Policy acknowledges persistent gaps in coverage, financing, institutional capacity and age-disaggregated data, which continue to limit the effective realisation of the rights of older persons in practice.¹¹⁶ During the reporting period, only the income support initiative has been implemented, although this remains inadequate.

Through the Family Strengthening Programme, implemented by the MoGCSW in collaboration with the NSPA, 1,447 older persons aged 70 years or above have received direct monthly cash transfers in the reporting period. However, the number of eligible older persons in the country exceeds the current coverage of the Family Strengthening Programme.¹¹⁷ The total number of eligible older persons in the Programme is 54,341.¹¹⁸

Older persons in The Gambia continue to face high poverty and food insecurity amid shrinking safety nets. Access to basic health care remains constrained, especially in rural areas where service availability and infrastructure are weakest. These constraints disproportionately affect older persons, whose heightened health vulnerabilities make timely and accessible medical care essential. Age-unfriendly urban environments including roads without sidewalks, ramps or safe crossings, undermines safe mobility and independent living. These factors reflect policy and planning gaps where the needs of older persons, such as

¹¹⁶ National Social Protection Agency, 'The Gambia National Social Protection-Policy 2015-2025'.

¹¹⁷ Updates from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare

¹¹⁸ Updates from the Social Registry, NSPA

accessibility, primary health care, and community support, receive insufficient attention in governance.¹¹⁹

Recommendations to the MoGCSW:

1. To develop policies and programmes that guarantee the social, economic, and health rights of older persons and ensure the integration and mainstreaming of their rights in laws, policies, plans and programmes.
2. To strengthen legal and institutional frameworks to prevent and protect older persons from abuse, neglect, violence and discrimination, with particular attention to older women and older persons with disabilities, given the intersectional discrimination they face.
3. To promote active ageing and create spaces for older persons to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes at local and national levels.
4. In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad (MOFA), to deposit the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa.
5. To popularise and domesticate the AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and integrate its obligations into national law, policy and sectoral standards.

¹¹⁹ Kim Thelwell, 'Elderly Poverty in The Gambia' (*The Borgen Project*, 29 June 2025) <<https://borgenproject.org/elderly-poverty-in-the-gambia/>> accessed 23 January 2026.

6. To effectively implement the National Social Protection Policy for the realisation of the rights of older persons in The Gambia.
7. To develop and adopt a dedicated National Policy on Older Persons and ensure its effective implementation.

Additional recommendations:

8. The MoH to strengthen age-friendly healthcare services, including training of health personnel in geriatric care.
9. The Gambia Bureau of Statistics' data and National statistical and policy reports, to include age-disaggregated data, to better understand and analyse the situation of older persons.

16. Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Gambia has made notable strides in strengthening the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, supported by sustained collaboration among Government institutions, NHRC, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), the National Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities (NAC), and development partners. During the reporting period, policy dialogues, capacity building initiatives, and efforts to mainstream disability inclusion across national governance systems, including public finance, disaster management, and sectoral policies, were expanded. The National Disaster and Risk Management Policy 2024-2032 has mainstreamed disability inclusion across all components of disaster governance, including in disaster risk reduction and

humanitarian responses. Through the Family Strengthening Programme, monthly cash transfers were provided to 1,577 persons with multiple disabilities in 2025. In addition, the MoGCSW disbursed Four Million Gambian Dalasis (approx. US\$ Fifty-four Thousand) from the Disability Fund to OPDs to support community projects, livelihood initiatives and advocacy activities. Assistive and prosthetic devices, including wheelchairs, crutches, artificial limbs, and laptops with screen-reading software, were also procured from the Fund by the MoGCSW for OPDs to support mobility, accessibility and social inclusion of persons with disabilities. The MoGCSW, through continued joint initiatives with the Gambia Federation of the Disabled (GFD) and the NAC, supported capacity building workshops for members of OPD on disability rights, service access, gender-based violence, and reporting and referral mechanisms. Community sensitisation programmes aimed at promoting inclusion, stigma reduction, and empowerment of persons with disabilities were also coordinated by the MoGCSW.

¹²⁰

During the reporting year, the National Rehabilitation Centre in Banjul was rehabilitated and plans for the decentralisation of rehabilitation services beyond the Greater Banjul Area are expected to begin with the establishment of a Rehabilitation Unit at the Bansang Hospital by January 2026. ¹²¹

In October 2025, a Roundtable on CRPD-Compliant Budgeting was convened to raise awareness on disability responsive public

¹²⁰ Updates from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare

¹²¹ The Voice, 'Stakeholders Review Progress on Disability Act Implementation -' (18 November 2025) <<https://www.voicegambia.com/2025/11/18/stakeholders-review-progress-on-disability-act-implementation/>> accessed 23 January 2026.

finance and to promote the adoption of CRPD-compliant Budgeting Guidelines developed by the NHRC.

Despite these encouraging and positive developments, significant implementation gaps, institutional weaknesses, and structural barriers continue to undermine the full realisation of disability rights in The Gambia. Implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021 remained slow, with key regulatory and enforcement measures still outstanding. Although the NAC benefited from strengthened capacity-building initiatives, it operated without a fully functional Secretariat until November 2025, experienced persistent funding constraints, and lacked adequate technical staff to support its monitoring of the implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021. These limitations significantly affected its effectiveness as the statutory body mandated to oversee the implementation of disability rights.

Accessibility barriers also remain widespread. Many public buildings, schools, workplaces and transport systems continue to lack ramps, signage, accessible sanitation facilities, reasonable accommodation and universal design features. The availability of sign language interpreters remains severely limited, with fewer than ten interpreters nationwide and none formally deployed in hospitals, courts or schools. Lack of representation and inadequate participation of persons with disabilities in national decision-making remain a concern, including the absence of PWD representatives in the NA. Persons with disabilities, particularly women, children and older persons with disabilities, continue to face stigma and discrimination, and remain at heightened risk of social exclusion, violence and limited access to essential services.¹²²

¹²² 'Persons With Disabilities Voice Frustration Over Delayed Implementation Of Disability Bill – The Fatu Network' (1 July 2025) <<https://fatunetwork.net/persons-with-disabilities->

A perennial systemic challenge is the absence of comprehensive, disaggregated disability data. The last National Disability Survey was conducted in 1998, significantly constraining evidence-based planning. Although GFD has reported that a National Disability Survey is planned for 2026 with support from the World Bank, the current data gap continues to affect policy design and resource allocation.¹²³

Employment opportunities for persons with disabilities also remain limited due to structural discrimination, inaccessible workplaces, and inadequate skills development programmes. The Gambia Labour Force Survey 2025 Report indicates that labour participation among persons with disabilities dropped from 32.8 per cent to 20.1 per cent, and youth with disabilities experienced much lower employment rates, with only 0.3 per cent in employment compared to 99.7 per cent among youth without disabilities.¹²⁴ Current interventions and initiatives under the Department of Labour’s Job Centres remain insufficient to address the scale of unemployment and underemployment affecting persons with disabilities in The Gambia.

Recommendations:

1. The MoGCSW to accelerate the implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021, including the development of regulations and institutional guidelines as stipulated in the Act.

voice-frustration-over-delayed-implementation-of-disability-bill/> accessed 23 January 2026.

¹²³ The Voice (n 36).

¹²⁴file:///C:/Users/NHRC%20LO%20lda%20Jatta/Downloads/The%202025%20Gambia%20Labour%20Force%20Survey%20Findings%20Report.pdf

2. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA) to integrate disability inclusive budgeting across all Ministries, Departments and Agencies, including budget tagging and structured consultation with OPDs.
3. The MoGCSW to ensure that all public institutions and buildings, services and information are accessible to persons with disabilities, in compliance with the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021.
4. The MoBSE to accelerate inclusive education reforms, including sign language integration, teacher training and the provision of assistive learning technologies.
5. The MOH to strengthen disability inclusive health services, including access to assistive devices, rehabilitation services and disability sensitive sexual and reproductive health care.
6. The MoTIE, in collaboration with the private sector, to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities through inclusive hiring policies, vocational training, workplace accessibility and financial support for disability inclusive enterprises.

17. Climate Change and Human Rights

In July 2025, the NHRC conducted its first Study on Climate Change and Human Rights in The Gambia. The Study highlights the connection between climate change, climate adaptation, climate mitigation and human rights in The Gambia. It used the Climate Change and Human Rights Analytical Framework (Analytical Framework) developed by the Danish Institute for Human Rights to conduct the Study.

The Study found that while some policy efforts, such as the development of the Recovery-Focused National Development Plan 2023-2027, National Climate Change Policy 2016, Long Term Climate Strategy, and the National Land Policy 2026-2035 have been made, significant impacts of climate change on human rights continue to be experienced. The study identified gaps in disaster risk reduction frameworks, non-justiciable constitutional protection of some economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights, poor participation and inclusion of rights holders in planning, mitigation, adaptation and other related intervention measures, all of which continue to significantly affect human rights in The Gambia.

The Study further found that climate change-related measures have adversely affected the enjoyment of human rights, particularly the right to health, food, social security, housing, and participation, among others. While acknowledging the limitations of the Study, the findings reveal an urgent need for action to address some of these human rights challenges.

Key highlights of the study include:

- ✓ Impediments to the right to effective remedies because of the non-justiciability of socio-economic rights.

- ✓ Lack of climate-specific laws protecting human rights in the context of climate change.
- ✓ Serious exposure to climate-related harm to health and life.
- ✓ Climate-related deaths.

The reports of climate-related deaths from the field data and relevant literature are corroborated by a case received at NHRC. On 2 June 2025, the NHRC office in URR/CRR, acting upon information of the mysterious death of a child in Giroba Kunda, URR, embarked on a fact-finding mission to establish the circumstances that led to the death of the three-year-old. Investigations revealed that the child drowned in a trench allegedly dug by the NRA to manage the flow and drainage of rainwater from the village. The father of the deceased has instituted a suit against the NRA at the High Court.¹²⁵

Recommendations:

1. The NA to pass the Climate Change Bill 2025 to chart a path towards sustainable human rights-based climate action.
2. The NRA, National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) and the Office of the Governor of URR to urgently (before the next rainy season) remedy the drainage situation in Giroba Kunda, URR by covering the trench and rectifying the drainage system to avoid further loss of life.

¹²⁵ <https://www.kerrfatou.com/high-court-to-hear-d40-million-negligence-suit-against-national-road-authority-over-toddlers-drowning/>

3. The Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources to integrate the recommendations from the NHRC study to ensure human rights are mainstreamed in climate change response.

18. Progress and Challenges of the Implementation of the Government White Paper on the Report of the TRRC

The Government White Paper on the Report of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), published in May 2022, marked a decisive policy commitment to addressing past human rights violations. Out of 265 TRRC recommendations, the Government accepted 263 recommendations to pursue accountability, reparations, institutional reform, and national reconciliation. This was further operationalised through the adoption of the White Paper Implementation Plan (2023–2027), comprising 304 activities across 22 thematic areas and involving 59 Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) as implementing entities. In line with its mandate given under the White Paper, the NHRC continues to monitor progress and report annually to the NA.

During the reporting period, progress in implementation remained uneven. Approximately 20 per cent of the planned activities, representing 60 planned activities, were fully implemented; 47 per cent, representing 143 activities, are ongoing, and 33 per cent, representing 101 activities, are yet to be implemented. While this reflects some progress from commitment to action, it also highlights persistent delays, particularly in accountability, guarantees of non-repetition, and reconciliation-related measures.

Legal reforms continued within the criminal justice sector with the enactment of the Criminal Offences Act 2025 and Criminal Procedure Act 2025, further strengthening the legal basis for accountability and due process. Progress was also recorded in the establishment of transitional justice institutions. The Reparations Commission was operationalised through the swearing-in of its Commissioners and the commencement of institutional set-up processes.¹²⁶ In addition, a Special Criminal Division of the High Court was established to handle TRRC-related cases, and preparatory steps continued towards the creation of a hybrid Special Tribunal for The Gambia, endorsed by ECOWAS, and the establishment of the Special Prosecutor's Office.¹²⁷ Although most of these mechanisms are not yet fully functional, their establishment constitutes an essential foundation for future prosecutions and reparative justice.

On capacity building and guarantees of non-repetition, important initiatives were undertaken, particularly within the security sector. The NHRC, in collaboration with the Office of National Security (ONS), continued to roll out training on International Human Rights Law, International Humanitarian Law, and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.¹²⁸ Law enforcement agencies received training on crowd control, prevention of torture, and policing of public assemblies.¹²⁹ These efforts contribute to institutional reform, though their long-term impact depends on sustained resourcing and integrating the training modules into the training curricula of the security institutions.

¹²⁶ https://gambiana.com/gambia-govt-allocates-d30m-to-victims-reparation-commission/?fbclid=IwY2xjawQVSiFleHRuA2FibQlxMABicmkETE5NzdQcHVob0ZJbjF2ZOYyc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODlwMDg5MgABHI594SfSv2QmvmnF_P492O--Y58Vtf03RkDKfr3moYYknL8Azyukb653CGuh3_aem_-Otd62_Ql-rAtjNi_LGX6Q

¹²⁷ <https://www.ejiltalk.org/the-special-tribunal-for-the-gambia-a-regional-experiment-in-transitional-justice-and-its-challenges/>

¹²⁸ <https://gamna.gov.gm/law-enforcement-officers-trained-human-rights-international-humanitarian-law>

¹²⁹ As above

Progress in reparations and victim support was anchored on the establishment of the Reparations Commission.¹³⁰ The Commission has engaged in victim registration and sensitisation exercises, and medical, psychosocial, and financial assistance have been provided to some victims. However, the delivery of reparations remains slow, contributing to frustration and diminished trust among victims and survivors.¹³¹

Despite these achievements, the slow and inconsistent implementation of the Government White Paper on the Report of the TRRC has serious human rights implications. The most critical concern remains the delay in justice and accountability for gross human rights violations committed during the former regime. Although the Special Prosecutor's Office has a legal basis, it was not fully operational during the reporting period. Prosecution of high-profile perpetrators, including former President Yahya Jammeh and his Junglers (hit squad), has not commenced. Extradition processes and forensic investigations into enforced disappearances also remain stalled.

In November 2025, in a significant step towards justice and accountability, Sanna Manjang, an alleged notorious Jungler, implicated in numerous extrajudicial killings, was arrested in Senegal, extradited to The Gambia, and is currently standing trial for murder.¹³²

¹³⁰ <https://www.askanwi.com/news/presser-victim-registration-and-upcoming-reparations-payments#:~:text=BANJUL%2C%20THE%20GAMBIA%2C%205%20December,of%20violation%2C%20starting%20from%201994.> ; <https://moj.gov.gm/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Government-Allocates-D30-Million-to-Victims-Reparation-Commission-to-Advance-Justice-for-Victims-1-1.docx>

¹³¹ As above

¹³² <https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/153146-sanna-manjang-handed-over-by-senegal-to-gambia.html>; <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/first-jungler-trial-in-gambia-hitman-sanna-manjang-pleads-not-guilty-to-murder>

The delays highlighted directly undermine victims' rights to justice and an effective remedy, as guaranteed under international human rights law. Prolonged impunity risks retraumatising victims, weakening public confidence in the transitional justice process, and entrenching a perception that powerful perpetrators remain above the law.

The weak enforcement of the Ban from Public Office Act 2023 further exacerbates these concerns. Individuals recommended by the TRRC to be barred from public office continue to serve in, or return to, positions of authority. The absence of clear operational guidelines and effective inter-agency coordination has rendered this Act largely ineffective. This failure undermines guarantees of non-repetition and allows institutional cultures linked to past abuses to persist.

Resource and capacity constraints also posed additional risks to the realisation of human rights. Inadequate budgetary allocations limited technical expertise, and the absence of dedicated budget lines for Government MDA's identified as implementing entities in the Implementation Plan have slowed implementation across nearly all thematic areas. Without sufficient resources for the Implementation Plan, victims' rights to reparations and institutional reform remain largely aspirational.

Furthermore, coordination, monitoring, and communication deficits have weakened transparency and accountability, while irregular public communication has fuelled misinformation and frustration among victims and civil society. Many implementing entities still had limited awareness of their obligations under the Implementation Plan, which further delayed implementation of their respective activities.

Recommendations:

1. The MOJ to urgently operationalise the Special Prosecutor's Office, prioritise TRRC-related prosecutions, and advance extradition and forensic investigation processes, including those relating to enforced disappearances.
1. The Ministry of Public Service, with the support of the MOJ, to enforce the Ban from Public Office Act 2023 through the development and publication of clear implementation guidelines, strengthen inter-agency coordination, and ensure the immediate removal of individuals barred under the Act from public service.
2. The MOJ and the MoFEA to fast-track reparations delivery by adequately resourcing the Reparations Commission to ensure timely and meaningful reparations for victims.
3. The MOJ to enhance the technical capacity of the MDAs for effective implementation of their assigned activities in the Implementation Plan.
4. The MoFEA to ensure each Implementing Entity in the Implementation Plan has a dedicated budget line for the implementation of its TRRC-related activities.
5. The Government to intensify its domestic and international resource mobilisation drives for the implementation of the Implementation Plan.
6. The MOJ, through the Post-TRRC Unit, to improve public information-sharing with victims and their organisations,

institutionalise regular interface with victims, and strengthen collaboration with civil society to rebuild trust in the transitional justice process.

19. The Gambia's Obligation to Report to International and Regional Human Rights Mechanisms

The Gambia is a party to numerous international and regional human rights mechanisms through the ratification and accession of various human rights treaties. As a State Party, The Gambia is obligated to submit both initial and periodic reports to these bodies and mechanisms. These reports provide information on the implementation of the treaties and assess The Gambia's compliance with its human rights commitments. In January 2025, The Gambia was reviewed by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group during its 48th Session. The review was based on the State's Human Rights Report and additional information submitted to the Working Group by institutions such as the NHRC, NGOs and the UN. In its outcome document, The Gambia was issued 309 recommendations, out of which the State accepted 273 and noted 36 recommendations.¹³³

The Gambia was also reviewed in January 2025 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child after the State submitted its Combined Fourth to Seventh Periodic Reports on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. After this review, the Committee issued its Concluding Observations on the State's

¹³³ Universal Periodic Review-Gambia infographic available <<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session48/gmb/infographic-gambia-the.pdf>> (accessed 18 January 2026).

Reports.¹³⁴ The main areas of concern indicated in the Concluding Observations relate to nationality, access to justice, prohibition of corporal punishment, children with disabilities, prohibition of female genital mutilation, child marriage and other forms of harmful traditional practices and sexual and gender-based violence.¹³⁵ In March 2025, the State's Initial Report on the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance was also reviewed, and with Concluding Observations, subsequently issued to the State.

At the regional level, The Gambia has submitted its combined Initial to Fifth State Party Report to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). This consolidated report outlines the measures undertaken by the Government of The Gambia to implement the provisions of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), highlighting progress made, challenges encountered, and strategies adopted to safeguard and promote the rights of children within the country. The submission marks a significant step in fulfilling The Gambia's reporting obligations under the Charter and demonstrates its commitment to accountability and transparency in advancing the rights of children in the country. The report will be formally reviewed by the ACERWC during its upcoming session scheduled for November 2026, where a state delegation will engage in a constructive dialogue with the Committee on the level of implementation. Following the dialogue, recommendations will be issued to the state to further strengthen the protection and welfare of children at the national level.

¹³⁴ Concluding Observations on the Combined Fourth to Seventh Periodic Reports of The Gambia available tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=5&CountryID=64&DocTypeID=5 > (accessed 15 January 2025).

¹³⁵As above.

Despite the several achievements registered during the reporting period, The Gambia is not up to date with its reporting obligations to treaty bodies, particularly with respect to certain treaties and conventions. While some progress has been made in submitting reports to the United Nations and the African Human Rights System, significant gaps remain.

One of the key challenges is the absence of a dedicated body or institutional framework to oversee and coordinate the reporting process, monitor the implementation of the recommendations from these mechanisms and follow up on the State's reporting obligations. In the 2025 CRC Concluding Observations, it was recommended to The Gambia to establish a NMIRF. Such a mechanism would serve as a permanent institutional body solely responsible for supporting the State in meeting its international and regional human rights obligations. As part of its advisory role, the NHRC in October 2025 developed, validated and published an Advisory Note on the establishment of an NMIRF, calling on the State to adopt an Inter-Ministerial NMIRF to manage the State's reporting and follow-up activities.¹³⁶

Institutional capacity at the ministerial level is also another challenge affecting the submission of reports to treaty bodies. Institutionally, the responsibility for preparing reports lies mainly with the Attorney General's Chambers and the MOJ. However, this Ministry is often faced with limited staffing, inadequate expertise, and difficulty receiving information on time from MDAs. Institutional challenges make it difficult to collect reliable data, monitor implementation of treaty commitments, and produce comprehensive reports. Financial constraints further compound the problem, as limited resources restrict nationwide

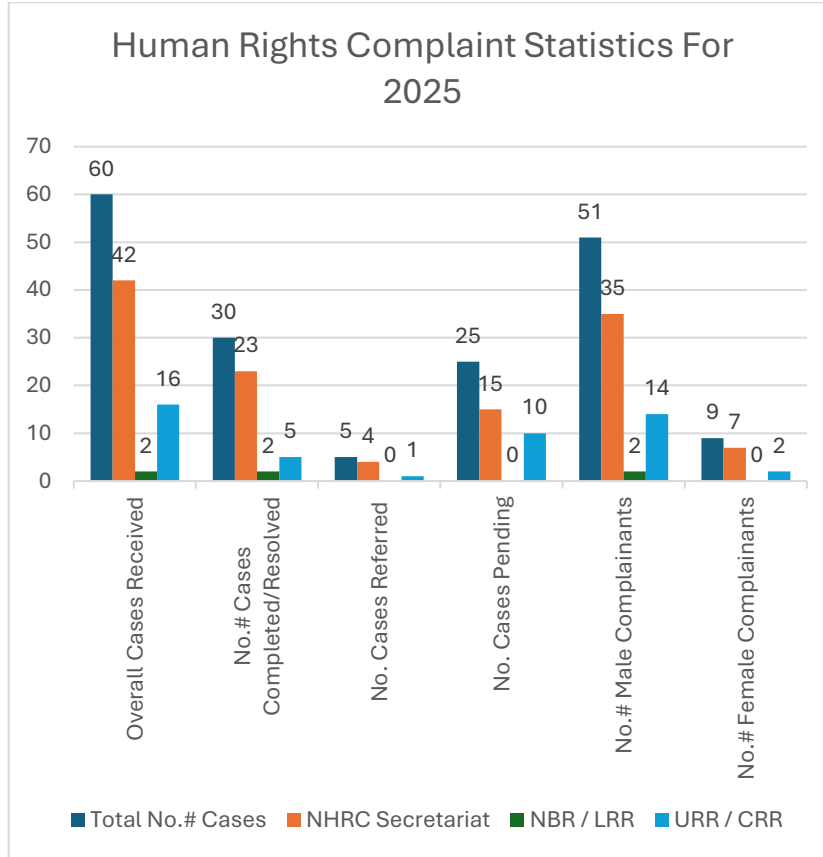
¹³⁶ NHRC 'Advisory Note on the Establishment of an NMRIF'

consultations, training officials, and the ability to sustain reporting mechanisms without donor support.

Recommendations:

1. The MOJ to lead efforts to establish an NMRIF in The Gambia.
2. The MOJ and MOFA to designate focal persons for the coordination and submission of reports pending the establishment of an NMIRF.
3. The NHRC to continue its engagement with stakeholders on the popularisation of the Concluding Observations and other Recommendations from AU and UN human rights mechanisms.
4. The MOJ to spearhead efforts for the ratification and domestication of relevant international human rights treaties, such as the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, to ensure compliance with international human rights standards.
5. The MOJ to develop and implement a road map or strategy for the implementation of the UPR Recommendations and Concluding Observations from the treaty bodies.
6. MoFEA to allocate adequate funds to the MOJ and the MoGCSW for national popularisation of the UPR Recommendations and the Concluding Observations.

20. Human Rights Cases/Complaints Registered



Breakdown of Alleged Violations Received in 2025	
Rights Violated	Number
Protection from deprivation of property	8
Labor rights	8
Right to legal redress	9
Rights of children	3
Protection of the right to personal liberty	8
Protection from inhuman treatment or torture	11
Domestic violence	1
Right to education	1
Right to health	3
Protection from discrimination	1
Trafficking in Person	1
Right to Privacy	2
Right to Marry	1
Access to Justice	1
Right to Fair and Speedy Trial	1

During the period under review, the NHRC received 60 complaints. Out of the total number, thirty (30) cases were completed/resolved, twenty-five (25) cases remain under investigation, and five (05) cases were referred to other institutions for further investigation/management. Of these complaints, forty-two (42) were reported at the NHRC Secretariat, two (02) at the Regional Office in NBR/LRR and sixteen (16) at the Regional Office in URR/CRR. Fifty-one (51) of the complainants were male, and nine (09) complainants were female.

21. Challenges and Recommendations

Following similar trends in previous reporting periods, the NHRC continues to grapple with accessing information and data on key human rights issues in The Gambia. Non-responsiveness of Government institutions with regards to cases being followed up by the NHRC. General stakeholder responses to NHRC's requests for information remain low. There also remain funding/financing gaps in NHRC programmes and activities. Several human rights programmes and interventions from the NHRC's strategic and annual work plan for 2025 were not implemented due to lack of funding.

Further, there remains significant gaps in the legal framework in terms of the enjoyment of socio-economic rights, thus leaving rights holders with no justiciable claim to several rights in The Gambia. The NHRC has also been faced with challenges in ensuring the implementation of recommendations from the NHRC complaints handling, advisory notes, State of Human Rights Reports, as well as other research and thematic reports.

Recommendations:

1. MDA's, CSOs and other stakeholders should, as a matter of urgency, designate focal persons within their institutions to ensure timely and coordinated responses to NHRC requests for information and contribute towards the development of the annual state of human rights report and other activities of the NHRC.
2. The MoFEA and the NA should increase allocations and the budget ceilings for the NHRC to enhance its work.

3. Development partners should continue the financial and technical support rendered to NHRC.
4. NA, MOJ, political parties, CSOs, and development partners should renew their efforts for constitutional reforms to develop a constitution that will accommodate a wider spectrum of justiciable socio-economic, environmental and development rights.
5. Stakeholders should implement NHRC's recommendations.
6. The NA should institutionalise periodic public hearings on the State of Human Rights Report to enhance oversight and compel accountability for implementation of NHRC recommendations.



National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

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