



**The National Human Rights Commission, The Gambia**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**RHP58/154/01(LF-01)**

**Date: 14 January 2021.**

**CELEBRATION OF ECOWAS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY ON THE THEME: PROMOTING RIGHT TO HEALTH EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY TO ENJOY INDIGENOUS CULTURAL HEALTH PRACTICES.**

The National Human Rights Commission, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, joins the member States of ECOWAS to commemorate ECOWAS Human Rights Day on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2021 under the theme 'Promoting the right to health education and opportunity to enjoy indigenous cultural health practices.'

Right to health, in particular the enjoyment of the best attainable standard of health, is a fundamental human right recognized in international human rights instruments including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights all of which have been ratified by The Gambia. As is at the core of the principle of indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, the fulfilment of the right to health enhances the enjoyment of all the other rights.

This year's theme, thus, obligates the State, as the primary duty bearer, to intensify its right to health education promotion programmes and efforts and provide opportunities for the people to enjoy and benefit from their indigenous cultural health practices. This requires the development and effective implementation of a robust public health education policy and regulatory frameworks which ensure the enjoyment of indigenous cultural health practices that enhance and complement measures and efforts to guarantee the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.

The NHRC recognises the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose to our health sector and the health care delivery system and appreciates the efforts of the Government in slowing down its devastating impact on the people. However, the Government is being urged to redouble its efforts in ensuring that the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society, especially the elderly, children, persons with disabilities, and prisoners, are cushioned against the effects of the pandemic.

Health financing, an adequate, comprehensive, and systematic approach, is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of the right to health. The NHRC welcomes the proclamation of the Executive to introduce a national health insurance scheme that will avail the population access to quality health services with state support. In line with its obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the people's right to health. The Commission implores the Government to

- ensure adequate budgetary allocation to the Ministry of health, in line with the Abuja Declaration which calls on States to allocate 15 percent of their national budget to the health sector.
- Accelerate efforts to combat maternal mortality and morbidity in the country.
- Dedicate funding to the research and development of traditional medicine as an alternative in line with the World Health Organization (WHO) African Region resolution in 2000 which called for "Promoting the role of traditional medicine in health care systems";
- Intensify its collaboration with the stakeholders in the traditional medicine sector to ensure the highest standards of safety and quality in their treatment of diseases.
- Increase support to the Directorate of Health Promotion and Education of the Ministry of Health in its public health education efforts; and
- In line with our international obligations, accelerate the adoption of the 2020 Draft Constitution which already has a provision on the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

While we wish everyone a great commemoration, we hope that the State and all stakeholders will seize this opportunity to reflect, take stock and recommit to the obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil peoples' rights to health in the country while creating greater awareness on the value of traditional medicine in the management of and support for the deepening of respect for the right to health.

Signed: Jainaba Johm  
Vice Chairperson  
National Human Rights Commission