

FUTURE IN OUR HANDS THE GAMBIA NEWSLETTER

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Education For All Through Community Development



FIOHTG WELCOMES 2020 WITH BUDGET TRACKING SESSION



Committee. A similar activity was conducted in Sare Musa in the Jarra West District, in Lower River Region.

The activity is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) which is a key partner and donor to FIOHTG. The activities were coordinated by Mr. Ebrima Drammeh, Programme Officer of the Community Development Unit of FIOHTG. Speaking at the training, Mr. Nyang said “we are decoding the budget language and process for the rural communities in The Gambia in order to participate in the budget process and Follow The Money for an uninterrupted development. Thank you Future In Our Hands The Gambia for the invitation”.

FIOHTG has organized a training on the preparation, monitoring and tracking of the National Budget in Charge. The training was facilitated by Mr. Maar Nyang of the NGO Gambia Participates attracting over 40 participants drawn from VDCs, Ward committee from 10 villages within the Chargel cluster. The Area Councilor of the Ward was represented by the Secretary General to the Ward Development

The trainings are series of activities that FIOHTG will be conducting in the Gambia to intensify its awareness campaign to promote accountability and transparency. FIOHTG believes that one of the best ways to hold government accountable is to provide the skills to communities. If they know how to hold governments accountable, they can do it better than any organisation.

FIOHTG ORGANISES INTERFACE DIALOGUES IN BADDIBU AND BASSE



FIOHTG has organized two Interface Dialogues, one in Baddibu Noo Kunda in the Illiassa Constituency and another in Basse Constituency. The Dialogues are FIOHTG’s Innovative Accountability Scheme which brings duty bearers such as National Assembly Members, Area Council Chairpers, Ward Councilors in front of their Constituencies, regions, wards, to explain their work to their people and to answer questions about issues affecting their people. It is a scheme that allows direct interaction between duty bearers and right holders.

During the Dialogue in Baddibu, Honourable Dembo Camara, National Assembly Member of the region, Ward Councilors across the political divide, women, men, youths and civil servants from various institutions including Njawara Agricultural Training Centre (NATC) Yiriba Hands Foundation, Educationists amongst others attended, answering and asking questions. A similar activity conducted in the Basse Constituency was hosted by Hon. Muhammed Magassy. Both activities were coordinated by Yankuba Manneh the Fundraising Officer of FIOHTG and Bubacarr ML Camara, head of the Community Development Unit of FIOHTG. The Dialogues are funded by the National Endowment for Democracy.





OMAR T. CHAM RETIRES; FIOHTG SHOWS GRATITUDE



One of the longest serving staff of FIOHTG, Omar T. Cham has retired having reached the retirement age. Mr. Cham joined FIOH while the organisation was under Swedish managers and continued to serve FIOHTG when it was transformed to a local NGO. Mr. Cham, a trained teacher and agriculturists served as an environmentalist and climate change adaptation expert in the Community Development Unit. Mr. Cham is well known for the development of school and community gardens. He is reputed for having turned Tabajang school in a green zone, having planted and nurtured over

a 100 trees including cashew nuts in the village. He also led the project on greening Changai School where he planted dozens of trees in the school yard and initiated a school gardening project. Both schools are now a pleasant view to environmentalists as he turned semi-desert areas into green zones.

Speaking at the occasion, his head of unit, Mr. Camara said that Cham was a community development facilitator par excellence who gave his energy, knowledge and personal resources to communities he served. He narrated several instances when he was told by community members that Cham had supported them with horses or donkeys and other farming implements. He said Mr. Cham had a cordial working relationships with everyone. Mr. Drammeh and Madam Marong and Mendy all praised Omar for having been a friendly coworker. Mr. Amadou Sambou from the School Development Unit said Mr. Cham has set a good record for retiring on time. He said this is a rare act in the Gambia. He prayed for his wellbeing and a happy retirement life. Madam Sarr, head of Human Resources, said Mr. Cham had notified the unit of his retirement even before the unit approached him. He said this is in line with FIOHTG policies and thanked Mr. Cham for compliance.



Madam Sarr also revealed that Mr. Omar T. Cham would be the first beneficiary of FIOHTG's new retirement package as contained in the new Employee Manual. Mr. Faburay, the Director of FIOHTG recalled Omar's 13 years of excellent service to FIOHTG. He said Omar is very dedicated to work and was always willing to go to the field to serve communities. He wished him well in his retirement life. Board Member, Mr. Dan Mendy who had also worked at FIOHTG echoed similar remarks. Omar T. Cham, who was accompanied by his family members thanked FIOHTG for the opportunity and recalled his days to the organisation. Mr. Cham received gifts from FIOHTG, his unit and other staff of the organisation in addition to his retirement package. The gathering was entertained by the famous SLA Choir with their scintillating voices.



KEEP OUR GIRLS IN SCHOOL PILOT PROJECT A HUGE SUCCESS SHOWS EVALUATION REPORT

The Keep Our Girls In School Pilot project has come to an end with the final evaluation report published by the M&E Office. Here is an Excerpt from the Executive Summary of the report.

Research has shown that girls often have their education interrupted during menstruation due to cultural, religious and the school environmental factors (UNICEF, 2010). Future In Our Hands The Gambia (FIOHTG) through the Gambia Groups' Chairperson secured funding to pilot a project dubbed 'Keep Our Girls in School'. The main goal of the project was to ensure that adolescent girls do not leave school or miss class as a result of menstruation and hygiene related matters. In preparation for the project and to measure impact results after the project, it was deemed important to conduct a baseline survey. Upon completion of the activities geared towards attaining the objectives of the project, an evaluation exercise was conducted at the end of December 2019 to measure the impacts of the project.

The evaluation took place in 4 schools in the North Bank, Lower River, Central River and Upper River regions of the Gambia. About 80 students were met, about half of them interviewed individually and the rest in Focused Group Discussions to measure the impact of the project. 9 female teachers who served as 'Coordinators' in the schools were interviewed. Parents were also interviewed in groups. The evaluation sought to establish the level of improvement (or otherwise) on MHM knowledge and practice among students. Furthermore, it sought to establish the impact of menstruation and the school environment on students after the project. Finally, it sought to establish Teacher-Student and Parent-Student relationship on menstrual hygiene matters.

Overall 200 students were directly reached and trained. 82% of the respondents who benefitted from the project had never attended training on MHM before 2019 until they attended FIOHTG's. During the baseline survey, only 9% of students could detail the scientific causes of menstruation, but that percentage has increased to 95% of students being able to explain how puberty leads to ovulation and the unfertilized eggs burst into menstrual blood at the end of the project. Meanwhile, during the baseline survey,

only 3 out of 8 teacher respondents stated that they had received training on MHM. However, during the evaluation of the project, 9 teachers have been trained on menstruation, menstrual hygiene and the production of sanitary pads. Also, during the survey, only 3 parents discussed hygiene matters with their girls at home, however during the FGD during the evaluation, all parents except 2 said they now discuss menstruation and menstrual hygiene with their children. Furthermore, the discussion had shifted from sexual intercourse and pregnancy only to include puberty, menstruation and hygiene

In addition, during the baseline survey, only 1 parent respondent stated that she started discussing menstruation with her child as young as 13 years. However, during the evaluation, 1 respondent stated that she started discussing menstruation with her 10 years old girl child. Most of the respondents said they are discussing with their children who are 13 years old. This is another significant improvement in opening the discussion on MHM to younger girls. Girls are frequently changing their sanitary pads compared to the past. During the FGD, it was found that over 80% of girls change at least 4 times a day which is a significant improvement from the 15% recorded during the baseline survey. Another significant achievement from the project is the establishment of the Girls' Club in the four schools. These clubs were nonexistence during our baseline survey. However, many students are not aware of the club hence the need to popularize them. The Clubs will need support if they will be very impactful.

The toilets in Saint George's are still insufficient for the girls. However, we have been told that the toilets were visited during the CCM and hopefully the problem will be addressed by the authorities. In Kerr Ardo, water remains a challenge but the members of the Mothers' Club take turns to provide water in the toilets, hence the toilets were found to be basically hygiene. However, despite Darsilami having benefitted from MRCH Foundation's school expansion project, the toilets are without water and we found them unhygienic. Chaa Kunda has cleaned toilets and water was available. Our evaluation has shown that the project has greatly succeeded in attaining its objectives.



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If so, we would like to hear from YOU!

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