

FUTURE IN OUR HANDS THE GAMBIA

NEWSLETTER

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NEWS IN SHORT

1. **EDITORIAL: WE HAVE A NATION TO SENSITIZE**
2. **6 DAYS SENSITIZATION ON GBV CONCLUDED BY FIOHTG**
3. **FIOHTG REACHES 100% CEREAL BANK COVERAGE FOR ITS VDPS**
4. **480 YOUTH IN URR, CRR, LRR & NBR GRACE FORUMS**
5. **GRADES 1, 2 & 3 TEACHERS TRAINED**
6. **CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR OWN UTG GRADUATES**
7. **ANNOUNCEMENT: FIOHTG TO LAUNCH POLICY BRIEFS**

Education For All Through Community Development

EDITORIAL: WE HAVE A NATION TO SENSITIZE; FIOHTG SHALL NOT BE DISTRACTED

On or around 19th February, we were notified of the circulation of an audio, remarks and images by one 'King Sports' (and many others later) purporting to show FIOHTG staff engaging in the registration of students (below the voting age) in Barra-Essau Upper Basic School in Lower Niumi District on behalf of Adama Barrow (NPP).

In the widely shared audio, 'King Sport' claimed that Mr. Jobe and Oumie Singhateh of FIOHTG against whom he used profanity, were in the school "asking students to remove their uniform, took their pictures, phone numbers and gave them money". But what he did not know was that Mr. Jobe spent most of his life sensitizing people on their civic rights. Mr. Jobe had served the Gambia until retirement and continues to do so in civic education while Oumie is following those footsteps.

Neither Mr. Jobe nor Oumie had anything to do with NPP or Barrow. They are with FIOHTG and the people. The duo were there to sensitize students on their voting rights should they turn 18 years. FIOHTG is known for its non-partisanship and mandate on civic education. In fact, it had been implementing civic engagement programmes in the past regime and it remains one of the most active in the CSOs Coalition on Elections in the Gambia. It has deployed resources before and during elections to sensitize people and monitor elections to promote free and fair elections.

Our civic education and voter education has been ongoing for years. Our impact is recognized by partners and donors who would not definitely fund us if we were partisan. In fact the current project is funded by IRI.

Reacting to the false news, FIOHTG Acting Director, J.T Sarr stated that *"FIOHTG is a non-partisan, non-religious national NGO, run by Gambians. As a national NGO operating in The Gambia for over 4 decades, one of our core roles is civic education and rights-based sensitisation in the areas we work..."* She urged all to visit the head office in Kotu or visit the fiohtg.org for any information.

Although 'King Sports', just as the ones before him retracted his false accusations, the damage was already done leading to delays in the implementation of the project. This is not good for the Gambia. The participation of all eligible voters should be encouraged by all. We understand that the political climate is tense, but the misinformation and false information does no good to this country. It is more destructive when it comes to targets CSOs and individuals reaching the unreachable and marginalized.

Therefore, we urge all actors in the political terrain, whether they are political party representatives/sympatisers or civil society actors to always verify information by contacting parties or individuals who maybe aggrieved. FIOHTG is ready to work with all on its civic education programme.

Moreover, we are more than glad to work with partners on addressing misinformation as the election fast approaches. Allow us to thank everyone who have responded to the allegations in our defense. Be rest assured that FIOHTG shall always remain nonpartisan. As the Acting Director said in the wake of the false news, *we shall not be distracted from our mission* and if I may add that *we have a nation to sensitise*.

6 DAYS SENSITIZATION ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE & ABUSES CONCLUDED BY FIOHTG



A six days sensitization on gender based violence for contractors and youths has been concluded by Mrs. Marong. Mrs. Marong is the GBV focal person of FIOHTG on its World Bank funded School Project. Reporting from CRR, Mrs. Marong said that "the activity is intended to ensure that the rights of the community are not being violated, more especially women, girls and children who are most often vulnerable". During the sensitization, participants were taken through what constitutes gender based violence, abuse of girls, children and women. It is expected that the presence of FIOHTG contractors and labourers building school facilities in communities will not lead to abuses, teenage pregnancies and violence.

FIOHTG is committed in not only fighting to abolishing gender based violence and abuse in communities but it is also enforcing strict regulations to ensure that its staff and affiliates are not perpetrators.

FIOHTG REACHES 100% CEREAL BANK COVERAGE FOR ITS VDPS



FIOHTG takes food security seriously. Food is a right and an entitlement. It is also the basics. Knowing that the Gambia in general and particularly rural communities are challenged by lack of food security, it launched its Cereal Banking Scheme.

The initiative starts with the provision of money for cereals to the communities. The communities proceed to buy the cereals which are then kept until the rainy season when families battle lack of food and hunger. The cereals are then distributed by the villagers amongst the needy. The Cereal Banking Scheme allows communities to design their management style which includes setting a committee and agreement over the payment modalities. Communities pay the cereal back with cereal after their harvests to make the scheme grow.

Thanks to generous support and partnership with Gambia Groups through Kristina Lundahl and ForumCiv, FIOHTG is happy to report that it has reached its target to establish cereal banks for all the Village Development Projects. This means that 17 VDPS and their satellites of over 120 villages in North Bank, Lower River, Central River and Upper River regions have benefitted from the scheme.

Mr. Ebrima Drammeh who went around the country to implement the scheme broke the news to staff. *"The capitalisation and sensitisation meetings have now been completed...Its a 100 % coverage now which has been achieved in a short time possible thanks to the support received from Kristina Lundhal of the Gambia grupperna in Sweden and forumciv funding"*.

Mr. Drammeh added that *"the beneficiaries are so appreciative of the timely support as this is expected to significantly strengthen the communities' capacity to ensure access to food at the local level especially during the lean period of July to September each year"*. FIOHTG will continue to work with partners to strengthen the scheme for more beneficiaries. We know the communities are growing and demand is increasing with decreasing farm yields. We are looking for partners to provide cereal storages in the communities.



FIOHTG CONCLUDES YOUTH FORUMS WITH 480 YOUTH IN URR, CRR, LRR & NBR



FIOHTG has concluded a 6 day youth forum in Central River Region and Upper River Region. The forums held in Wellingara Yareh, Bayaba, Sare Demba Dardo and Sare Ngallen were facilitated by Rose T. Mendy and Malick Ndimballand of the Community Development Unit.

The Forum is meant to raise awareness and create a platform for young people to discuss issues affecting them. During the forums in the different communities, participants discussed 'illegal/irregular migration', early marriage, teenage pregnancy, gendered roles, conflict, education, female genital mutilation and drug abuse.

Lamin Conteh, an Intern at the M&E Unit who graced the forums said that the activity was very interactive and educative as young people shared their experience on the thematic issues discussed. Commenting on migration, he said

that although 'returnees' shared the dangers on irregular/illegal migration, youth present gave reasons they why they find it compelling to travel. A key reason given by youth as a cause was the lack of economic opportunities in their communities.

Bucarr Dampah, a returnee from Libya told his mates that: "I embarked on this risky journey in 2016. The difficulties I encounter are unbearable because it was filled with trauma. I didn't made it to Europe and I had to struggle back home. My advice to young people is we should not risk it".

A similar activity was facilitated by Alimatou Marong in North Bank Region and Lower River Region bringing together 240 youth in the communities. It is envisaged that the events promote awareness creation and networking amongst the youth.

GRADES 1, 2 & 3 TEACHERS IN CHARGE, TUMANA, PAKALIBA AND NDUNGU KEBBEH CLUSTERS TRAINED



The School Development Unit has conducted training for grades 1, 2, and 3 teachers in 4 clusters across the Gambia. The training targeted the Chargel Cluster, the Tumana Cluster, Pakaliba Cluster, and Ndungu Kebbeh Cluster. The themes of the training were Power Structures and Career Development.

Teacher trainers, Amadou Sambou and Kebba Jobe from our School Development Unit conducted the training. Teachers are the shapers of the future, hence training them on the themes is relevant for their and the future of children.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE UTG GRADUATES, ESPECIALLY OUR KEMO, NAFFIE, NDIMBALLAND, OUMIE AND KALIDOU!



Congratulations to all the University of The Gambia graduates who had their degrees conferred on them today 27th February 2021. University education is not an easy journey anywhere. Many start it but not all finish it. Elsewhere, people commit suicide because of the incredible challenge that comes with it. But of course the resilience of the Gambian student is so overwhelming, that is why we do not have such cases here. And within those who finish it, not all do so at the expected time. For those who finish it, it means sacrificing pleasure and leisure. It meant spending holidays and weekends on fieldworks and assignments. The past four years had been very stressful for a good number of you especially those who took courses during the Corona pandemic which saw UTG switching to online classes. We know how tough it was.

FIOHTG is happy to congratulate you all because we place education at the core of our mandate. We are facilitating adult education for many who did not have the opportunity at your age while encouraging those within the regular education age group to take it seriously. We have been calling on parents to send and maintain their children in schools and we will continue to do so. We have been supporting communities to ensure education for all. And we have been training teachers to ensure rural dwellers get quality and relevant education to make informed decisions and excel in life. As we write this, two of our officers Mr. Jobe and Mr. Sambou are in the field training teachers. We believe that our education programme is key in breaking the unequal access to education.

Today we call on government to ensure that university education is free for all Gambians who have the admission

requirement. There are many brilliant students who keep on deferring because they cannot pay their tuition fee. There are some who cannot even enroll. This is unacceptable. We know that as Mandela knew very well that we can change the world through education.

If we want to change the Gambia and the life of every citizen, we must give education to everyone, free of charge. If people are freely admitted to the police academy, in the army, the fire and rescue service, students should be freely admitted to the schools of Arts and Sciences, Medicine and Allied Sciences, Education, Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Public Health, Engineering, Business and Public Admin, Law and Graduate Studies.

FIOHTG is proud of the great contributions it receives from Mr. Kemo S. Kinteh our HR Officer since last year who bagged his degree along with Naffie Jatta, Malick Ndimballand and Oumie Singhateh all interns at FIOHTG. We have seen the great contribution of other graduates that we have worked with in communities and partner organisations around the country. We will continue to provide internship spaces for UTG and other tertiary institutions to give them firsthand training on the tools/theories they have seen in class.

Finally, just as UTG was difficult and you made it, life after UTG will present its all challenges but trust us they too shall be crushed. Remember the principles you have defended in class, recall the positions you have taken, they are more needed today than ever. Honesty, dedication, sacrifice, sweat and blood for the good of the country. It is difficult but we trust in you. We are certain that your education shall deliver this country.



ANNOUNCEMENT: FIOHTG TO LAUNCH ITS POLICY BRIEFS IN MARCH 2021

Dear esteemed readers, partners, donors, stakeholders and beneficiaries, we are happy to inform you that FIOHTG is launching policy briefs in its effort to intensify its advocacy on thematic issues in the Gambia. The first issue of these briefs will be launched in March 2021. The Focus of the issue is maternal deaths in the Gambia which has not received the necessary attention from duty bearers. We will keep you updated on our website and social media platforms about the exact date of the launching. We look towards your support in this endeavour.

HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



FROM US TO YOU!

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Do you want to share a story with us? If yes, contact us on info@fiohtg.org

Thank you for reading through!