

# **FUTURE IN OUR HANDS THE GAMBIA**

## **NEWSLETTER**

### **MARCH 2021**



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**Education For All Through Community Development**



## EDITORIAL: DHS REVEALS GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IS ON THE INCREASE IN THE GAMBIA

Although there has been denial in some quarters that domestic violence against women is on the rise, there is no denial that domestic violence against women is a reality that many women battle with in the Gambia. In fact the recently released Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2019-2020 report is replete with disturbing findings on this crime. It has confirmed fears that the spike in media reports of domestic violence is reflective of the situation.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is any type of harm, suffering or threats, sanctions, coercions inflicted on and/or the denial of liberty of girls, women, boys and men. Although GBV can happen to both men and women, women and girls are the main victims of domestic violence. They suffer psychological, physical, and sexual abuses and pressures. Both in international law and domestic laws of the Gambia, gender based violence is a crime. For example in December 2013, the Gambia passed the Domestic Violence Act; similarly the Sexual Offences Act was passed during the same period. These were preceded by the Women's Act in 2010.

Despite the existence of laws against GBV, the menace is still widely perpetrated. In its survey of over 2000 women randomly selected, the DHS found that: *"46% of women age 15-49 have experienced physical violence at least once since age 15, and 11% experienced physical violence within the 12 months prior to the survey"*. Considering that the sample is representative, the figure confirms the prevalence of violence against women. It also shows the increase of violence from 41% in 2013 to the current 46%. Therefore, despite what may be considered tough legislation, is

on the increase. The report contains disturbing revelations which are thus summarised:

*"20% of ever-married women age 15-49 reported that their current or most recent husband or partner has ever exhibited at least three types of specified controlling behaviours...41% of ever-married women age 15-49 have ever experienced any form of emotional, physical, or sexual violence committed by any husband/partner...22% of ever-married women age 15-49 who have experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their current or most recent husband/partner have sustained injuries...65% of women who ever experienced physical or sexual violence never sought help and never told anyone."*

Clearly, GBV is a crisis that needs urgent actions. In addition to the existing legislations against this crime, there is need for implementation and monitoring. Furthermore, there is a need to give protective status to people who report GBV perpetrated on them and others. In fact, there is need to consider what reward mechanisms can be provided to ensure that victims and witnesses report incidences of GBV.

FIOHTG is currently supporting and encouraging the establishment of Gender Committees to build GBV-free neighbourhoods. Its effectiveness is yet to be fully determined but we believe it can help in addressing the menace. Finally it may be vital to convene a national dialogue to pave a coordinated approach to address GBV. The recent disturbing report of GBV death in Busumbala is a testament to the need for concerted efforts.

## FIOHTG TAKES PART IN DIALOGUE TO RESCUE DRAFT CONSTITUTION



Mr. Camara, the Programme Manager of the Community Development Unit has represented FIOHTG at the concluded meeting between Goodluck Jonathan and CSOs at the Sir Kairaba International Conference Center. Jonathan is serving as a mediator between different stakeholders including the executive, political parties, CSOs, the legislature among others to ensure that the Draft Constitution which was rejected by the Legislature is resuscitated. As a rights based organisation, FIOHTG is well committed to see that a progressive constitution with separation of powers, checks and balances and an empowered citizenry is adopted. However, there are still gaps between the parties on matters of legislative oversight over appointments, term limit, executive powers among others which must be addressed.



## FIOH CONCLUDES REGIONAL WOMEN CONFERENCE



FIOHTG has concluded a regional women's conference, a follow-up to the 'Women Deliver Forum', jointly organized by the WMD, CIPE, and FIOHTG which was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020, at the Kairaba Beach Hotel in Banjul. In fulfilment of one of the recommendations from that Conference, FIOHTG with partners organised a regional conference. It took the regional conference to Basse in URR to

give rural dwellers and stakeholders in rural development the lead in discussing and paving a way forward for the attainment of development. In addition to numerous women leaders, entrepreneurs and activists were regional program officers of NAWFA, Women's Bureau, NGO Affairs among others.

## FOOD PROCESSING TRAINING CONCLUDED IN THE NORTH BANK REGION



A five day village based food processing and preservation training was held in Kerr Omar Manneh in the North Bank Region. Forty participants, male and female were drawn from the community as trainees. The training is geared towards preventing post harvest loss, spoilage, wastage of fruits and vegetables and to ensure availability once they are out of season. During the training, participants were trained on best hygiene methods, personal and food handling and care and then to the processing and preservation

of pepper, tomato, hibiscus, and banana. Participants learned how to make pepper sauce and tomato paste as well as labelling of already made products like banana and wonjo jam. The knowledge gain will also help participants to add more income from their products on which they added value.



## 2 SCHOOLS TRAINED ON MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT



The School Development Unit has trained school girls, members of Mothers' Club, and teachers on Menstrual Hygiene Management in two schools namely Kabakoto and Chargel. The main highlight of the training is the production of reusable sanitary pads. A

2019 survey by FIOHTG had found knowledge in menstrual hygiene to be very low amongst students; and sanitary pads were largely unaffordable; prompting it to pilot a MHM project to address the issue. Parents were not or lately started discussing menstrual hygiene with their

daughters and many myths surrounded it. Furthermore, the lack of proper sanitary pads and water in schools was a contributing factor to girls' absenteeism during menstruation. Following the pilot project, knowledge on MHM was very much improved and hygiene practices improved for good. Therefore, the current schools under training are also expected to gain similar benefits.

As seen above left, students and parents as well as teachers were able to produce sanitary pads that are reusable at the end of the training.

## GBV SENSITIZATION IN WORLD BANK FUNDED PROJECT SITES



A six day gender based violence sensitization for six communities benefitting from the World Bank project on schools has been concluded. The beneficiaries are Contractors and community youths from the VDP and their satellite villages of Futayel, Ndingiri Kunda, Sare Chewto, Bakadagi Mandinka, Sare Futa and Boraba.

The beneficiaries are sensitized about gender based violence and abuses such as rape, harassment. It is expected that this training helps to protect women, girls and children by exposing them to their rights and letting know contractors and labourers that they will be held accountable for abuses.



### **FIOHTG CONTACT INFORMATION**

**WEBPAGE:** [www.fiohtg.org](http://www.fiohtg.org)

**TEL OFFICE IN KOTU:** +220 4460360, +220 446 6868

**MAILING ADDRESS:** P.M.B 352, Serrekunda P.O, The Gambia

**VISITING ADDRESS:** Kotu South, FIOHTG

**E-MAIL:** [info@fiohtg.org](mailto:info@fiohtg.org) or [sarrjainaba@fiohtg.org](mailto:sarrjainaba@fiohtg.org)

**FACEBOOK:** Future In Our Hands - The Gambia

*Do you want to share a story with us? If yes, contact us on [info@fiohtg.org](mailto:info@fiohtg.org)*

*Thank you for reading through!*