



UNITED NATIONS
THE GAMBIA



UNITED NATIONS ANNUAL RESULT REPORT - GAMBIA 2023

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FOREWARD

This report encapsulates the collective efforts and achievements of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the Government of The Gambia in advancing development priorities and fostering positive change within the country.

In 2023, The Gambia navigated through a pivotal phase in its post-pandemic recovery journey. Despite global economic challenges, The Gambia demonstrated resilience, with GDP growth rebounding to 5.6%. This resurgence was propelled by robust performances in key sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and financial services. However, the nation encountered hurdles such as high inflation and susceptibility to external shocks, underscoring the importance of sustainable economic strategies.

Moreover, The Gambia remained steadfast in its commitment to democratic consolidation and national reform initiatives. Significant strides were made in the Transitional Justice process, although challenges persisted, particularly in upholding human rights, advancing constitutional reforms, and implementing TRRC white paper recommendations. Nevertheless, the successful conduct of local government elections marked a milestone in the country's electoral cycle.

The UN's unwavering support to The Gambia's development priorities remained steadfast throughout the year. Guided by the Gambian United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and in alignment with the government's National Development Plan, our collaboration extended to key stakeholders, ensuring inclusivity and participatory decision-making processes.

The extension of the UNDAF for an additional two years underscored our commitment to synchronizing our efforts with the evolving needs of the Gambian people. Our interventions focused on capacity strengthening, technical assistance, and governance enhancement, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, including women and persons living with disabilities.

Throughout 2023, the UN provided essential humanitarian, financial, and technical support, fostering sustainable development and bolstering community resilience. This report meticulously details the progress made toward achieving the outlined outcomes and outputs of the UNDAF, reflecting our collective dedication to fostering positive change and leaving no one behind.

As we reflect on the achievements of 2023, we acknowledge that our journey towards sustainable development is ongoing. Challenges persist, but so too does our resolve to overcome them. By harnessing the power of partnership and innovation, we remain committed to supporting The Gambia on its path towards a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient future.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all stakeholders, including the Government of The Gambia, civil society organizations, and our dedicated UN staff, whose tireless efforts have contributed to the progress outlined in this report. Together, let us continue to work hand in hand to build a brighter tomorrow for all Gambians.

Ms. Seraphine Wakana

UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR

UNITED NATIONS IN THE GAMBIA



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IN THE GAMBIA



01

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY



OVERALL COUNTRY CONTEXT

In 2023, The Gambia continued its post-pandemic economic recovery, with GDP growth rebounding to 5.6% following the global slowdown in 2022. Growth was driven primarily by strong performance in agriculture, tourism, and financial services. However, high inflation, vulnerability to external shocks such as the effects of the Ukraine conflict, and rising food and fuel prices dampened macroeconomic performance.

The Gambia also continued democratic consolidation and national reform efforts, including in the Transitional Justice process. Challenges were faced in the human rights area including threats to the protection of the rights of women and girls, lack of progress in the constitutional reforms and the slow implementation of the TRRC white paper recommendations. The country marked the end of the electoral cycle with the successful conduct of the local government elections in April 2023.



02

UNITED NATIONS IN THE GAMBIA SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



COOPERATION FRAMEWORK PRIORITIES, OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS



OVERVIEW OF THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

The Gambian United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017- 2021 is a five-year strategic partnership framework between the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and the Government of The Gambia (GoTG). However, the UNDAF was extended for an additional 2 years to ensure alignment of the new Cooperation Framework with the government's National Development Plan. The formulation of the UNDAF was highly participatory, involving stakeholders including government (both central and regional) the National Assembly, CSOs and persons living with disabilities.

The UNDAF was developed to align with government's NDP (2018-2021) and the country's previous long-term vision (Vision 2020). The framework has been supportive of the government's medium-term development priorities in line

with UN guiding principles. While the UN needs to increase its efforts to provide better support for the most vulnerable in society, especially women and persons living with disabilities, the UN is at the forefront of promoting the welfare and needs of those most at risk of being left behind.

The UN was able to provide humanitarian, financial and technical support to the government and people of The Gambia. This report details the progress made in 2023 towards achieving the outcomes and outputs outlined in the UNDAF. The 2023 results provide support to the people of The Gambia through capacity strengthening, technical assistance, information, support, strengthened governance, sustainable management of resources, direct service provision and protection of the left behind, benefiting communities, and promoting sustainable development.



SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

OUTCOME 1.1: REDUCE POVERTY AND INEQUALITY BY ACCELERATING INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In this section, you will see how we have unleashed entrepreneurs' potential by streamlining business registration, leveraged data-driven planning to shape smarter policies, and contributed to expanding access to justice.

UN Gambia initiatives in 2023 provided essential support for thousands of Gambians by improving economic governance, promoting human rights, and stimulating inclusive growth through:

- Reducing barriers for MSMEs to enter the formal sector and create jobs by simplifying business registration through digital platforms.

- Providing \$400k seed funding to 4 agri-SMEs, catalysing the creation of over 800 jobs and training for 6,900 farmers.

- Building the capacity of 9 institutions, including GBOS, to undertake pro-poor, gender-sensitive development planning.

- Training 23 judges and officials on integrating human rights standards into the application of laws, enhancing access to quality justice.

- Supporting passage of pivotal transitional justice laws on reparations and barring past abusers from office.



STRENGTHENING PRIVATE SECTOR COMPETITIVENESS AND NATIONAL CAPACITIES FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT

EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURS, DRIVING INCLUSIVE GROWTH

In the bustling market of Basse, Marie Sillah proudly surveys the array of colourful preserves and sauces on display at her stall. The 45-year-old mother of four has come a long way from the days of selling her wares door-to-door in her village.

“I always had a passion for cooking, but I lacked the skills to take my business to the next level,” Marie recalls. “The training from the Gambia Women’s Chamber of Commerce changed everything. I learned techniques to make my products shelf-stable and attractive to buyers. Now, I’m supplying markets and stores across the region.”

Marie is one of 40 women entrepreneurs in the Upper River Region who received training in food processing and preservation in 2023 through a UNDP-supported initiative. These skills are proving transformative in a region with limited economic opportunities, and women face significant barriers.

“Before, I was barely earning enough to feed my family,” says Marie. “Now, I’m employing five other women and sending my children to school. I’m not just surviving; I’m thriving and determined to help other women do the same.”

Marie’s story epitomises the ripple effects of investing in women’s entrepreneurship. When women have the tools and resources to succeed in business, they lift themselves, their families and entire communities.

We are committed to unleashing this potential on a broader scale countrywide by simplifying business registration to encourage more micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to enter the formal sector.

“For too long, the bureaucratic hurdles to registering a business have deterred many Gambians from leaping into entrepreneurship,” explains Beatrice Mboge, the Gambia Women’s Chamber of Commerce (GWCC) CEO. “By streamlining the process through digital platforms, we are breaking down barriers and creating a more enabling environment for MSMEs to thrive, especially women-owned businesses.”

In 2023, GCCI partnered with ILO to launch a “Formalize Your Business” initiative that allows entrepreneurs to complete registration formalities using only their mobile phones. The platform already shows results, with hundreds of businesses taking advantage of the simplified process.

“I have been operating my business for years, but I knew I needed to formalise it to access finance and increase my clientele,” says Ramatoulie Mbye, the owner of the tailoring shop DIGNIFIED. “Formalizing my business opened doors to financing and expanded my client base significantly.”

We strengthened our MSME competitiveness-building efforts with targeted support to high-potential sectors like agro-processing. In 2023, the UNCDF gave four agri-SMEs \$400,000 in seed capital to expand operations. The impacts have been far-reaching.

“With the grant, we could upgrade our processing facility and packhouse by increasing machinery and cold room capacity. This allowed us to reach more export customers and diversify our supply chain,” explains Momar Taal, Managing Director of TROPINGO Foods. “This has allowed us to create — new direct jobs, mostly for women and youth, and provide a reliable market for over — smallholder farmers in our supply chain.”

“Before, I could barely support myself or my family,” says Fatou Badjie, a 24-year-old rice farmer in the Central River Region. “By working for MARUO Farms, I feel fulfilled that the World Food Programme purchases the rice we produce here in The Gambia. They use the same rice to feed our children in schools. I can now fully support my ageing parents and siblings. I feel hopeful for what lies ahead.”



Across the four agri-SMEs supported, the UNCDF financing catalysed the creation of over 800 new jobs and provided training to enhance climate-smart practices and boost yields for 6,900 farmers.

Illustrating our integrated approach to transforming food systems, instead of importing rice for their school feeding programme, the WFP bought 1,500 tonnes of locally grown rice for school feeding programs, injecting over \$1.6 million into the local economy and benefiting over 120,000 children across 120 schools.

This approach has nurtured prosperous communities, enhancing livelihoods, school attendance, and nutrition. Fatou Badjie, a beneficiary and rice farmer, shares

“Before, I could barely support myself or my family,” says Fatou Badjie, a 24-year-old rice farmer in the Central River Region. “By working for MARUO Farms, I feel fulfilled that the World Food Programme purchases the rice we produce here in The Gambia. They use the same rice to feed our children in schools. I can now fully support my ageing parents and siblings. I feel hopeful for what lies ahead.”

As these stories illustrate, our targeted interventions in key sectors are jumpstarting inclusive growth across The Gambia. By equipping entrepreneurs with the skills and resources and enabling the environment to succeed, new horizons of opportunity are opening, paving the way for a more dynamic and diversified economy that benefits all.



ENHANCING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

PLANNING FOR PROSPERITY: BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES



In the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) conference room, staff huddle around computers, intently analysing the latest poverty data. A few years ago, this scene would have been unimaginable. Like many institutions in The Gambia, GBOS lacked the tools and capacities to quickly turn raw numbers into actionable insights for policymaking.

“We were collecting a lot of data, but we didn’t have the skills to analyse it quickly enough to shape development planning,” recalls a government statistician. “Sometimes, policies had to be designed based on assumptions rather than evidence.”

Today, GBOS is at the forefront of a quiet revolution in evidence-based planning taking root across the country. With support from UNDP, the institution has undergone intensive training and capacity building in data analysis, poverty measurement, and geo-spatial mapping.

This transformation is exemplified by the recent Integrated Household Survey, supported by UNDP. The survey provided a comprehensive picture of poverty and living conditions across the country, with granular data on everything from income and consumption to access to basic services.

“The survey findings informed the government’s emphasis on expanded social safety nets, as reflected in the National Development Plan outcome, with the smallest funding gap being ‘Strengthened

Social Protection’,” explains Filly Jobarteh, Social Registry Manager at the National Social Protection Secretariat.

Beyond GBOS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and IOM have supported capacity building for pro-poor, gender-sensitive planning across nine key institutions this year. From integrating poverty and gender analysis into budgeting processes to enhancing monitoring and evaluation systems, these efforts are helping ensure that development is genuinely inclusive and responsive to the needs of all Gambians.

“In the past, women’s priorities were often overlooked in planning processes,” notes Hamang Manajag, M&E specialist at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. “Through this training, we have new tools and data to make a strong case for investments in maternal health, girls’ education, and women’s economic empowerment. We’re seeing a real shift in how gender is mainstreamed across government policies and programs.”

As these stories illustrate, building institutional capacities for evidence-based, inclusive planning is planting the seeds for transformative change. With each data point utilised, each budget line scrutinised through a gender lens, and each policy shaped by the voices of the marginalised, a new paradigm of people-centred development is taking root. While much work remains, the foundation is being laid for a Gambia where all share prosperity.

OUTCOME 1.2:

IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND FIGHTING CORRUPTION



JUSTICE FOR ALL: STRENGTHENING RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

When rumours of the arrest of Lt. Basiru Barrow were circulating, his wife, Sunkary, feared the worst. “I had heard stories of people being held for days without charge, beaten, and even tortured,” she recalls. Matters got worse when there were talks of him being killed alongside 13 others. “I felt numb and helpless and didn’t know where to turn for help.”

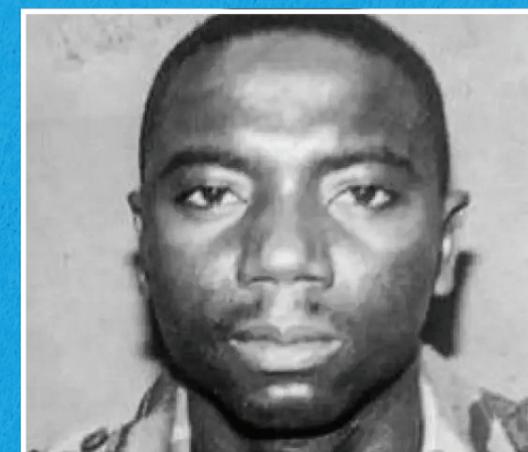
Sunkary’s fears are not uncommon in The Gambia, where memories of authoritarian rule are still fresh, and trust in the justice system is fragile. For decades, human rights abuses went unchecked, and impunity was the norm. However, since the country’s democratic transition in 2016, a new era of accountability and justice is taking shape.

“We’re working to build a system where every Gambian can have confidence that their rights will be protected and that the law will be applied fairly, regardless of who they are,” explains Hussein Thomas, the Solicitor General at the Ministry of Justice.

A key pillar of transformation is strengthening the capacity of judges and legal practitioners to uphold human rights standards in their daily work. With support from IOM, UNDP, and OHCHR, 23 judges and officials were trained in integrating international norms into domestic jurisprudence.

“The training has been highly beneficial. We’ve learned how to apply human rights principles in areas like bail decisions, sentencing, and the treatment of vulnerable groups like women and children. It’s helping us deliver justice in a way that is more fair, humane, and in line with international standards,” explains Police PRO ASP Binta Njie.

We’ve initiated broader reforms to boost the judiciary’s independence and efficiency to further this progress. A landmark achievement in our journey towards justice has been the government’s establishment of a reparations fund and legislation, crafted with UNDP’s guidance, preventing human rights violators from serving in public roles.



“For too long, victims have been waiting for justice and recognition of their suffering,” says Emmanuel Joof, the chairperson of The National Human Rights Commission. “Those who bear the greatest responsibility will be prosecuted, people will be given reparations, and there will be institutional reforms.”

For victims like Isatou Jammeh, the laws offer a glimmer of hope. Her father, Haruna Jammeh, and Aunt Massie Jammeh disappeared under the hands of state agents in 2005, leaving her and her siblings being raised by her mother. “I have been fighting for answers and justice for over two decades,” she says. “The TRRC gave my family and others the answers we sought all our lives, and this law is a first step towards healing and rebuilding. It shows that the government is finally listening to us.”

As these stories illustrate, building a culture of human rights and the rule of law is a long and complex process. It requires not only reforming institutions but also shifting mindsets and rebuilding trust. With each judge trained, each victim compensated, and each perpetrator held accountable, The Gambia is moving closer to a future where justice is the norm and human rights are sacrosanct. The road ahead is long, but the foundation is being laid for a more just and inclusive society for all Gambians.





As we look ahead, let us draw inspiration from the resilience and determination of the Gambian people. From the women entrepreneurs breaking into new markets to the farmers adopting new techniques to boost their yields to the victims bravely seeking truth and reparations - their stories remind us of the immense potential waiting to be unleashed.



OUTCOME 2.1: INCREASED ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, AND RELEVANT EDUCATION FOR ALL, WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON THE MOST VULNERABLE.

This section spotlights the progress we have made working with the government and partners to provide quality learning opportunities to vulnerable and marginalised children and build an inclusive and equitable education system. It showcases how strategic partnerships, targeted interventions,

and a focus on equity expand access to education, particularly for girls and the most vulnerable. Our efforts ensure every child has the resources, support, and environment to learn and reach their full potential.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2023 INCLUDE:

01 Enrolling over 30,000 out-of-school children and adolescents through community engagement and partnerships with traditional authorities.

02 Supporting 51,775 households (est. 258,875 children) with social protection services like cash transfers and in-kind support to access education.

03 Providing 15,350 children with cash transfers, 500 with bicycles, and 300 with disability learning materials via the Zero Out of School Children Project.

04 Supplying 20,000 children with individual learning materials like exercise books, school bags and play materials.



OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Fatou, a bright-eyed 13-year-old from the Upper River Region, had always dreamed of becoming a teacher. But as the youngest of seven children in a poor farming household, her chances of completing school looked slim. Her parents struggled to cover the costs of uniforms, books, and supplies and often kept her home to help with chores and care for her younger siblings.

“I loved learning, but I missed so many classes that I started to fall behind,” Fatou recalls. “I worried I would have to drop out like my older sisters.”

In The Gambia, poverty and gender norms keep many children, especially girls, out of school. The UN works with the government and communities to provide holistic solutions, including strengthening social protection programs. In 2023, over 51,775 vulnerable households received cash transfers and in-kind assistance, giving families the means to send their children to school.

“When my family started getting the cash every month, my parents could finally afford to keep me in school consistently,” Fatou shares. “It was like a weight lifted off all of our shoulders.”

Fatou is one of an estimated 258,875 children reached by these social protection initiatives. Alongside cash transfers, the UN invests in targeted measures to dismantle specific access barriers. For example, through the Zero Out of School Children Project, 15,350 students received cash support, 500 were provided bicycles to get to school, and 300 received specialised learning materials for disabilities.

These efforts are complemented by community-level engagement to shift norms and build support for education. Working with traditional and religious leaders, UN partners conducted outreach in over 1,000 communities this year, emphasising the value of schooling, especially for girls. As a result, a remarkable 30,000 out-of-school children were enrolled.

For Fatou, the bicycle she received from the project was a game-changer. With a reliable mode of transport, she can now consistently attend classes and keep up with her studies. Once unsure about investing in her schooling, her parents now beam with pride at her progress.

“Fatou is so driven and hardworking - I know she will achieve her dream of becoming a teacher,” says her father, Ebrima. “Seeing her pedal off to school each morning reminds me of how education can unlock a better future for our whole family.”

As Fatou’s experience shows, dismantling barriers to access demands tackling root causes like poverty while delivering practical solutions to get kids in school and learning. With sustained effort and partnership, a Gambia where every child can access their right to education is within reach.



ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION



In the bustling halls of Kotu Senior Secondary School, a sea of blue uniforms parts to reveal a familiar scene: girls clustered in a lively debate, their hands shooting up to answer questions, their faces alight with curiosity and confidence. In a country where women were once excluded mainly from upper grades, their presence is a powerful symbol of change.

“Growing up, I hardly saw any female students in high school, let alone university,” recalls Isatou Jallow, a 12th grader and aspiring doctor. “Now, we outnumber the boys in most of my classes. It’s amazing to be part of this shift.”

Girls surpass boys in education in The Gambia thanks to decades of girl-focused policies and interventions. However, the gender gap has now reversed, and boys are falling behind in enrollment by over 10 per cent, raising concerns about an impending “boy crisis” in education.

“We’re seeing more and more boys, especially from poorer families, dropping out to pursue quick money in the informal sector,” notes Momodou Bah, a teacher at Kotu. “Without targeted intervention, we risk losing a generation of male students.”

The UN is collaborating with the government to review and revise gender strategies in education. New measures, such as male mentorship initiatives and second-chance learning programs, are being explored to re-engage boys. The goal is to ensure all young Gambians have equal access to quality education. This approach to gender equality is being integrated across UN programs.

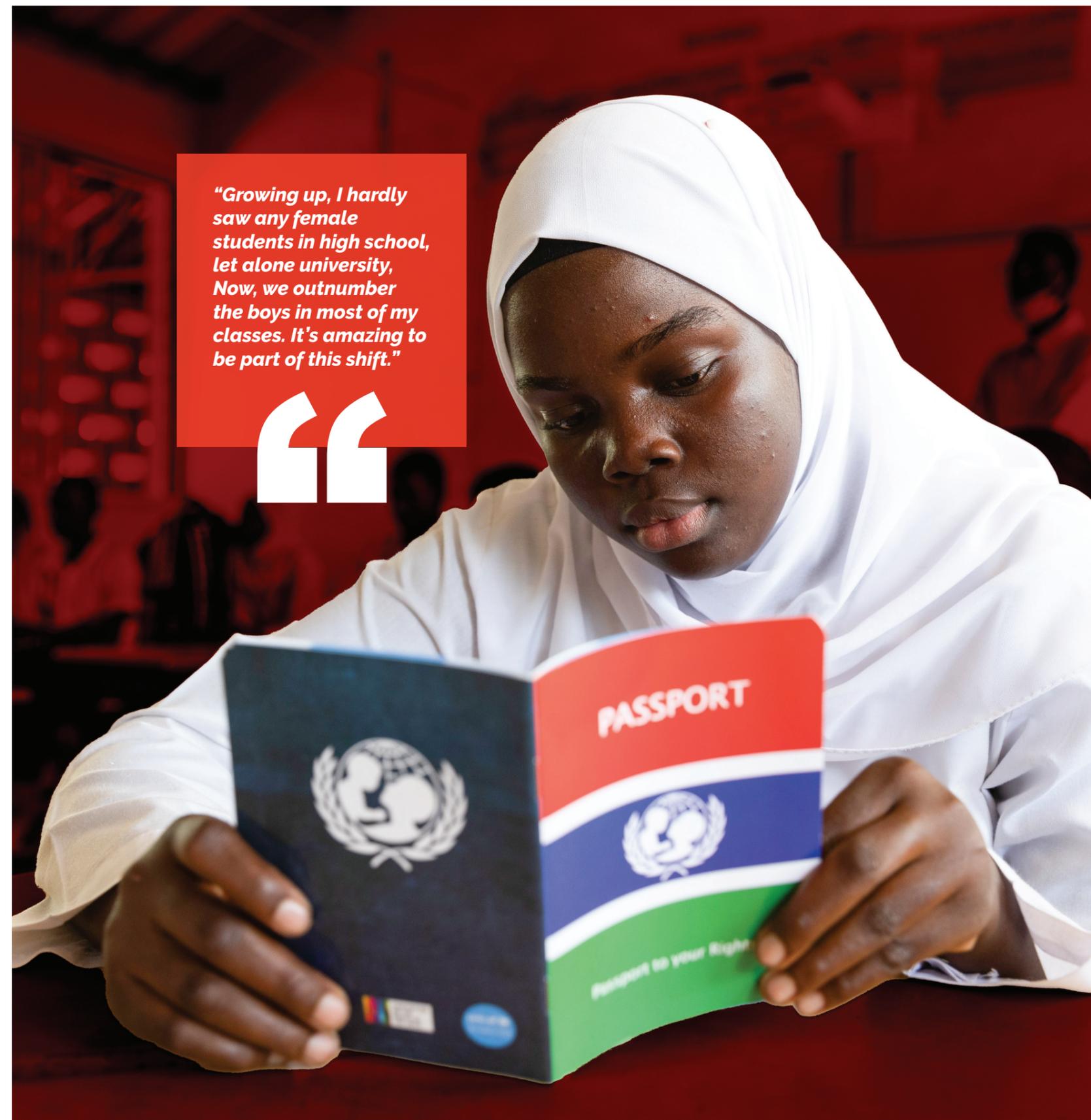
“Advancing SDG4 demands that we look beyond binary notions of gender to understand how multiple, intersecting factors shape education outcomes,” asserts Ndeye Rose Sarr, UNFPA Representative in The Gambia. “Only by taking this more holistic view can we hope to eliminate disparities for good.”

For students like Isatou, the value of an inclusive, equitable education system is self-evident. Growing up in a rural community where child marriage was once common, she knows all too well the transformative power of girls’ schooling.

“When you educate a girl, everything changes,” Isatou reflects. “She is empowered to make choices, lead, and dream bigger. I’ve seen it in my own family - my older sister was married off young, but now my parents are committed to supporting my goals.” As more girls like Isatou beat the odds to pursue their potential, they are upending entrenched narratives about what Gambian women can achieve. However, sustaining this momentum will require continuous effort to dismantle gender barriers while ensuring boys are not left behind.

“Building a truly equal, quality education system is not a zero-sum game,” Sarr emphasizes. “When every child, every young person, is empowered to learn and thrive, society benefits. That is the vision we are chasing - not just gender parity, but gender justice for all.”

“Growing up, I hardly saw any female students in high school, let alone university, Now, we outnumber the boys in most of my classes. It’s amazing to be part of this shift.”



OUTCOME 2.2: PROMOTE HEALTH EQUITY BY IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR EVERYONE, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE VULNERABLE

We partnered with various sectors to create a robust health ecosystem that provides equal access to healthcare services, prepares for emergencies, and promotes sustainable health development and community resilience.

We are strengthening public health systems through targeted initiatives, improving maternal and neonatal care, providing comprehensive sexual health services for youth, enhancing access to clean water and sanitation, and bolstering healthcare capacity to manage challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this section, you will see how our strategic investments in infrastructure and training are saving the lives of mothers and newborns, how empowering youth with knowledge and services is promoting sexual and reproductive health, and how expanding access to clean water and sanitation is preventing disease and enabling education.

In 2023, our initiatives reached hundreds of thousands of Gambians with vital health interventions and capacity building, including:

01 Supporting the development of a comprehensive national health promotion strategy and introducing the National Health Insurance Scheme to enhance healthcare access and affordability.

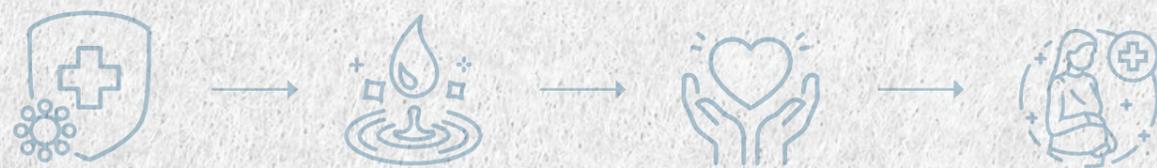
04 Providing over 102,000 people with access to safe water through solar-powered systems and constructing gender-separated school latrines for over 17,000 students.

02 Training 76 health professionals in obstetric and newborn emergencies and 10 in life-saving interventions during high-risk childbirth, contributing to a 33% reduction in maternal mortality.

05 Facilitating COVID-19 vaccination for over 230,000 individuals and training 210 healthcare workers in mental health support at the primary care level.

03 Establishing 3 model youth centres that provided over 2,000 adolescents with sexual and reproductive health services and counselling.

These diverse efforts are strengthening the building blocks of a resilient health system - from infrastructure to workforce capacity to community trust and engagement. By advancing progress on multiple fronts, we are moving closer to a Gambia where no one is left behind in pursuing health and well-being.



ENHANCING HEALTHCARE CAPACITY AND COVID-19 MANAGEMENT

With the support of USAID and the Japanese government, UNICEF facilitated two rounds of COVID-19 vaccination campaigns. The first round vaccinated 189,865 individuals, while the second round vaccinated 41,592 people. Social mobilisation activities amplified these efforts to increase vaccine demand and acceptance.

To strengthen the healthcare system's response to COVID-19, WHO trained 210 healthcare workers in the Mental Health Gap Intervention Guide,

ensuring that mental health services at the primary care level are robust and accessible. This training is crucial, as the pandemic has heightened the need for mental health support across communities.

The training of healthcare workers and the successful vaccination drives have directly contributed to safeguarding the mental and physical health of the Gambian population, ensuring that individuals can lead productive and fulfilling lives in the wake of the pandemic.



STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM TO PROVIDE EQUITABLE AND QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES CHANGING LIVES WITH CLEAN WATER

Karanta Health Centre depended on an unreliable borehole with no consistent water supply. "Water was a problem in Karanta Health Centre," says Lamin S. Jammeh, the health centre's officer in charge.

But today, the story is remarkably different since UNICEF installed solar-powered water systems in 10 schools, two health facilities and 12 communities, providing over 102,607 people with safe water.

"Two or three years back, water was a problem in Karanta Health Center," said Lamin S. Jammeh. "We were just managing from our local borehole, which was dysfunctional. But with the support of UNICEF, we now have a borehole that supplies us 24 hours, and water is no longer a problem."

With a nearby source of safe water, communities around Karantaba Health Center are saving hours on water collection. This primarily benefits women and girls, who often bear the burden of fetching water, by allowing them to focus on education, income generation, and other priorities.

"Since the taps came, everything has changed," says Isatou Jammeh, a mother of four. "My children no longer suffer from stomach pains and can attend school regularly. We have more time

for productive activities instead of searching for water. Life is so much better."

UNICEF also constructed gender-separated latrines for over 17,000 students, creating environments conducive to learning and health.

"Before, many girls would stay home during their menstrual periods because we had no proper facilities," explains Isatou Susso, a student at Kaiaf Primary School. "But with the new latrines, we feel comfortable and can participate fully. More of my peers are coming to school consistently."

While significant progress has been made, many Gambians still lack access to basic water services. Recognising the urgency, UNICEF and partners are scaling up investments in climate-resilient infrastructure and behaviour change.

"Access to clean water is a fundamental human right and a foundation for health, education, and prosperity," affirms UNICEF Representative Nafesa Binte Shafique. "By accelerating progress on this front, we can unlock the potential of communities and build a more equitable, resilient Gambia for every child."



STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS, SAVING LIVES

In an ambitious move to enhance health governance and push towards universal health coverage, WHO supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) in developing a comprehensive national health promotion strategy.

Supporting the introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) is a testament to our commitment to support the government's goal of ensuring that every citizen has access to essential health services, a critical component of our governance and human rights agenda. These

initiatives will improve health-care access and reduce financial burden, promoting a healthier nation for all Gambians.

In addition, WHO support was pivotal in strengthening health governance by developing a national health promotion strategy and a comprehensive framework for health in all policies. These strategic frameworks are designed to enhance the nation's preparedness and response to health emergencies, including pandemics like COVID-19.



IMPROVING MATERNAL AND NEONATAL HEALTH

"When mothers arrive ready to give birth, I always feel prepared," recounts Therese, a Bundung Maternal and Child Health Hospital midwife. "Everything I learned from the training kicks in - I know what medications to administer, massage the uterus, and monitor both mother and baby closely. With this, we can save lives."

Therese is one of 76 health professionals across The Gambia who received advanced training in obstetric and newborn emergencies this year through a UNICEF-supported program. This capacity building is a critical piece of the puzzle in the country's efforts to make childbirth safer for all women.

While The Gambia has made significant strides in reducing maternal deaths, with a 33% decline in the maternal mortality ratio between 2013 and

2019, preventable tragedies during childbirth are still far too common. Hemorrhage, sepsis, and other complications claim the lives of many Gambian mothers each year, shattering families and communities.

Recognising that no woman should die while giving life, UNFPA and UNICEF are working with the government to provide health workers with the skills and resources they need to manage complications effectively.

"In the past, we would refer all complicated cases to the hospital, but the journey could take hours," explains Haddy, another midwife who received the emergency training. "Now, we can intervene immediately and stabilise patients before transfer if needed. It's making a real difference."



"When mothers arrive ready to give birth, I always feel prepared. Everything I learned from the training kicks in - I know what medications to administer, massage the uterus, and monitor both mother and baby closely. With this, we can save lives."



“I used to think that as long as my children had enough rice to fill their bellies, that was enough, But now I understand that real health comes from a rainbow of foods. I’m committed to giving my kids the best possible.”



OUTCOME 2.3 INCREASED EQUITABLE AND QUALITY ACCESS TO NUTRITION-SPECIFIC AND SENSITIVE SERVICES, INCLUDING THE MOST VULNERABLE.



CHARTING A PATH TO ZERO HUNGER

In the village of Kudang in the Central River Region, Aja Fatou Ceesay is busy preparing lunch for her family. But today, instead of the usual rice and fish, she’s serving a colourful spread of ngumbo, papaya, and black-eyed peas.

“Since getting nutrition counselling at the clinic, I’ve learned so much about the importance of a diverse diet, especially for my little ones,” the 30-year-old mother of four explains. “I’m trying many new recipes to ensure they get all the necessary vitamins and nutrients.”

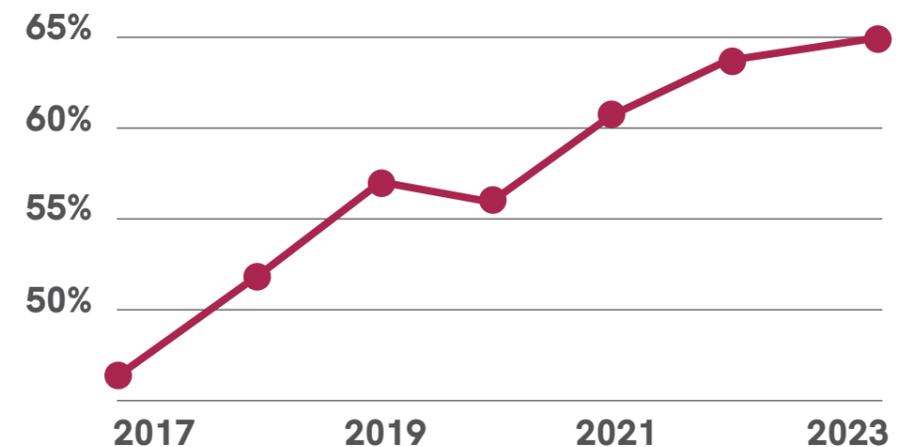
Aja is one of the 76,456 caregivers reached by UNICEF’s Infant and Young Child Feeding program. The initiative is working to transform how young children eat and develop through one-on-one counselling,

cooking demonstrations, and community dialogues.

“What children consume in the first years of life lays the foundation for their lifelong health and wellbeing,” says UNICEF Nutrition Officer Momodou Njai. “Empowering caregivers with knowledge and skills on optimal feeding practices can prevent malnutrition and unlock children’s full potential.”

This preventive focus is complemented by UNICEF’s support for treating children who become malnourished. In 2023, 3,558 children with severe acute malnutrition received life-saving care, with a cure rate of 90% - a testament to the strength of the community-based treatment system UNICEF has helped build over the years.

THE GAMBIA NUTRITION REPORT



Still, significant gaps remain in both the prevention and treatment of malnutrition. Micronutrient deficiencies are widespread, with anaemia affecting 50.4% of children under 5. And despite progress, stunting still impacts over 1 in 5 children nationally, robbing them of their full growth and development.

To accelerate progress, the UN is supporting The Gambia in taking a whole-of-government approach to nutrition. This year, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Health to update the National Nutrition Policy, bringing greater coherence and ambition to efforts across sectors. FAO supported the development of the country's first Food-Based Dietary Guidelines, adapting global recommendations to the local context.

"Nutrition is everyone's business - it can't be siloed off in any one ministry or discipline," asserts NaNA's Director. "The new policy and guidelines give us a common vision to rally around, from agriculture to education to social protection. By working together, we can achieve far more than we could alone."

Critically, the policy and guidelines put gender equity and social inclusion at the heart of nutrition action. They recognise that women's empowerment is critical to breaking intergenerational cycles of malnutrition and that interventions must reach the most vulnerable to leave no one behind.

This equity lens has shaped many of the UN's nutrition programs this year. For example, WFP provided cash transfers to 6,552 vulnerable households to meet their food needs during the lean season. Meanwhile, UNICEF procured vital therapeutic foods to stave off life-threatening malnutrition in hard-to-reach areas.

"Ending hunger is not just about increasing food production - it's about ensuring equitable access and utilization of nutritious diets, even in times of scarcity," says WFP Representative Miranda Sande. "This requires a combination of targeted safety nets, resilient food systems, and behaviour change at the household level."

In 2023, the UN invested heavily in nutrition education and social mobilisation. FAO trained over 5,000 community members on good nutrition, hygiene, and cooking practices, while WFP reached 45,000 people with messages on dietary diversity through radio/TV.

This wide-net approach is complemented by more focused interventions for groups with special nutritional needs. For example, UNICEF supported the provision of iron-folate supplements to adolescent girls to combat high rates of anaemia while also offering nutrition counselling tailored to the needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Aja Fatou's story is a microcosm of the change these multi-layered efforts are sparking. Armed with new knowledge and access to nutritious foods, she and thousands of caregivers like her are reshaping how their families eat and live.

"I used to think that as long as my children had enough rice to fill their bellies, that was enough," Aja Fatou reflects. "But now I understand that real health comes from a rainbow of foods. It's not always easy to afford or find diverse ingredients, but I'm committed to giving my kids the best start possible."

As The Gambia looks to the future, this commitment must be matched by sustained action at all levels to build a food

system that delivers for everyone. The UN is supporting the government to develop a new National Food Systems Transformation Pathway, laying out an ambitious agenda for change.

From promoting nutrient-dense crops to fortifying staple foods and diversifying diets to strengthening safety nets, the Pathway offers a comprehensive blueprint for ending hunger and malnutrition in all its forms.

The stories woven throughout this section offer a glimpse of what such an impact can look like. From the oyster farmer regenerating her resource base to the mother nourishing her child to reach their full potential, seeds of transformation are taking root across The Gambia.

With each new skill learned, each nutritious meal served, and each sustainable practice adopted, Gambians are writing a new story for their food system - and future.

"What children consume in the first years of life lays the foundation for their lifelong health and wellbeing, so Empowering caregivers with knowledge and skills on optimal feeding practices can prevent malnutrition and unlock children's full potential."



“Before, I constantly lived with stress, unsure how I would provide the next meal. Now I can breathe easier, plan, and give my children more than just the bare minimum.”



OUTCOME 2.4 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PROTECTION



INCREASED ACCESS TO INTEGRATED, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

In 2023, we provided integrated, inclusive and sustainable social protection services to thousands of vulnerable Gambians. Our programs were made possible through close collaboration with government partners and donors and positively impacted the lives of nearly 260,000 children.

Through small and large initiatives, we are weaving a stronger social fabric that catches families before they fall into extreme hardship and empowers them with opportunity. Our significant achievements include:

<p>01 Supporting the National Social Protection system, a collaboration between the World Bank and the government, aids 51,775 households (estimated 258,875 children).</p>	<p>04 Keeping 16,150 children in school.</p>
<p>Giving 26,526 people crucial food aid, with 702 metric tons distributed and \$187,641 dispersed.</p> <p>02</p>	<p>Addressing 1,824 child protection cases via a UN-supported case management system.</p> <p>05</p>
<p>03 Developing groundbreaking Shock-responsive and Gender-Focused Social Safety Nets study and Beneficiary Targeting Guidance.</p>	



SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS UPLIFT OVER 50,000 HOUSEHOLDS

“I no longer have to worry about how I will feed my children.” Those are the words of Fatoumatta Jallow, a 39-year-old mother of five living in the Upper River Region. Like tens of thousands of other vulnerable families, Fatoumatta’s household benefitted this year from the WFP and World Bank-funded National Social Protection system.

In total, 51,775 households received cash transfers and in-kind support through the initiative in 2023 - an estimated 258,875 children, assuming an average of 5 children per home. This aid represents a vital lifeline for families living on the edge - the difference between hunger and sustenance, despair and hope.

Fatoumatta says the assistance has brought stability in a turbulent time. “Before, I constantly lived with stress, unsure how I would provide the next meal. Now I can breathe easier, plan, and give my children more than just the bare minimum.”

The impact ripples beyond each family to their wider community. With a bit more cash to spend, local economies receive a boost. And as more children are adequately nourished and cared for, society grows stronger.



STAVING OFF HUNGER FOR THOUSANDS

When crops failed again this year amid a prolonged drought, Awa Sanneh, a 61-year-old woman from the Lower River Region, didn’t know how she and her two grandchildren would survive the lean season. Their food reserves had dwindled to almost nothing.

Help arrived in the form of WFP’s food assistance program. Awa’s family was among 6,528 people in the region who received cash transfers totalling

\$187,641 to help them afford basic food staples. WFP distributed 702 metric tons of food directly in other hard-hit areas, reaching another 19,998 beneficiaries.

“The cash lasted us through the worst months until the new harvest arrived,” Awa says. “It kept hunger at bay and gave us strength to keep working. I shudder to think what would have happened without it.”



CATCHING THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN

Musa's childhood has been scarred by abuse and neglect. Orphaned at a young age, he was sent to live with his extended family, who mistreated him. He ran away repeatedly, preferring to take his chances on the streets than suffer more harm at home.

Musa represents one of 1,824 child protection cases registered and addressed by the Ministry in 2023 via the newly strengthened case management system with UNICEF support. With this platform active in all seven regions, The Gambia has its first comprehensive national-level oversight of child protection issues and interventions.

"Before, many abused and exploited children were falling through the cracks. There were no standardised protocols for detecting risks, reporting problems, and deploying solutions," says a government official. "With the case management system,

we can identify the most vulnerable kids and connect them to a range of services to improve their circumstances - counselling, medical care, legal aid, relocation to a safe situation, help to re-enrol in school, and more."

In Musa's case, a local social worker intervened, placing him in a group foster home and arranging catch-up tutoring so he could restart his education. "I feel safe here," Musa says of his new living arrangement. Maybe I can be a normal kid again and start thinking about what I want to be when I grow up."

Together, we are building a Gambia where the social contract leaves no one behind - where everyone is protected, nourished, and empowered with opportunity. This is the foundation of the nation's stable, prosperous, and equitable future.



NOURISHING MINDS, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

In rural Gambian schools like Kerr Chebu Primary, the daily lunch provided by WFP's Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme is more than just a meal - it's a lifeline. For many students, it's their only balanced meal of the day, providing the nourishment they need to concentrate, learn, and thrive.

In 2023, WFP's HGSF programme reached at least 40 per cent of primary school children across all six regions of the country. The initiative feeds students and supports local agriculture by sourcing fresh produce from smallholder farmers.

This year, 914 farmers participated, gaining a reliable crop market and a steady income to reinvest in their farms and families. WFP also trained School Management Committees on procurement, food safety, and nutrition to ensure the programme's quality and sustainability.

The results have been transformative. WFP reached 367,849 people, including 366,993 children who received daily nutritious meals. Participating

schools saw marked improvements in enrollment, attendance, retention, and completion rates.

"Before, I would often miss school to help my mother sell vegetables, as this is how I am fed with my siblings," says 12-year-old Fatou Jallow. "But now, with the lunch program, I can focus on my studies without worrying about my next meal during school hours."

The HGSF programme's success showcases the power of integrated approaches to development. By tackling hunger, education, and rural poverty, WFP is helping create a virtuous cycle of change.

"School feeding is about nourishing minds and empowering communities," says WFP Country Director Miranda Sande. "Continued investment can transform education and food security across The Gambia."

The smiles at Kerr Chebu Primary show that transformation is already underway, one nutritious meal at a time.

"School feeding is about nourishing minds and empowering communities,"



OUTCOME 2.5: ENSURING EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT BY EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH TO REDUCE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

The UN in The Gambia worked with the government and partners to empower women and youth, protect them from harmful practices like FGM and child marriage, and amplify their voices in national development.

In this section, you will discover how community dialogues transform mindsets, youth become

agents of change, and an enabling environment forms through stronger laws, policies and support services.

In 2023, we reached thousands of Gambians with vital advocacy, capacity building and direct support to advance gender equality and youth empowerment; our efforts included:



NOURISHING MINDS, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

"I never questioned FGM before - it was simply our tradition," says Isatou, a mother of three girls from the Upper River Region. "But hearing other women share their pain and medical complications, I realised I could not let my daughters suffer this, too."

Isatou participated in one of the many community dialogues held this year by UNFPA to raise awareness of FGM's harmful impacts. In total, these sessions engaged 600 people, over two-thirds of them adolescent girls and women, in candid conversations - often for the first time.

Religious and traditional leaders, men and youth also took part, examining how practices like FGM violate human rights and undermine women's health and dignity. For many, it was an eye-opening experience.

"As a man, I never fully understood how FGM affects women psychologically and physically," admits Amadou, a village elder. "Now that I know, I am committed to protecting our girls and supporting survivors."

These dialogues are just one element of UNCT's multifaceted efforts to accelerate the abandonment of FGM. UNICEF also supported an international conference on FGM, while UNFPA funding enabled the first-ever prosecution of FGM perpetrators under The Gambia's 2015 ban—a watershed moment.

But real change must take root at the community level. That is why UNFPA and UNICEF empower grassroots advocates like Awa Ceesay, a youth activist in the Lower River Region.

"FGM has stolen so much from our women - childhoods, lives, dignity," she says. "It's time to break the silence and end this cycle of trauma." With training from UNFPA, Awa is now leading outreach and dialogues in her district. She has even convinced two former circumcisers to become advocates against the practice they once performed.

As more and more Gambians reject FGM, a decisive shift is taking place. "We are finally talking openly about this taboo topic," says women's rights campaigner Isatou Jeng. "Hearts and minds are changing. Much work is still ahead, but I believe a Gambia without FGM is within reach."

EMPOWERING YOUTH AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

"My dream is to become a journalist and use my voice to fight for girls' rights," says 17-year-old Fatou, a participant in UNFPA's Empowerment Camp in the Lower River Region. "This training has given me the confidence and knowledge to take action in my community."

Fatou was one of 50 adolescent girls who took part in the camp this year, which provided comprehensive sessions on sexual and reproductive health, GBV, and life skills. The girls also developed advocacy plans to engage their peers and families on these often unspoken issues.

Upon returning home, Fatou wasted no time using her new skills. She launched an FGM awareness club at her school and began producing a weekly radio show discussing the challenges facing girls.

"At first, people in my village said these topics were inappropriate for a young woman to discuss publicly," Fatou shares. "But I explained these are human rights issues that affect us all. Slowly, mindsets are changing. Even my imam has expressed his support."

Fatou's inspiring activism is just one example of how the UN is nurturing youth leadership to drive progress on gender equality in The Gambia. UNFPA and UNICEF also trained hundreds of peer educators this year who are now disseminating vital information on health and rights to other youth.

New platforms like UNFPA's Suma Tyme mobile app further empower Gambian youth with SRHR knowledge at their fingertips. And over 10,000 young people were reached with GBV awareness campaigns, including a ground-breaking UNFPA-supported men's conference on positive masculinity.

"We need to redefine what it means to 'be a man,'" says conference participant Abdoulie, 20. "It's not about controlling women, but respecting them as equals. I'm spreading this message to my football team. If we start with youth, we can shape a better future."

"At first, people in my village said these topics were inappropriate for a young woman to discuss publicly," Fatou shares. "But I explained these are human rights issues that affect us all. Slowly, mindsets are changing. Even my imam has expressed his support."



FROM GRASSROOTS TO GOVERNMENT: BUILDING AN ARCHITECTURE OF PROTECTION

When Binta mustered the courage to report her abusive husband to the police, she was greeted with disbelief, invasive questions, and inaction. “I felt judged and dismissed,” she recalls. “They made me feel it was my fault. I lost hope of getting help.”

Sadly, Binta’s experience is all too common. A shortage of survivor-centred protocols, referral systems and trained personnel has long undermined access to justice and care for GBV victims.

However, that is changing through the new National GBV Case Management and Referral Protocol and standardised police training developed this year with UNFPA support. Now being rolled out nationwide, these tools provide clear procedures for handling GBV cases with sensitivity and a survivor-first approach.

“The training opened my eyes to the realities of domestic violence and how to respond properly,” says Officer Fatty, one of 150 police and security personnel equipped through the initiative. “We learned to treat survivors with respect, connect them with medical and psychosocial services, and collect evidence for prosecution.”

These efforts are being reinforced by the launch of the Gender Management Information System, the country’s first integrated platform to track GBV incidents and coordinate response. A dedicated 24/7 helpline is also dramatically expanding access to life-saving support services.

With more robust systems and capacities taking shape, a paradigm shift is underway. “For too long, GBV was dismissed as a private matter,” says a Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare official. “Now we are sending a clear message - it will not be tolerated, survivors will be protected, and perpetrators will face justice.”

Strides are also being made on the legislative front. This year saw the first successful prosecution under the FGM ban and the development of a comprehensive FGM bill to accelerate the law’s implementation. UNFPA and partners’ advocacy also secured policymakers’ commitments to boost GBV prevention and response budgets.



“For too long, GBV was dismissed as a private matter, now we are sending a clear message - it will not be tolerated, survivors will be protected, and perpetrators will face justice.”



OUTCOME 3.2: ENHANCED SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND INTEGRATED NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT FOR FOOD SECURITY AND INCOME GENERATION.



CULTIVATING RESILIENCE THROUGH CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

Ramatoulie Bah proudly surveys her lush rice field, marvelling at the thriving crop that will soon nourish her family. The 47-year-old mother of five lives in the rural district of Jokadou in the North Bank Region, an area long prone to food insecurity due to erratic rainfall and soil degradation.

But this season, things are different. Ramatoulie is among 200 farmers who received training in good agricultural practices through an FAO-supported initiative. From land preparation to post-harvest management, she gained essential skills to boost rice production while protecting the fragile local ecosystem. One such initiative is the North Bank Tree Nursery Garden. Supported by the FFF, this Association is crucial in nurturing tree seedlings and distributing them to individuals and communities eager to participate in afforestation efforts through training programs on nursery setup and distributing fruit and timber trees to community forests.

“I learned techniques like planting in rows, using organic fertilisers and practising crop rotation,” Awa explains. “I was initially sceptical, but the results speak for themselves. My yields have nearly doubled compared to previous years.”

The impact extends beyond Ramatoulie’s paddy. FAO installed 20 milling machines in 10 communities, including hers, to ease the burden of manual processing. These machines dramatically reduced the time and labour women spent pounding rice, freeing them up to engage in other income-generating activities and invest more in their family’s well-being.

“The collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization and local organisations like the North Bank Tree Nursery Garden exemplifies the power of partnerships in driving meaningful change toward sustainable forestry practices and climate resilience,” Ramatoulie Bah, a member of the association, remarked.

Ramatoulie uses her surplus crop and increased earnings to diversify her children’s diets and pay their school fees. “I no longer have to worry about feeding my family or keeping my kids in school,” she shares. “It’s a big relief and motivates me to continue learning and improving my farm.”

FAO Representative Moshibudi Rampedi says the project exemplifies the importance of a holistic approach to building food system resilience. “We can’t just focus on increasing production without considering sustainability, equity and nutrition. By equipping farmers with climate-smart skills, appropriate technologies and links to markets, we can set them on a path to lasting food security.”

Indeed, FAO’s efforts extend beyond rice to strengthening The Gambia’s wider agricultural sector. This year saw the establishment of 30 poultry schemes and 50 small ruminant schemes in rural communities, providing a vital source of income and protein. FAO is also promoting sustainable land and water management through initiatives like agroforestry and soil conservation.

“Agriculture is the backbone of The Gambia’s economy and a critical entry point for achieving multiple SDGs,” notes Rampedi. “By investing in



“I learned techniques like planting in rows, using organic fertilisers and practising crop rotation, I was initially sceptical, but the results speak for themselves. My yields have nearly doubled compared to previous years.”



the sector strategically, we can drive progress on poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, nutrition and beyond. It’s all interconnected.”

This systems-level approach is reflected in our policy work, such as FAO’s support for developing a new National Fertilizer Policy and Groundnut Quality Regulation this year. Creating an environment that enables farmers to thrive is essential for realising The Gambia’s agricultural potential.

“For too long, we have seen our soils degrade, our forests deplete, and our productivity stagnate,”

says the Regional Agriculture Director Saikou Sanyang. “But there is immense opportunity to turn this around by embracing sustainable, climate-resilient practices. With the right policies, investments, and mindsets, we can build a flourishing agriculture sector that drives inclusive growth and ensures no Gambian goes hungry.”

As farmers like Ramatoulie can attest, this transformation is already taking root. With each new technique mastered and each abundant harvest reaped, they sow the seeds of a more resilient future.

OUTCOME 3.3: STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL DISASTERS

Across The Gambia, communities are grappling with the increasingly severe impacts of climate change. The challenges are multifaceted and complex, from erratic rainfall patterns disrupting agricultural cycles to rising sea levels threatening coastal livelihoods.

In 2023, the UN intensified its efforts to help The Gambia build resilience to these mounting risks. Our approach is two-pronged: equipping communities with the knowledge and tools to adapt to a changing climate while also supporting the government in developing more robust, climate-sensitive policies and plans.

At the local level, we work with farmers, fishers, and other climate-vulnerable groups to promote sustainable, resilient practices. For example, FAO trained 200 farmers on climate-smart agriculture techniques, such as agroforestry, intercropping, and soil and water conservation. These practices are helping farmers like Ebrima Jallow in the Upper River Region to cope with increasingly unpredictable rainfall.

“Before, when the rains were late or too heavy, I would lose a significant portion of my crops,” Mamadou shares. “But now, with the techniques I learned from FAO, my fields can better withstand these shocks. I’m using drought-tolerant seeds, practising mulching to retain soil moisture, and diversifying my crops to spread risk. Last year, despite the erratic weather, I had my best harvest yet.”

Beyond agriculture, we also support climate change adaptation in other key sectors. In the coastal community of Gunjur, UNDP worked with local stakeholders to develop a participatory Climate Risk Management plan. The plan identified key vulnerabilities, such as coastal erosion and declining fish stocks, and outlined strategies to address them, such as mangrove restoration and improved fish processing techniques.

“The plan has given us a way to make our community more resilient,” says Fatou Ceesay, a fish processor in Gunjur. “We’re now working together to implement the plans, such as establishing a community-managed marine protected area to allow fish populations to regenerate. It’s not easy, but we know it’s vital for securing our livelihoods and our children’s futures in the face of climate change.”

Our work at the policy and institutional level complements these localised efforts. This year, UNDP supported the government in developing a comprehensive National Adaptation Plan (NAP), providing a framework for climate change adaptation across all sectors. The NAP was created through an inclusive, participatory process involving various stakeholders, from government ministries to civil society organisations.

“The NAP is a significant milestone for The Gambia,” affirms Dr Dawda Badjie, Executive Director of the National Environment Agency. “For the first time, we have a holistic, long-term vision for building climate resilience. Importantly, the plan prioritises the needs of the most vulnerable communities and ecosystems. Its implementation will be key to safeguarding hard-won development gains in the face of climate change.”

To support the NAP’s rollout, UNEP is working with the government to strengthen its climate change monitoring and evaluation capacities. This includes establishing a robust system for tracking adaptation interventions and their impacts and enhancing the use of climate data in decision-making.

WFP is also partnering with the government to enhance its emergency preparedness and response capacities. This year, WFP supported the development of a new National Disaster Risk Management Policy and Strategic Action Plan. The policy outlines strategies for mitigating disaster risks, such as floods and droughts, and improving coordination in emergency response.

Critically, the policy recognizes that effective disaster risk management is not just about responding to crises but about proactively reducing vulnerability. To this end, WFP is working with the government to strengthen its social protection systems, ensuring that they are more shock-responsive and can quickly scale up to support affected populations in times of emergency.

These are just a few examples of how the UN supports The Gambia in building climate and disaster resilience. A mosaic of resilience is taking shape from the farmer adapting his practices to the coastal community, developing a risk management plan, and the government enhancing its emergency response capacities.



SUPPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA



In 2023, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in The Gambia remained steadfast in its commitment to fostering robust partnerships with the government, multilateral organizations, and bilateral partners. These collaborative efforts were geared towards securing financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aligning with the nation’s development priorities.

Building on the foundation laid in 2022, the government, in close collaboration with the UN, made significant strides in by optimizing financing mechanisms for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the National Development Plan (NDP).

Innovative partnerships forged by the UN in The Gambia continued to play a pivotal role in advancing the SDGs and leveraging financing to achieve the 2030 Agenda. A joint programme under the Joint SDG Fund has made substantial progress in several areas of domestic resource mobilization towards SDG Financing. This initiative has strengthened the country’s capacity to generate and effectively utilize resources for sustainable development.

The Development Partners’ Group (DPG), co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the US Ambassador, remained a crucial platform for development partners to coordinate and discuss strategic issues of utmost importance to The Gambia. Key areas of focus included Security Sector Reform, Democracy, and Strengthening Good Governance, among others. The DPG facilitated constructive dialogues and collective efforts towards addressing these critical challenges.



RESULTS OF THE UN WORKING MORE AND BETTER TOGETHER: UN COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS, AND EFFICIENCY

UNITED NATIONS COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

In 2023, the UN Communications Group (UNCG) played a pivotal role in shaping narratives and promoting understanding of the UN's work in The Gambia.

The UNCG developed a series of communication products to advance The Delivering as One agenda in The Gambia. This includes the organization of a field mission together with The Resident Coordinator and UN Heads of Agencies to see how UN interventions across the country are impacting on the lives of the people. A series of audio visual and written human interest stories were produced. The UNCG effectively led communications during the development of the UNSDCF.

OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Operations Management Team (OMT) made significant progress on improving coordination and efficiency across UN agencies in The Gambia. Aligned with the Business Operations Strategy, OMT supported agencies in identifying and collaborating on common business operation areas.

This led to the successful adoption of shared online systems for improved planning and information sharing. OMT was instrumental in migrating operations to the new Business Operations Strategy online platform.

GENDER TECHNICAL GROUP

The UN's Gender Technical Group (GTG) actively drove progress on gender equality priorities in 2023. GTG met regularly to discuss issues, implement collaborative activities, and find synergies across agencies. They rolled out the UNCT System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) gender scorecard in The Gambia and published a report to guide next steps and a series of activities.

DISABILITY GROUP

Supporting disability rights and inclusion was another priority area for the UN team in The Gambia, with the Disability Group playing a key role. A major milestone achieved was the establishment of the National Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities. The UN provided technical guidance and funding support for this Council, which will be critical in implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).





KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR 2024

PROGRAMMING AND SDG IMPLEMENTATION

The Gambia ended the final year of its United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in 2023 ushering in a new CF that is aligned with national priorities, the UN will target initiatives to foster economic revitalization, strengthen democratic governance, enhance food security and nutrition, and promote inclusive opportunities.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND SDG FINANCING

Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, the UN Country Team will strengthen its role in as a convener and catalyst to spur greater investment in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in The Gambia by leveraging on existing partners and building new ones with development partners.

POPULATION CENSUS

In 2024, the UN Country Team will provide strategic support to the Government of The Gambia as it conducts its first population census since 2013. An accurate census is crucial for national planning and development, ensuring policies are designed based on up-to-date demographic data.

NEW CONSTITUTION

With the initial draft constitution rejected in 2021, the UN Country Team will provide targeted support in 2024 as The Gambia restarts the reform process. A rights-based constitution that reflects all voices is crucial for lasting peace and democracy. The UNCT will advise on an inclusive, participatory process that incorporates views from women, youth, minorities and other groups.



UNITED NATIONS
IN THE GAMBIA



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