



REPORT

Two-Day Training on National and International Legal Instruments Addressing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Held on 22nd May, 2025 at the Medical and Dental Council of The Gambia hall, Bakau, and 23rd May, 2025 at the National Assembly Premises in Banjul

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1. Introduction

This report presents a detailed summary of a two-day high-level training on legal instruments addressing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), held on May 22–23, 2025. The training was convened by the African Women Rights Advocates (AWRA), with financial support from the World Bank.

The event aimed to strengthen the legal and policy response to FGM by enhancing the knowledge and engagement of key stakeholders, including Members of the National Assembly (NAMs), Social Workers, Activist, and Civil Society Organizations. A total of 48 participants attended the training over the two days: 25 social workers and activists on Day 1, and 23 National Assembly Members on Day 2.

2. Objectives of the Training

The workshop aimed to:

- Raise awareness of existing national and international legal frameworks related to FGM.
- Strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders to interpret and apply these instruments.
- Foster cross-sectoral collaboration in preventing and responding to FGM.
- Identify gaps in the implementation and enforcement of FGM laws.
- Develop actionable recommendations for legal and policy reform.

3. Methodology

The training adopted a participatory and interactive approach, combining expert presentations, survivor testimonies, group discussions, legal case analysis, role-playing exercises, and open dialogue sessions.

- **Day 1** emphasized the context, human rights dimensions, and legal frameworks related to FGM.
- **Day 2** focused on legislative enforcement, institutional roles, and strategic partnerships for implementation and reform.

4. Summary of Proceedings

Day 1: Thursday, May 22, 2025

Venue: *Medical and Dental Council of The Gambia*

The first day of the training focused on laying the foundational understanding of FGM, legal frameworks, and survivor-centered approaches for social workers, activists, and community advocates.

- **Opening Session**
The training commenced with welcoming remarks by **Ms. Mam Lisa Camara**,



Co-founder of AWRA. She outlined the purpose of the training, emphasized the urgency of coordinated national efforts to end FGM, and highlighted the importance of grounding the response in legal and human rights-based frameworks. She thanked the World Bank for its technical and financial support and welcomed participants from civil society, youth organizations, and the social work profession.

- **Session 1: Understanding FGM – Context, Culture, and Human Rights**

This session unpacked the cultural and historical dimensions of FGM in The Gambia. Facilitators discussed why the practice persists, linking it to social norms, gender expectations, and traditional initiation rites. Personal testimonies were shared by survivors, offering powerful first-hand accounts of the lifelong physical, psychological, and emotional effects of FGM. The session emphasized the need to balance cultural sensitivity with a rights-based approach to reform. Participants actively engaged in discussing how harmful cultural practices can be challenged without alienating communities.

- **Session 2: Legal and Human Rights Framework**

Legal experts provided an overview of the **Women’s (Amendment) Act, 2015**, which criminalizes FGM in The Gambia. The presentation explored specific sections of the law, including definitions, penalties, and the protection of victims. Facilitators also analyzed enforcement challenges, highlighting instances of non-compliance, lack of public awareness, and institutional capacity gaps. Discussions followed on recent court cases and how judicial decisions have shaped the national conversation around FGM. Participants shared experiences of working with law enforcement and the judiciary, noting the importance of sensitization and legal literacy.

- **Session 3: Legal Manual on FGM/C – National & International Instruments**

This session introduced participants to the legal manual developed by the World Bank, detailing key international treaties and regional protocols. Instruments discussed included:

- **The Maputo Protocol (Article 5)** – specifically calls for the prohibition of harmful practices such as FGM.
- **The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child** – obligates states to protect children from harmful cultural practices.
- **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** and **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** – both of which The Gambia has ratified.

Facilitators highlighted the importance of aligning domestic legislation with international obligations. The session closed with a dialogue on the role of CSOs in monitoring state compliance and using international mechanisms to hold governments accountable.

- **Session 4: Prevention and Supporting Survivors**

This practical session focused on prevention strategies and survivor-centered support systems. Presenters emphasized the need for trauma-informed care, access to psychosocial services, and community-based referral systems. Discussions addressed the



gaps in services for survivors, including stigma, limited healthcare access, and lack of follow-up. Participants proposed integrating FGM education into existing child protection and gender-based violence programs. Role-playing exercises illustrated how to respond sensitively to disclosures of FGM.

Day 2: Friday, May 23, 2025

Venue: *National Assembly Premises, Banjul*

Day two targeted Members of the National Assembly, aiming to strengthen their role in legislative oversight, legal reform, and policy enforcement.

- **Opening and Welcome Remarks**

The session opened with an address from the Clerk of the National Assembly, who acknowledged AWRA and the World Bank for organizing a timely and necessary training. He encouraged lawmakers to use their legislative power to ensure the enforcement and advancement of laws protecting women and girls.

- **Session 5: Revisiting the Context of FGM**

This session provided a condensed overview of Day 1's discussion on the cultural and human rights context of FGM. New perspectives were added to reinforce lawmakers' understanding of how societal norms fuel resistance to change, and how cultural gatekeepers can either hinder or advance reform. Special emphasis was placed on the role of lawmakers in shifting public opinion through community engagement and policy dialogue.

- **Session 6: Legal and Human Rights Framework (Expanded)**

Legal experts revisited the **Women's (Amendment) Act, 2015**, and examined its enforcement through the lens of institutional accountability. Parliamentarians discussed how the law is being implemented at local levels, and where enforcement is weakest. The session also reviewed international obligations under:

- **CEDAW** (Articles 2 and 5): calling for the elimination of discriminatory customs and laws.
- **CRC** (Articles 19 and 24): protecting children from all forms of violence and harmful practices.
- **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** recommendations from the UN Human Rights Council: specific mentions of FGM-related action points.

Participants acknowledged the need to not only uphold but actively monitor Gambia's international commitments, and discussed potential amendments to strengthen protections for victims and whistleblowers.

- **Session 7: Legal Manual – Institutional and Legislative Actions**

Building on the previous day's review of the legal manual, facilitators focused on strategies for incorporating the manual into institutional practice. Lawmakers were guided on how to translate legal instruments into actionable policies and oversight



mechanisms. Comparative examples from other African countries were presented to inspire local adaptation. A group discussion followed on establishing a Parliamentary Caucus or working group focused on FGM and related harmful practices.

5. Key Outcomes

- Improved understanding of national and international legal instruments addressing FGM.
- Recognition of the disconnect between legal provisions and enforcement practices.

6. Recommendations

1. Enhance training for law enforcement and the judiciary on FGM-related laws and procedures.
2. Develop clear reporting protocols and referral pathways for FGM cases.
3. Amend the Women's Act to include protective provisions for whistleblowers and survivors.
4. Launch a national awareness campaign linking law, health risks, and rights.
5. Establish a monitoring body to track prosecutions and implementation of anti-FGM laws.
6. Engage traditional leaders in championing legal and behavioral change within communities.
7. Engage both formal and informal sectors, e.g., including it in education curricula as part of civic education.
8. Monitoring mechanisms are in place to protect newly born babies from the harmful practice.
9. Collaborate with National Assembly Members to identify community-based groups for a more effective grassroots approach.
10. Consistency of messaging and use of appropriate language from different CSOs.
11. Engage Religious Leaders, especially Imams and Islamic Scholars.

7. Key Message

Culture must be respected and protected, but not at the expense of basic human rights. Any cultural practice that causes harm, especially to vulnerable groups like women and children, must be examined, questioned, and where necessary, abolished in favor of rights-based progress.

This principle is foundational to the legal and moral arguments against harmful traditional practices like FGM.

8. Annexes

- Workshop Agenda
- List of Participants



- Summaries of Presentation
- Photos and Media Coverage