



2024 Annual Report

*Bettering The Lives of Communities
by Promoting Good Governance*





**THE CONSTITUTION
WE WANT
CONVERGENCE**

15 APRIL
2024

2024

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Executive Summary

The year 2024 marked a defining chapter in Gambia Participates' pursuit of democratic accountability, civic empowerment, and inclusive governance. This Annual Report covers our work from January to December 2024, during which we prioritized civic awareness on democratic reforms, enhanced fiscal transparency, strengthened local governance engagement, and expanded into advocacy for sustainable agriculture and agroecology.

*Our work this year centered on increasing civic awareness around the draft constitution and rekindling public discourse on long-awaited constitutional reforms. Through nationwide outreach campaigns, community dialogues, and mass media engagement, we simplified the content of the draft constitution and brought the conversation to the people. Through our various projects, we reached in-person a total **1444 citizens** across **115 communities** and **202 satellite villages**. Equally a total of **1379 citizens** were reached through of advocacy caravans across various previous projects engaging 478 satellite communities.*

A major highlight was “The Constitution We Want” Convergence. This event served as a catalyst for renewed momentum, enabling diverse stakeholders to collectively call for the revival of the constitutional reform process. Our efforts, backed by consistent policy advocacy, helped shape the national agenda, culminating in the re-introduction of the 2024 Draft Constitution a critical milestone for The Gambia's democratic future.

In 2024, Gambia Participates also deepened its work in electoral governance, participating in international election observation missions in the United States and Ghana. These missions offered key lessons on the use of technology, timely collation and reporting of election results, campaign financing regulation, and institutional preparedness insights we are now contextualizing for domestic electoral reforms in preparation for upcoming electoral cycles.

In the area of fiscal transparency, we focused on bridging the information gap between government institutions and citizens. We collaborated with the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to produce citizen friendly budget reports to enable citizens to better understand how public funds are managed. Additionally, we facilitated budget engagement sessions between local government authorities and citizens, creating platforms for dialogue on resource allocation, local priorities, and service delivery.

In alignment with our commitment to sustainable development, Gambia Participates expanded its advocacy into the field of agroecology. Through community sensitization and stakeholder dialogues, we encouraged the adoption of organic fertilizers and sustainable farming practices, particularly among rural farmers and youth. This emerging area of work reflects our growing recognition of the role of environmental governance and food security in democratic development.

Our impact in 2024 is a reflection of the resilience of our team, the strength of our partnerships, and the trust of the communities we serve. From the grassroots to the policy level, Gambia Participates remains committed to creating a more transparent, inclusive, and accountable Gambia where citizens are informed and institutions serve the public interest.

As we look ahead to 2025, we renew our commitment to citizen-centered reform and to the values of justice, equity, and sustainability.

A Word from the Executive Director

As we reflect on the work of Gambia Participates over the past year, it is evident that our mission remains as critical as ever. Gambia Participates is a civil society organization committed to fostering transparency, accountability and good governance. The fluctuation of democratic governance, the absence of political commitment to constitutional reform, increase in public sector corruption and impunity makes our work ever demanding. Our work is driven by the belief that an increased and an effective civil society oversight, with an informed and engaged citizenry, democracy will thrive.

Throughout the year, we have undertaken initiatives aimed at increasing fiscal transparency, combating corruption and constitutional reform to strengthening democratic processes. Our engagement with communities, policymakers and stakeholders has played a crucial role in shaping conversations around governance and accountability. From grassroots awareness campaigns to policy advocacy, we have worked extensively to ensure that the democracy that Gambians fought for is not taken for granted and that, citizen representation is not mere lip service.

Despite the challenges we face, our commitment to democratic values and good governance remains unwavering. As we progress, we will continue to push for reforms that promote integrity, strengthen institutions and empower citizens to actively participate in decision-making processes.

We extend our gratitude to our partners, donors, government establishments and community members who have supported our efforts. Nation building is about collaboration, even if we may not agree with each other's approach and ideology.

Let us remain steadfast in our mission to uphold democracy, justice and integrity. The journey ahead may be demanding, but with collective action, we can drive the change we all desire.

Marr Nyang
Executive Director
Gambia Participates.

About Gambia Participates

Gambia Participates is a civil society organization committed to promoting transparency, accountability and good governance in The Gambia. As part of its mission, the organization advocates for fiscal responsibility, anti-corruption initiatives and democratic reforms while empowering citizens to actively participate in governance processes. By fostering an informed and engaged society, Gambia Participates ensures that government institutions remain accountable to the people they serve.

Gambia Participates supports increasing calls for greater accountability from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to donors, governments, partners and communities. We have worked on numerous projects around Fiscal Transparency, Anti-Corruption, Elections, Strategic Litigation, Advocacy, Access to Information and Research.

A significant part of our work in fiscal transparency involves conducting budget research for The Gambia under the Open Budget Survey (OBS). This research provides critical data on the country's budget transparency, public participation and the strength of oversight institutions. We leverage these insights in supporting government institutions in enhancing public finance management so that national resources are utilized efficiently and equitably.

In addition to research, Gambia Participates actively promotes public engagement in the budget process. Through public forums, media campaigns, and grassroots advocacy, we educate citizens about the national budget, their role in holding leaders accountable, and the impact of budget decisions on development. Our flagship projects such as "Know your budget", and "Follow the money" aim to simplify complex budgetary information, making it accessible to communities and fostering greater civic participation.

Further, we offer pro bono technical support to government institutions and legislators, equipping them with research-based recommendations and policy guidance to improve governance structures. Our legal and policy advocacy initiatives focus on strengthening anti-corruption laws, ensuring electoral integrity, and fostering greater access to information for citizens and stakeholders.

Through our work in elections, strategic litigation, advocacy, and research, Gambia Participates continue to be a driving force in shaping governance discourse in The Gambia. By collaborating with national and international partners, we remain steadfast in our commitment to a transparent and accountable government that serves the interest of the Gambian People.

2024 in Figures



online
371,470



Offline
1443



Men
761



Women
682



Youths
958



Satellite Villages
202



Parliamentarians
40



**Government
Officials**
20

Areas of Intervention

Gambia Participates in its 3 main areas of intervention in 2024 conducted activities under distinctive projects all geared towards promoting good governance. We also went beyond our scope through various projects including the SAPOF Project and most importantly, the Constitution We Want (CWW)



ELECTIONS



**FISCAL
TRANSPARENCY**



**ANTI
CORRUPTION**

PROJECTS

• • •



Fiscal Transparency

Gambia Participates work with multiple stakeholders to improve fiscal transparency and increase public participation in the national budget process and budget accountability.

Strengthening and Sustaining Fiscal Transparency and Accountability in The Gambia (SFTA)



Gambia Participates, with support from the U.S. Embassy Banjul, implemented the Strengthening and Sustaining Fiscal Transparency and Accountability (SFTA) project to improve public participation, budget oversight, and transparency in The Gambia's fiscal governance.

The 2-year project which began in September 2022 contributed to a significant increase in The Gambia's Public Participation score in the 2023 Open Budget Survey (OBS), rising from 9/100 in 2019 to 26/100, surpassing the global average of 15/100. Legislative reforms were achieved, including an amendment to the Constitution that extended the budget review period and mandated earlier submission of the Executive Budget Proposal. Institutional support strengthened budget oversight, particularly through the National Assembly, National Audit Office, and the newly established Parliamentary Budget Office. The initiative also increased public access to financial data by supporting the development of local government websites, training civil society organizations and journalists, and promoting public engagement through open budget dialogues.

Public Participation in the Budget Cycle “Know Your Budget”

The budget process of The Gambia is a top-bottom approach with citizens having less opportunity to participate in budget formulation, execution, and reporting. Citizens tend to see the budget as a government matter because they do not comprehend the bulky and technical budget document. To stir up public interest in budget participation and accountability on the national budget, Gambia Participates facilitating radio programs between citizens and government representatives on the 2024 budget, especially on development programs expected from their respective ministries.

The radio programs created a platform for citizens to engage with key ministries. A total of 7 radio programs have been conducted with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transport, Works, and Infrastructure, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment. 3 radio programs are pending, due to the unavailability of identified ministries. These pending radio programs are expected to be completed before the end of the project.



Public Participation in the Budget Cycle “Know Your Budget”

Activity Outcomes

- *Created a platform for citizens to voice their concerns, suggestions, and questions regarding budget allocations and expenditures.*
- *Citizens were able to voice out the economic hardships faced by their communities in the areas of health, agriculture, roads etc. directly to the responsible ministry.*
- *Facilitated dialogue and exchange between citizens and representatives from relevant government ministries on budget-related issues.*
- *Increased public awareness and understanding of budgetary processes, priorities, and outcomes.*
- *This activity helped foster collaboration and mutual understanding between citizens and government officials for improved governance and service delivery.*
- *A total of 7 ministries were engaged.*

Know Your Budget

Development of 6 Local Government Websites

To enhance communication between citizens and local councils, Gambia Participates through this project supported the development of modern websites for Six councils, including Brikama, Kerewan, Basse, Janjangbureh, and Kuntaur Area Councils. Despite delays in with the administration at the Kuntaur Area Council, a developer has now been identified and contracted for the development of Kuntaur Area Council website.

Despite challenges, significant progress has been made. Of the targeted six websites, five have been achieved, with three completed, one nearing completion, and one progressing steadily. Notably, Brikama and Kerewan Area Councils have already published their 2023 citizens' budgets on their respective websites, aligning with the project's goal of providing councils with standardized web platforms.

The radio programs created a platform for citizens to engage with key ministries. A total of 7 radio programs have been conducted with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transport, Works, and Infrastructure, Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment. 3 radio programs are pending, due to the unavailability of identified ministries. These pending radio programs are expected to be completed before the end of the project.



Radio and Television Program on NAO's Audit Reports and its Mandate:

To achieve fiscal accountability, citizens must possess the knowledge and understanding of public bodies that are responsible for budget oversight and accountability. Understanding the mandates of such institutions like the NAO, citizens can play their part in supporting or influencing the audit programs of NAO.

Gambia Participates supported the National Audit Office to conduct a week-long television program under its public engagement interventions called the “NAO Public Hour”; which is geared towards enhancing greater public awareness and knowledge about the role and work of the NAO. This is also line with NAO's SDP priorities for 2020-2024.

During the week-long activity, 4 TV Programmes were held at 4 different TV stations; GRTS, QTV, The Fatou Network and Kerr Fatou on March 5th, 6th, 7th and 9th, respectively. The interactions at the respective stations were held in English language and partly in local languages as response to the callers. Discussions were around the mandate of the NAO, functions of the Auditor General, types of audits and institutions audited my NAO and some of the challenges faced by the NAO.



Radio and Television Program on NAO's Audit Reports and its Mandate:

Activity Outcomes

- *A total of four (4) TV shows were conducted*
- *The NAO had the chance to discuss their mandate to a wider audience and address some public misconceptions about audit.*
- *The NAO also had the opportunity to access the level of citizen's awareness, perception, and NAO which could help the office in the enhancement of its communication and stakeholder engagement strategy.*
- *The public had the opportunity to provide inputs/recommendations as to how NAO can improve their audit process.*
- *The online TVs alone reached a total of 17,218 viewers, 180 likes, 44 shares and 25 comments.*

National Audit Report

Consultation on the Development of the Budget Advisory Office Institutional Framework

At the helm of fiscal transparency resides budget scrutiny. Gambia Participates commissioned the development of a robust preliminary situational analysis that served as a tool for data gathering to inform the development of the Parliamentary Budget Office institutional framework for the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). The preliminary situational analysis report seeks to collect background information on the role of the Parliamentary Budget Office within the parliamentary environment and how it can be better enhanced. The report is informed by data collected from the Finance and Public Accounts Committee (FPAC), the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), the Office of the Clerk, Ministry of Finance, International Budget Partnership and other respondents. The report is anchored on 4 key areas; capacity and readiness to implement the strategic plan which the work of the PBO is tied to. The subsequent framework will serve as a guide to dictate the PBOs direction and operations as well as enhance its efficiency in providing budget analysis, cogent research reports, fiscal data and technical support and advise to parliament and the National Assembly Members

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Capacity Building Training for Legislatures on Budget Oversight and Public Participation

Budget oversight and public participation are essential components of transparent and accountable government practices. They involve mechanisms through which citizens can engage in the budgetary process, contribute to decision making and hold the government accountable for the allocation and utilization of public funds. The legislatures play a crucial role in budget oversight; this involves the scrutiny and approval of the government's budget proposals. Legislators review budgetary allocations, question government officials and may propose amendments to ensure public funds are allocated consistent with national priorities. Legislators are better in a position to exercise their oversight functions on the public budget, if they are better informed by Public Finance Management (PFM) experts on the tools and tricks that they could use to extract key information from government budgets in order to ensure fiscal discipline and performance.

To that effect, from January 26th-27th 2024, GP supported a two-days training for legislators and national assembly support staff on budget oversight and public participation. The training was attended by 34 parliamentarians, a 58.6% representation of the national assembly members and 4 national assembly support staff.

The training was conducted by a Public Finance Management Expert, Maya Aziz and GP's former Economist, Lamin Dibba.

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Dissemination of Community Score Card for Social Audits on NAWEC, Gambia Ferry Services, Brikama Health District and the Banjul Rehabilitation Project Participation

Gambians over the years, have been experiencing sub-standard, unreliable but expensive public services from public enterprises. The services rendered to the public or infrastructural development are not usually evaluated to measure the quality of service, the value for money and the receipt of revenue to facilitate the services to the public.

To increase transparency and efficiency of public service delivery, GP supported two local CSOs Center for Policy, Research & Strategic Studies (CEPRASS) and Center for Research and Policy Development (CRPD) to undertake a comprehensive social audit to assess various indicators related to National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC), Gambia Ferry Services, Brikama District Hospital and the Banjul Rehabilitation Project, respectively. Each of the organizations conducted two social audits.

This social audit was to evaluate the impact of social services in meeting community needs in line with the overall objectives outlined by regulatory authorities and to highlight areas of improvement in public service delivery. Following the social audit research, Gambia Participates on February 13th, 2024 conducted a dissemination workshop to present the social audit findings to stakeholders.

This dissemination workshop was attended by 33 participants, including representatives from the civil society, media, NAWEC, Ferry Services, Brikama District Hospital, PURA, Banjul City Council and US Embassy, Banjul.

Community Score Card

Dissemination of Community Score Card for Social Audits on NAWEC, Gambia Ferry Services, Brikama Health District and the Banjul Rehabilitation Project Participation

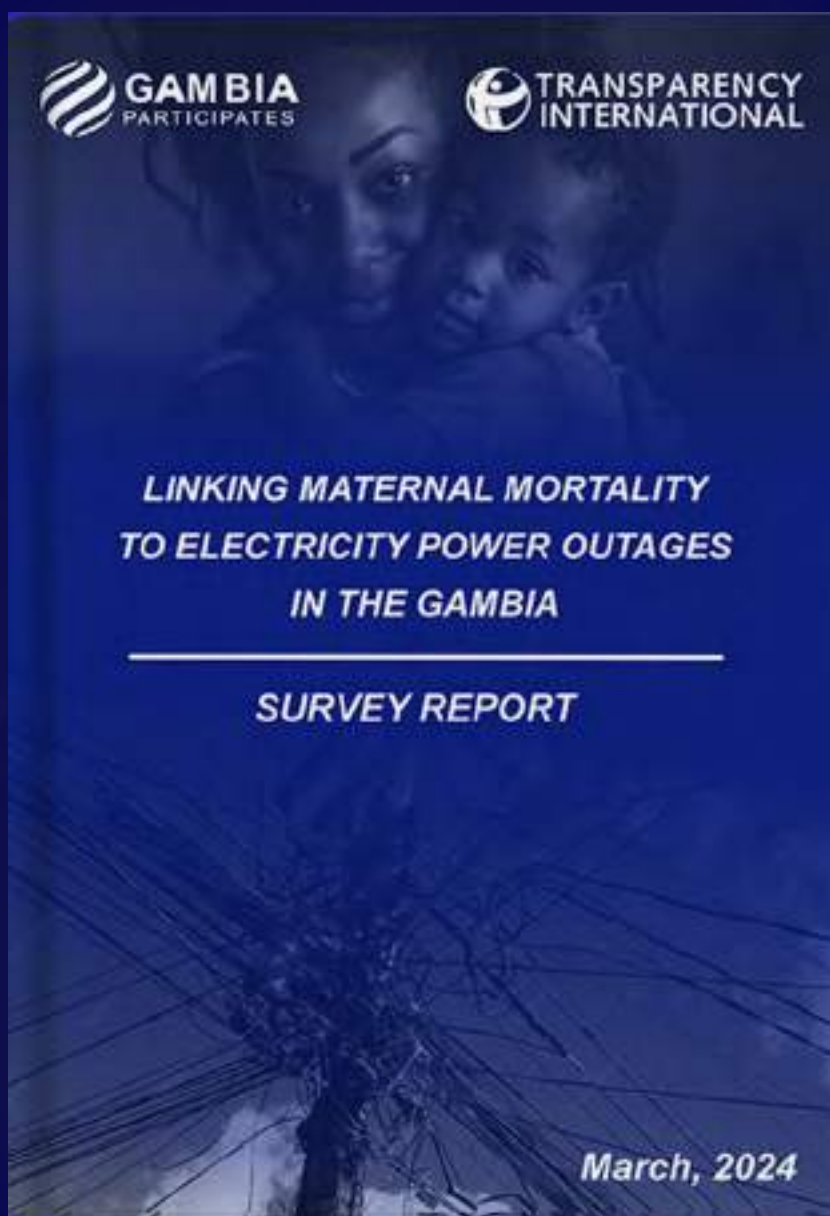
A total of 33 participants from civil society, media, NAWEC, ferry services, Brikama District Hospital, PURA, Banjul City Council and US Embassy Banjul attended the activity.

Members from civil society and media got the chance to interact with and give recommendations to the respective service providers present.

Service providers received first-hand information on how the public perceive their services and how they could be improved.

Gambia Ferry Services updated the stakeholders on the measures they will take to address security and safety concerns at the ferries.

Frank conversation ensued between CSOs and service providers on the condition and standard of services received by the populace.



Development of the 2023 and 2024 Executive Budget Proposal Citizen's Budget (EBP CB) and the 2023 and 2024 Citizens' Budget

The citizen's budget is a simplified version of the enacted budget designed to be interactive and easily understood by the public. Its objective is to increase citizen understanding on the government's development priorities, where government receive and spend public monies. To provide clear and accessible information about government revenues, expenditures, and priorities, Gambia Participates in partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs with funding from the US Embassy – Banjul developed a citizens' friendly version of the 2024 budget.

By providing citizens with information about government spending and priorities, they are better equipped to engage with policymakers, advocate for their interest and participate in decision making processes that affect their lives.



Ministry of Petroleum
Energy (MoPE)
DS22.800000

Ministry of
Infrastructure
DS24.200000



Ministry of Finance and
Economic Affairs
DS23.800000

Stakeholder Discussion on the Citizens' Audit and Citizens' Budget Services, Brikama Health District

Following the development of the 2024 citizens' budget, Gambia Participates on Thursday, 25th April 2024 supported the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to conduct a stakeholder discussion on the 2024 Citizens' Budget at the Bakadaji Hotel. The discussions were centered on the citizens budget and was used as a platform to increase government-citizens discussion on the national budget. Different Ministries, Departments and Agencies gave a detailed presentation of their planned activities for 2024/2025. This stakeholder dialogue was attended by members from Civil Society, various ministries, international organizations and media practitioners.

Overall, this stakeholder discussion provided an opportunity for civil society and media organizations to hold the government accountable on their budget expenditures and fiscal activities.



Stakeholder Discussion on the Citizens' Audit and Citizens' Budget Services, Brikama Health District

Activity Outcomes

- *The event was attended by 75 attendees. 45 government officials, 21 from civil society organizations, 5 media personnel, and 4 from international organizations.*
- *Attendees gained a clearer understanding of the national budget and the different avenues in which the respective ministries aim to direct their allocated funds.*
- *Street interviews were conducted before the event to assess citizens' understanding of the national budget. The responses collected provided insights into the level of public knowledge about the budget for relevant authorities.*
- *The organizing partners of the citizen's budget dialogue gained constructive feedback on ways in which future events could be improved.*

Citizen's Budget

Local Government Citizens' Budget Engagement

With a view of broadening and deepening citizen engagement in the budget, Gambia Participates in collaboration with Janjanbureh Area Council convened a two-day community engagement on the budget of the Janjanbureh Area Council with constituents of Jarreng and Fulabantang respectively congregated over 100 participants of whom 68 were male, 32 females, from 52 satellite communities within the region. Participates included influential community members and the leadership of the Janjanbureh Area Council.

This budget discourse created an unprecedented opportunity for constituents to engage with council on budget related issues discussing on budget priorities, unaddressed socio-economic problems and a host of other community issues. The engagement afforded the leadership of the council the opportunity to disclose the Council's total expected expenditure and revenue for the 2024.

The convergence unlatched a window of opportunity for the Janjanbureh Area Council administration to illuminate on the Council's sources of revenue, such as Cattle Taxes, Compound Rates, Market Duties etc. The council also used the opportunity to present its development programs for the fiscal year 2024 detailing the budget for each development program. It created frank conversations on the Council's weaknesses and challenges such as mobility, lack of timely payment of taxes etc. that continue to diminish council's expected revenue for the previous fiscal years and the current fiscal year ultimately affecting its performance in administering development projects and responding to disaster within the community.

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Local Government Citizens' Budget Engagement

The engagements wrapped up with a Priority Mapping a session focused on problem identification to enable Council to strategize and refocus its energy and direction on other neglected priority areas that are of concern to constituents, the ultimate taxpayers. The problem identification also evoked a sharp contrasting difference in priority needs per community which served as an indicator for Council to be more innovative to further maximize revenue generation, augmenting performance, development and effective service delivery to the taxpayers.

Activity Outcomes

- *A total of 100 participants were reached during the engagement*
- *Participants collectively mapped out top 3 priority problems using the community problem identification and prioritization technique*
- *The problem mapping evoked the divergent priorities that existed in both communities*
- *The LGA and the constituents for the first time, dialogue on specific budgetary allocations*

Impact & Sustainability

The project has fostered a more transparent and participatory fiscal environment in The Gambia, improving budget accessibility and oversight. Strengthened institutional frameworks and continued advocacy efforts will ensure the long-term sustainability of these gains.

The project enhanced budget monitoring and reporting by supporting the publication of advanced budget execution reports

Local government budget access improved with the launch of five council websites to enhance transparency.

Public forums, training, and advocacy campaigns were key strategies in increasing civic engagement in fiscal governance.

Social audits and community scorecards were used to assess transparency and accountability progress

Budget Discussion



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON THE OPEN BUDGET SURVEY 2023



With the Gambia assessed by the International Budget Partnership 3 consecutive times amongst 125 countries globally in terms of budget Transparency, Public Participation and Oversight, the Gambia has been steadily climbing the ladder in reaching the apex of accountable governance. In the most recent 2023 OBS results, the Gambia is scored distinctly in 3 key areas using variant indicators showing its performance amongst other countries against the established objective baseline.

In line with its mission to promote fiscal transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance, Gambia Participates on Friday 27th August 2024, engaged the community of Salikenni in the North Bank region on the findings of the Open Budget Survey (OBS), as a global independent assessment that evaluates the transparency and inclusivity of national budgets, providing insights into how well governments manage public resources. As a tool for advocacy, it helps citizens and civil society hold their governments accountable and ensures that public funds are used effectively for development.

The engagement aimed to raise awareness among community members about how the government generates revenue, manages public funds, and makes budgetary decisions. It also provided an opportunity to discuss the findings of the 2023 OBS, emphasizing the importance of aligning national budgetary practices with the principles of openness and participation. The session served as a platform for dialogue between community members and civil society, fostering a deeper understanding of the national budget process while encouraging feedback on how to improve fiscal transparency and governance. The convergence convened a total of 45 participants of whom 25 were male and 19 females including 3 persons with disabilities.



A woman with long dark hair is wearing a white t-shirt with the 'YALI LEARNS' logo and the website 'yali.state.gov/learns'. She is standing in front of a red banner that has the text 'FOSTERING ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFECTIVE TRANSPARENCY' and logos for 'GAMBIA' and 'USA'.

Anti-Corruption

We work on a diverse range of anti-corruption programs, from social audits to legislative and institutional reform projects

International Recognition: Anti-Corruption Champions Award



In December 2024, the Executive Director of Gambia Participates, Marr Nyang, was honoured with the U.S. Department of State's Anti-Corruption Champions Award, a global recognition launched by the State Department to acknowledge individuals who have shown exceptional leadership in combating corruption. Marr was selected as one of ten international honorees at the ceremony led by Secretary Antony Blinken on International Anti-Corruption Day; colleagues and multiple reports noted that his selection and remarks (he was chosen by fellow awardees to deliver the acceptance address) drew international attention to The Gambia's anti-corruption work and the collaborative approaches underpinning it.

This recognition highlights both Marr Nyang's personal leadership and the collective efforts of Gambia Participates to advance transparency, accountability, and good governance. The award underscores the organisation's growing prominence on the global stage and affirms the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships , between civil society, government institutions, the judiciary, media, and international partners , in driving reforms and protecting public resources. The accolade also serves as a platform to amplify Gambia Participates' work and to inspire continued investments in citizen-centred accountability mechanisms across the country.

Advocacy and Civic Action on the Gambia Ferry Crisis



In April 2024, Gambia Participates, in collaboration with Niumi Hands and the National Youth Parliament (NYP), undertook coordinated advocacy actions in response to the prolonged operational and safety challenges affecting the Gambia Ferry Service. These actions included the issuance of a joint media invitation and the convening of a press conference on April 20, 2024, to inform the public and media about a planned peaceful “Sess Nen” protest. The advocacy sought to draw national attention to the social, economic, and human costs of the ferry crisis, particularly its impact on commuters and communities in the North Bank Region.

The peaceful protest proceeded on April 21, 2024, in Banjul and Barra amid heightened security presence. Although engagements with law enforcement authorities highlighted constraints around the facilitation of the protest, the action nonetheless underscored the determination of citizens and civil society to exercise their constitutional rights and to raise concerns about alleged negligence, corruption, and accountability gaps within the management of the Gambia Ferry Service. The advocacy emphasized the broader consequences of the crisis, including disruptions to livelihoods, increased transportation costs, and risks to health and safety. Through these actions, Gambia Participates reaffirmed its commitment to non-violent civic engagement, public accountability, and the defense of citizens’ rights to speak out against governance failures that affect everyday lives.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue vest over a dark shirt, is looking down at a document she is holding. The vest has 'GAMBIA PARTICIPATES' and 'OBSERVER' printed on it. The background is a light-colored wall with a grid pattern.

Elections

We're continuously finding new ways to make election processes in The Gambia more transparent and participatory.

OBSERVATION OF THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2024



Gambia Participates and Connected Development with accreditation from the Maryland State Board of Elections, deployed an election monitoring team, to observe the US 2024 Elections in the state of Maryland. As the first election observed by Gambia Participates outside the continent of Africa, the experience during the observation filled our team with ideas that could improve The Gambia's electioneering process.

The monitoring team engaged with the Maryland State Board of Elections to explore their campaign financing regulations and the use of technology in registration, voting, collation and reporting of election results. During the polls, the team visited polling stations in the city and suburbs of Maryland.

The outcome of this election observation has influenced GP's strategic electoral reform process in The Gambia, specifically on campaign financing and technology in election.

OBSERVATION OF THE GHANA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2024



On December 7, 2024, Ghana held its general elections in a context marked by political competitiveness, institutional preparedness, and public expectations for credible democratic outcomes. This observation mission was conducted by Gambia Participates in collaboration with the West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS) and CDD-Ghana. The mission focused on assessing the transparency, fairness, and integrity of the electoral process while documenting key lessons for strengthening democracy in the West African region.

The 2024 Ghana general elections were primarily contested between the ruling NPP and the opposition NDC. While the Electoral Commission took key steps to ensure a credible process such as using biometric verification and conducting voter education challenges such as misinformation, alleged voter suppression, and registration irregularities were observed ahead of the polls.

On election day, polling was generally peaceful and well-organized, with most stations opening on time and electoral officials conducting their duties professionally. Biometric devices worked efficiently overall, although minor technical issues were noted. Voter prioritization measures for vulnerable groups were effectively implemented. However, a major concern was the significantly low voter turnout compared to previous elections, raising issues around voter apathy and weakened civic engagement.

The counting and collation process was largely transparent, and results were released promptly. While some opposition parties contested certain outcomes, disputes were handled through legal channels, demonstrating the strength of Ghana's judicial process.

In conclusion, the elections were credible and peaceful, with strengths including competent administration and civil society involvement. Nonetheless, the low turnout, misinformation, and occasional technical and transparency gaps suggest areas for improvement. Ghana's experience offers valuable lessons for other West African democracies like The Gambia particularly in building trust, improving voter education, and maintaining institutional independence to strengthen democratic governance.

A woman with long braided hair, wearing a beige utility vest over a dark long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, stands in front of a building. She is holding a clipboard and looking directly at the camera. A blue lanyard with a white ID badge hangs around her neck. The background is slightly blurred, showing an outdoor setting with a building and some equipment.

Other Projects

The Constitution We Want Convergence



From 2023 to 2024, significant strides were made toward The Gambia's constitutional reforms, as presented in the National Endowment for Democracy's (NED) Final Consolidated Report. The project witnessed the coming together of a wide range of stakeholders, including political parties, religious leaders, legislators, and civil society organizations, all of whom were cooperative in their pursuit of a democratic transition

Identification of Contentious Issues

One of the most important aspects of the reform process was the identification and open discussion of points of contention within the draft constitution. The inclusion of the term "secular" was one such point of contention, as it sparked debate about the nation's identity and values. These issues needed to be resolved through ongoing interaction to ensure that the final constitution would be acceptable to all sections of society.

Political Parties' Stand

Aligning political party agendas with the national interest emerged as a key factor in the reform. The political parties were encouraged to assume positions that were not just consistent with their individual ideologies but also guaranteed the successful passage of the new constitution. This alignment identified the importance of unity and common purpose in achieving democratic reforms.

Strategic Approach to Reintroduction

Learning from past experiences, particularly the reasons for the rejection of the draft constitution in 2020, stakeholders agreed on the need to enhance the document. The strategy was premised on surmounting weaknesses in the past to enhance the draft's prospects for passage in the National Assembly. The step highlighted the dedication to continuous improvement and responsiveness to public opinion.

Public Awareness and Mobilization

Public involvement was very important to the reform process. Initiatives like the "Constitution We Want" convergence served to significantly raise public consciousness of the reform process. The initiatives were meant to facilitate broader public support and advocacy for a new constitution so that the voices of common citizens would be heard and considered.

Commitment from the National Assembly

The process received institutional support, especially from the National Assembly. The Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly ensured its resolve to see to it that the constitutional adoption process was eased. This assurance was deemed necessary in pushing forward the necessary legislative steps, a sign of collaboration between legislative institutions and reformers.

Greater Stakeholder Engagement

The convergence successfully engaged 145 stakeholders, fostering a collective sense of responsibility for constitutional reform. This broad-based participation ensured that diverse perspectives were considered, enriching the reform process and promoting inclusivity.

Key Quotes

The commitment of various leaders underscored the common resolve in the reform process. Hon. Ousainou Darboe was hopeful, stating, "If the constitution is tabled at parliament, it would be passed with an absolute majority." Omar Bojang of the Supreme Islamic Council also remarked, "We are compromising for it to be passed." Moreover, the President, in his June 27, 2024 State of the Nation Address, committed to conducting a referendum on the new constitution by December 2024, indicating executive resolve on the project.

Overall Impact

The project significantly increased multi-stakeholder agreement on the necessity for constitutional reform. Advocacy created momentum for the re-submission of the draft constitution and improved public engagement in the democratic process. The inclusive process not only addressed contentious issues but also created consensus on a common vision for the democratic future of The Gambia.



The Constitution We Want Stakeholders Engagement



In 2024, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) embarked on an ambitious project to consolidate democratic governance in The Gambia through support for constitutional reform. The project aimed to heighten public awareness, increase civil society engagement, and facilitate inclusive dialogue among stakeholders.

Increased Public Awareness and Participation

The project successfully reached 202,104 individuals across different platforms. This reach included 1,400 individuals reached through caravans, 663 individuals reached through community meetings, and a staggering 200,000 individuals reached through television, radio, and billboards. This extensive reach successfully raised public awareness of the 2024 Draft Constitution and its implications for democratic governance.

Civil Society Organization (CSO) Coalition Building and Capacity Development

One of the major outcomes of the project was the establishment of the CSO Coalition on "The Constitution We Want." The coalition prepared a joint position paper that identified strengths, gaps, and recommendations on the 2024 Draft Constitution. The project also focused on strengthening the capacities of CSOs so that they could effectively advocate for the necessary constitutional reforms.

Stakeholder Engagement and Consensus

The project facilitated dialogue among political parties, religious leaders, and media representatives to build consensus on contentious issues such as the separation of powers, safeguarding human rights, and accountability of public officers. The dialogue strengthened collaboration between CSOs and government actors to ensure that the proposed constitutional reforms reflected the people's aspirations.

Media Advocacy Effect

Media was central to the advocacy campaigns. Television programs like "Kerr Fatou" and radio programs like "Coffee Time with Peter Gomez" reached a listenership of over 200,000 people, including rural communities. The programs generated public discussion of the draft constitution, which pushed parliamentarians to be more consultative in the reform process.

Direct Engagement and Community

Face-to-face interaction with 663 individuals across seven regions through community caravans provided valuable grassroots feedback. Participants were worried about issues like dual citizenship and judicial independence while appreciating provisions such as term limits and gender parity. They also demanded strongly more involvement of National Assembly Members in public consultations.

Visual Advocacy (Billboards)

To maintain public interest and keep constitutional reforms in the national spotlight, ten billboards were placed in high-traffic areas. These visual cues reinforced public consciousness and reminded parliamentarians of their responsibility to act in the nation's best interest.

Policy and Legislative Recommendations

The project concluded with recommendations urging parliamentarians to prioritize the draft constitution and incorporate amendments based on stakeholder feedback. It also urged continuous public sensitization and stakeholder coordination to ensure informed decision-making throughout the legislative process.

Overall Impact

Collectively, these activities intensified public demand for constitutional reform and enhanced civic participation. The initiative fostered ongoing dialogue and coordination among stakeholders, maintaining pressure on the National Assembly to enact the constitution with the proposed amendments. Going forward, the report demands sustained advocacy, enhanced media engagement, and additional grassroots mobilization to ensure the passage and enactment of the 2024 Draft Constitution.





SAPOF

**Strengthening CSO Support
and Advocacy for
Sustainable Production and
Use of Organic Fertilizer in
The Gambia**

Townhall Meeting on Circular Economy and Agroecology

Organic fertilizers and circular economy play a crucial role in sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation. Unlike synthetic fertilizers, organic fertilizers are less likely to cause water pollution through runoff. They are absorbed more slowly by the soil, and it results in lower greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, by designing products for reparability and recycling, the circular economy reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators.

In this effect, Gambia Participates in partnership with Action Aid International The Gambia and Njawara Agricultural Training Center under the Strengthening CSO Support and Advocacy for Sustainable Production and Use of Organic Fertilizers in The Gambia (SAPOF) project, funded by the European Commission on Friday, June 28th , 2024, conducted a townhall meeting in Juffureh (North Bank Region) to discuss the virtues of circular economy and organic fertilizers. The primary objective of this meeting was to knowledge gap about agroecology and organic fertilizers which government officials, national assembly members and private sector suffer from, as reported by a 2020 FAO agroecology assessment in The Gambia. In addition, the townhall meeting also aimed to increase the knowledge of participants about the benefits of agroecology and organic fertilizers in The Gambia and draw on the experience of Gambian farmers who use an agroecological approach to farming, including using organic fertilizers.

The activity saw 50 participants ranging from women garden groups, farmers, local councilors, local government agricultural extension workers and organic fertilizer producers and users from 20 satellite villages in the North Bank Region. 50% of the total participants were male and 50% female.



Advocacy Caravan Tour on Circular Economy, Agroecology, and Organic Fertilizer

Gambia Participates conducted an advocacy caravan tour in Barra (NBR), Brikama- Ba & Mamud Fara (South Central River Region) to raise awareness on the use of organic fertilizers for sustainable agriculture and environmental protection. The initiative engaged farmers and women gardeners in local markets and “Lumos” to promote eco-friendly farming practices, improve crop yields, enhance food security, and advocate for policy reforms to reduce reliance on chemical fertilizers.

Key Engagements:

Barra (September 27, 2024): Farmers in Kanuma, Essau, and Mayamba were introduced to the benefits of organic fertilizers, including improved soil fertility, increased affordability, and local production using animal waste. Farmers expressed concerns over the high cost of chemical fertilizers and were encouraged to advocate for government investment in organic fertilizer production.

Mamud Fana (September 29, 2024): Women farmers actively participated, sharing their small-scale composting experiences. Discussions centered on boosting productivity through organic methods and the need for government intervention to make organic fertilizers more accessible. Farmers were urged to engage with their parliamentarians to push for policy reforms and investments in organic agriculture.

Outcomes & Impact:

- *Increased Community Engagement: Farmers actively discussed sustainable farming techniques and shared local knowledge.*
- *Knowledge Enhancement: Participants gained insights into the benefits of organic fertilizers and their impact on crop yields and income generation.*
- *Commitment to Advocacy: Some farmers pledged to advocate for government investment in organic fertilizer production.*
- *Farmers lamented the high cost of chemical fertilizers, despite subsidies.*
- *Local composting techniques were discussed as an alternative.*
- *The initiative encouraged grassroots advocacy for legislative reforms to support organic farming.*

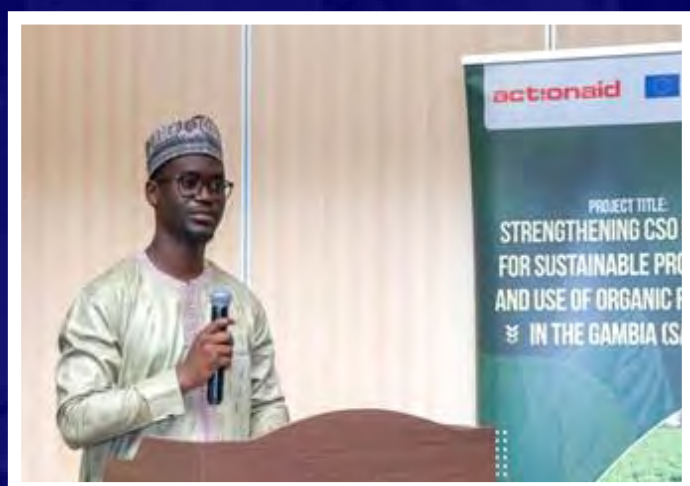




Interface Dialogue with Farmers, National Assembly Members (Select Committee on Agriculture), and Local Government Authorities (Councilors) on the Production and Usage of Organic Fertilizer

Gambia Participates, as part of its advocacy efforts to promote sustainable agricultural practices and environmental conservation under the strengthening CSO support and advocacy for sustainable production and use of organic fertilizer in the Gambia (SAPOF) project, organized an interface meeting between key stakeholders in the agricultural sector. This activity, held on December 1, 2024, in Farafenni, North Bank Region (NBR), brought together 40 farmers (32 of whom were women), 10 councilors from various wards in NBR and Central River Region (CRR), and 5 members of the National Assembly's Select Committee on Agriculture and 2 support staff of the National Assembly.

The event was aimed at enhancing collaboration and dialogue on sustainable farming practices, specifically focusing on the production and usage of organic fertilizers. This initiative aligns with Gambia Participates' commitment to supporting environmentally friendly agricultural practices, reducing reliance on chemical inputs, and improving livelihoods through sustainable farming methods.





RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Community Engagement Across 3 Regions

Gambia Participates, contracted by the International Republican Institutes, held community engagements to raise public awareness of constitutional reforms on the 7th and 8th of June 2024 in Kiang Kaiaf (LRR), Brufut(WCR), and New Jeshwang(KM). These engagements were part of a broader initiative to help educate and engage communities on the importance of constitutional reforms in the Gambia. The engagements were facilitated by Annetta BV Mahoney, Programs Manager at Gambia Participates. By the end of the engagements, participants had a clear idea of the constitutional reform process, the undemocratic issues in the 1997 constitution, the democratic issues in the 2020 draft constitution, and why the Gambia needs a new constitution. A total number of 150 participants took part in these engagements of whom 82 were female and 68 male.



Open Market Advocacy

As part of the public awareness campaign on constitutional reform, Gambia Participates on June 20th, 2024, embarked on an open market sensitization in community markets in the Kanifing Municipality and West Coast Region visiting Tippa Garage, Brikama and Serrekunda markets and garages respectively.

Engaging market vendors and buyers, the team indulged in conversations around the relevance and the need for the legislation of a new constitution for the Gambia. Participants were engaged on the progressive provisions entailed in the new constitution and its nexus with the respect for fundamental human rights and the promotion of accountable governance to enable citizens hold leaders to account for their actions or inactions.



Challenges

**Insufficient
Institutional
Monetary
Resource**

Constitution

One of the most significant milestones of the year for Gambia Participates was the successful re-introduction of the 2024 Draft Constitution into national discourse a development that renewed public hope in democratic reform and institutional accountability. This breakthrough followed our flagship advocacy initiative, "The Constitution We Want" Convergence.

The convergence served as a dynamic national platform to amplify citizens' voices and reinvigorate the push for a new, people-centered constitution. Through dialogue, expert panels, and engagement sessions, we built consensus around key democratic principles and governance reforms, highlighting the urgent need to revisit and adopt the progressive provisions contained in the 2020 draft constitution.

Our sustained advocacy through town hall meetings, position papers, media engagements, and direct lobbying contributed significantly to the government's decision to revisit the process. The announcement to reintroduce a revised 2024 Draft Constitution was not only an achievement for Gambia Participates and its partners but also a collective victory for every Gambian committed to building a just, transparent, and accountable society.

This achievement reflects GP's unwavering commitment to democratic renewal and sets a powerful precedent for what inclusive civic action can accomplish in shaping national policy and governance.



2024

DEAR PARLIAMENTARIANS:

PLEASE PASS THE 2024

DRAFT CONSTITUTION

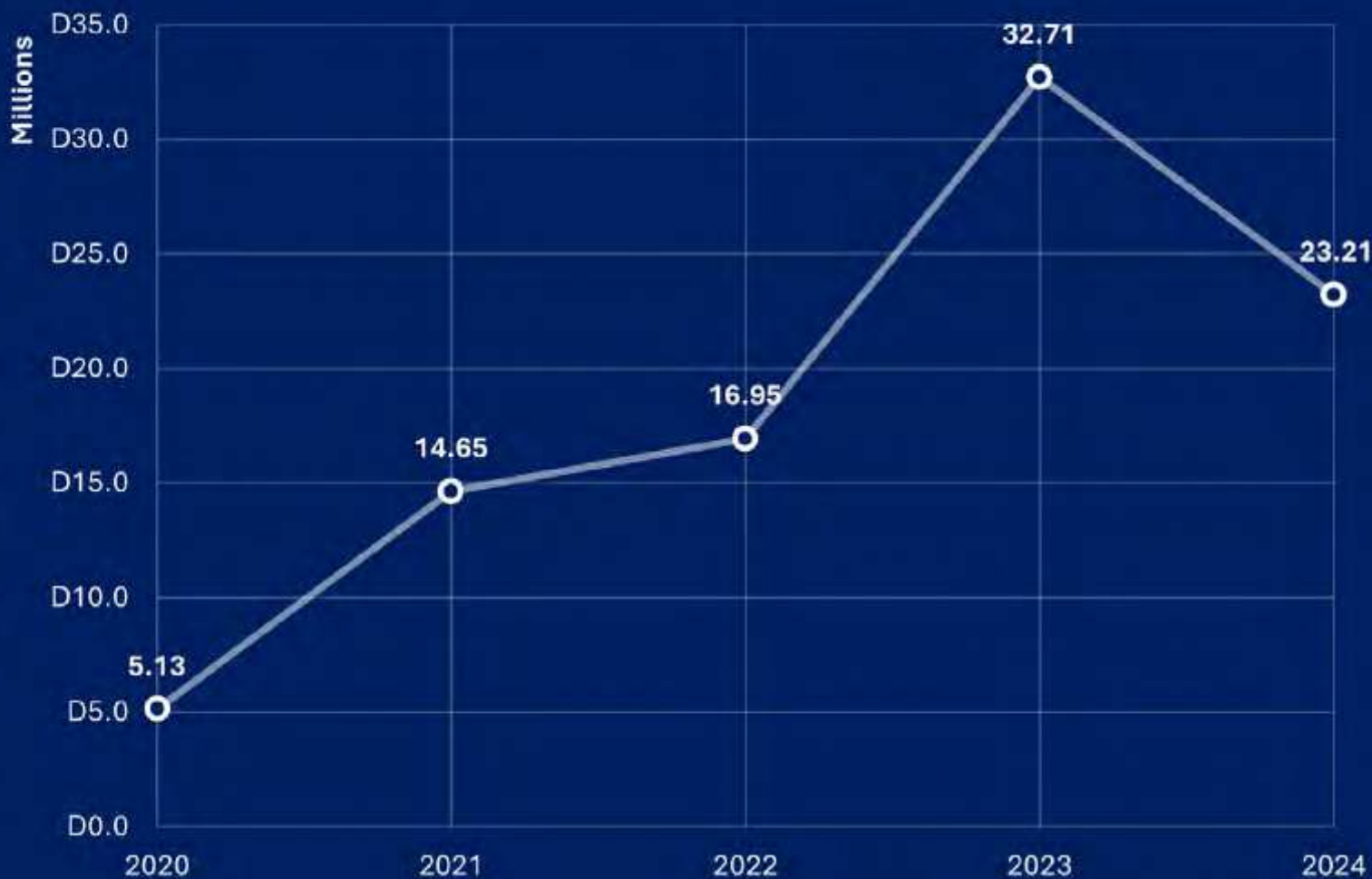
WITH AMENDMENTS



Financial Highlights

Gambia Participates demonstrated remarkable financial resilience and strategic diversification in 2024, securing total funding of 23,208,799.80 (approx. USD 333,939.57) Dalasi through our robust partnership network. This achievement reflects our organization's continued strength in building meaningful relationships with key international development partners and our unwavering commitment to advancing democratic governance and sustainable development across The Gambia.

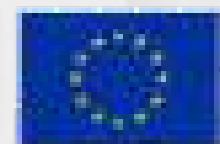
The graph below illustrates our funding pattern for the past 5 years.



Our funding portfolio showcases the breadth and depth of international confidence in our mission, with strategic partnerships spanning multiple continents and organizations. The US Embassy Banjul continued as our largest partner for the second consecutive year, maintaining a consistent 59% share of our total funding. We successfully expanded our development partnerships, welcoming the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The European Union's support through the SAPOF project, led by Action Aid International The Gambia as significant new contributors

Our established partnerships with the International Republican Institute (IRI), Transparency International (TI) and International Budget Partnership (IBP) remained strong. These continued collaborations underscore the sustained trust these organizations place in our ability to advance transparency, accountability, and democratic participation throughout The Gambia.

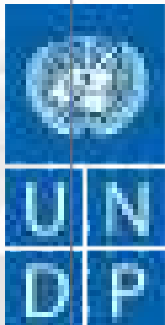
Partners:



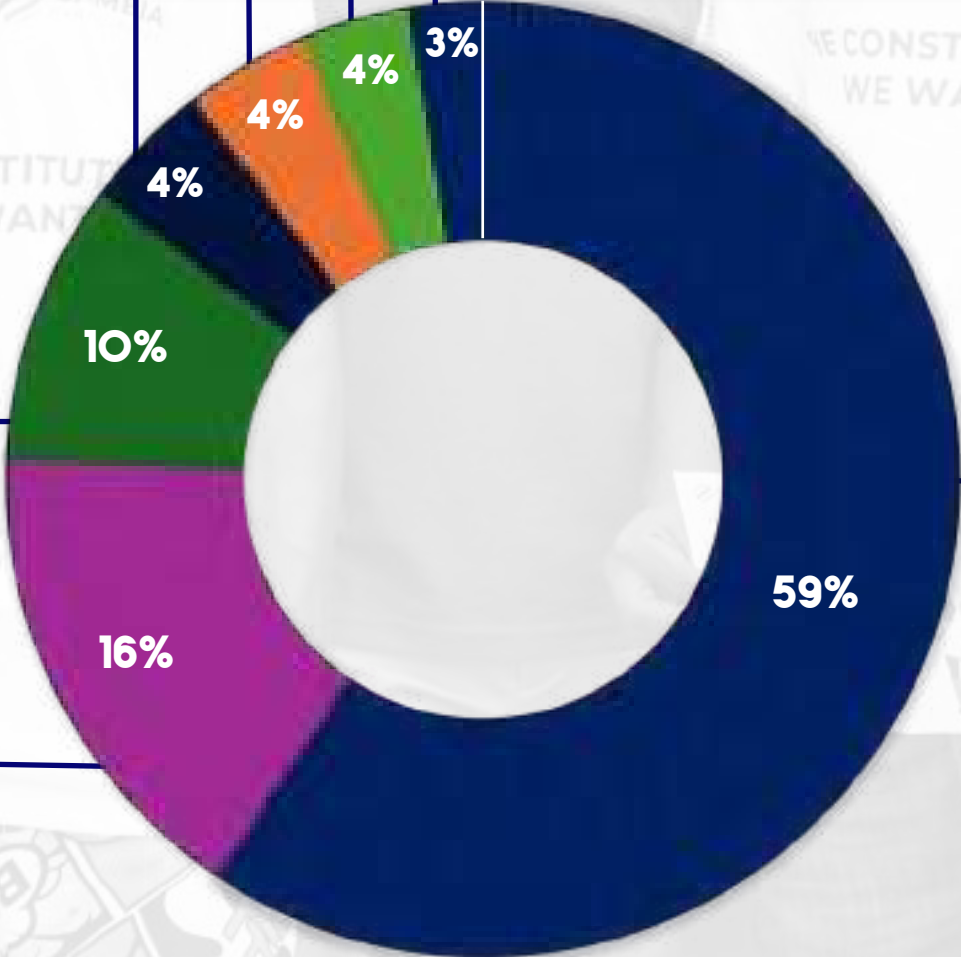
Funded by
the European Union

IRI INTERNATIONAL
REPUBLICAN
INSTITUTE
Advancing Democracy Worldwide

 **TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL**
the global coalition against corruption



Others



**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
DEMOCRACY**

SUPPORTING FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD



Conclusion

In 2024, Gambia Participates advanced its mission with renewed energy, navigating a complex political landscape while staying rooted in the principles of democratic accountability and citizen empowerment. This year marked a turning point in our advocacy journey, as we shifted from persistent calls for reform to tangible progress most notably in the national effort to revive the constitutional reform process. By combining grassroots mobilization with high-level engagement, we reaffirmed our role as a leading voice for good governance in The Gambia.

*At the heart of our achievements this year was the successful re-ignition of constitutional reform efforts, culminating in the **re-introduction of the 2024 Draft Constitution**. This pivotal moment was made possible through sustained advocacy, grassroots mobilization, and coalition-building, most notably during **“The Constitution We Want” Convergence**. Organized in collaboration with key civil society allies, this event served as a national rallying point, reminding both citizens and duty bearers that the pursuit of a legitimate, democratic, and accountable governance framework is non-negotiable.*

*Beyond constitutional reform, we expanded our work across critical areas such as **electoral integrity, anti-corruption advocacy, public finance transparency, and youth and women's political participation**. We strengthened the capacity of local actors, produced evidence-based research and policy recommendations, and engaged constructively with institutions to push for systemic reforms. Our monitoring of public spending and procurement processes, as well as our support for whistleblower protection and investigative journalism, remain pillars of our work to build a more accountable Gambia.*

Crucially, our progress in 2024 would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of our dedicated team, the commitment of our partners and donors, and the active involvement of Gambians across all walks of life. Your voices, your engagement, and your demands for a better Gambia have propelled our advocacy and fueled every milestone we have achieved.

As we prepare for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in 2025, Gambia Participates reaffirms its dedication to standing with the people, holding institutions to account, and pushing for policies that serve the public good. We believe that democracy and good governance is not a destination, but a continuous journey and we remain steadfast in our pursuit of justice, equity, and transparency.

