

GAMCOTRAP PROVIDES SIX MILLING MACHINES TO FORMER CIRCUMCISERS IN NBR

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GAMCOTRAP launched the provision of milling machines to former circumcisers in the six districts of Niumi in the North Bank Region on Saturday, 16 November 2024. The milling machines, provided by UNFPA’s Country program as well as Donor Direct Action (Frontline women), were launched to end FGM at an event held in Madina Kanuma village. The objective of the program is to provide sustainable alternative employment opportunities for former circumcisers within the region, as an economic empowerment program to support them during their transition from cutting girls, to safeguarding young women and girls from FGM.

GAMCOTRAP already recognizes the critical role played by former circumcisers in raising awareness of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other forms of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Given their deep connection to the cultural and traditional fabric of their communities, empowering the former circumcisers with sustainable livelihoods is important in ensuring that they do not revert to previous practices, which will also reinforce their abandonment of FGM.

The event is also intended to celebrate the success of upholding the law and to empower former circumcisers with some economic activities of their choice.

The six beneficiary communities are Darsilameh, Toro Alassan, Madina Kanuma, Bakalarr, Bakindik, and Sika.

Dr. Isatou Touray, the Executive Director of GAMCOTRAP said her office has been engaged in advocacy across the region to educate, train, and empower various target groups about the harmful effects of FGM on the SRHR of women and girls.

“This initiative is part of our broader mission to create sustainable alternative employment opportunities for ex-circumcisers and to support their transition from harmful traditional practices such as FGM, to activities that uphold the dignity and the well-being of girls and women (rights education),” Dr. Touray said.

Dr Touray went on: “This is a transformative step in the fight against FGM. One that aligns with our belief that true change must come from the community itself. We are not just launching milling machines. We are also launching hope, progress, empowerment, and the promise of a future where girls and women can live free from the harmful consequences of FGM.”

“By offering ex-circumcisers a pathway to economic suitability, we are reinforcing the abandonment of FGM, safeguarding the next generation, and nurturing a culture of respect and protection for all,” Dr. Touray said.

She said the launch also addresses poverty as one of the underlying factors that drives the continuation of FGM among ex-circumcisers.

George Sonko, the District Chief of Lower Nuimi highlighted the significance of the gathering, saying it is a milestone in ending FGM and empowering ex-circumcisers with alternative livelihoods. He said it is important to celebrate the collective efforts that have raised awareness and empowered communities to protect the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls.

Alagie K. Saho, who represented the Governor of the North Bank Region, reiterated that women and girls’ empowerment remains at the heart of their work, noting that the event marks a very important day in the successful celebration of upholding the law that was threatened to be repealed. He applauded GAMCOTRAP and partners for their attempts to protect girls from FGM.

Lamin Camara, the assistant country representative of UNFPA said the project not only represents an important victory for the right of women and girls, but it also underscores the role of local communities in leading the change process. He added that with collaboration, commitment, and community engagement, ‘we can build a future where the voices of women will be heard, their rights respected and their opportunities will be limitless’. The event also witnessed both new and former circumcisers downing their tools to embrace modernity and end the harmful practice of FGM.

According to research, FGM has implications on the physical and emotional health of women and girls with no known benefits of the practice.