



**GAMCOTRAP**



**Protect the Girl-Child**



## **GAMCOTRAP JOINS THE WORLD IN COMMEMORATION OF 16 AND 19 DAYS OF ACTIVISM: RISINGS TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, WOMEN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY.**

Today is the beginning of the unleashing of the 19 days of activism which focuses on the theme: **SDG16.2 : End abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture of children.** GAMCOTRAP joins the Global World Order to engage in advocacy and social mobilization to give visibility AND AMPLIFY THE VOICES to this very important SDG to guarantee a better future for the children of the world, and particularly to children of the Gambia. First and foremost I want to encourage all the organizations to engage in giving visibility to the situation of children and engage children to be part of the process for them to be aware that the whole world cares and efforts being made to address violence against children. It is important to note that, violence against children and women continues to occur at an alarming scale in every country in the world. Too often it is accepted as normal behavior and the global culture of discrimination against them allows violence to occur with impunity.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022, report was made at the Kuntaur Police Station of the alleged rape of a grade 9 female student from Niani Sukuta attending Kuntaur Upper Basic School by the son of her guardian who is friend to her father.

These types of incidences are happening on a daily basis and sometimes the culprits go free after a prolonged engagement. Therefore we must put all our efforts in different platforms, forums using both electronic and traditional media to bring visibility to all forms of abuse that children and other vulnerable groups are facing. Activists, advocates and social critics and organisations can employ various ways in non-violent strategies to raise their voices against injustice, abuse and impunity such as lobbying governments to improve laws and services to working with communities to change discriminatory attitudes and behaviors through awareness creation and consciousness raising. The periods beginning from 1<sup>st</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> of November focusses on the visibility needed to bring attention on the rights of children, particularly the girl-child. The WWSF is a leading front in this process working closely with grassroots activists, change makers and organisations to bring attention on the issue of children.

As indicated earlier all organisations, individuals, groups and other entities can engage in one of many themes affecting children's rights involving in the campaign that runs from the 1<sup>st</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> November for youth and children.

Other relevant SDG Targets for the 19 Days Campaign include: 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation 8.7: Elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including slavery and human trafficking recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms 4.a: Provide safe, non-violent, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all 4.7: Ensure that all learners acquire knowledge...(for) promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence Reduce the impact of violence in their families and communities... 16.1: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere 16.2: See above 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the

national & international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all 16.9: Provide legal identity for all, including birth registration 16.a: Strengthen relevant institutions... to prevent violence (source WWSF resource Kit 2022).

Similarly, 25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December is designated as the global action to end violence against women, with the theme: UNITE! ACTIVISM TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS. Many organisations and individuals are working all over the world to respond to and prevent violence against women and children.

I would like to give a bit of a historical context for the understanding and guidance of the public to take note of very important events that happens calling attention to a phenomenon leading to call for global action.

### **Historical context of the 16 Days of Activism**

On 25 November 1960, sisters Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa Mirabal, three political activists who actively opposed the cruelty and systematic violence of the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, were clubbed to death and dumped at the bottom of a cliff by Trujillo's secret police.

The Mirabal sisters became symbols of the feminist resistance, and in commemoration of their deaths 25 November was declared International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in Latin America in 1980. This international day was formally recognised by the United Nations in 1999. (Source UN website).

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day. It was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

The 16 Days campaign provides a platform to highlight issues and strengthen work around gender-based violence at a local, national and global level. For many years GAMCOTRAP has engaged in the 16 days of activism campaigns amplifying the abuse of women and children and played a big role in putting sexual and gender-based violence on the global agenda. "GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM" is the catalyst that created the awareness and consciousness among people who never had the privilege to access information to make the right choices and defend themselves. Through grassroots activism we have seen progress over the advocacy to end FGM and other harmful Practices that are inimical to the health and well-being of children and women in the Gambia. The new generation of activists are making effective use of the social media reaching out to effect change. This is the period to escalate and amplify our voices and call for action to promote and protect the human rights of the vulnerable.

Violence against women is a global problem and requires global action. Calls for action like the 16 days of Activism are crucial because they shine a spotlight on the issue of violence against women. They are a moment to create public awareness and attention about what needs to change to prevent it from happening in the first place at local, national, regional and international levels.

Speaking out against women's and children's rights abuses is something that women's rights organisations have been doing through advocacy and social mobilization using different strategies on a daily basis. GAMCOTRAP likes to appreciate the concerted efforts made by organisations particularly Women's Rights Organisations, Youth organization in engaging to end violence against children, women and other vulnerable groups.

In the Gambia we have noted some progress with government bringing in legislation on children's Act and a law prohibiting harmful practices thus achieving formal equality, often in response to pressure from development partners and civil society. It is important to acknowledge that women human rights defenders play a significant role in this at both the local and global level. However, it is the implementation of these legislations that counts. For too many victims of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) access to justice remains cumbersome no matter what laws are in place. Therefore we call for substantive equality making things happen for the poor and vulnerable.

However, violence against women and girls is a global problem and it requires global action. It is important to note the context of our advocacy to create impact. Calls for action like the 19 days of activism against children and young people creates awareness about their situation. The GAMCOTRAP Girls and Boys for Changes is towards giving children agency to speak out about issues affecting them. They are the leaders of today and tomorrow and we must nurture them in the right direction. Also, the 16 days of Activism are crucial because they shine a spotlight on the issue of violence against women. These globally designated days are a moment to create public awareness about what needs to change to prevent it from happening in the first place at local, national, regional and international levels.

To end violence against women and children all and sundry need to engage and challenge the attitudes that perpetuate, rationalise and normalise that violence, and deny children and women's right to safety. To see violence truly eliminated and gender equality achieved means all of us, and working with all genders is the only way to see true change. However, change can take place when every individual makes it a responsibility to engage and be committed to the change.

The periods can be celebrated in many ways, march passes, debates, songs, theatre, poems, tweets, interviews, articles and speaking out as well as facilitate for others to engage in big and small ways.

Violence against women is not inevitable; it is preventable. Tell your families, schools, communities and workplaces and broke the silence over the rampant abuses happening. Together, our message will be amplified, and our voices heard and something will change.

"Research shows that "abuse and maltreatment can lead to life-long physical and mental health problems, lower educational achievement, and can even affect a child's brain development. Victims of violence are more likely to become future perpetrators, feeding a cycle that consumes lives." In addition, there are large economic effects. Countries that do not address issues of violence against children end up losing significant amounts of money. Physical, psychological, and sexual violence against children can cost governments and families serious repercussions over the years to come.

The global theme for this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which will run from 25 November to 10 December 2022, is "UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls".

You can choose from any of the topics or thematic areas and engage in advocacy, reporting or highlighting the issues to educate the public and other constituencies. All aspects touching on human existence is within a thematic area and you have choices to make and engage constructively in engaging with the global campaigns. We take this opportunity to appreciate and thanks all our development partners for supporting work to end violence against women and girls, young people and people with disability.

### **DON'T BE A VICTIM!**

- **BREAK THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE**
- **BREAK THE SILENCE**
- **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**
- **ACT AGAINST ABUSE**
- **DO NOT LOOK AWAY!**

### **KEY DATES TO OBSERVE IN THIS PERIOD**

- **25 November: International Day of No Violence Against Women**
- **29 November: International Women Human Right Defenders Day**
- **1 December: World Aids Day**
- **3 December: International Day for the Disabled**
- **10 December: International Human Rights Day**

**GAMCOTRAP WISHES THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT SUCCESS IN OUR COLLECTIVE ACTIONS TO END ALL FORMS OF DICRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN.**

You can access some of our activities on Activism on [www.gamcotrap.org](http://www.gamcotrap.org), facebook.com/gamcotrap, Twitter:@gamcotrapG, instagram:gamcotrap

Dr Isatou Touray

Executive Director

GAMCOTRAP