



## Musawah Global Life Stories Project

### THE GAMBIA COUNTRY REPORT

Documenting Women's Life Stories  
Relating to *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

GAMCOTRAP  
IN COLLABORATION WITH PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

**GAMCOTRAP**



**Protect the Girl Child**

2014

This report, which was submitted to the Musawah Secretariat by the country team,  
has been lightly edited by the Secretariat for format and style.

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## Acronyms

AFDB- African Development Bank

APGWA- The Association for the Promotion of Gambian Women and Children

CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women

CPA- Child Protection Alliance

CRC- Convention on the Rights of the Child

FGM- Female Genital Mutilation

GAMCOTRAP- Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women

GTTI- Gambia Technical Training Institute

MUSAWAH- Global Movement for Equality and Justice in the Family

NAM- National Assembly Member

NCP- National Convention Party

NGO- Non-Government Organization

PPP- People's Progressive Party

UN- United Nations

VDC- Village Development Committee

WODD- Women for Democracy and Development

WOJAG- Women Journalist Association, the Gambia

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To the team of religious scholars, with whom we shared the findings and issues emerging from the legal mapping process to guide us with regards to the religious viewpoints and terminologies, the GAMCOTRAP staff <http://gamcotrap.gm/>, and volunteers whose commitment, conviction and determination made this possible, we share a common vision and focus on the work despite the challenges, and at last it has come to be. This work would not have been possible without the funding commitment from the MUSAWAH Seed Fund, Newfield Foundation <http://www.newfieldfound.org/>, and other contributions from friends and colleagues who realised the importance of the project.

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## Part One

### Executive summary

GAMCOTRAP is a women's rights organization that focuses on sexual and reproductive health rights of women, and girl children in the Gambia. Specifically, the organization advocates for the elimination of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), early marriage, and gender based violence. It also empowers women and men who care to take leadership in expressing their agency to effect strategic changes on matters and issues affecting the wellbeing of women. However, GAMCOTRAP's work is based on cross-cutting issues of the rights of women in Islam and all other rights affecting the human rights of women.

The study is initiated by Musawah Global Life Stories under the knowledge building component in partnership with GAMCOTRAP. The project adopts a transformative process that seeks to engender our religious discourses around and about women with feminist analysis, theory and praxis. From the on-set, there was a clear explicit vision and objectives of what we wanted to do, and we set out to pursue them using different feminist strategies to achieve our objectives and goal.

We have been engaged, and have been dedicated to fight for women's rights and taking for granted a lot of things which we do not believe that our religion will tolerate. This study has revealed to us that there is no innocent context, and the context is shaped by the patriarchy and gender politics in it. Our engagement with the process has empowered us to engage constructively with our religion and we thank Allah for making it possible to undertake this study to come up with another *ijtihad* to establish justice and to show that change is possible and necessary.

We have come to realise that there are common grounds with some of the scholars we engaged. We noted that the terms *Wilayah* and *Qiwamah* were not concepts that actually guided their dispensation of justice, in the area of personal status of Muslim women. According to most of them, it was not an issue they take into consideration, thus revealing that the concepts of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* were not the main consideration for mediating the personal status of Muslim Women in the Gambia. This implies that matters reaching the Cadi Courts with regards to the personal status of Muslim women, are not properly dealt with from an Islamic perspective.

The study in the Gambia identified some issues related to *qiwamah* and *wilayah* that affect Muslim women in the context of their personal status. These were derived from the life-stories, and they were the basis on which the legal mapping processes were applied. The emerging issues from the Gambia range from, divorce, polygyny (otherwise or commonly known as polygamy), early marriage, custody, inheritance, female genital mutilation, to education etc., (see legal mapping of the issues). Our analysis of these stories from the 13 Resource Persons with regards to the issues were not in conformity with the dictates of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. What is ("lived realities"), and what ought to be (*qiwamah* and *wilayah*) are in opposition to each other. We discovered that what are justified in the name of religion are indeed traditions and practices, which Islam does not accept or recommend in most instances. The current debates about female genital mutilation and early marriage, are good examples of violence against the girl-child. The concepts of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* have been subjected to debates because the evidence coming from the "lived realities" of women shows that women are the providers of sustenance, care and guardians in most circumstances in any cultural contexts, and therefore a rethinking of the meaning needs to be considered. For example, a resource person noted: "Our children are orphans even whereas their fathers are alive. We are responsible for our kids' feedings, clothing, health care, or even good upbringing. Even our portion which Allah has given us is taken from us in the name of religion."

*Qiwamah* as a legal postulate has been commonly understood as mandating men's authority over women. The *ulama* frequently invoke Verse 4:34 (from which the idea is derived) as the main textual evidence in its support; it is often the only verse that ordinary Muslims know in relation to family law. It reads:

Men are *qawwamun* (protectors/maintainers) in relation to women, according to what God has favored some over others, and according to what they spend from their wealth. Righteous women are *qanitat* (obedient) guarding the unseen according to what God has guarded. Those [women] whose *nushuz* (disobedience) you fear, admonish them, and abandon them in bed, and *adribuhunna* (strike them). If they obey you, do not pursue a strategy against them. Indeed, God is most exalted.

Our reflections also noted that women adhering to other faiths have similar issues, and this was a common ground for all the women who participated in the workshop at which we shared the findings. From the foregoing, it is evident that that patriarchy and gender discrimination are main factors contributing to the way women are perceived in our religions.

The analysis of the legal mapping process also revealed that sometimes laws which are designed to promote women's rights, are sometimes problematic in the way they are applied to the circumstances of women when it comes to marriage, polygamy, inheritance rights, early marriage etc. The women's narratives have been subject to deeper analysis with reference to the existing different schools of thoughts and in some cases where there are commonalities, and in some cases differences on the matter raises the issues of whether some of the issues placed on the realm of the divine are interpretations. This then leads us to our understanding of the *fiqh* which is Islamic Jurisprudence, which can be subject to change and reinterpretation if there is compelling evidence to do so as in the case of this project. The evidence in this research definitely calls for a rethinking of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* taking into consideration the "lived realities" of women and men.

### Goal

To advance gender equality and promote women's rights for women of the Gambia recognizing their "lived realities" and agency in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. As feminist activists, we envision a world where the personal status of women and girls are informed by justice and equality, and not shaped or informed by patriarchal discourses of control and suppression in the name of religion.

### Objectives

- To facilitate the collection of 13 narratives from women on their "lived realities" and document them in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*
- To use the analysis coming from these stories to inform our advocacy with regards to *qiwamah* and *wilayah*
- To inform policies and reforms of laws on matters of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* that shape the sexuality of women in the Gambia
- To contribute to the broader international advocacy initiatives that shape the international development initiatives with the relevant data to advance feminist epistemology
- To engender our institutions with feminist analysis with regards to *qiwamah* and *wilayah*
- To use the evidence derived from the life stories of women to make the case for rethinking of interpretation of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*

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## Background information on The Gambia

### Location and size

The Gambia is located on the West coast of Africa and extends about 400 kilometers inland, and has an approximate land area of 11,000 square kilometers. It is bordered on East, North and South by the Republic of Senegal, and on the West by the Atlantic Ocean.

### Population Profile

According to the Population and Housing Census of 1993, the Gambia's population is at 1,360,681, out of which 670,840 and 689,841 are male and female respectively, and growing at the rate of 2.8% per annum. Although the rate of population increase has declined from 4.2% in 1963 to 2.7% per annum in 2003, the Gambia still ranks among the countries with the highest population growth rates in Sub-Saharan Africa (CSD, 2003). The Gambia is seen to be one of the least developed countries in the world, with a ranking of 155 out of 177 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI) of 2006. According to the Census 2003 report, 45% of the Gambia's population is below 15 years. It is estimated that the population will double in 26 years. As in 2003, the population density is estimated at 127 persons per square kilometer, with a net migration rate of -0.61%. In 2005, it is estimated at US\$341; generally urban incomes tend on average to be about three times higher than incomes in rural areas (DOSFEA 2005).

Overall, provisional results of the 2013 population census revealed that there are more females than males in the country. According to the results, 50.5 per cent of the population counted are females, compared to 49.5 per cent males. The findings further revealed that Local Government Areas (LGAs) that are predominantly urban, tend to have more males than females while those that are predominantly rural have more females than males. This can be attributed to the movement of males from rural to urban areas and even from outside the country in search of better paid jobs. (Source: 2013 Population and Housing Census Preliminary Results). This trend therefore means that more female headed household will emerge, and the burden of the family will definitely lie in their hands, as in the Gambian context.

The Gambia is a secular state with predominantly Muslim majority, and enjoys a diversity of multi-ethnic characteristics who co-exist and inter-marry. At times cross-religious marriages do occur with the approval from the Registry Court, where both parties can retain their religious identity.

### Health profile

The Gambia's crude birth rate is at 41 per 100,000 live births, and the crude death rate at 41 per 1,000 with a total fertility rate of 5.4. Infant mortality rate as in 2003, stands at 75/1,000 live births, the under-five mortality rates at 99/1,000 and maternal mortality rate at 730/100,000 live births. (National Population Policy, February 2007).

The National Health Policy Framework, 2007-2020, "Health is Wealth", seeks to address the common health desires of the population through a number of initiatives, both in the area of preventive and curative health services. With a vision to improve the health of all Gambians with a per capita income of US\$ 1,500 by 2020, the policy has a mission to promote and protect the health of the population. While this is towards the right direction, the policy does not have an explicit strategy for women's health concerns.

Similarly, women have a limited say on controlling their fertility, and mostly responsible for child care. Their attitude to health is usually dominated by traditional beliefs and practices. These include nutritional taboos, and their first resort to seek health care services is with herbalists or traditional healers. Most deliveries are carried out by Traditional Birth Attendants, both trained and untrained. Women are socially responsible for household chores and pregnancy and child rearing. This does not prevent them from carrying on the burden of work to maintain their families. They are responsible for providing nutritious food to improve the health of the family in general, and tend to be responsible for caring for the sick people in the family affecting the extent to which they can self-actualise. The burden of the HIV/AIDS pandemic is mostly shouldered by women as caregivers. However, poverty contributes to malnutrition amongst women of the reproductive age group and under five children, and leads to anemia. The leading causes of death for children under-fives are malnutrition, anemia, malaria, etc. Early marriage and short intervals of child bearing, wife inheritance, the drudgery of work in the household and female genital mutilation are common practices affecting the health of women and children in the Gambia.

Poverty in all its forms exists in the Gambia and women are more vulnerable compared to men. The vulnerable areas of poverty have been, and continue to be the Lower River Region, Upper River Region, and the North Bank Region in that order. However, urban poverty has not been given the due attention and poverty is on the increase.

### Gender Profile

The Gambia is a predominantly patriarchal society in which women have less decision-making powers compared to men. In areas of sexuality matters, women are controlled and limited by the dictates of their husbands, who would normally give prescription in terms of what they should do or not do. Also, male members of the family are next in the line to decide on matters affecting them in terms of marriage and other social responsibilities. However, the *qiwamah* and *wilayah* project had revealed that even though men are considered to have authority over women, what qualifies them in such positions are not usually abided by.

### The Gambia's Commitment to Promote Women's Rights

The government of the Gambia through its contributions, has committed itself to promote women's rights. It has made several commitments to improve the status of women and children and has ratified international and regional conventions to that effect, such as Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women – CEDAW <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>, Convention on the Rights of the Child – CRC <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>, International Conference on Population and Development – ICPD <http://www.unfpa.org/icpd>, Full ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/women-protocol/> 2006 and the Lagos Plan of Action. It has also developed national policies such as National Gender and Women's Empowerment Policy 2010–2014, National Health Policy, National Population Policy, and The Children's Act 2005. Apart from these policy documents which promote women's rights, it has gone to the extent of harmonizing some of them to law. In 2013 the Gambia has passed the Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Act to guarantee the rights of women. However, these have not translated to actions which women can enjoy. Also, the proposed Bill that protects girls and women from FGM is still not enacted, and there is still reluctance by the State to put in place a specific bill with regards to this. Other Acts which have attempted to address FGM have been watered down with the explanation that certain clauses will be able to address the issue. The Constitution of the Gambia has a clause that states that *Shari'ah* laws govern the personal status of Muslim women, which in most cases is not favorable to women given the "lived realities" and the way the *Fiqh* issues are translated by those in authority in the Cadi Courts. The Gambia has been very effective in signing most of the international, regional, and local conventions on women's rights creating formal equality for women. However, this commitment is not yet fully translated into reality to achieve substantive equality for them.



## Socio-economic, political and demographic features of The Gambia

This section gives a synopsis of the indicators of some features of the country. In some cases, data for some aspect is either not available, or there is nothing published to substantiate the information, and where it is not available, it is not indicated.

### General demographic information about the country:

- a. **Population size:** 1.88 million (2013 pop. census)
- b. **Sex ratio:** The overall population sex ratio (male/female) is 0.98. The sex ratio (male/female) at birth is 1.06.
- c. **Composition and percentage of different ethnic and religious groups in the country:** The largest ethnic groups in The Gambia include Mandinka (36.8% of the population), Fula (19.5%), Wolof (15%), Jola (10.7%), and Serahuli (9.2%). There are also a number of smaller groups including the Serer (2.9 %) and Creole/Aku Marabout (2.5%) (AfDP Report, 2011). Etc.

### Health:

- a. **Life expectancy at birth:** Female: 53 years; Male: 50 years (2003 pop census). 66.5-Female and 61.8-male (2013 est.)
- b. **Child mortality:** Infant mortality rate (probability of dying between birth and age 1 per 1,000 live births) is 57. The under-five mortality rate is 99 per 1,000 live births (AFDB Report, 2011). This has increased to 67.6 deaths per 1,000 live births according to the 2013 pop. census
- c. **Rate of maternal mortality:** Maternal mortality rate is an estimated 360 [170-820] per 100,000 live births. This is down from 750 per 100,000 live births in 1990 (UN Women, 2011).

### Education:

- a. **Literacy rates:** The literacy rate is 40% for females and 60% for males. This is up from 33% (female) and 48% (male), as reported in the 2006 Gender Gap Report. Literacy rates in 1970 were 7% (female) and 13% (male) (World Bank [http://www.worldbank.org/?cid=ECR\\_GA\\_HPlaunch\\_searchad\\_EN\\_EXTP&gclid=EA1aIQobChMirYC2z5Tc1AIVKxbTCh0rSQ45EAAYASAAEgLPsvD\\_BwE](http://www.worldbank.org/?cid=ECR_GA_HPlaunch_searchad_EN_EXTP&gclid=EA1aIQobChMirYC2z5Tc1AIVKxbTCh0rSQ45EAAYASAAEgLPsvD_BwE))
- b. **Primary school enrolment:** The primary school enrolment rate is 67% for females and 64% for males. This is a decrease from 77% (female) and 73% (male) as reported in the 2006 Gender Gap Report, undoing some of the gains made since 2001, when the Girl Friendly Schools Initiative instituted programs to improve gender parity in schools, including a waiver of fees for upper basic (middle school) education. In 1995 primary education enrolment rates were 57% (female) and 72% (male) (World Bank).
- c. **Secondary school enrolment:** The secondary school enrolment rate is 8% for females and 19% for males. This is a decrease from the reported 2006 rate of 41% (female) and 49% (male) (Gender Gap Report 2006), and the 1992 rate of 14% (female) and 26% (male) (World Bank).
- d. **University enrolment:** The rate of enrolment in tertiary education is 1% for females and 2% for males. This is an improvement from the reported 2006 rate of less than 0.5% (female) and 2% (male).

### Participation in the economy:

- a. **Employment rates:** 71% of women and 85% of men participate in the labour force.
- b. **Percentage of women in professional, technical, managerial, administrative jobs compared to men:** Women make up just 9% of the skilled labour force (AFDB Report, 2011). 32% of employees in the non-agricultural sector are women.
- c. **Percentage of employment rate of women in informal labour compared to that of men:** Women generally have a higher unemployment rate (19%) than men (14%) (The Gambia National Report on Women: The Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995, p.30)
- d. **Percentage of female-headed households:** In 2008, female-headed households accounted for 15.3% of all households (AFDB Report, 2011). This is up from 11% in 1992 (World Bank).
- e. **Wage inequality among women and men:** The estimated earned income for female workers in The Gambia is 33%, lower than that of male workers. On average, women earn 20% less than men for doing similar work.
- f. **Duration of state paid maternity leave and child care rights:** 20 weeks of paid maternity leave. No child care provided.
- g. **Percentage of unemployment rate of women compared to that of men:** Unemployment rates are estimated to be very high (AFDB Report, 2011), but accurate data is not available.
- h. **Property rights:**
- i. **Gender-based differences in property laws and policies:** Although the Women's Act supports women's "equal treatment" in access to land, it does not protect women's rights to own, or control land. Most land ownership in The Gambia is determined by customary law, and women's control over land is limited (AFDB Report, 2011 <https://www.afdb.org/en/>). Women have more access to property other than land, but property distribution is still very unequal (precise data is not available).
- j. **Percentage of male and female property owners (e.g. land, businesses, etc.).** 21% of firms have female participation in ownership.

### Participation of women in political realm and decision-making:

- a. **Percentage of women in parliament:** 8% (up from just 2% in 1997 (UN Women, 2011)
- b. **Percentage of women in government cabinets:** 31% (up from 20% in 2006).
- c. **Percentage of women in other leadership positions in both public and private sectors:** Data not available.

### Marriage and Divorce:

- a. **Average age of women and men at marriage:** The average age of women at marriage is 20 years. This is up from 19 years in 1993 (AFDB Report, 2011). Data is not available for the average age of men at marriage.
- b. **Overall rate of divorce;** Data not available as cases of divorce are not reported for documentation
- c. **Overall rate of marriage;** No available data
- d. **Overall rate of polygamy;** 45% of women are in polygamous marriage, according to the 2003 pop. census
- e. **Percentage of single; married; divorced; and widowed women compared to men:** Data not available

### Violence against Women

- a. **Rate of domestic violence against women:** 74.5% according to the 2013 pop census
- b. **Other kind of violence against women: types and statistical rate:** Rate of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is estimated at 78% (down from 80% as reported in the 2006 Gender Gap Report). A decrease to 76.3% according to the 2013 pop census

### Other Indicators

According to the Human Development Index 2012, the Gambia is ranked 165 out of 187 countries with HDI value of 0.439. Gender inequality index score is 0.610 placing Gambia at 128 out of 146 countries. Global Gender gap index, score is 0.6763 placing Gambia at 77<sup>th</sup> place out of 135. The countries pop. Density according to 2013 pop census is 176.1 per square kilometer.

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## Part Two: The Gambia *qiwamah* and *wilayah* project, 2012

### Introduction

In 2009, Musawah International Advisory Group (IAG) saw the need to build on the existing body of information which documented the situation of different countries. The IAG initiated a project to show the contradictions emerging from the lives of Muslim women whose personal status are professed to be governed by Muslim laws and traditions. Through this process country situational analysis was submitted to Musawah, which contributed to the data based on the “lived realities” of women to come up with theoretical papers from a feminist point of view for activists to use as a tool to justify why change is necessary and possible in Islam. The resource book for Musawah seeks to understand the genesis of Muslim family law, how it was constructed within the classical *Fiqh* tradition, and the wealth of information derived from the field notes of activists and women’s rights organizations to demonstrate that current discriminatory Muslim Family Laws are not divine, but constructed by humans within a socio-political context, and the existing patriarchal context they live.

In the Gambia, this report was facilitated by Dr. Isatou Touray and her team in GAMCOTRAP, a women’s rights organization with other partners to produce a Gambia Country Report on equality and justice for the women’s rights movement. The situational analysis of the situation of women was an entry point for the constructive engagement of the advocates and partners, to realize that the “lived realities” of women are far from what the Muslim family laws prescribed as they saw the discriminatory practices meted on them, justified in the name of Islam.

According to the group, Equality and Justice are necessary for humanity because Allah created men and women as human beings. That all men and women, have the necessary faculty and ability to act rationally if given the same opportunity and the enabling environment to do so. The group has come to consensus that women do not enjoy equal opportunities as men in all aspects of their lives. As a result, women are oppressed and are put in a subordinate position rendering them powerless and voiceless. It is also observed that injustice on women is maintained in our communities using religious misinterpretations, culture and tradition as justifications. This persists because many women are not educated and depend on the teachings of the scholars, some of whom are not honest with their knowledge of Islam. Many male scholars are given leadership positions in their various communities because they pose as knowledgeable in Islam and this gives them the recognition by the community to lead the affairs of Islam and women’s rights in Islam.

Women have come to realise that these superstructures are not cast in stone, and they can be changed and having experienced alternative interpretations and the injustices, they experience or see happening have led to the questioning of these injustices and inequalities in their communities as individuals in their own rights. They have come to realise that equality and justice are necessary, and that change is necessary to restore the dignity of women as indicated in the Holy Quran, and other human rights discourses and international and regional conventions.

Equality and Justice are necessary because women are no-longer complacent, and are constantly searching for the truth and looking for alternative discourses that promote their rights in Islam (Excerpted from Gambia Report, October 2008). Having set the context for why a pilot study is necessary with the support of the International Advisory Group (IAG, and Sisters in Islam (SIS) and drawing from the pilot study of Indonesia on documenting women’ life stories in dealing with *qiwamah* and *wilayah*, GAMCOTRAP participated in the preparatory processes of this initiative to come up with this report which involves a team of feminist activists, grassroots activists and scholars from different background in the Gambia.

The work started with the active engagement of GAMCOTRAP core staff, with seed money provided by Musawah and supported by the Newfield Foundation. Participants of this Life Stories Project were drawn from women’s rights organizations that are working in various fields, to promote women’s rights and individuals from various backgrounds calling for gender justice. The common area we share was calling for justice within the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.

### GAMCOTRAP and its *qiwamah* and *wilayah* team

GAMCOTRAP (<http://www.accessgambia.com/biz1/gamcotrap-gambia-committee-on-traditional-practices.html>) is a Women’s Rights organization working on the sexual and reproductive health, rights of women, and girl-children. The organization works on sexuality matters affecting the personal status of over 90% of the female population. Specifically, we focus on advocacy through social mobilization to create awareness and consciousness amongst various target groups at different levels. Also, the organization is engaged in policy advocacy to influence laws and legislation that achieve formal and substantive equality for women and eliminate harmful practices that affect women in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. Our main focus is on female genital mutilation, early marriage, polygamy, inheritance rights, violence against women and girl’s education, among other things. Our advocacy is informed by gender as a tool for analysis, rights education, and grounded in feminist discourses to interpret the issues affecting or confronting women to bring in change in their and our lives and conditions for a just and egalitarian society. We use the life stories of women to inform our analysis with regard gender relations.

The GAMCOTRAP team consists of five members namely, Isatou Touray Coordinator of the project and supported by Amie Bojang-Sissoho, Mary Small and Isatou Jeng. Other staff members also gave support to the processes. GAMCOTRAP partnered with Women for Democracy and Development (WODD), The Association for the Promotion of Gambian Women and Children (APGWA), Female Journalist Association of the Gambia (WOJAG), The Child Protection Alliance (CPA <http://www.cpagambia.gm/>), and some budding activists amongst the female students of the University of the Gambia, who were interns with GAMCOTRAP to sharpen their analysis with a critical gender lens and feminist perspectives. Therefore, this engagement from the start has explicit feminist agenda which calls for the empowerment of the researchers as well as the resource persons who are empowered the researchers to learn about the “lived realities” of such women. The document presents the processes and the stories of the Resource Persons and reflections on interviewers.

### The process

The process of documenting the life stories started from 2012 to 2013 with some time devoted to the project among other activities of the organizations work. The project involves three stages with all the facilitators and resource persons interacting with each other. There was a constant back and forth between the resource persons and the facilitators to confirm and re-assess the analysis coming out of the individual stories. Given the dispersed nature and distance in location of the resource persons, the individual facilitators had to travel to each of the resources persons home to follow up on the gaps to come up with the stories and analysis. The three stages were not completely discrete entities, but were processes undertaken at different times. It was a living process where both the resource persons and the facilitators have interacted and learned from each other. The context of interaction may vary from one location to another.

### Stage One: Preparation

For the Gambia project to take off, Dr. Isatou Touray was part of the initial planning process when she joined Musawah and participated in all the discussions on issues affecting women’s rights in Islam. Issues emerging from such discussions were very relevant to what GAMCOTRAP was engaged in the Gambia to promote Women’s rights. It became quite clear that the Musawah Initiative is something that will add value to the work and resonates with our normal organizational work. GAMCOTRAP has engaged with WLUML (<http://www.wluml.org/>) earlier. Some of the framework for analysis with regards to women’s rights in Islam were familiar, based on the WLUML Women and Law project. Meeting with other feminist scholars whose analysis embraces both



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secular and religious discourses was encouraging. That is given the fact that the Gambia is a secular state, but has over 90% of the population adhering to Islam as their religion. GAMCOTRAP decided to engage, and to do so more of the staff had to be involved, including Amie Bojang-Sissoho, who was involved with other women's rights activists, and few male scholars from the University of the Gambia. The common denominator among all of us was that all the organizations who have agreed to join the project were working on women's rights issues. Some were focusing on women and politics, women and the media, women and sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as women and Islam, and students studying different development field in the University among other things.

When we came out of the meeting it was realized that we need to capture the voices of the women whose interests we have been promoting. We felt that it should not be ourselves alone raising the stakes, but we have to listen to other women who are out there as leaders with a wealth of experience but do not have the voice and space or are not made visible because of distance, and lack of opportunities to share their experience. We also felt that perhaps they are the right people to talk about issues affecting them, and our role was to facilitate the process and let them narrate their stories to empower us to engage in effective advocacy. Therefore, we all agreed that they will be referred as the 'Resource Persons' and we the activists and scholars will be the 'facilitators'. That was a strategy adopted from the Musawah methodological workshop. It took time to accept the reverse of this position and role to the grassroots leaders because the norm is they are not knowers and therefore, what do they have to teach us. This feminist approach was a bit confusing for some of the scholars who did not have a gender lens. We finally agreed that to advance equality in the Muslim family in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*, the people have to talk about aspects of their personal status and how it affects them. Therefore, stage one of the project was to come to consensus about what are our common issues, our specific issues and our different issues, and how we position ourselves in the process and this was achieved. We also agreed that the research was absolutely necessary.

### **Defining our approach**

The team agreed that the information generated would be used by all of us to inform our advocacy at community, policy, and institutional levels. That the data to be collected from the process will be shared with the resource persons and if they agree we would use their stories to share with other people to effect change on matters affecting the personal status of women in the Gambia and beyond. We also agreed that every aspect would be explained to them and we would be transparent about the project, but not to call the attention of any institution until we complete the whole process and are able to get clarifications on matters that may evoke sensitivities within the larger public. We also agreed that we will meet them in their own regions, be sensitive to their concerns, establish trust and it must be their own decision to participate in the project. All those resource persons involved had worked with all the team members in their various organizations, and all the facilitators have worked closely with them in projects they have led. Understanding the patriarchal context, we have been working on the myths and beliefs surrounding religious discourses around women, the team agreed that the information generated will be first shared with the women to give them the opportunity to comment, and whether it represents their stories. We also agreed that the information and the emerging issues will be presented to the Muslim *Ulama* to get their reactions about the findings, as well as to help us in our analysis of the issues. This values clarification process informs the research process, which informs our work. We also agreed that we will cover all the regions of the Gambia and select the resources persons based on the criteria we set for ourselves. Therefore, the life stories were gathered at different levels throughout the seven administrative divisions of the Gambia.

### **Delving into the unknown (*qiwamah* and *wilayah*) to understand the patriarchy and "lived realities" of women**

During the process of our reflections, it became quite clear that *qiwamah* and *wilayah* are new concepts for all the activists and some of the scholars who had no religious knowledge. Everyone was asking what is this concept about? What does it mean, and how can we deal with it? We thought that it is important to first have a conceptual training workshop where some scholars and the team members will be invited. This process was led by Dr. Isatou Touray using the Musawah framework and the concept note on *qiwamah* and *wilayah* written by Professor Ziba Mir-Hosseini, and other resource materials by Professor Amina Wadud, other male scholars such as Professor Khalid Masud, and we had reflection on reports of the Musawah Knowledge Building Working Group. The presentation dwelt on the issues and we decided to use the local language to enable the religious scholars to take a lead in the discussions. This was done to be able to clarify in our minds what the concepts mean in our local language and the issues *qiwamah* and *wilayah* addresses in our context. This was a very important process to reach consensus on the issues affecting the personal status of women, and also know whether all the women's right advocacy has anything to do with *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. The reflections and discussions and the emerging issues from the workshop validated the work that activists were doing over the issues, and also brought to light the work of the Qadi Courts and how they deal with women's concerns. At this workshop, it came to light that all the issues that the women's rights movement addresses are related to *qiwamah* and *wilayah* concepts (See Legal Mapping process, The Gambia 2012 and report on Gambia). All the facilitators were present and it also came to light that some of the religious scholars do not even know what are *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. So, this process was liberating for all of us, as we are starting on equal footing with the interpreters and implementers of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. At the end of this process all of us came to realize that male domination of the knowledge which shapes the way people think, affects the discourse. This is manifested in all the issues listed for the Gambia with regards to the analysis coming from each of the issues. The crosscutting issue of patriarchal control and dominance over women's bodies, minds and appearances was the emphasis, while forgetting the responsibility of men with regards to their families. **(See section on *qiwamah* and *wilayah*)**

### **Building the capacity of the facilitators**

The facilitators were trained, the resource materials were shared and we interacted with them during the training process. Based on the list of things to be addressed, a checklist of questions was drawn using the life cycle approach to generate the information using landmarks, events in their lives as they grow up. This way we were able to relate the issues which emerged as they grow from childhood to adulthood, and the important events in their lives. Then the facilitators were asked to collect the information using the list of issues and the legal mapping matrix was used to feed in the information generated after analysing the information with the resource persons. Both actors in the life stories project identified with all these stages and sometimes use themselves as examples to motivate the resource persons to self-disclose, and to create a safe space to enable them talk about the most sensitive and personal emotional aspects of themselves. They were exposed to feminist methodologies of collecting data and to be responsive to emotions when the resource persons show restraint in coming up with the information. Templates were provided to facilitate data collection, and they were encouraged to write down all the points as soon as the interview is concluded at any point they encounter the resource persons.

### **The work plan**

The work plan was fitted in the usual work of the facilitators as it was a continuation of the work they were engaged in on a daily basis. Due to the dispersed nature of the participants, we agreed that those resource persons who were not within our area of proximity will be reached and transportation was facilitated for the facilitators. We also agreed that since the resources we had were very limited, it will be fitted in some of our monitoring trips as an agenda to engage them especially after the initial data collection. Therefore, the work plan came to be work plans for all the participants of this project, thus revealing the nature of feminist work and the organizational contexts we all work in to change the world. It was agreed that all facilitators will be meeting at the end of each month and this was revised to two monthly meetings, as the resource persons were very busy with other development initiatives.

### **Stage Two: Interviews and sharing experiences**

After going through the first stage, it was very clear who were going to be the resource persons for this great project. All the activists were asked to reflect on who they think can be recruited, based on the criteria we set for the Life Stories Project. The criteria set for identifying a resource person were discussed and it was agreed that if they do not fulfill all but most of the criteria they would be eligible. The following criteria were taken into consideration- A woman

with a feminist lens, engage in movement building, engage in grassroots activism, manifested a leadership quality, envisaged to join the initiative and contribute to the empowerment of her community, and class. The Resource Persons to be documented came from the following areas: Upper River Region, Central River Region, Lower River Region, North River Region, West Coast Region and Kanifing Municipal Area. It therefore emerged that almost all the resource persons were interviewed in different contexts, which shows their engagements at different times and periods of the year.

### Composition and background of team members in the *qiwamah* and *wilayah* project

The team was comprised of grassroots activists, scholars, Academics and Journalists who have experience in doing research work as well as social enquiries. They were engaged in one form of research or another, and have engaged in human rights work and promoting the rights of women and vulnerable groups. Members of the media engaged in advocacy and have the experience of talking to prominent people in society. The following table consists of the team of facilitators:

No	Name	Organization	Role
1.	Isatou Touray	GAMCOTRAP	Coordinator/interviewer
2.	Amie Bojang-Sissoho	GAMCOTRAP	Interviewer and video documentation of the stories
3.	Mary Small	GAMCOTRAP	Interviewer
4.			
5.	Sarjo Camara	Female Journalists Association	Interviewer
6.	Binta Bah	Female Journalists Association	Interviewer
7.	Isatou Jeng	Intern from University of The Gambia	Interviewer

Others who supported the process at different stages included Omar Dibba, and Kaddy Touray. Baai Jaabang was instrumental in the follow up documentary of cutaways and editing the documentary that came as a result of the Newfield Foundation support.

Scholars in Islamic jurisprudence were engaged in the process from the conceptual and methodological meeting. As people in dealing with women and human rights issues, their input was important in interpretation, analysis, understanding and validating of the concepts based on the “lived realities” of the Resource Persons in the project. Although over 95% were men. Also, issues emerging for the legal mapping were discussed with them which facilitated our understanding of how the personal status law of Muslim women affects them in the application of law.

The following scholars supported our work:

1. *Imam* Baba Leigh – *Imam* at Kanifing Mosque. He is an activist promoting the rights of women in the context of Islam, and has been engage in dispute resolution and human rights work in the Gambia.
2. Dr. Abubacarr Senghore – Is a lecturer at the University of the Gambia and head of the faculty of law. He has expertise in Human Rights and Islam and *Shari’ah* law. He is the Chairperson of the Gambia Network on Islam, Population and Development.
3. Muhamad Sanuwo – is an Islamic scholar and has a good understanding of women’s rights issues and has a command of the Arabic language and expertise in Islamic Education.
4. Dr. Sabarr Janneh – Is an expert in Human Rights in Islam, and specialized in the Tijani interpretation of Islam under the Maliki School of Thought.
5. Boubacarr Touray – Is a *Qadi* at the Kanifing Municipal Council and involved in decision making processes that relate to *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. He judges on matters of personal status.

The diversity of their experiences grounded in Islamic knowledge contributed in validating the realities of women in addressing *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.

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## Part Three: Life Stories

### ***Our “lived realities”, our voices, our religion***

The following section presents the stories of the 13 (thirteen) resource persons across the country. They were drawn from different regions – urban, rural, semi-urban, to the capital.

#### **Life story #1: Natoma – As wise as a rabbit**

*All Muslim parents owe their children the opportunity to gain knowledge, and they should support them when they seek it, regardless of whether they are male or female. This call is clearly stipulated in the Holy Quran Surah Al-Alaq 96:1-5.*

*In this generation, no girl should be denied education because of gender discrimination. It is her right to seek knowledge and it is the duty of the parents to provide the opportunity. Unfortunately, in many families, formal education is not a priority for parents, especially when it comes to the education of girl children. In rural Gambia, child marriage is more of a priority, than the education of girl children. It is unfortunate that girls are denied the opportunity to seek religious knowledge to the best of their ability, just because of their gender and social expectations of them. Natoma is no exception. She was enrolled in an Arabic school, but this opportunity was more concentrated on providing her with basic knowledge about Islam. Even though Natoma is a girl, her teacher appreciated her intelligence and allowed her to teach other younger students. However, she was denied the opportunity to have a scholarship to further her education in Saudi Arabia.*

*It took unusual courage for Natoma, as a young bride living in a foreign land, to inform her first husband that she would divorce him. She made a Khul' (divorce pronouncement) when it was least expected. Natoma did not give consent to the marriage in the first place, as it was arranged by the parents. She knew that it was the husband who was the source of their problems. She did not pay back her dowry, but did wait for the husband to respond to the cultural way of confirming divorce by giving back her “nunkong ngho,” an insignificant amount of coin symbolizing the legal status of the marriage as either legal, or null and void.*

#### **Childhood**

I was born in Sankwia, Jarra West. When I was 8 years, I was taken to an Arabic school. I realized that during the exams, I used to come out first in the whole region. I used to read and explained the Quran. When I was 10 years, my teacher started to allow me to teach the younger ones. However, people started complaining that I am a woman. As a result, I was denied the opportunity to move on. I was also denied a scholarship to go to Saudi Arabia.

A lot of my age mates used to come to my house to help me with my domestic chores. I was their leader. Even the assistance I was getting from my mates was a concern for the other women. I was prevented from continuing the Arabic education when I was under 12 years of age.

#### **First marriage**

After being denied the opportunity to continue my education, I was married at the age of 14. I was betrothed to my uncle who lived in Barcelona, Spain. I was taken to Spain in 1984 when I married him. I was very young when I met him in Spain. My first husband saw me in Spain, and I have my marriage certificate. I was also popular and well known amongst the Gambians.

When I arrived, I was under the guardianship of my brother's friend, who lived in Spain, and I met his wife, who supported me as a young married girl.

#### **Divorce from first marriage**

As time went by, I could not go on with my husband. The reason for our divorce was that a man, who was known to my mother, called me and explained to me about his family's close relationship with my parents; he decided to take me in as a member of his family. Since then, I considered him a father and would visit him and his family during weekends. One day, I was called by a woman who spoke to me in confidence that the family I am visiting will give their daughter to my husband. I did not believe her because my mother and my ex-husband are related and that is why she ensured that I marry his brother.

However, this woman continued to call my attention, explaining that my family friend in Spain is planning to marry their daughter to my husband. I was very young and did not notice anything unusual. However, one day, my husband woke me up in the middle of the night and decided to tell me that the man and his wife have decided to offer him their daughter. I asked him, “did you request to marry the girl, or did they decide to offer you their daughter?” He replied that the family wanted him to marry the girl. I responded that “if you marry this girl, I will leave you.” I decided to inform my brother and he could not believe it. He decided to find out from my husband and he confirmed that, yes, my husband was bent on marrying this girl from that family. I left and stayed with my brother. Attempts were made by my ex-husband for me to return back to him but I refused, and this ended my 5 years of marriage with him.

I refused to go back to him because the family I trusted as my parents in Spain had betrayed me and caused the problem. One day, as I was sitting at home, I received a subpoena. I went to the court with my family. When I was called, I stood in the court and the prosecutor was surprised to see that I was very young. He told me that “your husband reported to us that you are always beating him.” However, it was a big surprise to the police prosecutor. I was asked to narrate my story as I did to you. After my narration, he (my ex-husband) was detained and I was left to go home. Later my brother begged me to go back to the court to seek his release and he was released. After this situation, I was always crying to my elder brother that I want to return home (to The Gambia).

My marriage was registered and I have a copy of it. There were some regulations that I did not know about because I am not literate in English. My certificate was in my husband's possession and before he handed it over to me after the divorce, he photocopied it, deleted my name and put his second wife's name on it. I did not know about all of this because I was very young, illiterate and ignorant. I was not aware of this. You know that now I am well empowered, and have an idea on all these things. Nobody will fool me.

Upon divorce, everything was given to me, including my marriage certificate. I was able to come back home and two weeks later, I got the news that my ex-husband would be in prison for 10 years. I don't know his crime.

I joined my mother from Spain. My brother who lives in Spain wanted to take me back to Spain, but I refused and decided to stay because my mother was very old.

I observed three months of *'Iddah*. My husband never sent anything during this period, and I was also not in touch with him. I did not pay back the dowry as there are conditions attached to the payment of dowry. One of the conditions is that if the woman has offended the husband or is guilty of an offense on

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the husband, then she is asked to refund the dowry. In my case I have not offended him, he did instead. 'Iddah was observed at my mother's house in The Gambia.

### **Second marriage**

It is very rare in rural Gambia to find a woman in a polygamous marriage staying separate from her co-wives in a different compound, even if the husband could afford to do so. In her second marriage, Natoma had given consent, but she also set conditions for the marriage before it was contracted. Empowered Natoma laid out her conditions for her second marriage and one of them was that she would live in a separate compound from her co-wives.

After one year, I got married again to a rich and influential chief. I had no problems in this marriage and he was my choice of husband. I was 22 years old when I married my second husband. He had two wives. I am the third but I never stayed in the same compound with my co-wives. I was not ready to be in the same compound with my co-wives, a condition I laid down for my husband and he agreed. When I went to join him, he had already built my own compound and he respected my conditions. I can say that my current husband is rich by Gambian standards. I don't have problems with my co-wives because we are not staying together. I feel that I am lucky and I feel that every human being has to contend with her luck. My reason for refusing my first husband's second wife is because of the way I was treated, and because of my relationship with the girl's family, who I saw as my parents.

I never had a child in either of these relationships. I feel that it is the will of Allah. I never feel any pain that would prevent me from having a child. I have been told that I will get children but until now, I have no child. In this second marriage, my husband has never made me feel bad for not having a child with him. All the children I have under my custody are my immediate family members, and my husband treats them equally.

### **Leadership**

Some people do not realize their leadership potential but for some, they do pay attention to it at an early stage in life. Natoma recognized her leadership role at as a young girl amongst her peers. As an adult, she continues to be a leader in different forums. She also encompasses her leadership with empowerment to control her own resources, and takes decision on how she uses her income. Her mobility is not restricted and her leadership spans from her community, at the regional and national levels.

I saw my ability to lead at a very early age. As I told you earlier on, I used to lead among my peer groups in any activity. In our village groups, district level and at the regional level. Most of the times when a person is to be chosen, if I am present, there is always consensus that I should lead them.

I am the regional mobiliser for APRC, the ruling party in the Gambia. I was the Women Councilor for nine (9) years in the National Women's Bureau <http://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n88126265/>. I have served as the regional president of FAWSEA. I am also the president of the Adult literacy programme in my region. I was entrusted with funds on a quarterly basis to pay the facilitators to run the Adult literacy programmes. I was responsible for 62 literacy classes, and I have benefitted as a student in the literacy class.

My current husband has never posed any problem with my leadership responsibilities. I was the coordinator of the July 22<sup>nd</sup> Movement, and the President used to pay us D1,500 each week for three years. He provided us with fuel and transport to sensitize people about the changes of government from Constitutional democracy, to Military rule. It was not difficult to see and speak to the President in those days because every one of us (July 22<sup>nd</sup> coordinators) used to report to the President. Then Tamsir Jallow was the National Chairman July 22<sup>nd</sup> Movement. I am the President of a number of organizations and groups.

In my leadership effort, I was sent to Mecca by the President and also awarded a medal of the Order of the Republic of the Gambia. I was trained as a Community Based Facilitator (CBF) by GAMCOTRAP, Department of Social Welfare and the Women's Bureau.

Through my leadership role, I had three opportunities to travel to Dakar. UNDP sent me on a study tour twice to Dakar on Adult literacy. The Women's Bureau (WB) sent me to observe the work of other councilors, and to learn from them the best practices. In my leadership, I love to work with people in position to learn from them, to be able to improve my life and family.

A lot of women have learned from my experience. I teach them about children's and women's rights issues. There are issues I got from GAMCOTRAP and other organizations. These things have made positive impact in our lives. I did not go to the Parliament because I am illiterate (in Western education). What is always said is; "This illiterate cannot go to the House". Some of the male MPs were equally illiterate, and they were elected to go to parliament. I am just being discriminated in political representation. Everything is in the hands of Allah. But the first thing is good life, health and wealth.

### **Daily life**

When I wake up in the morning, I start by preparing food for the family. I cook porridge for breakfast. When I wake up, I light the fire and start the cooking. I don't cook lunch because my daughter-in-law (Her husband is my sister's son), Juju Darboe cooks the lunch while my adopted daughter cooks dinner. When I wake up even before preparing the breakfast, people are at my doorstep waiting for me to attend to them. After preparing the breakfast, I share it among my family and those waiting outside. In our family, we do not cook for ourselves alone. We prepare a lot of food and share it because it is an administrative place as my husband is the chief of the District.

Each of those people waits for me to lodge their complaints. They sometimes request for support, while some of them seek for information or assistance. For example, (a woman), came up to my house and told me that her husband divorced her and asked her to leave the house and I told her not to leave the house because there are laws of the land. I told her to wait until he forces her to leave. But up till now, she has not left the house, and the ex-husband did not insist that she leaves because she has two sons who are adults.

You are aware of the other incidence when I took you to a compound of the *Alkali*, when a woman was divorced with 5 children. We went to the police and reported the matter and you gave her D2, 000.00. We had a meeting and now she has returned home. The support you gave her was very important.

In 2009, I met GAMCOTRAP and we started working to promote women's rights during the month of Ramadan. We had a meeting and I learnt some new things on the reason why FGM should stop in the region. I advised you to involve all the districts in the region and engage in advocacy. We were able to convince a lot of people. Through our sensitization programmes, I was able to lead the Dropping of the Knife Ceremony in the Lower River Region (LRR) which includes 20 circumcisers, and 150 communities in 2012.

### **Land rights**

When my father died in 1983, I had access and control to all his landed properties, but not ownership right. We share the fruits among ourselves after selling them. I have 2 siblings, Momodou, Maimuna and myself. We are from the same mother and father. Momodou is the eldest brother and currently living in Spain.

My husband gave me land that I own, and the papers are in my name. I can build my own house. I got it seven years ago. Similarly, in my husband's farm land, I have access and control, and not ownership. I controlled my money and at times shared it with my mother who was my first priority. There were times when I contributed to the items needed for the home but my husband never controlled it. I put my trust in Allah. Allah directed me and this is the appointed time to go ahead with the building of my house. I would have built it a long time ago but as a leader in a large community who is trusted by many

people, I have to also consider their needs. There are times when people would come to me with their problems, financial, political, gender related, schools, etc., and I assisted them solve their problems due to the confidence that people have in me.

I know that no condition is permanent; a person grows from one stage to another until she reaches an old age when she cannot do much. I came to realize that I am aging and have to plan my future now. My husband gave me this piece of land, and also contributed towards the construction. The documents are all in my name. In June 2013, H.E. the President of The Republic of The Gambia was on a tour to the region, so I told him about the piece of land that I am constructing. He asked me how I manage to raise the funds for the construction, I told him that I have been working with GAMCOTRAP, and the organization empowers women to take up responsibilities and because they have empowered me, I took the initiative to start on my own. Then H.E. sent someone to the compound to assess the work done so far and he promised to assist me.

### Gender based violence

I have rarely experience any form of domestic violence. I do recognize some bodily expressions but I avoid them. Gender Based Violence is an everyday burning issue between me and men. Some men feel that my decision should not stand, and sometimes this could cause push and pull. However, if you are determined, people will recognize your role. Some of the women who are jealous will create stories and talk to the men who sometimes listen to them. This is used as an opportunity to dismiss your viewpoint (decision making).

### Reflection of the interviewer

A decision was made to interview one of the resource persons who is a Community Based Facilitator, and who has led the campaign in the Lower River Region to stop female genital mutilation. The resource person was very willing to share her story and had reflections on how she was discriminated because she was a girl. She was comfortable with the team. The first part of the interview was done while she was on a joint monitoring trip with the team. The interviews were done at the residence of one of the coordinators of GAMCOTRAP in the Upper River Region of the Gambia. Even though we proposed to meet her home, she insisted that she has no problems because she is part of us. There was confidence and trust. Natoma started her leadership role at an early age and grew up with it. She stays in her husband's compound separated from that of her co-wives. She commands a lot of authority and respect from friends, relatives and authorities for her contribution in national development.

She is the third wife but she is very assertive. She has a high status in her community which made her influential. She is trustworthy and connected to key authorities within her community and the district. She meets and discusses with H.E the President of the Republic of The Gambia on matters relating to politics. She works with government officials, women groups, community based organizations and non-governmental organizations.

In her compound, we met a group of women, said to have been from the Greater Banjul Area. Due to the confidence they had in her, the women converged at her place before and after their travel to a religious all-night prayer, gathering where they used the opportunity to shop and on their return, sell the items.

People were also seen waiting in queues for advice and support in terms of solving problems, one of which was related to women's milling machine in a nearby village. Even though she is not blessed with children, her relatives' children are attached to her, and she is contributing to their welfare. Her leadership role is obvious, reflecting on her strength and ability to address issues in a professional manner.

### Notes on the links between the story of Natoma and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Early and Arranged Marriage</li> <li>2. Betrayal of her acting father/family friend in Spain to give his daughter's hand in marriage to Natoma's husband without her knowledge</li> <li>3. Divorced her first husband after deciding to marry a second wife</li> <li>4. Remarried after a year to the man she desired</li> <li>5. Although she rejected her first husband due to polygamy; however, she later decided to be a 3<sup>rd</sup> wife</li> <li>6. Childless in her 15 years of marriage, but second husband never treated her bad as a result of that</li> <li>7. Dowry was not refunded for the first marriage</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider arranged and early marriage as normal</li> <li>2. Expect her to remain in her first marriage after encountering such unpleasant circumstances</li> <li>3. Leadership role at an early age</li> <li>4. Mediate in broken marriages of women in her region</li> <li>5. Support women financially and as well as feeding</li> <li>6. Played a very important political role in the community and the country at large.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Natoma was denied scholarship to study in Saudi Arabia due to her gender despite her good performance in school and qualifications.</li> <li>2. She was never given opportunity to attend formal school</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There was no law by the time of the arranged marriage to prevent her from getting married at that tender age</li> <li>2. The foreign state (Spain) treated the case fairly, considering her age and the lies told by her husband</li> <li>3. Conditions are attached to the refunding of dowry- for example if the woman has initiated the divorce from the husband, or is guilty of an offence inflicted on the husband, she is asked to pay back the dowry</li> <li>4. The <i>Shari'ah</i> law/customary law is applied for Muslim marriages.</li> </ol>



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## Life Story #2: Fama – Enslaved by love for her children

*We travelled all the way to the Tumana district. During the heavy rains, it is difficult to have access to this big community hidden beyond the hills, and has only one transport to ply to and from the village daily. Unfortunately, when we arrived, Fama has already left with the morning trip to the regional capital Basse. We could have saved the trip, but Fama lost her mobile phone and could not be reached. Having got the message that she was attending training in Basse, we drove back to the Agricultural Centre and there we met her. After briefing her, Fama agreed to meet us later when she finished with her meeting. She is a busy woman trying to do her own work, as well as represent her community to contact development agents to support her community. She arrived with enthusiasm that she was able to meet us after a long break. After exchanging greetings and catching up, we settled down at the back yard of our host family under the neem tree and here is Fama's story.*

*During our second visit, the 50-year old woman was relaxing on her bed which she later told us one of her children bought for her. She proudly showed us pictures of a ceremony she hosted when a group identified her as their surrogate mother. She later led us to one of the projects she was able to get for her women. She is the main provider in her second marriage and takes responsibility of the children, whose protection was the reason for even marrying again into the same family. The love for her children enslaved her in a marriage without love.*

### Childhood

My name is Fama and I come from Tumanna in the Upper River Region. I did not go through Western education. I was born in the family of *Mullahs* and we did Arabic education when I was young, I went to *Karanta* (local religious education system) for 15 years and I was circumcised at the age of 5 years. I got married at the age of 17 in another village in my district, Tambasansang.

### First marriage

My first husband died and I was inherited by his brother, which is a common practice in The Gambia. In my first marriage, I had nine (9) children and I got two (2) children in the second marriage. I was the second wife in my first marriage, and the last wife in my second marriage.

In my first marriage, I was the second wife and I had to accept the situation. I gave my co-wife who was the first wife all the respect and recognition and I was in turn respected. But if you come with a sense of competition, you will not succeed and you will not be able to enjoy your life. If you take the first wife as your mother, you are likely to win her over.

I have never faced any problem with my first husband. I was consulted by my father and he told me they wanted me to marry. But my father said that he will not force me, and would like me to see him and make up my mind about him (To seek consent in marriage). I therefore took my time to observed him and I accepted him as my husband because I know that his character was good. I was not forced and I loved him. I got married for 31 years. He died nine (9) years ago.

### Second Marriage

With my second husband, truly speaking I faced difficulties. When my husband died, after the completion of the mourning period (*'Iddah*), I was returned to my family. Later, the family of (my late husband's brother) came back to seek for my hand in marriage. Truly I did not have that much love for him, but their argument was that they did not want me to marry another family. I did not love him but because of my children, I reluctantly accepted him. During our marriage, he would help me in my farm work. He has farming implements. He helps me by using his farming equipment on my farm and I cook for him. I don't live in his compound, but in the house of my late husband with my children. Currently, I have two children with my husband.

### Source of livelihood

My main source of livelihood is based on farming, petty trading, soap making, gardening, and I sell the proceeds and use the money to help my family. I provide my own fish money but he occasionally gives me money to buy sugar. I also cloth myself and the children, because he does not provide for the other wives, so I cannot tell him to buy for me. If anything, I am only married to him because of "*horomo*" (respect) and "*Bunya*" (honour). I live in my own compound like I told you before and I am responsible for myself. My relationship with my co-wives is not very easy because most of the time these co-wives feel that you are intruding into their marriage. So, I cope by accepting my situation as the will of Allah because I am in it for the sake of my children. Honestly, I will never have entered into the second marriage, (if I knew what I know today).

When I went to meet my co-wives in my husband's house, I greeted them but they did not respond. I repeated it twice and I saw one of the wives creating problems and we fought. People intervened and advised the other wives to stop the fight. Our husband noted that he will not do anything for me without them, and it is because of his late brother's death that he married me. When this happened, I felt so bad and I thought that if it was not the death of my late husband, I would not face this situation. When my co-wives realized that I am responsible for all my things, I pay for my children's fees, provide lunch, clothing, books, food etc., they no longer pose a problem for me. They are also in the same situation like me. In other words, we are the providers and caregivers of our husband and children. I am about 40-45 years (relatively 50 years). I have three other children, two of my sister's and a friend's child. I took them to school and now they have been transferred to a higher school. I pay for their school fees.

### Leadership

You know in one's life time you must wish good for all, and at all times, you must strive to help others. Therefore, whatever you have you must share. It is not easy to be a leader. First of all, you must be patient and you must have a good character. Like I said earlier, you must wish the best for others as you do for yourself. If you do that, you will succeed. Anything you plan, you should share with the people. My leadership started at community when I was 18 years old.

You know one cannot make herself a leader. It is the people who observe your character, recognize your talents and the qualities you have, and they decide to choose or identify you as their leader. When I was chosen as a leader, it was a big surprise and I was not there. The previous leader was seen to be very old and the whole community decided to come together to get a replacement for her. So, they chose me as their leader. I was not there but they went to my husband and begged him to allow me to accept the position. Later, they were able to convince my husband and he agreed to allow me to engage, and his family also accepted that I should accept the responsibility. Since I took up the responsibility, I decided to make a great effort to bring in any opportunity that comes my way to the village.

Since we are in rural areas, my interest is bringing in garden projects because as farmers, it improves family health and wellbeing as well as some money for our families. I search for training opportunities for the community so that the members will get to learn about development issues in order to improve themselves. It is through this process that I met GAMCOTRAP. This is how I was able to introduce the opportunity of GAMCOTRAP to the community and got the people engaged to be involved in the fight against FGM, women's rights, and early marriage. These were issues that our community was unaware of. I made efforts to bring in the program and all of them benefitted. Truly, after this project, we have come to realize the importance of girls' education, and

that Female Genital Mutilation is not a religious obligation, and most of us now know our rights. I did not stop at my community; I decided to involve other communities in the district to spread the news. I reached out to the religious scholars, chief of the district and all these efforts resulted that our women and children are protected from Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs). In 2009, 60 circumcisers and 351 communities dropped their knife to protect girls from FGM in our region. I made sure that my district was not left behind this movement to change the lives of our women and girl-children in Tambasangsang. I am a representative of GAMCOTRAP in the region, and I served as a Community Based Facilitator. I am chosen as a representative of NAWFA <http://www.accessgambia.com/extra/nawfa-gambia.html> in the region. I am responsible for informing the membership of information coming from NAWFA, and I am involved in development work in the region. I belong to a political party. I have never travelled out of the country. I have never received an award from the government.

It is because my husband gave his consent that I accepted to take leadership role. If he did not give his consent, I will not accept it as he is the head and the reason for my staying in his compound. I have to listen to him as I was under his control. (At this point the children interrupted asking for coins)

### Inheritance

I still live in my first husband's house, and we have inherited it. If I did not have children with him, I will not stay here, because they will say that I do not have children with him. Also, if do not agree to marry his brother after his death, I will not be allowed to stay in the compound. I inherited the land, his gowns and farm implements. I had to return the clothes and farm implements because my children were still very young to use them.

I will never leave this house to go to another husband's house. I have aged and my children are grown ups, so I could not afford going out. Amongst the Mandinkas if you do not have a child, you will not inherit a house. So, if I did not have children, I would not stay here.

### Reflection of the interviewer

When the team arrived in Tambasangsang, we heard about the death of the Alkalo (village head), and the team paid a courtesy visit. Our first day with the resource person was not possible because of her busy schedule. We followed on her in Basse.

Fama was willing to give us the Interview in Basse at a convenient venue where we had the space available. She noted if we do not start, now it will be difficult to reach me as I am on the move and my village is very remote and the rainy season will prevent you from reaching me soonest. We had the first interview with her when she came to attend a training programme on agricultural extension methods and new technologies. She was representing her community in Basse.

Fama has also assumed a leadership position both in her community and the surrounding villages who look up to her for advice. In May, she was chosen by a group to be a surrogate mother which she accepted. She is a role model for women in her community. While the interviews were on children, mainly her grandchildren would come in to ask for lunch or other items for purchase.

### Notes on the links between the story of Fama and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wife inheritance</li> <li>2. Polygamy</li> <li>3. Got married to her husband's brother to safeguard her children's interest</li> <li>4. Accepted to live in violence imposed on her by her co-wives</li> <li>5. Jealousy among co-wives</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Forced to accept polygamous marriage throughout her marriage experience</li> <li>2. Forced to marry her husband's brother because society believe the children would adopt a different attitude when Fama remarries in another family</li> <li>3. Fama helped others in the community</li> <li>4. She plays a leadership role in her society</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It is assumed that Islamic religion supports wife inheritance, even without the consent of the woman</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Although there is a law that protects women from being inherited as properties; however, it is not recognized and implemented in the Gambia and so the majority of women are ignorant about such legal protections.</li> <li>2. The state operates within a patriarchal framework which it justifies in the name of Islam.</li> </ol>

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### Life Story #3: Maimuna – Whatever a man can do, a woman can also do: disability is not inability

*The unassuming modest woman, despite her slight physical disability, heads not only her family but she is the head of her community. Her leadership in her community did not go uncontested, because some male headed households could not accept a woman to be the head of their village. She is amongst the few girls in those days who went sent to school, and was allowed to complete her education. She worked and retired as a nurse and continues to work in her farm and garden to support her family.*

*She was at her garden when we first arrived at her home. We had to return the following morning and she was all dressed up in her traditional tie & dye indigo colour set for our interview. She welcomed us to sit with her in at her veranda. Her responsibility as a provider was evident when her grandchildren came to her to ask for money to buy snack. She tells her story of how she became the first female village head in the Gambia. Maimuna is beginning to realize the importance of distributing landed property when sharing inheritance, because the generations coming will demand for it. At the garden, she raised the issues of land ownership and its criteria to guarantee ownership for both. She gave part of her land for the village women to use as a garden and they had support to fence it but she would not allow the women to grow fruit trees, only vegetables because later she would reclaim the land from them.*

#### Childhood

My name is Maimuna. I was born in Basse Kabakama, in Danso Kunda. I went to school and completed until Standard 4. I was trained as a nurse mid-wife in 1962 when I was 26 years. I completed the training in 1963. I returned to Basse and started working in Basse health Center as a nurse mid-wife for 32 years. In 1984, I became the *Alkali* (village head) after the death of my brother. I continued to work as a nurse mid-wife and as the *Alkali* up to 1997 when I retired from the health Center. In 1987, I also started to work with Dr. Isatou Touray and Mary Small on women's rights issues.

#### Alkalorship

No, when my father died, he was succeeded by my brother, Lamin Danso. When Lamin Danso died, the issue of succession became an issue. However, my father's relatives and the elders decided that it should come from the same lineage. All the rightful heirs were women. We were three (3) women, and I was the youngest among them. The Futankas (Fulani tribe), who were then living within our community said that my father was very kind to them and thought that this position should not be ceded to another family lineage. They came together to decide who among the three (3) women should succeed my late brother. A decision and consensus was reached and I was chosen. When they realized that I was the educated one among us, the elders of the community came to the family to say we would like to return the *Alkalorship* to the family. The team of elders went to see the chief, (Alhagie Muhammed Krubally) to ask him whether a woman can be an Alkalo. He replied that "whatever a man can do, a woman can". They then went to the Governor's office (then Waa Juwara was the Governor, and Bala Jahumpa was his Assistant). They asked him the same question; the chief and the Governor too gave the same reply. They all agreed that I should be the *Alkali*.

When my tenureship was announced to the entire community, our settlers (karankes- Coblers), blacksmiths, Sillah Kunda) also raised issues that they would like to contest the seat of *Alkalorship*. It was only one compound; my father was their host. They are our 'karanke'. The Fulas are the majority, they said my father was kind to them. As a result, their request reached the Governor's office and Bala Jahumpa, who was Minister at the time, and gave directive to Waa Juwara who decided that the seat will be contested. In 1984, I contested the *Alkalorship*, my opponent got 42 votes and I got 264 votes. Then I became the Alkalo. After that, the whole community was gathered and the result was announced and they were urged to give me all the support, I am still the Alkalo (Village Head). The whole village had a meeting to reconcile. Since then, when there is anything regarding the village I involve their elders.

#### Community engagement

I was engaged in my paid job as a nurse midwife and Alkalo. I retired in 1997. I led the people in my community work. I represent my community in all development functions. When people are faced with problems, I intervene between them and the police. I served as an intermediary between my people and the government. I also used to provide support to other families. I do the same, like my father. I collect rates and taxes in my community. I am assisted by my son, Mandu. He sometimes helps me to collect the rates and taxes, and takes them to the area council. I preside on family matters and involve the council of elders in the community to settle disputes. I have never faced resistance or discrimination from immediate communities, especially close members of my community and the Fula community. However, I faced resistance and discrimination from Mandinka dominated families.

All land under my family are under my authority and I allocate it to other members of the family. For example, when any member of my family wants to farm on the land, I will allocate land. I am controlling family/kabilo land. I own 2 plots of land given to me by my father. The current compound I am living in belongs to my late father. My half-sister was also given her land. At the community level, I must approve if any land is going to be deposed off to ensure that there is fairness. I usually ensure that members of the family know the situation of the land.

#### Land ownership and control

My father cannot because my grandfather did not. My father did not; my brother whom I succeeded did not so I did not. However, sooner or later the land will be shared because it is possible. I did not share the farmland we inherited because this was the way I found, it but all other properties were shared.

#### Marriage

I was married at the age of 19 years. I have 5 children, three (3) girls and (2) boys. I was the 2<sup>nd</sup> wife. I lost my husband in 2006. During our time, we married late. Girls' education was not encouraged. We were only 4 girls namely; Satou Kora who was at standard four, Makanny Damba, Mariama Camara, and myself. We completed our education and took up jobs. Some of us are retired. Makaddy and I went to school of nursing.

This is my father's house. He was told by a marabout that the physically disabled amongst his children should not leave the compound, as you can see I am the one with a disability. So even when I got married, I continued to live here. My husband died, he was from Jimara. I do visit Jimara, my children did not inherit land from my husband, but they use his land for seasonal farming. After I lost my first husband, I refuse to re-marry because they (men) disturb people. My refusal to re-marry did not affect my image as the village head at all.

I am the guardian of my children. When my husband was alive, I was responsible for my children. Since 1978, I was responsible for my mother, my brothers, and their wives, in addition to my children. I was living on my paid job to take care of my children, even before I became the village head. I engage in farming during the raining season. I produce rice. I also work in the garden; I produce onions, pepper, tomatoes, okra, greens and eggplant. I sell some and eat some at home and to ensure food security. I feed my family from the rice and I give out charity, I don't sell it.

#### Politics

As a village head, if there are elections in the country, I am responsible for supporting the process by providing space for voting, confirm the registration of voters to verify if they are citizens. I also confirm access to national Identity cards as my official role. I facilitate and mobilize for the voting process.

### Achievements

I was elected as Alkalo during the First Republic. When I was elected, the Governor of the region wrote to the president and informed him that he has the first female Alkalo, and I was given an Award in 1987. The Award was presented to me by Bakary B. Darboe who then was the Vice President in the First Republic. I received the Award in Banjul, I was the only woman. I was awarded a certificate of service in 1999 by Yankuba Touray during the Second Republic. I went to Mecca under the ticket of the current ruling party. I have received several other certificates for attending workshops, to further enhance my skills in the field of development.

### Daily time use

When I wake up in the morning, I pray and have my breakfast. If it is in the dry season, I go to the garden, and if it is during the raining season, I go to the rice farm. Sometimes when I am in the farm or garden, I am called to come home that some strangers are waiting for me, and I will return to attend to them. I usually return home after 6:00 in the evening. When I return home, I have my bath, pray, eat dinner and rest. I would advise my people that whatever men are, women can do the same. In terms of leadership, village heads, even as president, because there are women presidents in other parts of the world. You have to be strong and determined. For example, there are women in leadership positions in communities. For example, a woman in the Nuimi succeeded her father when he died, and she became the Alkalo. It is determination, commitment and hard work to get what one is aspiring for.

### Domestic violence

I experienced violence with my brother who was then the village head, who beat me up. A boy was very rude to me and made verbal insults to me. My son retaliated and fought with him. I have never experienced violence with women. I am fortunate in regards to my husband. I did not face violence because he did not stay with me. I was circumcised at the age of 10. I went together with my elder sisters who were around 14 years. I was taken with them because I was the only one remaining. When many resisted the FGM campaign, I accepted to give support in those early days of the campaign in my region. I knew the harm so I sensitized with others even in Jimara. It affects women during child birth and at marriage. At the beginning, many did not understand. People will stop through sensitization. I go to different places, in Touba Tafsir, people fear that if anyone does FGM, legal action will be taken against the person. Definitely, people have stopped here.

### Reflection of the interviewer

Maimuna has been a long-standing partner of GAMCOTRAP, and has been very supportive of our advocacy work to eliminate FGM in her region, when the resistance was very high. She took leadership and through her, she was able to mobilize the people in the region to declare the region FGM free. She was comfortable in narrating her story and agreed that her experience should be a source of inspiration for others to learn from. She cried for all the struggles she encountered. She kept on emphasizing that they need women like the activists to share their struggles because they have a story to tell the younger generations of women.

At the time of the interview, there was a Fula bride in the compound hidden from the husband as one of the traditional wedding rites. The young women and girls cooked and had fun.

### Notes on the links between the story of Maimuna and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

Personal and Family	Society	Institution / Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Female Genital Mutilation</li> <li>2. Violence from the brother, who was the village head before her</li> <li>3. She controls family land</li> <li>4. Maimuna was the second wife of her first husband and after the death of her husband, she refused to remarry</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership role at an early age</li> <li>2. Maimuna took up the responsibility as a village head and mid-wife/nurse as a paid job at the same time</li> <li>3. She provided financial support to other families</li> <li>4. Intervenes between people when problem arises</li> <li>5. Maimuna serves as an intermediary between her people and the State</li> <li>6. She collected taxes and rates, as her late father did</li> <li>7. She also faced resistance and discrimination from Mandinka dominated families</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The council of elders helps to resolve family matters</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State showed support and commitment to her role as an Alkalo</li> </ol>



## Life Story #4: Penda – A determined survivor

*Heavily built, her body is an attraction for many men, who admire women with big lower body. She went through four different marriages without happiness. Penda had to endure the anguish of living, as a young woman, with a man old enough to be her father. Despite the fact that she was not in love, her co-wives were not happy that she had only boy children with their husband. The male sex preference put her in all sorts of violence including fighting with her. She struggled with the daily household chores, and grew older to see her sons fight for her before she was able to have peace at home. However, she did not escape abuse of men who marry her to legalize their desire to have her as a wife. She continues to be disappointed with men because the husbands were not interested in providing support to her children, but to get the little privileges she could provide for them. She cooks for them the best food she could afford to appease them, but the men were not sincerely in love, but to justify their lust. None of these husbands were either her provider or protector. She is hopeful that one day her own sons will provide her proper shelter. She could see the signs, one of them bought her a big TV set and he is building a big house in his father's compound.*

### Marriage

I got married at the age of 18 years. We were 8 girls in the compound, and all of whom got married before me. I got married to a very old man and I was the 6<sup>th</sup> wife. I come from a nearby village. I was the youngest wife. When I was being betrothed to him, I refused because I did not love him. But I was forced to marry him without my consent. He was the head of his town. When I came to join him, I was 'lent' to him. When I got children, I became very happy. I got 7 children in that marriage, but 5 are alive. All my children were boys. While I was with him, the female youths came to choose me as their leader and I accepted the choice. Together with them, we were engaged in paid farm work with my group. Later, women of reproductive age came to identify me as their leader. When the group comes, if I don't move, they won't.

I don't have a sibling of the same mother and father. I have a sister of the same mother, and some half-brother of the same father. In the community, I command respect and trust from the people. So, I decided to engage myself with the children. I am now 50 years old or more.

### Violence in my marriage

I suffered different forms of violence. Yes, indeed. My first son was given poison (soda). I took him to the hospital and the doctors confirmed that he was given soda. What happened was, I left him at the veranda and went to take bath. When I came out of the bathroom, I found his tongue with a piece of kolanuts and I took him to the hospital, after 2 days, he died.

I suspected someone and *Allah* knows best. A woman did it, the most senior wife who never wanted me to get a child in this marriage. I have suffered a lot from this marriage and even this house I am sitting in with you, I was refused to occupy it. My husband's eldest son said that the inherited wife (I could say the 7<sup>th</sup> wife) was to occupy the 2-bedroom flat and I refused. This house was built by the son of the second wife who passed away. I said if I will not occupy the house, then we can demolish it and build a new one. He sent in people for me to leave the compound. I refused and finally I got into the house with my children. I suffered a lot in this compound, but now I thank *Allah*. Now I am involved in a lot of things, and nothing happens without my involvement.

In those days, the other wives and their children would fight with me. I suffered a lot in this compound. But now I am free, when my children grow up, they will stand up to them when they make attempts to fight with me. I am motivated by the fact that I have children in this compound, that is why I still want to stay.

### Female Genital Mutilation

We used to be around 15 years, because it was a time when you can wash your things and do a lot on your own.

### Source of livelihood

I am a farmer. I produce rice during the raining season. When my husband died, all my children were in school and only the oldest was earning a salary. I single handedly fed the others and paid their school fees. Sometimes I used to cry so much. I would go to the farm, carrying my children on my back. One day I went to the river very early in the morning while pregnant to fetch water, I tripped off and fell in the river. I was lucky to anchor myself on the wharf but lost my shoes, bowls and other belongings. I thanked *Allah* that I was safe but I cried a lot.

I used to sell smoked fish at the market and alongside that, engage myself in petty trading to earn an income and feed my family. I also engage in soap processing and trading. I also used to do gardening and cultivation of rice, but because of my current physical health status I am experiencing pain in my knees and could no more go to the rice fields. I hope *God* will continue to help me and my children.

### Determination to stay at ex-husband's compound

I live in this house but it was built by the second son – living abroad with his children - of my co-wife (deceased). I am not sure if I shall remain to occupy it forever because there may be changes. Earlier when the house was built, my ex-husband's son who is the current village head rejected the idea of me staying in the house. It was a difficult period, but in the end, he considered that I had children here and allowed me to use the house.

### Inheritance

I have never inherited land or life-stock or any property, and none of my children inherited from their father. I was given 3 clothes to be shared amongst my children; who actually rejected those shirts but I took them just to avoid problems and remained patient. The other remaining landed properties were all sold by his eldest son (from a different mother), and no one got any share from that money.

Before his death, I requested him to give me land, and he agreed and gave me a plot besides the graveyard although now inhabited by people all over. However, I still could not develop the land because of lack of resources. I have no compound papers for the plot of land except the receipts of the yearly rates that I pay. I once attempted to construct a mud house on the plot, but I could not complete it due to lacking resources and in the end the rain destroyed it.

### Series of marriages after first husband

I got married afterwards to a religious leader from Guinea Bissau, but because he had not been coming for two to three years, I requested for a divorce and refunded his dowry amount.

I then remarried to a Marabout man from a village about 4 Kilometers from our town. This marriage did not last for a year because he does not like my children. I decided to give him back his dowry, but he declined to take it from me. His problem was that he cares for me because of what he gets from me, but does pay little if any attention to my children.



Both my second and third husbands came to me to ask for my hand in marriage. With the husband from the nearby village, I used to cook from my house and take it to him. This did not go down well with his other wives, and there was a day the husband had to beat the second wife for my sake. I had a good relationship with the first wife.

I enjoyed my marriage with the Marabout husband because he thought me a lot in my religion and about society, but I should also acknowledge that sometimes we did not get along very well and it is me who has to be quiet to rest the case.

I married another religious leader but this was short lived. When he saw me, he followed me for quite a while. He finally sent a woman who lives in my town who came with the information, and then I accepted his proposal. To perform the customary marriage, I asked him to go to my relatives in the village to inform them of his proposal, as well as perform the usual marriage ritual. I would have easily accepted for everything to be done where I lived, as I am not a young girl to undergo the formal ceremony and requirement of a young girl, but I deliberately asked him to go to our village so that my relatives would be aware of what is happening and for me to gain the due respect. He gave my relatives D600.00 as dowry; the D300.00 was given to me, while the rest was left with my elders. After the fourth day when the married rituals were done, he came over to spend the night. On returning to his home town in Basse the following day, he sent me message saying that he has divorced me.

I do not even want to discuss this marriage. He does not love me but wanted to have fun with me.

I am not interested in going out to a husband's home; whoever marries me will have to come over as I will never go away from this house. I have grown up children, and one of them is constructing this house. He brought me a fridge and a television. I will continue selling ice block and food items in the market where I have a stall.

*"As a women's leader, societal expectation is such that you are supposed to be married, and without a husband people talk negatively about you."*

**Advice**

Women should learn to be caring and supportive of their children and alongside that, try to empower themselves as a means to guarantee a better life.

**Reflection of the interviewer**

Penda at the beginning was very emotional about her story as she narrates she was crying, and we were obliged to keep the interview short. And she promised to continue on our next visit. Women, irrespective of age, position and geographical locations strive hard to make ends meet. When she was narrating the bitter experience, she had with the last marriage, she was very emotional and she kept on lamenting (he was only interested in me for sex).

The resource person is a very well-built woman of considerable vital bodily measures/shape which is an attraction for men in our context.

**Notes on the links between the story of Penda and Qiwamah and Wilayah**

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Betrothed to an old man as a 6<sup>th</sup> wife</li> <li>2. Forced Marriage</li> <li>3. Gender Based Violence</li> <li>4. Her first son was given poison by her co-wife, and so he died as a result of that</li> <li>5. Suffered at the hands of her co-wives</li> <li>6. Denied occupancy to the house that was built by her step-son</li> <li>7. Female Genital Mutilation</li> <li>8. Got married a second time but because the man has not been visiting her, she asked for divorce</li> <li>9. Got married 3rd time, but her marriage didn't last for a year because the man rejected her children</li> <li>10. Got married the 4<sup>th</sup> time but man was only interested in having sex and divorced her the day after he fulfilled his lust.</li> <li>11. Polygamy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Chosen as a leader by the youths and women of reproductive age</li> <li>2. Child betrothal is seen a normal act</li> <li>3. Believe that parents should choose the husband for their daughters, and so they shouldn't object to their parents' decision</li> <li>4. As a leader, societal expectation is that you are supposed to be married</li> <li>5. Without husband, people talk negative about you</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exploitation of women who are desperate to marry, by religious figures</li> <li>2. Less value for women, apart from the desire to satisfy their needs</li> <li>3. Although Islam limits men to marry up to four wives, majority of men exceed that to satisfy their sexual needs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Although there are written laws that protect girls from child betrothal and forced marriages, these laws are not recognized and implemented and so girls continue to suffer in silence.</li> </ol>

## Life Story #5: Anta – Standing up against patriarchy

*The empowerment of women starts with education. Coming from rural Gambia, Anta was amongst the few women who had opportunity to be educated. She worked all her life to serve her community as a nurse, and rose to the ranks of a midwife. To her surprise, her community looks up to her as a leader and wants her to serve them in the political arena. However, she faces the task of challenging patriarchal norms that ascribe limits to women's leadership. Some men stood up against her leadership even in her own political party. The issue was "a woman will never lead us". For them she led them for five years as the Local area councilor of the local governance structure in her region. She has a rare life experience in a rural setting. She is educated, married in a monogamous marriage and supported by her husband to get into partisan politics. However, with the loss of her husband, she had to continue her struggle as head of her household, but had to give up her political aspiration due to fear of mythical powers that can overcome her family.*

### Early life

I started as a voluntary worker at Bansang Hospital for two years. I was employed as an Auxiliary Nurse for 8 years and I got my General Nursing Certificate. My first postings were in Basse, Bansang and later in Dankunku. From General Nursing, I became a Nurse Midwife in 1997. I have 43 years of work experience as a nurse. I married at the age of 23 years to Modou Sanyang (alias MS). I have 5 children, 3 girls, 2 boys, 1 of the girls died, 4 are alive. All my children are educated and I contributed greatly to their education. (At this point, she cried when she reflected on her relationship with the husband which was very emotional. All of us cried. We had to stop for some time to allow her to recover from her sentiment). My husband died 2008, since then I have taken full charge of my family, and the extended family.

### Leadership

I participate in community initiatives and I am a member of the Council of Elders. In the hospital, you have to be sympathetic, Mary (one of the interview team members) knows me very well. I took responsibility in my work. I became a National Women's Councilor –NWC for nine years, I started in 1999 until September 2008. I never knew that the position of NWC was open for applications. I was in the hospital ward when I saw a group of people came to tell me "you are our hope". I also met with the Chief, Falai Baldeh who told me the same thing. We were 6 or 7 people (women), Fatou who was my friend was amongst them. She came to me and begged me to withdraw from the competition for her to have a good opportunity of winning. It was resolved that it was Upper Fulladu's turn to represent the area in the Women's Council. So, my friend conceded the position to me and advised all her friends to vote for me. I was elected and my opponent lost. She was the choice of the Parliament at the time.

Later, the men formed a delegation and went to the Women's Bureau to lodge a complaint that I am not their choice. The Bureau drove them away and told them she is the women's choice. In the last parliament before this one, GAMCOTRAP organized a workshop chaired by Nyimansata Sanneh in 2008. After that workshop, I spoke to Nyimasata Sanneh Bojang. She advised me. I then went to see the Council of Elders, community leaders, etc. When the men realized that I was consulting the elders of the community, the competing aspirants and supporters also organized themselves and became subversive.

### Standing up against patriarchy

In the selection committee, there were two women and two men. After the selection, the President was informed and was told that there is a fight in Fulladu. If you take Anta, her opponent's people will not vote for you, and if you select her opponent's, Anta's people will not vote for you.

With this situation, MS, a National Intelligent Agent (NIA), released a team of NIAs to go around and in every corner; people were confirming their acceptance for me as their choice of candidate. But MS Jallow abused his position and told the NIAs to say that he is the choice of the people. The President then asked what we are going to do. That a neutral person should be chosen and they reported to him that MS was the chosen person. In the evening, MS and his parents came to see me and my family and said that they have learnt that in 2008, I contested the ward councilor election. My husband supported me. He used his motor bike to reach out to the people. Some wanted me to step down, "whose mother and father owns the seat?" She remarked!

Many attempts were made by some of the men in the constituency for me to step down for another man. I photocopied my application into 4 copies and the men called to say that I should not be chosen and made false allegations against me that I took money from the women.

Some prominent men stood up for me while one of the men refused and said, "a woman will not rule me, a woman will not lead me". These men and some women will go to the people to tell them that we should not vote for her. I made efforts to bring a project to my people but National Assembly Member spoiled the opportunity. In the last parliamentary election, it was my sister's daughter who wanted to contest. She did not tell me about it but I heard the news. Men were against me as they said that whenever there is a position that empowers people I would apply. Secondly, I am a woman and should not handle the post. Men do not want a woman who is vocal, and God has made me vocal. They will not encourage me to hold meetings and when there are meetings they will never want me to speak, or they will make me the last speaker because I am also influential. They stated that whatever the position, I always contest for it, I normally tell them that I do so because I feel that I should apply. They also said that women should not lead them and they will never be led by a woman.

I am not engaged in politics now, because during the past local government elections, I was strongly opposed by men but I submitted everything to God who can make the impossible possible. Those who opposed me are nowhere to be seen. The Akalolu who is in support of me suggested writing to the Governor that they did not change me. However, one of the well trusted Alkalo, whom I had no problems with, I took him as my "born brother" and was my best friend, called the Akalolu and bribed them to go against me. They instead identified someone who is illiterate and has supporters and they rallied for him, just for him to decline at the last minute saying that if he competes with me as an illiterate he will be the loser. They identified a male who has never participated in any development work, but said if they allow me to win, they will all suffer. Then during the nomination of councilors, the person identified did not have the required documents and I was nominated. He insisted that even if the government nominated me, he will ensure that he invests all his resources just to see that I do not occupy the seat. Seeing all the politics going around I opted out knowing that women do not like to be disgraced. So, I gave up and told them that I am with you. I am a woman with family and thus entrusted everything to God.

All I want to say is that we should be committed and focus on our objectives. One important thing is that the men should not be a barrier for aspiring women in the political field. We just had a programme on leadership conducted by the Women's Bureau in Mansakonko. The organizers made it point blank that divisional Governors and chiefs should not be involved, it is purely for women. They are misleading women thus resulting in in-fight and conflicts among themselves. Women! When given a position, make sure you fulfill the duties to the best of your ability.

### Inheritance

I do not have any problems with inheriting his property. I was the only wife and I am the only women who bore all the children. When he died at the RVTH, his elder brother told me that I have ownership to everything including his gratuity.

### Re-marriage

There is only one condition attached to this and that is the children. They were very close to their father, for that reason they are very jealous of men proposing marriage. This has given me some problems. With this exception, if I want to get married, I do not have any problems I can do so at any time. I am thinking about re-marrying. I am a Muslim and if I have someone to take me, I will be able to fulfill the requirements of a Muslim woman. I have past the stage of childbearing, so I am not looking forward to children.

**Livelihood**

I depend on my pension although this is not much, I still benefit from it. I also benefit from proceeds from selling ice [homemade juice], and this is how I survive with my family.

**Reflection of the Interviewer**

Anta was emotional as she narrated her story to the team. She felt the loss of her husband and how she was the sole bread winner of the family. The discrimination she suffered during her political career and how she was able to face the challenges, and how she is now the Area Councilor of the constituency.

Anta is educated but not empowered enough to be able to counteract the resistance encountered. Her story is a clear indication of men oppressing women especially when it relates to occupying public places. She finally succumbed and gave up because she is a woman.

Furthermore, she wants to re-marry not because she needed company but to have someone linked to her so that her religious obligations could be fulfilled.

**Notes on the links between the story of Anta and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah***

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
1. Gender Based Violence 2. Support from the family 3. Widow and a single mother	1. Influential women leader 2. Men's hunger for every position 3. Discrimination against women in the area of politics 4. Men conspiracy to undermine her decision to contest for the position of councillorship 5. Attempts were made by men in the constituency for Anta to step down for another man 6. Discrimination against women who want to acquire leadership position by their fellow women 7. Men stands as barriers for aspiring women in the political field		1. Less support to aspiring women in the political field 2. Few women in government top position

## Life Story #6: Sally – She broke the chains of tradition

*Sally is determined that she can undertake the hustling and bustling that go with seeking political leadership. She defied the patriarchal expectation that a woman's place is in the home, and marriage should be a priority for women. While she respects the institution of marriage, Sally has not allowed marriage to overtake her potential as a leader, and ability to mobilize people for political gains. Despite being young and a single mother, she became the first ever elected women who battled it with men to get where she is today. She had developed her career in education and moved from one part of the country to another without a "Mahr" or male guardian. Her political career provided her with economic opportunities, and she was not dependent on husbands to provide all her needs, instead they benefited from her status. It also defies the understanding that men are the providers of household in a Muslim family. Sally has proven that female leadership in a community has nothing to do with people's faith and spirituality, thus women can be political leaders of Muslim communities.*

### Beginnings

Sally hailed from the West Coast Region, her father was born in Brufut, and her mother was born in Sukuta, Kombo North. During the colonial era, uneducated people were employed in the police force and her father was one of those employed in the Gambia Police Force. This is how Sally became connected to the capital Banjul, where both her parents stayed. Sally narrated her story how her father's status gave them privilege to be educated, an opportunity not many of her peers in the village had. Born on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1941, she is a member of a family of three, two females and one male. In the 40s it was unheard of for a rural child to go to school; only daughters of the privileged class went to school. Sally narrates her story:

My father served in the police force until his retirement. He was later then employed, as a steward sort of an ancillary staff by one of the forces.

My father stood up and took us to school, because he was advised to take his children to school and in the future, he will see the benefits. In 1947, I was 6 years when I was enrolled in school, my elder sister and me. We were admitted at the Methodist Girl's school in the Kindergarten, Nursery, and Primary now the school is transformed to Gambia High School.

### Career

I ended my education in 1958. I was first employed as a provisional nurse at the then Royal Victoria hospital; I was 21 years. I spent two years but I felt that nursing was not my career. Between 1962 and 1964 I did pupil teaching as unqualified teacher. I attended several in service training courses. I was qualified as a teacher. I was posted at Brikama primary school, to Yundum primary school, and Faraba-banta primary school, I was appointed as deputy headmistress. In 1966, I attempted the admission exam to the Yundum College, I was fortunate. In 1966 I, entered and graduated in 1969. I was posted at Kinteh Kunda Janneh Yaa as a qualified teacher. I was later transferred as the head teacher in Faraba Banta. From there I asked to be posted in Brufut School because I lost my father and my mother was alone.

Whilst at Faraba Banta School, I decided to be part of the community. I associated myself with the village *Kafo*, e.g. People of the same age "peer club/group" or "*fulang kafo*". I decided to talk to women being a fortunate rural woman I was sensitive and concerned about rural Gambian women.

I started sensitizing them, encouraged and mobilized them into meaningful and gainful activities. At that time, we can only do that faithfully, when we identify ourselves with the ruling party and that was the PPP. Then I started to be very active in politics and I encouraged women to be part of the PPP party. 1977- I entered in politics; I was then identified by the then member of the parliament of that constituency Lamin Kiti Jabang, who was the Minister for Foreign Affairs who introduced me to Sir Dawda Kariaba Jawara. I was recognized by the party. I am always called upon by the party when there is any party function.

In 1978, I was then transferred to Serekunda School. In 1978, again I was appointed as vice president of the PPP Women's Executive Committee. The following year, in 1979 I now became a fulltime politician. 1980 I was fortunate to travel to participate under the Canadian Crossroad International Exchange Programme. When I came back, I was then appointed as the Public Relations Officer of the Women's Bureau, in 1980. My functions allowed me as a field officer to trek the length, and breadth of the Gambia to identify women groups and women leaders, organized, sensitized, mobilized and give them series of orientations to prepare them to be able to participate in all spheres of nation building. In the early 80s women were engaged in drudgery work with labor-intensive way of farming in their rice fields, and their vegetable gardens sometimes situated at their backyard. Then we came up with the idea for them to have communal vegetable gardens for women to become productive and make them income earners.

When they started gardening, it was for only home consumption, because there was no market in the rural areas. Sometimes they sit under a tree at the bantaba in the 80s-81 to sell their products. Then it was not an easy task because many a time, when I go I will only get men either the Alkalo or a district Chief, then as time went by, the traditional rulers understood my mission and they directed me to the *Ngansing-baa* (the women's traditional leader), because women are aware and know of women's engagement to take care of the family.

At that time, I was identified as the head of women. Then we came up with the interventions, commercial vegetable farming which will make them more productive, make them income earners. It was not easy, from dawn to dusk these women were busy.

Early in the morning to late in the evening, they cook their breakfast and leave for their rice fields, when they come back in the evening they are busy preparing the cereal for the evening meal, and that is pounding rice or coos, with mortar and pestle, it is a very hard work. After that, they will rush to village well, which sometimes will be half a kilometer away. In addition, they have to fetch water by pulling the size of a small bucket to fetch water.

If am fortunate I see the women briefly. That was not enough.

I went through female genital mutilation at the age of eight, although I was born and bred in Banjul but I did not escape. During the holiday, they took us. However, it was painful but that time people don't know the health implications, and our elders thought it was a cultural practice. Some they think if you don't practice female genital mutilation you are not a good Muslim. In fact, they drag us to the back yard for the *Ngansingba* to cut us.

During those days as a women leader I dear not to talk against female genital mutilation, it was an un-mentioned topic.

In 1975, world leaders met at the UN headquarters and determined that there is a need for rapid development, and that the developed world cannot be fully developed without developing the rest of the world.

Those at the UN strongly believed that women should be part of the development initiatives. The heads were urged to go back and create enabling environment for women to participate in all spheres of nation building, that was when the Gambia, created/established in 1980 National Women's Bureau. However, it was not under the President's Office, the Permanent Secretary at the President's office was virtually responsible for the running of the office.

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Anything we need, we have to channel to the office of the President. Then the National Women's Council was set up with membership from all seven regions of this country. It was made easier for us to meet and get in touch with the women councilors. Eventually women were able to ask for their needs and their plight.

Because of the UN intervention, NGOs were able to assist with women's communal garden, fences, digging well, giving seeds and few garden tools. I can remember our first assistance was the SSP wells, and then we had the Germans digging some wells, for the rural population.

In 1982, I applied for the candidature under the PPP ticket at the age of 41 years. There were 14 candidates; I was the only woman among them. Fortunately for me, the party leadership was very keen, and convinced the panel for the first time to consider a woman. I stood with one Abdoukarim Jatta of National Convention Party (NCP) and I defeated him with a margin of 1400 votes. I was appointed Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education, Youth Sport and Culture.

### Campaigns

It was very tough, I was a divorcee, and they used that against me. Some of the men were jealous of my popularity; the head Chief of my district that was Kombo North was supportive. He convinced all the 31 *Alkalolu* to lend me their support and they did.

### After the election

The time I started, I was very vocal and I always highlight the suffering of Gambian women, especially the rural women.

The first vegetable gardens were ten with two boreholes, under Saikou Sabally the villages that have the boreholes were Sukuta and Kafuta.

I was divorced three times: I was a woman who was convinced that I was out for a purpose. I was determined to achieve my goal so any husband who is not in support of my intention, I just broke away or as in a professional career, I quit.

It was after my third divorce that I entered into politics. I was called all sorts of names that I was not married. I knew it was my right to contribute regardless of my race, or sex. So, I had support of my fellow women. They were very happy to rally behind a woman candidate, so that they can have a special voice in Parliament. They wanted me to forward their needs at the Parliament.

My first divorce was in 1968, my second divorce was in 1977, the third divorce in 1979 and 1996 I had my fourth divorce, since then I did not get married. Having a child in marriage is not part of any marriage contract. It is a social expectation in marriage. However, women can be subjected to abuse and violence if they do not have children in their marriage. Even though when a man does not have a child in a marriage, the social expectation is that the women should be patient and in fact, it is the women's fault that there is no child in the marriage. Sally's story continues to present such scenario in the "lived realities" of women.

My last marriage was a bitter experience for me, out of the first three marriages I did not have many problems compared to the last one. When I was married to this man, I already had all my children, so I have no child with him. My sisters-in-law, and my mother-in-law were a big problem in my matrimonial house. Only my father-in-law was supportive towards me. My husband's family said I cannot bear children for him, because I am above childbearing age, they said my husband should marry another woman, or divorce me. They said he should marry somebody who can bear children for him because he is the first born of the family. So, I faced a lot of domestic violence from that family. Sometimes when I came from my late meetings I will find that he had closed the door.

Men as providers as stated in the teachings of the Holy Quran, is not always in line with the "lived realities" of women in marriage. It is stated that men should provide shelter, food, care and other needs of their wives, but the reality is that not all men are in a position to do so. Yet women will take pride to support their husbands to ensure they have a happy matrimonial life.

This particular man has been in Sweden for seventeen years. I went to Sweden to talk to him so that we can arrange for our marriage. I paid for him to come home. When I became a Parliamentary Secretary, I was advised by some elders in my area that I should scout for a husband and be married. I thought of him before going to the unknown, somebody who you already know so I went after him. This was between 1984-1985, then I brought him back home. He agreed, but he said he has no money to come back, he could not pay for himself, he was stranded, then I assured him that I would bring him back to the Gambia and we got married. He said he was having difficulty of finding a job, then I told him that I would take care of that if he arrived in the Gambia he will not be jobless.

I found him a job. I can still remember Dr. Hatib Njie, Badara Njie's son was the then Director of Medical Services; and my husband before leaving for Sweden he was working at the Medical and Health Department, as a Health Superintendent. Mr. Njie told me that if he can send his papers, they would pursue it. He was given work at the same office. My neighbor, the late Salif Jallow was then Executive Director of Gambia Airways; he gave me a ticket on loan and sent it to him. I took loan to pay for his ticket. During Jawara's regime, he gave me a ticket to Mecca. I said I cannot go to Mecca because my husband did not go. I paid for him to go to Mecca to perform the pilgrim. We all went together under the Presidential delegation; I did all this for this man. I was renting at Bundung, they harassed him and said it was shameful for him to live in his wife's house, staying with his wife, living in her home and he was the first child of his parents. When he was in Sweden, he started a stand-alone house, it only stopped at "lento" it could not go further. At the time, I was building this my compound where I am now staying, I suspended building my own house and transferred all the materials and completed his house for him all in the name of love and marriage. I completed building his house first to please him.

They (his family) brainwashed him. He adhered and succumbed to his family, and we were always at loggerhead. I cannot forget my ambition and my determination and my commitment. I also would not go against my will and my determination. I can remember when I was travelling going to America, after doing all the immigration formalities, I went with him to a quiet place, I told him that I am travelling, that I know what is happening, and I don't want him to be at loggerhead with his family. The problem is for him to have a wife who can bear him a child; I told him that all the doors are open to you. "*You can search for a wife who will give you children, am saying this with sincerity*". I asked him to marry a second wife. I wanted him to be on good terms with his family.

I went to America, he did not call me to tell me what was going on. After getting married, he did not say anything to me. One of my cousins called me and she said, "*do you know what is happening?*" She narrated everything, and asked me if I was informed that my husband got married. I told her that we did discuss that before I came to America. What hurts me most was that at least he could have told me that the plans have materialized. After some time, I confronted him about the matter, he said he did not owe me an explanation; this is how I rested the case.

I once came home from a late meeting; he insulted me and hit me once until I fell on the ground. That was the day; I made up my mind that I would get out of the marriage. I told him that "I heard that you took your new wife into my bedroom; at least you should give me that honour of preserving my room, you have three rooms in that house". He said, "it is my house", but I completed building that house. He said, "it is my house I married my wife and will take her



wherever suits me, I will take her there". One day I came home late from a meeting, he pushed me out of his house until I fell. I did not have any fracture but that was the day, I was determined to leave his compound. I just packed my few things and left. I came here (the house I am now staying), I finished building it and I rented it out. Fortunately, for me, the people who were renting wanted to leave, and here I am today. I had my own compound since 1983, that is where I am staying. This is the only landed property I have. I got this during the time the government was giving lands to civil servants for residential purposes. I applied for the land.

It is very important for women to own a landed property because women are vulnerable, sometimes you marry to a husband for some years and you have more than four or five children, and a man divorces you. If you don't have a landed property where will you turn to, because you cannot go back to your family's home, you already left there for ages and the other members of the family have already occupied the entire house. Secondly women need landed property especially their own farm land in the rural areas, so that they would farm and use the produce for home consumption and sell some to buy other commodities that will benefit them in the house hold upkeep.

The "lived realities" of women are that they at times take *qiwamah* and *wilayah* responsibilities in family upkeep. The extended family system is well established in the Gambia, and women who are better up economically do take huge responsibilities in providing care and protection for households.

My cousin was involved in the 1981 coup. I also took guardianship of his three girls in the late 1980s, the two are a set of twins, , their father was arrested and they brought the twins to my custody. The other one also was a daughter of my late brother. I got my first child at the age of 18 years in 1959. The father of the child did not accept the child as his own. With that, the following year my parents gave me out to another man. I took care of my child, now she is a grown up and now supporting me.

There is need to take legal action, because talking will not solve the problem, some of them (men) are heartless, they have no sympathy but now we have the Children's Court and we have other institutions to turn to, we have to turn to those institutions for legal protection. It is very unfair for a man to leave all his children's responsibility with a woman. "*Some men are very heartless*" She concluded.

### Reflection of the interviewer

First appointment for interview was scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2013. We could not go ahead with the appointment because she was sick. At the initial stage, it was not easy to get to Sally due to her health condition, but after that she decided that I should go and meet her. Eventually we had the follow up interview. I found her on her sick bed. She was eager to receive me in her bed room where she was lying.

She made a great effort to talk to me, even on recording, one would understand that she was just trying to cope. Nyimasata Sanneh Bojang did a lot of efforts to call five of her grandchildren to help me and search for her photographs, some of which were taken during the first republic. The children brought a big suitcase and later brought other envelopes where she kept the pictures. She indicated that because of the love she has for the work and GAMCOTRAP, that is why she was able to respond to our call. It seems that during my short interaction with her, she was able to get cured.

### Notes on the links between the story of Sally and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lucky to be among few girls to go to school in the 1940s</li> <li>2. Went through Female Genital Mutilation</li> <li>3. Divorced four times</li> <li>4. Since her fourth divorce, she decided not to get married again</li> <li>5. Bitter experience in her marriages</li> <li>6. Sally had no child in her fourth marriage, and so the sisters-in-laws, and the mother-in-law were a threat to her marriage</li> <li>7. Fourth husband's family ordered him to divorce her and marry a second wife since she cannot bear children</li> <li>8. Domestic Violence in her fourth marriage</li> <li>9. Had a child out of wedlock at the age of 18 years, and the father of the child denied responsibility</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sally encourages, mobilizes women into meaningful and gainful activities</li> <li>2. Took active part in politics</li> <li>3. FGM is thought to be a good cultural practice</li> <li>4. Her opponents in politics used her status as a divorced woman to mock her</li> <li>5. Men jealous of NS popularity</li> <li>6. It is considered that a good woman should be in a matrimonial, house and not single</li> <li>7. Discourages child out of wedlock</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGM is seen to be a religious obligation upon every Muslim woman</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is no specific law that incriminates FGM</li> <li>2. Support by the then ruling party</li> <li>3. At the time of the incident there was no children's court to address men disowning their children who were born out of wedlock</li> </ol>

## Life Story #7: Adu – Love beyond boundaries

*She defies interpretations of who a Muslim woman could marry. Religion for her is a personal matter, and should not be a barrier to love and social relationships. She made a decision that a happy marriage life cannot be achieved within a polygamous marriage, and the most guaranteed commitment to have monogamous marriage, was for her to marry a Christian man. The Quran states that you worship according to your belief and I worship according to my belief.” Furthermore, the Quran promotes equality between all human beings because the Quran states in that Allah creates you in many languages. It also states that you can marry people of the book. A strong believer that men and women are equal human beings and citizens, she encourages dialogue and respect for women’s participation in decision making. She participates in political life of her country as an equal citizen. She is not constrained to travel on missions if the need arises, and does not have to be accompanied by a male guardian.*

### Background

I am from a Muslim family; my father was a polygamist, according to my mother when she got married to my father. My mother was from the urban area. My father was from the rural area. My mother was taken advantage of, and abused. This showed that my father has not been fair. I vowed not to marry a man who has more than one wife.

I met my husband in 1978. My aspirations came from my late brother, Comrade who was a great artist. He was very knowledgeable in history, arts, and science, and I was very attached to him. That is where I really got my spirit. My mother and my brother both influenced my life.

My husband is a Christian, I am from a Muslim home but even though we are married, religion does not matter, because I do not want to marry in a polygamous family. We leave our children to choose which religion they want.

### Domestic violence and polygyny

As I said earlier, my father used to batter my mother, even if you entered in our compound my father’s second wife’s house was more beautiful than that of my mother’s, all that is because of my father. He discriminated against my mother. I could remember my mother asking him ‘*why did you make this house more beautiful than mine*’, and then he beat my mother, I can remember that. My father used to be very helpful before he married a second wife.

### Education

Parents withdrawing girls from school to marry them off when they are still young is not practiced by all Muslim families. Some value the education of girls and would do all they can to ensure that their children, whether boys or girls, have the opportunity to complete their education before getting married.

I was a very brilliant student and vowed not to experience what my mother went through. As a brilliant student, I am the first daughter to my parents, we were three girls, and my step-mother also had three. Because I was brilliant, my father loved me, he took me to school, and still I was not happy. I was betrothed to my cousin, my father told him that he could not give me out for marriage until I completed my education. That time I was in form four. I went to Muhammedan primary school. During our time, there was no nursery school. I was born in 1954, and in 1960 I started school. In 1966, I took my common entrance, I repeated it in 1967. I attended St. Joseph’s High School, I spent six years and in 1973, I completed school with five O’levels. I should have gone to further my education, but my parents could not afford it, because they were neither rich nor poor but middle-class earners.

In 1973, I volunteered at Royal Victoria Hospital Laboratory. I applied to School of Public Health with two diplomas local and higher equivalent to BSC, in 1976 I worked in the civil service; I was posted to different parts of the Gambia. I could remember since the time I was at school, I was a good debater and I used to write, which I am good at. Since then I got my real spirit. I started to be a fighter, I was a very good writer, anything I felt whether am happy or sad, I wrote it. I was engaged in early childhood education, and all my children went through that school. In 1986, I started writing for the FOROYAA newspaper. I have my column in it. People like my column; in fact, people buy FOROYAA because of my column. It did a lot of difference. Even if am travelling I write my column in advance, before I travelled. I travelled widely in Africa.

I am the author of *Silent Voices*; I worked with FOROYAA (<http://www.foroyaa.gm/>), and people made sure that I compiled it to a book. I decided to publish the book in the real sense of the work. The book is about gender sensitivity, and includes the perspectives of men and women.

### Women in political life

Women’s participation in political life is usually restricted to followership and voting for men. While a lot of resistance is meted on women who break that cycle of patriarchal control over decision making, and women’s contribution to national development. In this case Adu has gone beyond being a supporter in political parties, to stand as a candidate in her political activism. Despite the stereotype challenges about female politicians, she took the courage to challenge men in politics, and more so as an opposition candidate.

In 1992 in the first republic in Banjul South, I contested but I did not even have my deposit. At that time, it was very difficult for women to contest. They insulted women, all kinds of insults. When it comes to development, there should be gender parity between men and women. Fortunately for me, they did not know anything about me, that is why for me my insults have limits. When I contested, two women stood for the same constituency, Banjul Central, but it was very nasty for one of the women. I contested the Banjul South seat against a man. For me they were insulting the gender, a woman should be a mother, she should be at home, things like that. Again, coming from the opposition is very difficult. Our regimes, they are always tyrannical, even the radio, you cannot get airtime. It is not easy because you cannot have access to radio or any other public media; you went house to house and campaigned. They threatened you to be afraid, that was my first experience.

There was verbal violence against the women contestants. According to one of them she was playing a game with them. They gave her all the options that she would stand, then later they said it was the incumbent that wanted to contest and asked her to withdraw. When she refused they called her all sorts of names, they said she was mad and stuff like that.

In 2002 my second contest in the second republic, I stood with another woman, and then the incumbent was a man. They were calling her all sorts of names, I could remember that I interview her as a journalist, I helped her to push her agenda, this time I got my deposit, the incumbent was favored. With all that, I got my deposit. If the incumbent is favored and you are not you, you have to fight it bone to bone.

I founded a civil society organization, Women for Democracy and Development -WODD. Now I am doing mentoring, with my association, I am doing leadership training, inspiring women, me and late Satang Jobarteh, we went to the provinces to scout for women, to participate in politics and in fact many women in the ruling party stood because of our advocacy. Women can only win when people are determined to effect change.

### Marriage

Marriage in Islam should be based on consent and respect for each other. Women should not be degraded or disrespected. Equality of Muslim men and women has been expressed in many areas to promote harmony and social cohesion. Violence against women is manifested in the home and in larger

society. In attempts to limit women's participation in politics and decision making, they are threatened in many ways to curb the potential of women's leadership in national development.

In my matrimonial house, I never came across gender-based violence, my husband is a gender activist, he envisages change, they advocate for change, they advocate for social change. He does not have any problem for justice, we agree to disagree. However, in the end as I usually said, we got a decision. Moreover, everything requires dialogue and we respect each other's view.

Anyway, the land we acquired, my husband and I, we sold it and put it in the struggle. Now I have my own land and I hope to develop it.

### Prison

I worked for government in 1973. In 1983, this was very important in my life, when I was supposed to go for my masters, I was detained in Mile2 Central Prison. That time my second son was only 10 months old. My baby spent one day in prison, until my sister-in-law came for him and took him to my mother and my sister; they are the ones who took care of my baby. The girl was five and the first boy was only three years, and the younger boy 10 months. We spent 7 months incommunicado in the remand wing. I was in the women's wing whilst my husband was in the male wing. The conditions at the prison were very terrible. We were like Nelson and Winnie Mandela.

They gave us planks, later on I wrote my stories. It is not bad to go to prison for social justice, they sent my husband to remand because he was a friend and mentor to Kukoi Samba Sanyang, (who led the 1981 attempted coup d'état in the Gambia).

### Adopting girls

My husband's daughter, who was my first adopted daughter is now married and has a son called Muhammed. My husband got this girl with a woman whom he did not marry. That is about life, we cannot discriminate the girl, and this is why we adopted her. Our first son is an engineer at the airport, and then the "chat" last born son is now a Computer Scientist in the United States. So, thank God. My husband is supportive, he is my crown, and he is very gender conscious. He just means everything to me. My husband is a real partner, I have nothing to lose.

As an activist, I am still adopting girls to support them. I have another adopted daughter, who I am bringing up and I am helping her to realize her potentials to have a fulfilling life. I adopted this girl through the FAWEGAM project (<http://www.accessgambia.com/biz1/fawegam.html>) "Take Your Daughters to Work". She was eighteen, I paid for her to complete her secondary and tertiary education, that time I was at the age of 40 years. She worked with FOROYAA (<http://www.foroyaa.gm/>) as an Office Assistant. She is now qualified and she is working in my media house as an Accounts clerk. Thank God. She is an orphan, I adopted her from the activism work I do. Now she is my colleague too, I am helping her to become somebody in life.

### Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation is not practiced by all Muslims. It is a traditional practice that is strong in some ethnic groups in the Gambia, who want to associate it to Islam. However, with awareness of its negative implications, survivors of FGM are fighting the practice because it is not a religious obligation and it affects women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. This can be done through empowerment because women's sexuality is wrongly tied to their mobility and use of public spaces.

Female Genital Mutilation was not performed on any of my children; I experienced it since I was at the age of seven years. With my health background, I hate Female Genital Mutilation; I oppose it, because my own Aunt was 'ngansingba' (circumciser). I married at 24 years. I did Gender Training Diploma in 2005. Since 1986, in my 32 years I was a leader, it is very difficult and you have to be a role model. This is how you inspire others and do what you preach. There has to be implications.

### Current work

I move freely, sometimes even if I have some overseas travels if am tired, it is my husband who persuades me to go. Like during the campaign if I come home he will give me hot tea to drink, massage me, above all he used to advise me and work with me too. I am an activist, Journalist, trainer and educator. At the age of 46 when I had my own book in 2009. My book was launched, and it was read by all Gambian activists young and old.

I spend my day writing, starting from 05:00 a.m. after my prayers, because I have to get my source from different angles. I do not cook every day, my small girl who I adopted cleans, and I got someone to iron for me. When she is gone on holiday, I cook for myself. Occasionally, I have family functions, or I go on trek, though hectic, but I enjoy what our traditional communicators do. I also exercise, healthy body, healthy mind. I encourage women to jump. I also like to mentor and counsel them. They need to be strong, because we cannot do it alone.

### Notes on the links between the story of Adu and Qiwamah and Wilayah

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Born by Muslim parents and got married to a Christian man</li> <li>Her mother was battered by her father, who married a second wife and so she vowed not to marry a man with more than one wife</li> <li>Her husband being a Christian, religion was not a barrier in their marriage, hence they allowed their children to choose any religion they wish</li> <li>Husband is gender conscious</li> <li>Betrothed to her cousin, but father refuses saying she is going to school</li> <li>Imprisoned by the state for seven months with her husband, as a result of their political involvement.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Takes part in politics</li> <li>Threatened by the state to change her decision to contest as a woman from an opposition party</li> <li>Endures verbal abuses from her opponents</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited support to women contestants for political positions</li> <li>Denial of women contesting from using the media to campaign</li> </ol>

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## Life Story #8: Kumba – “Women speak up, kill the culture of silence”

*It is expected that women should be subservient and be under the control of men. Even where they are income earners and contribute to the welfare of the family, they are still subjected to abuse. Kumba is woman who has been thrown out of her husband's house by her husband's brothers. Abused by her former husband and left impoverished, her ordeal is synonymous to a real guinea pig of extreme violation of rights. Her first marriage ended after her husband failed to deal with his first wife iniquity. She married again after five years, but failed. But if life, as it is said, is an admixture of bitter and sweet, Kumba had her fairer share of the bitter than sweet part of life.*

*Between 4 percent and 12 percent of women globally are reported to be physically abused during pregnancy. The Gambia government has considered violence against women, particularly domestic violence by husbands or other intimate partner, to be a relatively minor social problem. In the Gambia, violence is pervasive, and as a result, many women continue to suffer in the home, and in the community with devastating effects. Women are beaten seriously at their homes, insulted, and faced with other forms of violence, which leave children very scared, distressed and anxious about their own safety and that of their mothers and siblings.*

*Today, due to the efforts of women's organizations, violence against women is recognized as a global concern. This continued violence and discrimination has prevented the full advancement of women.*

*In her late thirties, she seems to have all the necessary qualities and abilities to deal with difficulties, stress and painful situations, and refused to be silent in pain. She is physically strong, yet in her house, she was powerless to stop her husband's brothers from abusing her, she could not convince her husband because of the culture of silence.*

*Kumba was treated violently, and they deliberately tried to make it as painful and humiliating as possible by kicking her out of the house. She is a victim who has gone through the ordeal of domestic violence. She now discusses the most throbbing experience of her life, because she wants women to speak up, kill the culture of silence.*

*Now 37 years old, the colourful and strong woman was forcibly mutilated when she was seven, joining the ranks of some 130 million girls and women globally. Her ongoing trauma and physical anguish motivate her in no uncertain terms. She used to be a very prosperous businesswoman before she felt trapped into the hands of her second husband. Most of the family members were depending on her, but everything vanished after a couple of months following her second marriage. She was insulted and harassed for campaigning for women's health in her community, yet she never loosens up. A mother of two, she works round the clock to earn dignified living, for her family has been ridiculed for being against Female Genital mutilation (FGM), and has now earned herself a place among Gambian women who made giant stride so far.*

### Beginnings

I was born in Sukuta, Kombo North, West Coast Region in 1976 by Muslim parents who were strugglers. My father was a carpenter who made chairs, wooden beds and dressing tables. My mother was a vendor who sold foodstuff. I was given to my Aunty, my mother's sister who lives in Bakau at a very young age and that's where I grew up.

In 1982, a year before I joined school, I went through Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). I was only 7 (seven) years old. We were about 100 (hundred) children who were all young. It was a painful experience. My mouth was covered with a cloth during the process so that people outside wouldn't hear my screams. It was really painful, with several women surrounding me with each holding me tight. Passing urine was painful and frustrating. After a week, I got some infection but the circumcisers did not inform my parents. They did not want them to know what was happening to me, the pain I was going through, but my father came to detect it. Before my father knew it, they (circumciser and her team) threatened to mutilate me for the second time if I informed my parents. It was painful. The wound is healed, but the mark is still there. It will remain with me forever.

My father wanted to take me to the hospital, but they refused. They said it was an abomination. At the end, my father had to talk to my aunt, who was a nurse to come over. I was treated within a week. What was more shocking is that I was fooled. I was told that I was going to Banjul, the capital city because during that time every child was eager to go there. As a child I believed, my mother did not know that they were going to circumcise me. It is still hard to forget but I have found the heart to forgive them. They were not aware of the consequences that the practice could cause me. Secondly, they thought it was religious injunction.

### Education

Education was a source of economic empowerment as well as independence. Education made it possible for me to build my own business and travel without men controlling my life. In 1983, when I was 8 (eight) years old, I was enrolled in Sukuta primary school. I used to travel more than 10 (ten) kilometers to get to school, coupled with domestic work, thereby arriving late to school sometimes. I was the eldest in the family, so I had to help my step-mother do the domestic work. She was blessed with only one child, a son.

I went through the usual common entrance examinations and in 1990, after 7 (seven) years, I went to SOS Hermann Gmeiner Technical Senior Secondary School and finished in 1994. After the completion of my schooling, I went to The Gambia Hotel Training School to work on contract basis on housekeeping for one year, and was taken as a full-time employee in 1995 until 1997. Then I quit because I wanted to go back to school to acquire more knowledge. I wanted to be well educated and achieve something good in the future.

While married, I decided to go to Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI) (<http://www.gtti.gm/>) to acquire knowledge and skills. I did computer software application for two years.

### Career

After completing GTTI in 1999, I was attached to the Local Government and Lands office where I stayed for one year and got a lot of experience. In 2000, I started working at Max Line Shipping Agency (Max Gambia Limited), as submarine executive. I worked with Max Line Shipping Agency (Max Gambia Limited) until 2003, and I left to join Trust Bank Limited. I left because I wanted to get experience in banking. While working with Trust Bank I got lot of appeal from the company I used to work for. They wanted me back and I decided to leave Trust Bank to join Max Line Shipping Agency for the second time. I was able to buy a car from my earnings in 2005.

While working at the agency, I used to attend seminars and workshops both locally and internationally. I was able to learn about distribution, importation and exportation from colleagues and organizations. In 2007, I quit and ventured into business. I wanted to be my own boss, I don't want anyone to bark at me, or give me orders. I don't want to be dependent because a man is always a man. They will be here for you today and tomorrow, they would be there for another woman. I started travelling to Asia most especially to China, Hong Kong. I used to bring household and office supplies and I had two shops.



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*It is difficult for women to live a life without marriage in most communities. Women who are economically empowered are coerced to marry to earn them 'social respect', even if they suffer in marriage. While it is expected that men provide protection and care for their wives, this has not been the case for many including Kumba. Even where women who survive violence could overcome their experience and stand to advocate against all forms of violence, they are verbally abused to silence them. Kumba can no longer be silenced in her advocacy to empower women to overcome all forms of violence including Female Genital Mutilation.*

### **Difficult marriages**

I got married in 1996 when I was 21 years old. I was the second wife of my husband. Living together with his first wife was unbearable. I was insulted, pestered and beaten almost every day by my husband's first wife. It was my first major breakdown. I got a girl child with him, but he was not doing anything about it. I lived with that for five years; I was so young to endure such pain. A year after I decided to end the marriage because I wanted to live my own life where I will get love, peace and protection from a husband.

In 2005, I got married again. But the worst thing anyone can do to someone close to them is to totally ignore them. I lived a miserable life when I fell into the hands of my ex-husband's family who were just interested in abusing me and left me impoverished. The feeling of worthlessness this creates can cause a multitude of problems. I was thrown out of my husband's house by the husband's brothers when I was 8 (eight) month pregnant. I was abandoned in a situation of pennilessness. I could not still believe if it was an order from my ex-husband, because it is sad to hear that my husband was the mastermind, but I could not tell. I was kicked out of his house by his brothers without a penny. I was harassed, beaten and finally kicked out. I went out and before I came back, my belongings were put outside and the compound gate was locked with chains. My ex-husband has been living abroad for years. He came back to the Gambia for holidays. He left when I was pregnant with his first child.

It did not take long after my husband left they started harassing and humiliating me. They told all kinds of lies to my ex-husband to separate us. They insulted me and told me all kinds of shocking things for me to leave the house. My ex-husband used to send me money and called every day but stopped after a while. He ceased calling me and sending money. He called his brothers and gave them orders on what needed to be done in the house. It was very hard for me as I was pregnant. When I recalled the happy moments with my ex-husband, I concluded that I was not loved. It was difficult for me to overcome it, forget it, but I told myself that I got to be strong to overcome the ordeal.

Marriage requires an equal amount of nurturing if it is to blossom, but I had my fair share of the bitter than the sweet part of life in marriage. The torment I endured in my ex-husband's house, where I was finally kicked out as if I was not a human being. I was having all the necessary qualities and abilities to deal with difficulties, stress and painful situations. I am physically strong yet in my ex-husband's house, I was powerless to stop my husband's brothers and to convince my husband because of the culture of silence. As a pregnant woman at the time, they did not care how well or bad I felt, instead they deliberately tried to make it as painful and humiliating as possible by kicking me out of the house. I had the good intentions to stay together forever with my husband who I have entrusted my life, but that was not enough for him to be in a successful and happy marriage. That was the time when I believed excitement and joy that newly wedded couples often experience, tend to wear-off within the first year of marriage.

Three to four times a day was not enough for them (husband's brother) to call me names, when I struggled against them, they threatened that they will lie against me to my husband. It was hard to tell my own parents the things I was subjected to by my husband's family. I was unhappy in my marriage, not because of their own faults and false expectations, but the way I was treated. I was seen as the weaker sex.

What was surprising was that he (ex-husband) never called me after I was kicked out of the house until when he heard that I gave birth to a baby boy. My son is almost four years old and going to school. I am sure that what happened after this experience had caused lack of trust between us. He wants us to get back together. He calls me and his son every time but I'm yet to make any decision. It is not easy to get back with a man who makes your life miserable. Not after when he refused to protect me, trust and care for me when I needed him the most.

As business woman, I have spent monies to feed the family unnoticed by outsiders and not knowing that one beautiful day I will be kicked out of the house. I used to be a very prosperous businesswoman before I felt trapped into the hands of my husband's family. His family members too were depending on me, but everything vanished after a couple of months following my marriage.

### **Campaigning for Women's Rights and Health**

In 2011, I started campaigning for women's rights and health after I was sensitized on the harmful practices that affect the health of women. At one time, it was very difficult for me. The villagers turned against me and accused me of abusing their tradition. They said I was insane to talk about FGM which was considered as taboo to discuss. The villagers held a rally where they used loud speakers and started insulting me and using all kind of abusive words. I was insulted by my own society, because of my strong uncompromised belief that women are humans too, and that no one should take a razor, knife or sharp glass to cut off our clitoris.

All my family were cursed and called names during the rally. As a strong woman and with the support from my parents, I overcame it. I never confronted them. Despite the resistance in the community, I keep doing what I was doing because I believed I was doing the right thing. Thank God that most of them have been sensitized by women's right activists. Some of them met me and said I was doing the right thing. Now I go to seminars and workshop. I speak out when I have the forum. I realized that I am not the only one that has been going through this kind of ordeal. There are thousands of women like me but most of them fear to come forward to discuss the most throbbing experience of their lives because of the culture of silence. Most of them are ashamed to talk about what is happening to them because our society views it as inconceivable. Reflection on her lived experience in marriage was difficult to contain with tears. After she broke down, Kumba continues to narrate her daily routine.

I have got over the trauma because I'm a very strong woman. I now stayed with my parents together with my own two children, and two others who are under my custody since 2009. My parents are very supportive and they have understanding. I have started doing business again. I run a mini market in Sukuta here. I go to Dakar, Senegal to bring in stuffs like shoes, lotions, and perfume among others. I also sell locally prepared home-made food "*naan mburru*", and ginger juice, which is sold at the Sukuta Health Center. With aging parents, I woke up as early as 7a.m to run all this business until midnight. I also used my car to transport my stuff in the neighboring villages which is really helping.

I got into politics at a very young age. Since the current leader took over in 1994. I got involved into politics because of his agenda to support youths. Currently I am a leader in my village. I was elected as the Chairperson of the Village Development Committee (VCD) in 2009. The village wanted me to be the leader because they said I am a strong woman. As the leader, it is my responsibility to help the people especially women. Women in my area are very strong and hardworking. They are hardworking and they spend the day in the '*nakoos*' (gardens) and markets. My village has 17 wards but it is divided into three '*kabilos*' (clans). Men have access to the lands more than women. In 2008, lands were given to my brothers. Three of my sisters and I were denied. This is tradition here and has been a long-standing practice. Women have no control over land allocation; there are gender differences in the quality and location of land.

### **Reflections of the interviewer**



Kumba had an emotional breakdown as she narrates her bitter experience with the ex-husband's marriage and members of his family who were abusing her during the Mariam ence of the husband. She still feels bitter about the series of abuses she was putting up with and felt that she should have resisted.

**Notes on the links between the story of Kumba and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah***

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Female Genital Mutilation</li> <li>2. Divorce</li> <li>3. Physical harassment</li> <li>4. Domestic violence</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Society perceives talking about FGM as dirty, disrespectful, and against Islamic religion</li> <li>2. Consider sexuality issues a taboo, which are shrouded in secrecy, and most people are shy to talk about sexual problems related to FGM</li> <li>3. Society believed protecting their husband's wrongs as a wife and staying in a marriage will earn them ticket to heaven when they died.</li> <li>4. Domestic violence treated as normal behavior.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using the religious council to risk the life of women on the issue of FGM</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is law on all harmful practices affecting women</li> <li>2. There is no specific law on FGM</li> <li>3. Women's Act 2010 has failed to abolish female genital mutilation, which is regarded as violence against women, violates their rights and affects their health in numerous ways.</li> <li>4. There is law that prohibited all kinds of domestic violence, but many violations and injustices against women that should have gone through the test of litigation are treated as normal behavior.</li> </ol>

## Life Story #9: Yama – She was prepared to be a housewife, she became a village head

*Her formal religious education was limited, with no Western education; she did domestic chores and was never prepared to be a leader in her community. The expectation was her to be a housewife and at most a mother. However, her dedication to work and the respect she earned in the community brought her trust to lead her village. Gender though used by some men as criteria to challenge her leadership, the majority of the villages trusted that her being a village head has nothing to do with their faith, or religious practices. She was accepted and still continues to be the village head.*

*The seventy-eight-year old woman is a native of Njawara, Lower Baddibu District, North Bank Region about 60 Kilometers from the capital city, Banjul. She married at the teen age of 15, four years after she was asked to stop her Qur'anic studies in a 'dara' (traditional Islamic school), in order to help her mother with the domestic work. Yama is living in her family's home with her only son and grandchildren. Unlike many, she is an Alkalo (village head) adopting more than 30 children who she described as her own children. She got a child later in life.*

*Like many Gambian women, she was not given the chance to read the Qur'an thoroughly because they believed women should not acquire much knowledge as men should do, even though she went to 'dara' at the age of seven. Gender Based Violence in the Gambia manifests itself in many ways and it continues to persist, if not on the rise. It is perpetuated largely by traditional attitudes and religious conservatism in which women are seen as subordinate to men. Yama used to do most of the domestic work as early as six o'clock in the morning before joining the male (talibe) students to learn the Qur'an.*

*She felt lucky to have married the man she described as an honest man with beautiful qualities. She joined her husband who lived in the same village with her. "I was known as the seven-to-seven woman" who worked from dawn to dusk for sustainability of the family. She used to work in the farm from seven in the morning to one in the afternoon, when she would leave her husband to go home to cook only to return again at three to continue her work on the farm till late in the evening. Her husband became the Alkalo after the demise of his father, who also died later. She became the Alkalo in 2006, some eight years ago when the villagers invested the confidence and trust in her to head the village to a higher height.*

*Now old, Yama is a survivor of enforced early marriage. She was 15 when she was given away for marriage in the same village to a male relative. Despite the evident threats, early marriage against women pose a threat against growth, health and wellbeing of Gambian women, the society sees it as normal, but she is doing every effort to make sure that it stops in the village. She revealed that she would always protect the integrity and rights of women who she said work under hot burning sun to feed the family. Under customary law, wives are not entitled to the property of their husbands unless they agree to let themselves be inherited by the husband's family, but Yama is an exception. She said she has access to land and women in her village have access too.*

*In patriarchal Gambia women are traditionally viewed as an inferior sex, but Yama was asked to head the village after the demise of her husband. Women's rights activists in Gambia revealed that domestic violence is widespread, though the information is fragmented and anecdotal because of the culture of silence which surrounds the cases, makes it difficult to get a true picture of its extent. Yama's involvement in politics, as a woman, however actually started in her early life in the early 1970s, during the first Republic. Though now old, she is still strong. She presides over disputes that cannot be solved on the family level in her village. She also helps her step-daughters by looking after their children while they are at the farm.*

### Beginnings

I was born in Njawara, Lower Baddibu district, North Bank Region in the 1930s by parents who were farmers but also very religious. My father had a 'dara' (traditional Islamic school), where children from the village and neighboring villages come to learn.

At the age of 7, I joined the other students and started reading the Qur'an. As a girl child, I woke up early in the morning to help my mother with the domestic work, which is considered as an 'obligation' for girls to do. I joined the other students late and left early to help my mother with the cooking. As a child, I was respectful, obedient and interested in learning the Qur'an, but I knew it wouldn't continue. I have seen it happen to many girls who were so keen to finish the Qur'an as the boys.

Three years later, when I was about ten, I was asked to stop reading the Qur'an and help my mother with domestic work because it was too much for her. It was always hard for her because she had to cook for the extended family with lot of 'talibes' (students). At that tender age when I used to be with my mum in the kitchen, she told me the good morals a girl should have, placing emphasis on the need to learn domestic work before getting married. She taught me that I was expected to take responsibilities of the family in my matrimonial house.

When I was 15, my father started holding closed door discussions with relatives to get me married off to my cousin. I was told that I will get married soon; that I will soon take responsibilities of being a mother. I was told that I was expected to take care of my husband and his parents. This relative, who became my husband effectively, acts as a sponsor, taking responsibility to get me married to him. Within few months the traditional wedding took place in the village and I went to stay with my husband. That was in the early 1940s. The two families usually wanted to maintain a high level of cordiality in these interactions.

Commonly in rural areas, parents used to arrange for sons and daughters to meet as spouses without objection. It was not, and still not common in the villages for young people who are engaged romantically, to get married with the specific partner in mind. Early marriage was rampant because parents don't want to see their girls get pregnant. Many families get their girl children married off at an early age to avoid disgrace to the family. Having a child out of wedlock was an 'abomination' in the village.

### Relationship with my husband

Fortunately for me, my husband turned to be very honest, respectful and hardworking man. He is the only child of his parents. His father was the Alkalo (village head) of Njawara. He was so kind to me and treated me as a sister. Every morning I go to the farm with my husband as early as seven in the morning. I was known as 'seven to seven' woman, because I worked from dawn to dusk. I have little time for myself. When I work on the farm up to 1 (one) in the afternoon, I would leave my husband on the farm and go home to cook lunch for the family. I was expected to go back to the farm at 3 O'clock (three) to continue working on the farm till 7 (seven) in the evening. I can remember that women on many occasions were asked to work on the gardens where they cultivate tomato, cabbage, garden egg, pepper, etc. while men work on the farm.

I couldn't get a child after years of my marriage. It was painful but I was blessed with good people most of whom gave me children to bring up. At the end, I was given more than 30 (thirty) children who were all under my custody. At last I was blessed with a bouncing baby boy who is now the bread winner of the family. He is blessed with children, both boys and girls.

I never experienced injustice with my husband. I was groomed to understand the rules of marriage by my parents. It was an environment of security. I vividly remember being told by my husband that I was a sister to him, a woman he will always protect and care for. When my father-in-law was seriously ill,

the Alkaloship was given to someone from the village, even after when my in-law died he continued to be Alkalo. My husband and I never complained. We were not disturbed by that. When the man died my husband was called in to take responsibility of the Alkaloship, but he subsequently died in 2006.

I was able to lobby two tractors for my village. I used to give it free of charge at first, but I later realized that something can be derived from it in case it got broken down. I started renting it if certain people need it from the village, and the neighboring villages. The little I used to get from the tractor, I help the women of the village. But I was disappointed when certain people, who still remain unknown, poured soda all over one of the tractors. Everything got burnt. It was painful for me. I thought they were being jealous.

### Leadership and politics

Shortly after my husband passed away, the people of the village asked me to replace my husband, but I refused. They said they have trust and confidence that I can move the village to a higher height. I refused the proposal because I wanted to go to the city to start a new life. I like politics. I have been a politician since the first Republic. Politics works everywhere, even in the family, there is politics.

With the expanding female emancipation that accompanied economic and literacy growth after independence, I decided that the city will be the best place that I can stay after the death of my husband. I wanted to be another Yama. I was planning to go to the city when I received a letter from President Jammeh asking me to accept the villagers' proposal and become the *Alkalo*. I accepted and sought the villagers support.

I started to help the people especially women who have long sought help. Access to land was never a problem in my village. Now they have access to cultivate without being discriminated. With the help of women's right activists, I was able to bring together the villagers and sensitized them on the issue of female genital mutilation, which is harmful to the girl child. I advise them to stop the practice and anybody who wants to do, should go out of the village.

I spend most of day giving guidance to the women and taking care of my grandchildren, while their mothers go to the farm and gardens. I'm almost 80 (eighty years old), and I can no longer go to the farm. But I wish the government could help us with markets and good roads to ease the work of the women. I'm a leader who is concerned with the issues of women because they are the backbone of the families. They do all kinds of business to sustain their families. Currently I allocated 5 (five) hectares of land to the women of my village to cultivate vegetables.

I'm old now, there is not much I can do by myself but the women of my village are really in pain. We don't have markets despite the hours they spend in the gardens and farms. These are issues I discuss with them almost on daily basis. We go to the banks for loans but the time they give to repay it is very short. Can you imagine giving a poor farmer one year to pay back GMD20, 000 (twenty thousand Dalasi), it is very hard for us.

As a leader, I received reports every time that most of the cases are marriage problem. I preside over them with honesty when they cannot solve it at family level. Lots of divorce used to happen but it has now reduced. If I realize that they cannot settle it peacefully I take the decision to save both rights. Most of the divorces that happen are as a result men's dishonesty. They don't tell the truth to their wife at the beginning, the reality on the ground. Recently, a man from the village decided to take the case of his wife to the Qadi (Islamic court), because he knew I will tell the truth that women are not to be stepped on. Thank God that in my community marriage is thought to be for life, and the divorce rate is extremely low in my village.

### Reflections from the Interviewer

A gloomy look could clearly be seen on Yama's face as she yarns with her grandchildren under her veranda. The 78 year-old-woman could no longer go to the farm neither, or cook as she is aging. She is living in her family home with her only son and grandchildren. Yama's life as a woman and a mother had lived a joyous life with her husband before his untimely death. Yama has been a pride of her family when she got married to her late husband, who was the Alkalo (Village head) for only short time.

### Notes on the links between the story of Yama and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arranged Marriage</li> <li>2. Early marriage</li> <li>3. Dropped out of 'dara' Quranic recitation</li> <li>4. Took leadership of the Village</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Despite the evident threats, early marriage poses a threat to the growth, health and wellbeing of women, the society sees it as normal</li> <li>2. Consider girls' education as insignificant</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is law that both men and women should get the required education, but ignorance still prevails</li> <li>2. The law is not enforced to end arranged and early marriage</li> <li>3. There is a law that ensures every woman has the right to basic education and training for self-development</li> <li>4. There is law for elimination of discrimination in the field of education</li> <li>5. There is prohibition of withdrawal from school, for the purpose of marriage but not enforced</li> </ol>

## Life Story #10: Mariam – The king maker

*Mariam is a woman of timber and caliber. Since her youthful age she became independent and endeavored to take up responsibilities irrespective of her husband's wealth. At some point, she demanded for her share of the land to avoid the many problems that women face with inheritance. In her struggle to live with her situation of struggle, she developed herself, had farmlands, cinema halls, shops, vehicles and people. Her goal was fulfilled when she commanded a lot of resources.*

*She was also a determined woman, well respected, surrounded not only by women but by men and young people because she has served as role model. In the area of politics, she could have assumed a high post knowing well that she contributed to the successes of presidents of the Gambia, NAMs, and local authorities, but as culture and tradition did not make room for her, she continued to rally for leaders. For her, re-marrying was not a priority. She was well empowered, had the resources and was not dependent on a husband who would provide the basic needs, she has all. She believed that without a husband her religious obligations will be met by Allah. She has performed the Hajj, which is one of the five pillars of Islam.*

*She still has the support of her community who obeys her instructions. She is socially engaged in all activities. Mariam was known as a die-hard promoter of FGM, after being sensitized by GAMCOTRAP, she led the campaign against FGM in the CRR North and Janjanbureh, and 30 circumcisers have now dropped their knives. The grand FGM ceremony celebrated every five years in Janjanbureh is now a thing of the past.*

*There is the perception that the feminine energy is too much for some men to comprehend, so they resort to restriction of women as to what the limits are. However, survival is a key factor to break the patriarchal barriers as to what a woman can do and cannot be limited to if she has the physical and mental capacity to do so. This is what Mariam had demonstrated.*

### Beginnings

I am not literate in English because when I was young and should go to school, my grandfather denied me the opportunity. He was learned and was a chief of the area. He saw how I was growing up and had a lot of fame, so he thought that if I am schooled, I will one day unseat him (She laughs aloud).

### Marriage and hard work

I went through a lot of problems, but I thank *Allah*. As I was growing up, I became very famous and was able to manage myself. During those days, I was fair in complexion; some thought that I was a Lebanese, while others saw me as a descendant of the Arab family. When I got married to a poor Lebanese, I was driven away from home, and he was also driven away from home because he married me. When we had nowhere to go I told him that we should stay together and join hands to better our livelihood. So, I went into farming struggling to clear virgin lands. At that time, many people were not interested in clearing the virgin lands, but I saw progress in what I was doing and endeavored to clear as much as I could. So, while I was clearing the lands, my husband would sit down and watch me. I ploughed and sow seeds and my first harvest I had 60 bags of coos. This was bought by Mr. Ndow of the Armitage High School. From the money realized from farming, we would meet our demands and would pay D5 for our rent. Whenever I do not have money to pay for rent, I would pledge my gold earrings. So, my husband and I continued with this life without the support from our relatives.

### King Maker

*While men are leading in political positions, the wisdom of women contributes to the strategies that fortify them in those positions. Mariam's determination and commitment to bring about change in her country was limited by her lack of education, however she can be described as one of the people who are "King Makers". Thus, it become threatening for men when they see women with ability, and educational qualification in the public spaces. Mariam has been behind both the Presidents that came to power in the Gambia from the early stages of their political lives, and went to lengths to so. She proudly pointed to the room in her house where the First President of the Gambia was hosted while the "Committee of 6" tried to convince him to go into politics.*

I am a relative of Dawda Jawara (Ex-president in the first Republic), a veterinary surgeon and whenever he was on trek in the rural areas, he will pass by, or spend nights with us. When the issue of identifying a candidate for presidency came up, one of my relatives, Bakary Sidibeh, was suggested but he declined saying he could not guarantee winning in politics and then he would have lost his job.

So while Dawda Jawara was on trek, he came to spend the night with us before going further. I discussed the issue of presidency with him and asked him to resign to be a candidate for Committee 6. Initially he said no. I continued to talk to him and insisted. On hearing this, his wife Augustus Jawara who is a Christian, told him that if you become a president then it will mean that you are going to be converted to a Muslim, divorce me and marry a Muslim woman. So, at this point, Dawda Jawara did not commit himself but told me that I would discuss with my wife and on my return, I will pass by and give you feedback.

The wife agreed to the proposal and Dawda Jawara resigned and became a candidate. I was the one accompanying him and campaigning for him until he was successful. When he became a president, he passed by the house when he is on tour.

### Entrepreneurship

Later, he brought in some Chinese to introduce cultivating rice during the dry season in The Gambia. Knowing that my livelihood was dependent on farming, I tried and cultivated all my fields and had some money. When the government knew about my efforts, they gave me a loan, then I continued with my farm work. I bought tractors to boost my farming. As I realized some income, I started buying bales of materials, and put them underneath my bed.

You see this sitting room, it used to be a shop. I have left this particular iron in the wall to serve as remembrance of our struggle. The bales of materials that I was buying in small quantity and putting under my bed, was what was on the counter, and I will sell after coming from the farms. As the president used this house many a time when he was on tour, I decided to convert the shop into a sitting room so that we will have something decent for the president and ourselves. I had one room for me and my husband and made another a guest room.

Then my husband died. I continued with the struggles of life. I had 4 acres of land by the seaside. I went and cleared it, and made it a banana plantation. The money that I realized from the sales of banana was what I used to buy part of a piece of land from a man and built a lodge called "*Alakabun*" (meaning Allah is Great).

I called it so meaning '*Allah is great*' when my husband died I continued the struggle because I did not want to suffer. When he died, we were 'well off' and he left a lot of shops, and vehicles but I still continued with my farming. Then I started with APRC, and most of what I had is gone. I am still doing my farm work.

In the Gambian context, the *Wali* (guardian) in a marriage does not have to be the biological father. In most cases it is the paternal or maternal uncles or close family friend who is the *Wali* in the marriage. Even though marriage in Islam should not be based on ethnicity, class or caste, it has been a cultural barrier for many young people. This is what happened when Mariam's father did not want her to marry a man because he is of Lebanese origin. Her uncle became her *Wali* as the tradition in her family demands.

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My father (referring to her uncle) Moriba Krubally is the eldest in the family and he gives out the female children for marriage. They called me and said that this man [white], wants you for a wife and sort my consent. I told them that I want him for a husband and would marry him. So, my relatives told me “if you so decide then we will not be part of it as we intended marrying you to Sir Farimang Singhateh who was the governor at the time.” I insisted and told them that amongst the two, I still want to get married to the poor [Lebanese] man because he is my choice. I don’t want to get married for position and this poor white man is my choice (pointing to his picture on the wall). When I saw that they were adamant with their proposal, I convinced them and won them over. On the other hand, my husband’s relatives also said the same thing that he would not marry a black woman, but he also insisted that I am his choice and later both parents agreed and the customary ceremony for the marriage took place. The families later agreed. They were the ones who tie the marriage and later accepted. We are both Muslims, we were married for 33 years.

My engagement in politics initially paid off dividends. My efforts in farming were recognized and I had support to venture into alternative business ventures that brought in income, and made me a breadwinner.

Before Jawara became the President, he was working at the Veterinary department. Our *kafo* [organisation] called *Committee 6* called him and told him about the position of presidency that existed for the Gambia, and asked him to contest for it. After we succeeded in convincing him, he agreed to contest for it and resigned from his job. When he became the President of the Gambia, I went to him and told him that there was a white ruler, and you, a black person is currently the ruler of the country, and I want you to show the world that we have a black president. I told him about our condition that my husband is white but poor and needed assistance from him. Then he asked what I wanted, I told him that I wanted a Cinema hall for Janjanbureh. I was directed to Sheriff Ceesay who was at the Ministry of Finance at the time, and I was given a loan. There were sailing boats transporting groundnuts to and from a firm called UAC in Janjanbureh. These boats were the means by which my building materials were transported. They loaded my building materials on the boat, and I received them from the UAC. I constructed a cinema hall in Janjanbureh called Liberty Cinema, I still had some money at hand and I constructed another cinema hall in Bansang called Konko Duma.

At the Department of Agriculture, there was a man called Sedat Ceesay Sanyang who was managing the land for the agricultural sector. At the time, they were giving loans for the promotion of agriculture. I requested a loan for a tractor, but before I was given the loan, Government officials came and inspected my entire rice field. When they were satisfied, they gave me the tractor as loan. With the help of Allah, after harvesting I will have 1000–2000 bags of coos; during which period, my husband was still poor. Even this house was constructed from the funds of my harvest. This area was a shop and you can still see the holdfast that was attached to the shelves. I refused to remove it and left it as a remembrance of the struggle I went through. I also bought materials in small quantity, and kept them beneath the bed until I was able to operate the shop. Materials were not expensive at that time but I could not also afford bulk purchase. I was also able to pay the loan given to me for the tractor without my husband’s contribution.

I did not provide anything as collateral. They believed that I will be able to pay the loan because they saw what I am capable of doing. I was the first person to farm ‘Taiwan’ [particular type of rice variety that is cultivated in the dry season], that President Jawara brought in The Gambia. People were reluctant to engage in it as they have never seen rice being cultivated in the dry season. All along I was growing coos, so I decided to go in for the rice too. After harvesting the coos, I will take it to James Ndow – the then principal of Armitage Senior Secondary School – and he will buy them. Still interested in the Taiwan rice I went and cleared 2 hectares of virgin piece of land. The Chinese were constantly asking whether I will farm the rice and I repeatedly told them that I will do so. The Chinese assisted with the clearing, then made a canal for the water to pass. This got broken and seeing that I was determined, the Chinese ordered a certain type of material which came by air. All along people were saying it was due to poverty and hardship that forced me into farming during the dry season. I succeeded and called it “number one” farm. This was a sample that attracted a lot of attention countrywide. I endeavored because of the struggle that me and my husband were going through.

### **Inheritance**

I am one of the very few women who did not have a problem to have my rightful inheritance from both my father and husband’s properties. My father gave me landed property before he died. Having realized my struggles in life and my contribution to making a living despite being married, when my husband died, I did not have any problem with his family regarding inheritance. I inherited everything except for a vest that my husband was in when he died. His sister Ramzia came begging for it as a remembrance. All of them stood up to say that they did not own anything in the property, as I was the one who worked for everything. They are still financing me as they still take me as a mother, not an in-law.

Even this house that we are living in was given to me by my father. I demanded for it and inherited it. I told my father to give me part of the land as I am now married. Whenever we have the ability, we will be able to construct it. He has his own along the highway. I inherited my father’s land and he accepted to give me part of it so that when he died there will be no confusion. His land was shared amongst us, so there was no problem when he died. He did not segregate among his children be it male, or female.

### **Status as a widow**

I did not re-marry when my husband died. My brothers were contacted but they were told that she is not interested in getting another husband; however, they can meet and discuss the issue with me themselves. I insisted on not re-marrying and they left me alone. So, I continued praying and waiting on Allah.

Being single does not affect my leadership. Men knew my position and are careful on how to deal with me. Some of them are even afraid of me. Hope belongs to Allah. My grandfather’s marabout normally asks whose child I was, and Makang told him that I was his grand-daughter. He advised him to take good care of me because if I have long life and was a male child, I would have inherited his kingship but as I am a woman, they should not beat me. It is for this reason that my father and uncles pet me, but my mother and aunts would always beat me well.

### **Political leadership**

After I got married, one day I was sitting with my husband and received a letter from Bombay, India. There was a magic instrument in it and my husband asked where it was from and I told him that I do not know. He told me that I could use it if I want to. Ever since, Allah has made me assume leadership positions. Positions are given by Allah, and I have assumed leadership roles in politics too. I have never been fed up, tired or never belittled anyone and that is why I have been in leadership position for so long. Some men think I should have been a man. (she giggles)

During my political leadership, I had a lot of guests and when one sees me managing them they have pity on me, but this is what I have been used to. When my husband died he left me with four vehicles; my private car, his Benz, a Ferguson and a Pickup that does all the errands. My husband goes to America frequently and my shops were packed full to the extent that since Yahya became President I provided ashobi [uniform] for the whole town whenever there were occasions.

When Yahya came into power, political branches in Farato, Pakali, Balagharr were established by me; a woman in wrapper. Allah gave me this power and I had the support of my relatives. This is what I have succeeded in doing up to date with the help of Allah. Wherever there is a problem, I am always called to go and solve it and I always succeed.



**Support for President Jammeh after years in the opposition**

At that time when our party has no leader, we called it “Mandinka Kafo”. I switched over to Yahya Jammeh because of my citizenship. Before Yahya took over, I had already left the PPP regime for over 10 years. I joined the opposition party and Sheriff Dibba, the head stays in the compound. I moved over because with all the struggles undertaken, it was not appreciated by the PPP regime. My husband’s elder brother was ill with cancer; his relatives came to my husband who was also admitted. Assan Camara was there but the Georgetownians did not appreciate me and my husband’s contributions, and over the years we hosted and fed of all PPP party militants. I and my husband were all politicians.

They went and told lies against us saying that there were not many supporters to welcome former President Jawara because Andrew wanted to join Shrieff Dibba’s opposition party. So, I decided to resign from PPP as I was no one’s slave, then I joined NCP for 10 years; after which there was a coup d’état. This was in support of Yahya Jammeh, when I walked up to Sankulay kunda joined the entourage and escorted him to Janjanbureh for a political rally. After we have reached the Methodist school in Janjanbureh, we had a meeting and I called for the construction of the bridge in Sankulay Kunda. I advised him to remove his soldier’s uniform and be a civilian and we will vote for him. This picture shows when he removed his military uniform and turned civilian. This is the President himself. This was when we were going to the Arch 22. We had two buses filled with supporters. It was during the first celebration. This picture depicts when I was decorated. The first decoration was in year 2000 by the V. P. H. E Dr. Isatou Njie. Before Yahya takes off for his campaign, he asks me to go around to assess the situation on the ground all over the country. There is nowhere that I did not go to on his behalf, when he provides vehicle and fuel for the trip. I was also a board member of the Bansang Hospital. I have worked extensively for the APRC regime, but they have all forgotten this. The last visit of the President, I was not invited and I did not participate too. I also contributed to the NAM’s success in Janjanbureh, but he is also not appreciative. I came to assess my contribution to the APRC and how they have used and dumped me I became angry and decided to sit back and not get involved.

Women should be represented in all positions. Whatever a man can do a woman can also do. Women are supporters and risk their lives. Therefore, women should assume more positions than men. *“Musoo mu muneh bolaliti”*

**Notes on the links between the story of Mariam and Qiwamah and Wilayah**

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Got married to a Lebanese man and, so her family raised concern for her decision to marry a white man</li> <li>2. Embarks on farming as an employment opportunity to support the husband who was at the time not financially strong</li> <li>3. Support from her family and husband’s relatives</li> <li>4. She inherited all property owned by her husband after his death</li> <li>5. After the death of her husband she refused to remarry</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A political figure and a woman who has helped a lot of men in position during the first and the second Republics</li> <li>2. Because of her leadership ability, some think she should have been a man rather than a woman</li> <li>3. Supported many people in the region</li> <li>4. Part of an opposition party after the fall of the first regime</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supported the first and the second regimes</li> </ol>

## Life Story #11: Binta – A role model for girls' education

*She could be described as lucky amongst girls in her ethnic group. She was sent to school and allowed to complete her education and even travelled abroad for university education. She took leadership to create her own organization to support vulnerable girls, and learned skills to empower them. Though married, Binta is involved in many committees in her community and is recognized at the national level as a women's rights activist. Binta sees education as the key to success for women's economic empowerment.*

### Beginnings

My name is Binta. I am 57 years old. My parents came from the North Bank region, Illiasa, and settled in Banjul where I was born. I am the first child of 14. My father saved me from early marriage, and helped me through school. However, he could not save me from FGM. I underwent the procedure at age 11; my father was a gender sensitive person. I thank my parents especially my father who has the foresight to take me to school. However, both of my parents are not educated. My father restricted all temptation from my family to give me the opportunity to further my education, and he also saved me from forced, or early marriage.

### Education

I passed my common entrance examination, but I did not get scholarship because of my rural background. But the funniest thing is that when I passed my common entrance with high marks, my father told my mother to take me to female genital mutilation because I passed by exams. At that time; female genital mutilation was considered as training your daughter, I remembered I asked my father when I will be circumcised because that was the order of the day.

Another challenge was, I had a scholarship mark but because my parents came from the rural area, I was denied that package, I went to the interview but because of my gender, and my parents came from the provinces I was denied. There also my father came to my aid and insisted that he will pay for my schooling. I went to Gambia High School at the age of eleven. From there on I had my O' levels, I had eight credits, I passed everything with high marks, beating all the boys, in different subjects including French, Math, Science, and Oral English.

At that time, I recognised gender disparity, the society was not ready for women to take high responsibility because we were very few women to complete high school at that time. Gambia was very much a gender-biased society in 1967 – not ready for women to take leadership, going to school, etc. Boys teased me about my handwriting, but I stayed strong and beat them in marks. The ratio of girls to boys in school was 8 girls to 30 boys. The higher I went to attain education, there were fewer girls.

In 1974 not many girls reached A levels, looking at the number of girls that used to be enrolled. Like for me I used to take first in class but boys will not want to spare me, they will provoke me and say, look, you have a very bad hand writing all that is to distract my attention. With all that, I will be bold enough and tell them with all my bad handwriting I still beat you. You see that challenge has already been there. When I passed my O levels, we were only four girls that went to six forms. This was very rare at that time. Still in education, I think still the higher level you go, the less female representation you have.

I went to the United States on scholarship from Indiana University; because one woman was working as a Peace Corps volunteer and a researcher working with my husband at the time; Mr. Sidibe. He worked on that scholarship for me. That scholarship was another successful story, you know girls if someone wants to marry them others ask for land, houses, etc. However, this particular man Mr. Sidibeh I told him that I want to learn, he found me a scholarship to go overseas. When my husband expressed interested in marrying me, I told him that I wanted to learn. His parents insisted and told his community that she would be fine travelling to U.S. by herself.

I graduated at 22 years of age that was unusual for a young woman. Because I wanted to keep my word; I returned to the Gambia; I studied history and sociology. Before I left, I got married at 19 years because from my ethnic group for a woman to travel at that tender age was a big issue, so I decided to get married before I left for studies. With all this, so many people came to my mother telling her you are going to send your daughter to America all alone on her own. They said a woman should not go abroad, but still my parents insisted and sent me to abroad.

### Early career and motherhood

After returning to the Gambia, I started working on a consultancy. I also took part in the Social Economic Tourism Impact Study in 1978. "social impacts" how young people were influenced by tourism. It was mainly to look at how young men and women were influenced by tourists, and if there is any funding for them. I was employed by U.S. Embassy in 1978, for one year as admin assistant. Helped form the National Association of university graduates – how best to contribute to culture and make a path for future girls.

I also worked at the U.S. Agency for International Development – age 33. I was responsible for the scholarship program for the government, and I was a cultural expert. "Men still cannot accept a woman at the top levels of government. Only staring, making "beautiful" comments, but not accepting women. I also had had educational value or merit. However, I did not compromise my principles.

During this time, I had 5 children – 2 boys and 3 girls. I had my children consecutively. My husband's family (my in-laws) are supportive. I am the oldest in the family, so there was a lot of hope surrounding my children and the need for them to be trained. It is always a pressure to be a good wife, mother, sister, etc. I still travelled and worked while pregnant, and even leaving the country to do research in universities like in Nigeria, when I was 5 months pregnant.

### Working with girls

I worked with UNFPA (<http://www.unfpa.org/>) as a project – Coordinator of social reforms, 1988-1992. It was hard trying to restructure the Women's Bureau, National Women's council affairs and training. I was always interested in training women. This is where I had the idea to start the current organization – sponsored by the Ford Foundation – to begin combating child abuse – physical, emotional, and sexual, child custody cases, wife abuse cases, etc. Women's empowerment issues were the foundation of the NGO in 1992.

Sobeya Girls club nicknamed the "hard working girls club." Children adopted me as a surrogate mother. I realized they needed skills, most could not even write their own notes from meetings. They brought in their own sewing machines to teach them, started something from scratch. I used my own compound in 1995. In 1992, they focused on gender sensitivity, and FGM, as most of them are single mothers. It is a bit easier now to go to villages and talk to people. I didn't have funding from anyone back then, and I only had 10 students. Funds arrived later, and they were able to expand and grow – almost 400 students now doing fishing, sewing, gardening projects, etc. Training needs to be continuous. Giving women loans, trainings in management of resources, profits, etc. I set up a health program.

I started another school and let the students bring their children. They provided them lunch and enrolled them in immunization programs. Otherwise, children would have been exposed to abuse – physical and sexual, trafficking, etc.

## Gender violence

Did I experience gender violence in marriage? Not really. I had a supportive mother-in-law. If my husband wanted to refuse me to go places, my mother in law would come so that I could.

Marital rape did happen to me – I am a victim. I could remember my mother in-law sometimes did preach me and my co-wife saying that it is a sin to deny your husband of yourself. I talked about it with other women that sometimes the husband forces himself on you, and the mother said it is a sin to refuse your husband. I have never been divorced.

I had my own land rights at 31 years. I had another land plot that is not built, which I secured in 2006; many women groups, musicians and other national groups adopted me as a mother, which I am appreciative of. In addition, I worked for Amnesty International in 1990. In addition, I strongly condemn female genital mutilation, although I went through it.

## Notes on the links between the story of Binta and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Father saved her from early marriage and helped her to go through school</li> <li>2. She went through FGM at age 11 years</li> <li>3. Her father was a gender sensitive person</li> <li>4. Lucky to be educated up to university level as a woman during that era</li> <li>5. Denied scholarship package in her first attempt and husband finally found scholarship for her to study overseas through a co-worker</li> <li>6. Victim of marital rape</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At that time, FGM was seen as a training for girls who are ready to get married</li> <li>2. The society wasn't ready for women to take high responsibility because women were few to complete high school at the time</li> <li>3. Relatives insisted that she should be married before travelling to study</li> <li>4. So many people argue that a woman should not travel abroad</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. She was denied scholarship package because her parents are from a rural setting</li> <li>2. Believe that is a sin for women to refuse their husbands in bed for any reason</li> <li>3. FGM is seen as a means of purification for women in Islam</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gambia was very much a gender-biased society in 1967</li> <li>2. The Gambia is not yet ready for women to take leadership</li> <li>3. No specific law to criminalize FGM</li> <li>4. No law on marital rape- it is not recognized as a gender based violence</li> </ol>

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## Life Story #12: Kaddy – Struggling to break the chains

*At her family level, she takes responsibility to support her younger siblings. In her marriage she pays the rent, feeds daughter and herself when the husband is with the other wife, because he only gives fish money when he is to spend the night with her. Kaddy faced neglect and abuse. Marriage is perceived as the best, even if under abuse and neglect where there is no qiwamah and wilayah.*

### Education

I was taken to school by my father at the age 4. I went to 2 different nursery schools. From there, I went to primary school alongside *Madarasa* education. I started participating in sports while I was in grade 2. In grade 3, we were given an examination and were grouped into 3 different groups according to performance. I was lucky to be in class A where I became the class Head.

I sat to the primary school leaving certificate (Common Entrance), and got admission into Brikama Junior Secondary School. I was going in the afternoon shift and I used to cook lunch every day before going to school. When I finished school, I used to help my mother with the domestic chores.

My father married a second wife while I was in grade 7. I had a problem with my stepmother and my father refused to pay my school fees until a friend of his decided to pay it. But he (my father) later decided to continue paying by the time I got to grade 8.

I went to Bothrope High school for three years. Upon finishing there, I did a computer training course for one year and later proceeded to Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI) (<http://www.gtti.gm/>) for two years, where I did software. Without giving up, I proceeded to Jollof Tutors where I studied (CAT) for two years. While pursuing for my academic career, I also continued with my sporting activities both in football and volleyball, until I became part of the National Team.

Coming back to my childhood days, I used to give helping hands to a woman circumciser around my area in Brikama when I was just 10 years. I began cutting girls myself when I was 12 years old. I circumcised 18 girls at my first time, and I was very brave at doing it without any fear or pity for the little ones. I was so much in Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) that I thought there is never going to be any going back. I was a circumciser for 2 years and when I got to the age of 15, I became reluctant to cut girls.

GAMCOTRAP used to come to my school while I was in the junior school, but never attended their trainings and I persuaded my friends never to attend because I was so much into the practice of FGM at that time. I first attended GAMCOTRAP's training when they organized a community sensitization in Brikama. As a Group leader of a particular group in the community, I was sent to represent the group. We were trained on the Harmful effects of FGM and that training has contributed a lot in changing my views on FGM. I went back to my people and related the message to them, but they never took me seriously. One of my co-circumcisers, who was young as I am, told me that; "u went there and that is why you saw what you saw, because I will never attend their trainings". I will sometimes discuss the issue of FGM among my friends, but they ridiculed me. To change was my desire but societal pressure was an obstacle for me. But I managed to hold firm onto my beliefs that FGM is harmful to the health of women and children and since then, I refused to attend ceremonies relating to FGM.

### Marriage

I am married with a child who is two years old. I got married at the age of 29. I am the second wife of my husband but I am not living together with my co-wife. My husband spends two days at my place and two days at my co-wife's. My husband is working as a Journalist. Things were going on so well during the first months of our marriage, until when he decided to run away from his responsibilities. We ended up having a problem in 2011, when I got tired of fulfilling his responsibilities for him. As a working husband, he refused to pay the house rent, he will only give fish money when he feels like and that is if he is to spend the night at my place and will leave me with nothing when he is not supposed to be with me. I got fed up and asked him to leave my house. He packed and went on to live with the other wife, where he stayed for 6 months without even caring how his child and I lived. Within those 6 months, he went to some of the elders in my community to plead on his behalf for me to accept him back but I refused. I never wanted to accept him back but I finally did when my father's elder brother with some elders and *Imams* came to beg me to forgive him, while my husband himself was present. He promised to live up to his responsibilities in their presence. He is now doing all what is required of him without any compromise.

During those months when my husband left, I was selling ice juice to feed myself and my child. I pay my rent from that sales, and pay the school fees of my younger brother and two of my sisters. My father refused to pay their fees because they had a problem with our stepmother.

### Guardianship of children

Life has been very tough for me because I am still responsible for the needs of my younger siblings. I am the first child of my parents and we are eight from my mother's side but we have half brothers and sisters that we share the same dad with. Although I have only one child, but I am taking care of my younger ones.

### Leadership

I started taking up leadership positions when I was very young during my primary school days, and I still continue to be a leader in various women groups around my area. Each of those groups comprises of 50 young women of reproductive age. We used to come together every Saturday to make contributions, which we normally use to help each other in times of need. We will also grace each other in occasions like naming ceremony, wedding, etc.

### Employment

I used to do petty trading while going to school, but I am now working with GAMCOTRAP and I really appreciate working with this organization.

I owned a plot of land that was given to me by my uncle and hope to develop it later in the future.

### Political participation

I have been actively involved in politics before I started work, and I still do but I got so occupied with my job that I get little time now to participate. As a citizen, I believe we all have to take active part in the politics of our country and this is what motivated me to be an active participant in the political processes of my country, The Gambia.

### Domestic violence

Boys used to bully me when I was young, but I never gave it up to them. I also went through some hard times with my Step-Mother who came to stay with us shortly after marrying my father. She hates the fact that my father used to give me all the attention I needed, and this still continues because I am still close to my father.

**Gender based violence and FGM**

I was circumcised at the age of 4 together with some other girls in Brikama. I used to be an active supporter of FGM, but my perception of the practice changed ever since I got engaged with GAMCOTRAP. FGM is harmful and it must stop.

I experienced Gender Based violence when I was in school, and actively involved in sport. I was supposed to go to Sweden for an exchange visit for sport but I did not go just because of my gender as a woman. I went through some rough times with my husband just one year after I gave birth to my daughter. Even though he has never hit me, but he refused to fulfill his responsibilities as a husband.

**Marriage**

During the last interview I had with you, I did mention that I reconciled with my husband and that he was fulfilling his responsibilities. But things have changed from bad to worse. I got pregnant the same month we got back together. He decided to go back to the ugly side of him by dodging away from his responsibilities, and there was a time he even stopped coming to spend the night at my place for over 20 days. We talked that over and decided to move on. But we could not continue because I could not bear it any longer. While I was pregnant, he was not providing me with nothing and all of a sudden, he decided to leave me for months.

One day, I was in my office when he called and I told him never to call me again. He kept on calling and that was the time we exchanged words. After 30 minutes, he came to my office and found me on a prayer mat and started hitting me; I was 7 months pregnant at that time. The senior staff tried to talk to him, but he bullied everyone and even insulted one of the junior staff. He said the office can take him anywhere it wants. Because it was a trespass, GAMCOTRAP and I took the case to the police station. The police called him and he came. He started behaving strangely by saying he is sorry and that it was a mistake. His apology and behavior was not accepted and for that, he was thrown behind bars for 2 days before he could be granted bail. While reporting to the police on a weekly basis alongside him, they asked if I could withdraw the case to reconcile with him. I said no while emphasizing the need for a divorce. But I was told I will not be able to file a divorce until I give birth. So, the case is still pending at the kanifing police station.

When I gave birth to a baby girl on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2013, my mum called him and informed him the news. Since then he has been coming to my house on a daily basis but never spent the night. A day before the christening, he came and asked if he could spend the night with me but I refused. He came the following morning for the christening and went back in the evening. After a few weeks, he came and requested for a conversation with me. He then said he is sorry for all that happened in the past and asked if am willing to forgive him, but I told him I want a divorce and nothing else.

One day, my uncle called and said I have a letter from my husband which is my divorce letter. I went to collect it the following day. I was very much excited with the joy that am finally freed from him. Although I know it is not going to be easy for me and my two children, but I will manage as I have ever been coping even during our marriage for the fact that he was not doing anything for me and the kids. He decided to meet my eldest uncle again after weeks of the divorce claiming that he still loves me and wanted to reconcile with me. My uncle sent one of my cousins to call me requesting I should go along with my divorce letter. Upon arrival at his house, he took the letter from me and informed me that my husband was there before and wants to get back to me. He called my father the same time and told him the news. My uncle said he is not asking me but rather suggesting I go back to him. I did all I could but I could not escape. And now we are back together again despite all that happened in the past. Anyway, I am coping and hoping things will be better this time around. He has assured me of his support and promised to change and be a good husband and father.

**Reflections of the Interviewer**

Kaddy is pretending on the surface as if things are going to be alright which inside her, she knows the kind of man she marries. She lacks the self confidence in herself, and allowed herself to be used by a man on several occasions by accepting his flimsy excuses. The man will not change to suit her through my own observation of situations, because he is not even having a stable job right now and have two families at same time with 7 children all together.

She decided to go back to the husband but should bear in mind that she will continue to provide for herself and her kids because the husband will not do it. Again, the man is exploitative of his wife thinking that one can marry as many women as one can, with the expectation that the wives will provide for themselves and their children. I understand that empowerment begins with education, but Kaddy is not one of those, considering her level of education and work experience with GAMCOTRAP over the years. She needs to build her understanding on the reality issues in our present society.

She struggles to support her family, and her husband took advantage of her lack of education to cheat her by deceiving her that the name of their son was on the landed property that was bought from the loan she took. For years she has been working hard to survive, while her husband travelled for greener pastures. Upon return, he stopped her from earning income, married a second wife and insists she leaves the house with her children because he has divorced her. The *Qadi* court also supports his stand because the land is in the husband’s name. The *Qadi* court did not consider the best interest of the young children she has, and the husband’s responsibility towards them.

**Notes on the links between the story of Kaddy and Qiwamah and Wilayah**

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unstable marriage</li> <li>2. Lack of understanding between her and the husband</li> <li>3. The husband does not trust her</li> <li>4. She is educated but not empowered</li> <li>5. She allowed herself to be used by the husband</li> <li>6. The husband is responsible for the bitter relationship between her and the co-wife</li> <li>7. Female Genital Mutilation</li> <li>8. Domestic Violence- Battering from the husband</li> <li>9. Polygamy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expects women to endure pain in silence especially in marriage</li> <li>2. Fear of what the society will say regarding her action to free from a violent relationship</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. She has been encouraged to stick to the marriage making her to believe that divorce is a sin in the eyes of the lord</li> <li>2. Less support from the <i>Cadi</i> Court</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Although there is a section in the Women’s Act that could have been used to discipline the action of the man, none the less she never had the courage to pursue the case of assault and battering to the court this was instead resolved in the family level and she reconciled with the husband</li> </ol>
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## Life Story # 13: Hawa – The price of ignorance

### Education

I am not educated but went to the *Madrassa* for a short period. I could not go through the formal education system due to my poor background, because my parents could not afford to pay for my fees.

### Domestic chores

As the first child of my parents, most of the domestic chores were my responsibility. I used to clean the compound, wash the dishes, cook and join my mother at the farm. I have younger brothers but they were small at that time.

### Marriage

I got married at the age of 16 to this man when we were both young, and we have gone a long way in assisting each other because both of us were not financially strong at that time. After having two children with him, he told me that we should engage ourselves in helping each other so we can buy a plot of land. I then asked him how can I raise the money to buy a land since I am not educated and you are. That was when he told me there is an organization called IBAS who give loans to only women and I asked him how to do that. He then told me that he will go with me to the place, but I will be the one to take the loan. I later agreed but asked him whose name will be on the papers if I take the loan and he said our first son's name will be there. That was when I told him I will not allow any form of foul play in it. When I looked at the way things are going, I decided to back out of the deal, but he asked some elders to talk to me saying that this is for the benefit of him, and me as well as the children. I then agreed and he was the one who went to receive the money but he could not get it because I called IBAS telling them not to give him the money if it is in my name. He came back to Farafenni and I went for myself the following day to collect the money at IBAS and spent the night at his sister's place. I went back to Farafenni and handed the money to him. He came to Brikama the following day and bought the land. Upon his arrival at Farafenni, I asked him for the papers but he said they have not given it to him yet. It took a long time before he could get the papers until his third time to see the land dealers. When he brought the papers, I asked him whose name is on it and he told me is Lamin, our first son. I didn't believe him, so I took the paper to someone in his absence to read for me, and I found out that instead of our son's name, it is his own name that appears on the paper. I then asked him why and he said is all the same. He later told me that he wants to start building a house on the land, but I told him let's wait for a while so we can do the fencing and later build a house. He did not agree with me, instead he went on with his plan. I was selling at the shop while he goes to school to teach.

After building a mud house with no fence, he asked me to move there, but I did not want to because the place was isolated. I contacted my parents about it but they asked me to move. I was there with two of my children and one of them got sick for a whole year. My husband used to come for weekends once every month. He was on postings for years, until when he was transferred to the Kombos. That was when he came to stay with us but just after two years, he told me he was travelling. It was very hard for me and my children because he did not live much with us. So, I used to go sell some food items to make ends meet. He travelled to Libya and left only a bag of rice and D500.00 assuring me that he will send something when he got there. I engaged in garden work and sold the produce, or sometimes sold firewood to sustain the family while he was in Libya. I used the D500 he left with me and ventured into petty trading, which yielded profit for me and my children to live on. After some months, he started sending money amounting to D1, 100 to D1, 200 per month for three years. He came back in the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> year.

### Divorce

We divorced about four months ago and the children are with me.

### Polygyny

We married for over twenty years until he decided to marry another wife. He divorced me because he wanted me to go out with my children, so the new wife can come in. During the period of my "*Iddah*" (an Arabic word meaning the 3 months period a wife stays without having sex with the husband), the new wife came in. After that period, he asked me to leave the compound, the same compound I bought with the loan I got from IBAS. We went to court and the *Qadi* ruled that I should leave the compound and move out, because his name is on the compound documents.

### Wife beating

My husband used to batter me especially when he was planning on marrying this second wife. I can remember him beating me severely just after giving birth to our last son, and it was so serious that I could not move my neck for 5 days.

### Leadership

When my husband was in Libya, I was the leader in a women's group that used to come to my place every week to put money together and help ourselves to take care of our individual necessities, and also assist each other in times of need in the form of a loan. Upon his return from Libya, he asked me to stop it, and that is how the group ended.

### Inheritance of landed property

I own no landed property as of now. My parents are still alive, but they did not allocate any land for me and I have not inherited anything from my ex-husband either; and not now that he asked me to leave the compound with my children.

### Maintenance

He makes provision for me, but has never been enough because I am responsible for clothing myself, and even where as he should give me fish money, he doesn't give enough. I used to add the profit I make from the market to make sure I cook something for the family. He doesn't even provide enough for the children, claiming at times that is my turn to provide for the kids.

### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

I am a victim of FGM. I was circumcised at the age of 4.

### Final words

I am still living in my ex-husband's house but I will move out even though I have nowhere to go yet. In as much as I wanted to stay, I cannot because he doesn't want me anymore. I will try to engage again in petty trading to feed myself and my children and find ways of taking the issue to the department of Social Welfare, so he can take the responsibility of taking care of his children.

### Reflections of the interviewer

Hawa is faced with the difficulties of illiteracy, which makes life a bit difficult for her. She was not empowered to make her decision, instead the husband was in control of her life. Now that the husband is sending her out of the compound, she will have to go through hurdles to feed herself and her children. Furthermore, Hawa is a victim of harmful cultural practices. She was not privileged to go to school, but only to a *Madrasa*, where it is believed that the only education needed for a woman, were the verses enabling her to say the daily prayers. On the other hand, the husband who is educated took advantage of her illiteracy and ignorance. She was married off at the age of 16 years, when she was still a child and not physically and mentally matured.

Hawa showed the husband that she had confidence in him to have gone to receive the loan which was rejected and for her to give the money to her husband who batters her frequently, who is an ungrateful and patriarchal, raises some questions about how empowered she is. Upon realizing that the land was not in her son's name, she could have asked for advice but instead was complacent about it until when it was too late. Also, the *Qadi* court did not take account of the best interest of the children, and the number of years the woman spent with her husband. The ruling is flawed and we think that the ruling should be contested in the Appeal court. IC needs to be empowered to know her rights.

**Notes on the links between the story of Hawa and *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah***

Personal and Family	Society	Institution/Religious Figures	State
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Early Marriage</li> <li>2. Did not go to school due to poverty</li> <li>3. Forceful divorce by the husband because of the second wife, and so she was asked to leave her husband's house with the children</li> <li>4. Support from the family to go through the divorce procedure</li> <li>5. Victim of violence, she faces continuous battering and assaults from the Husband</li> <li>6. Abused from the husband</li> <li>7. Female Genital Mutilation</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Considered FGM as a religious obligation to be considered a pure Muslim</li> <li>2. Take battering as normal in marriage</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The <i>Cadi</i> Court didn't support her, instead she was asked to leave the husband's house for the second wife</li> <li>2. Biased on her judgment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The <i>Shari'ah</i> Law governing Muslim marriages in the Gambia is biased, and it does not take women's rights into consideration</li> <li>2. The judgment has been appealed because Hawa wouldn't have a place to stay with all her children</li> <li>3. There are certain provisions in the State law that needs to be amended</li> </ol>

## Part Four: Mapping of the life stories in The Gambia, 2012

No	Qiwamah /wilayah Issues	Lived reality	Problems	Children's Act 2005	Women's Act 2010	Comments
1.	Education	Girls denied advancing knowledge and scholarship, whether conventional or religious because they are going to marry	If parents are of different religions, which one does the child adopts in case of divorce.  Can women study <i>Shari'ah</i> law to become <i>Qadi</i> ?	Section 18 provides for the right to education of all children, and parent/guardian have responsibility for children (both boys and girls) to complete basic education.  Section 151 provides children to be brought up in the religion of the parents.  Section 161 provides for both parents to maintain and educate their child, even in case of divorce.	Section 26. (1). (g) Women have the right to education and training at all levels in all disciplines.  Section 28 prohibits withdrawal from school for purposes of marriage.	The Children's Act 2005 provides for the welfare, survival and protection of the Child by institution, person or body.
2.	Domestic chores (drudgery of work on women)	Girls are given responsibility of household chores at an early age	Household chores are not seen as life skills, but the responsibilities of girls and women.	No mention of domestic chores but section 23: 2: b gives children responsibility to assist parents and supervisors.	No mention of domestic chores	
3.	Marriage	Few gave consent  Most coerced, or were forced to marry.  Young girls forced to marry men old enough to be their father, or grandfather	Lack of consent to marriage can lead to violent relationship and sexual abuse.	Section 24 and 25 clearly protects children (below 18 years), from marriage and betrothal in any form.	Part IX – marriage and The Family, sections 34, provides for equitable rights as equal partners in marriage; and promotion and protection of the rights of a woman in marriage.  Section 35 provides for free and full consent of both parties.	
4.	Guardianship/ child custody	Mothers have guardianship of their children in most cases of death or divorce, especially of girl children and young boys.	Women are denied custody to emotionally blackmail them to stay in an undesired marriage.	Section 11 provides for the child to reside with parents considering their best interest.  Section 145 also provides for both parents to take parental responsibility of the child.  Section 181: priority is given to the surviving parent to take custody of the child first, and then other family members come in.	Section 40 provides for the joint responsibility to safeguarding, protecting and education of their children.	
5.	Divorce	Mostly husband initiates divorce but in some cases wife initiate divorce if she can no longer stand abuse and violence in the marriage.	Women who initiate divorce are asked to forfeit compensation during " <i>iddah</i> " period, even if she fears violence and abuse if she stays to do " <i>iddah</i> " in the	Section 146 provides for custody of the child in the case where parents are not residing together.  Section 158 provides for consultation	Section 43 (1), (2), (3) and (4) women enjoy equitable rights as men to seek divorce, rights and responsibility towards children, and sharing of joint	

			marital home. Women are required to pay or return the <i>mahr</i>	between parents on the upbringing of the child.	property derived from the marriage.	
6.	Polygamy	Most women are psychologically prepared to accept polygamy no matter they support it or not. Co-wives are forced to accept each other as equals, no matter how long they have spent or invested in the marriage. Young girls are forced into polygamous relationships.	Constant violence among the women especially if they live together. Children engage in fighting and fathers sometimes favour their most beloved wife. Young girls are married to men in polygamous and they face a lot of abuse from the older wife. Most of the men are not qualified to be into polygamous relationships but they do so, saying it is their divine right	N/A	Silent on polygamy	Children's Act 2005 prohibits child marriage therefore a child cannot be in polygamous marriage. The reality is they are married in polygamous relations
7.	Wife beating	Men believe they have right to beat their wives and most women accept to be beaten in marriage. Some men justify it to be a religious	How can it be right for an adult woman with full conscience and responsibility to be beaten because there is misunderstanding or argument?	N/A	Section 6 prohibits any form of violence whether occurring in public or private. Section 7 provides for access and protection before the law.	
8.	Habitation/residence	Most women live in their husband's property, and very few can decide to live with their co-wives or not.	Living with In-laws poses problems for women in such situations.	Priority is given for children to stay with their parents unless otherwise determined by the Children's Court in the best interest of the child.	Section 42 husband and wife shall by mutual agreement choose their matrimonial home.	
9.	Leadership	Women can be leaders and are accepted as leaders in their communities, especially amongst their peers. Some are accepted as Community leaders of both men and women, but do face patriarchal resistance from some men who believe that women should not lead men as heads of villages (Alkalo).	Women have to contend with having to negotiate with men in almost many issues. Men sometimes undermine them using other women to create problems and tension to reveal the weakness of the woman in such position.	Under section 23, children have responsibilities that prepare them for leadership in society. It is not very clear in the women's acts.		
10.	Inheritance of landed property	Women are allowed to use, and in some cases, control landed property but they are not allowed to own it even through inheritance. They do not own them to take decisions on what to do with them. In case of death, the widow is sent back to her father's	Men see women as moving out of the paternal home and if she inherits any land it will be lost to the other family. Most of the land is under community/traditional tenure system, which is under male control most of the time. Women are not	Section 15 provides for children's right to parental property. It is not explicit in the legal provisions.	Section 11, right to movable and immoveable property. Section 44 provides for widow's right to inherit landed property of her late husband, and the choice to stay in what she has inherited.	

		home. Most do not inherit houses or landed properties of their deceased husband or father.	aware that they have a right to inherit land from their father or spouse.  They do not assert their rights because of ignorance		Section 45 right to inheritance of parents' property.	
11.	Wife inheritance	Widows are expected to remarry their late husbands' brother or relative, even without consenting as an adult person and the literal meaning of 'wife inheritance' is equating women to properties to be inherited.  Women are forced to remarry the late husband's family to control what belongs to the children and the woman.	Not giving widows their right to inheritance especially landed property forces most to remarry into the late husband's family without having option to get their right to inheritance, and yet marry their choice of husband outside the family, especially if their children are young so as to allow them to be with their children.	Section 20 provides for the child to stay with parents or guardians.	Marriage is based on consent in section 35.	
12.	Maintenance	Husband provides according to his means, or wishes.  Others are negligent in maintenance of their children.  Wife works outside the home to feed, clothe and pay school fees for her children, even though the father is alive.  Men felt that women have to earn by taking responsibility to cover their inadequacy by taking charge of men's responsibility and women are responsible for all the household food security.	While some fathers are poor, there are others who have the means to support their children, but do not because they want to punish the mother for leaving the marriage.  In situations where women are still in the marriage, they are left with the responsibility to provide for their children, because there is no mechanism in place to monitor and ensure fathers to provide to the children.	Section 146 (3) provides that when a child is residing with either parent, the court may order for the other to pay towards maintenance of the child having regards to their means if the parents are separate.  Section 162 provides for maintenance of the child by both parents.	Sections 40 and 43 (3) provides for both man and woman to take responsibility towards their children.	
13.	Female Genital Mutilation	Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) seen as culture and religion to control female sexuality.  With awareness creation, Communities are taking decisions to protect girls from FGM.	The practice is associated with religion and some dishonest religious leaders are telling the women that it is Islam.  Circumcisers benefit from the practice and tend to do it to earn money  Gross ignorance, because it is a deep-rooted practice that no one really questioned.	Section 19 protects children from harmful social and customary practices.	Section 31 government is obliged to respect and promote the right to health and specifically, under 31(2) (e) ensures right to be educated on the health aspects of harmful traditional practices.	FGM is a harmful customary practice. FGM affect sexual and reproductive health. FGM denies women the right to dignity.  FGM contributes to maternal and infant mortality due to the complication during childbirth



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## Conclusion

This research was conducted with the participation of women's rights organizations, some of who are working in various fields to promote women's rights and calling for gender justice within the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. These organizations and individuals have worked over the years to advance the agency of women and calling the state and other social actors to accountability to promote women's human rights. Our goal is to advance gender equality and development for women of the Gambia through their own agency in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. As feminist activists, we envision a world where the personal status of women and girls are informed by justice and equality and not shaped by patriarchal discourses of control and suppression in the name of religion. The project facilitated the documentation and collection of 13 narratives from women of different backgrounds to document the "lived realities" of such women in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.

The purpose of this feminist engagement is to engage with our religion, and to sharpen our analysis with a critical gender lens and feminist perspectives. Therefore, this engagement from the start has explicit feminist agenda which calls for the empowerment of the researchers as well as the resource persons, who will empower the researchers to learn about the "lived realities" of such women. The goal and objectives of this research resonates with Musawah, a global initiative of which GAMCOTRAP is a part of, therefore involved in the project to contribute to this initiative which calls for the agency of various organizations working on women's rights.

Drawing from Women's Human Rights Defenders' perspective, we also perceive the context in which women engage and define as the dominating discourses and ideologies that can both serve to justify or reinforce discriminatory social, legal, economic political and customary structures, practices and restrictions. As feminists, we attempt to "gender interrogate" these super structures which define woman's sexuality in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. In response to this, we therefore engage in a new discourse that responds to the commonalities, similarities and differences by listening to the narratives of women which bring and put their "lived realities" in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* to envision a just and empowering environment for women. This project therefore facilitated the agency of women within their "lived realities" that bring in the "other" to deconstruct the patriarchal ideologies, or the hetero-normative assumptions. It is also an attempt to understand how these prevailing ideologies interplay in the context of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* both in the public and private lives within the gender relations, to provide greater insights in the challenges women face on an everyday basis through their life cycles all justified in the name of Islam. For these reasons, we envision a project that is liberating and informative for all to consider the feminist discourse as an alternative that informs *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.

- It is envisaged that the project will use the analysis coming from these stories to inform our advocacy with regards to *qiwamah* and *wilayah*;
- To reform and inform about laws and, in particular on the areas we focus on including other policies that shape the sexuality of women in the Gambia;
- To contribute to the broader international advocacy initiatives that shape the international development initiatives with the relevant data advance feminist epistemology; and
- To engender our institutions with feminist analysis with regards to *qiwamah* and *wilayah*.

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## Part Four: Annexes

### Annex 1: Musawah Framework for Action

This Framework for Action is a working document that provides a conceptual framework for Musawah, a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family. Musawah declares that equality in the family is necessary because many aspects of our current Muslim family laws and practices are unjust and do not respond to the lives and experiences of Muslim families and individuals. Musawah declares that equality in the family is possible through a holistic approach that brings together Islamic teachings, universal human rights principles, fundamental rights, constitutional guarantees, and the “lived realities” of women and men today. Musawah builds on decades of tireless effort by women’s groups and activists in Muslim countries and communities to campaign for reform of Muslim family laws that discriminate against women, and to resist regressive amendments demanded by conservative groups within society.

The Framework has been developed by a group of Muslim activists and scholars who have come together to initiate Musawah. The core group, coordinated by Sisters in Islam (Malaysia), comprises a twelve-member planning committee of Muslim activists and academics from eleven countries. The Framework was conceptualised and written through a series of meetings and discussions with Islamic scholars, academics, activists and legal practitioners from approximately thirty countries.

***We hold the principles of Islam to be a source of justice, equality, fairness and dignity for all human beings. We declare that equality and justice are necessary and possible in family laws and practices in Muslim countries and communities. We, as Muslims and as citizens of modern nations, declare that equality and justice in the family are both necessary and possible. The time for realising these values in our laws and practices is now.***

- I. Equality and Justice in the Family are Necessary
- II. Equality and Justice in the Family are Possible
- III. Principles on Equality and Justice in the Family

***Principle 1: The universal and Islamic values of equality, non-discrimination, justice and dignity are the basis of all human relations.***

***Principle 2: Full and equal citizenship, including full participation in all aspects of society, is the right of every individual.***

***Principle 3: Equality between men and women requires equality in the family.***

(source: [http://www.musawah.org/sites/default/files/Musawah-Framework-EN\\_1.pdf](http://www.musawah.org/sites/default/files/Musawah-Framework-EN_1.pdf))

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## Annex 2: Questions for resource persons

- **Divorce and custody:** In case of divorce who takes charge/custody of the children?
  - **Maintenance:** Do you contribute towards the maintenance of the family?
  - What /how do you contribute?
  - Do you believe that the man is taking care of his responsibility as head of the household?
  - Do you consider the man as head of household? Why is he, is he or is he not? (Allow the narrative to flow)
  - **Education:** Is education of a girl an important issue for you? Why? (Allow the narrative to flow)
  - **Female Genital Mutilation:** What was your perception about FGM before you took leadership to campaign against it?
  - What were your reasons for subjecting your daughter to FGM?
  - Where did you learn that FGM is a Religious obligation?
- Early marriage:** (Focus your questions on the explanation of the illustration on early marriage)
- Why do you marry your daughter off early?
  - Do you believe that early marriage is a religious injunction?
- Gender based violence:**
- (Use illustration on violence) what types of problems do you face between you and your husband in the household?
  - How do you cope with this problem?
  - What do you do?

### Annex 3: List of resource persons interviewed

No.	Resource Person	Community	Region
1.	Natoma	Soma	Lower River Region
2.	Fama	Tambasansang	Upper River Region
3.	Maimuna	Kaba Kama	Upper River Region
4.	Penda	Bansang	Central River Region
5.	Anta	Bansang	Central River Region
6.	Sally	Janjanbureh	Central River Region
7.	Adu	Njawara	North Bank Region
8.	Kumba	Churchill's Town	Kanifing Municipality
9.	Yama	Churchill's Town	Kanifing Municipality
10.	Mariam	Brikama	West Coast Region
11.	Binta	Kerr Sering	West Coast Region
12.	Kaddy	Sukuta	West Coast Region
13.	Hawa	Brikama	West Coast Region

## Annex 4: Summary matrixes

### Resource Person's Summary Matrix (NATOMA)

<b>Interviewer</b>	<b>Name: Dr. Isatou Touray; Organisation: GAMCOTRAP Address: Kanifing Contact No: 9813325</b>															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> July 2012, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2012 and 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013</b>															
<b>Resource Person</b>	<b>Name: Natoma</b> <b>Age: 45 yrs</b> <b>Status in the family: 3<sup>rd</sup> Wife</b> <b>Occupation: Farmer and Women's Leader</b> <b>Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: None apart from activism</b> <b>Sex: Female</b>															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	She led many struggles in her community and region including taking a lead to protect girls from deep rooted practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation, women's political participation and was instrumental in seeing through many men who are in decision making positions.															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage				√											
	Divorce					√										
	Employment											√				
	Mobility					√										
	Guardianship of children										√					
	Land Rights											√				
	Political Participation							√								
	Domestic Violence															
	Gender Based Violence								√							
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership									√						
	Female Genital Mutilation			√												
	Child Marriage						√									
Education			√	√												



**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (PENDA)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	<b>Name: Isatou Touray</b> <b>Organisation: GAMCOTRAP</b> <b>Address: Kanifing</b> <b>Contact No: 9813325</b>															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2012 and 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2013															
<b>Resource Person</b>	<b>Name: Penda</b> <b>Age: 52 yrs</b> <b>Status in the family: Breadwinner</b> <b>Occupation: Farmer, Business Woman</b> <b>Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: None apart from activism</b> <b>Sex: Female</b>															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	She has led her region to end FGM and has been instrumental in mobilising the whole region to join the campaign and made a public declaration to end FGM in her Region. She works with various women's rights organizations and SRHR issues. Also, a good role model in motivating women to engage in economic empowerment activities such petty trading etc. Amie cessa															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage					√						√				
	Divorce															
	Employment															
	Mobility															
	Guardianship of children					√										
	Land Rights								√							
	Political Participation															
	Domestic Violence						√	√	√							
	Gender Based Violence					√										
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership										√	√	√	√		
	Female Genital Mutilation						√									
	Child Marriage						√									
Education																

**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (ANTA)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	Name: Isatou Touray Organization: GAMCOTRAP Address: Kanifing Contact No: 9813325															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> July 2012, and 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2013															
<b>Resource Person</b>	Name: Anta Age: 57 years Status in the family: Head of Family Occupation: Nurse Midwife Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: Sex: Female															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Rural based, educated and took up political leadership															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage						√									
	Divorce															
	Employment					√		√			√					
	Mobility															
	Guardianship of children						√									
	Land Rights													√		
	Political Participation											√	√	√		
	Domestic Violence															
	Gender Based Violence													√		
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership											√	√	√		
	Female Genital Mutilation				√											
	Child Marriage															
Education					√	√					√					

**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (MAIMUNA)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	<b>Name: Isatou Touray</b> <b>Organisation: GAMCOTRAP</b> <b>Address: Kanifing</b> <b>Contact No: 9813325</b>															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> July 2012 and 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2013															
<b>Resource Person</b>	<b>Name: Maimuna</b> <b>Age: 51 yrs</b> <b>Status in the family: Head of family</b> <b>Occupation: Nurse Midwife</b> <b>Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: Friend</b> <b>Sex: Female</b>															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Victim of Gender Based Violence, even though she is physically challenged, she is the head of her community.															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage					√										
	Divorce															
	Employment							√	√	√	√	√				
	Mobility						√									
	Guardianship of children							√								
	Land Rights								√	√	√	√	√			
	Political Participation									√						
	Domestic Violence									√						
	Gender Based Violence															
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership									√	√	√	√	√		
	Female Genital Mutilation					√										
	Child Marriage															
Education				√			√									

**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (SALLY)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	<b>Name: Sarjo M. Camara</b> <b>Organisation: Women Journalists Association of the Gambia WOJA</b> <b>Address: c/o FOROYAA Newspaper</b> <b>Contact No: 9914602/3657574</b>															
<b>Dates of interview</b>																
<b>Resource Person</b>	<b>Name: Sally</b> <b>Age: 73 years</b> <b>Status in the family: Head of Family and Bread Winner</b> <b>Occupation: Politician, Former Public Relations Officer for Women's Bureau and Former Head Teacher</b> <b>Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: Board member</b> <b>Sex: Female</b>															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	<b>A dropout from school, survivor of unwanted pregnancy, and four marriages failed/divorce. First female elected candidate in parliament during the first regime and nominated member in the second republic.</b>															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	<b>Marriage</b>					√	√				√					
	<b>Divorce</b>							√		√√				√		
	<b>Employment</b>					√	√									
	<b>Mobility</b>											√				
	<b>Guardianship of children</b>											√	√			
	<b>Land Rights</b>															
	<b>Political Participation</b>								√							
	<b>Domestic Violence</b>												√		√	
	<b>Gender Based Violence</b>											√				
	<b>Marital Rape</b>															
	<b>Leadership</b>											√				
	<b>Female Genital Mutilation</b>				√											
	<b>Child Marriage</b>						√									
<b>Education</b>				√												

**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (ADU)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	Name: Sarjo Camara Organisation: FOROYAA Newspaper Address: Churchills Town Contact No:															
<b>Dates of interview</b>																
<b>Resource Person</b>	Name: Adu Age: 59 years Status in the family: Mother Occupation: Journalist/Politician/Activist/Educator Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: Activism Sex: Female															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Her multiple identity as a woman in political activism, Journalist, teacher and women's leader															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage						√									
	Divorce															
	Employment					√	√									
	Mobility								√							
	Guardianship of children															
	Land Rights												√			
	Political Participation								√				√			
	Domestic Violence															
	Gender Based Violence									√						
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership									√	√	√	√			
	Female Genital Mutilation			√												
	Child Marriage															
Education			√	√	√	√										



**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (KUMBA)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	Name: Binta A. Bah Organisation: WOJAG Address: Bundung Contact No: 3802626															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	August 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2012,															
<b>Resource Person</b>	Name: Kumba Age: 37 years Status in the family: Bread Winner Occupation: Business Woman Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: None Sex: Female															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Survivor of domestic violence, two marriages failed, Survivor of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and Community Leader															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage						√									
	Divorce							√	√							
	Employment						√									
	Mobility							√								
	Guardianship of children									√						
	Land Rights															
	Political Participation							√								
	Domestic Violence							√		√						
	Gender Based Violence							√		√						
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership									√						
	Female Genital Mutilation			√												
	Child Marriage															
Education			√				√									

**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (YAMA)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	Name: Binta Bah Organisation: WOJAG Address: Bundung Contact No: 3802626															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> 8/2012															
<b>Resource Person</b>	Name: YAMA Age: 78 years old Status in the family: Breadwinner Occupation: Village Head Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: Sex: Female															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Survivor of early marriage, village leader ( <i>Alkalo</i> )															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage					√										
	Divorce															
	Employment					√										
	Mobility															
	Guardianship of children						√									
	Land Rights										√					
	Political Participation															
	Domestic Violence															
	Gender Based Violence															
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership															
	Female Genital Mutilation															√
Child Marriage						√										
Education			√													

**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (MARIAM)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	Name: Mary Small Organisation: GAMCOTRAP Address: Kanifing Contact No: 9941896															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	05 <sup>th</sup> /08/12 and 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2013															
<b>Resource Person</b>	Name: Mariam Age: 76 years Status in the family: Family Head Occupation: Farmer Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: Sex: Female															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Mariam has genuine leadership in all aspects of life and this made her take the lead in the campaign on FGM in the Central River Region North. She led 30 circumcisers in a publicly celebrated ceremony, where they vowed never to cut girls. Apart from her political leadership, she is the chairperson of the gender based violence committee in her region. She also served as National Women's Councilor, an advisory body on issues affecting women to influence policies, under the national Women's Bureau promoting the socio-economic and political rights of Gambian women and girls.															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage					√										
	Divorce				√											
	Employment						√									
	Mobility															
	Guardianship of children						√									
	Land Rights					√										
	Political Participation						√									
	Domestic Violence															
	Gender Based Violence															
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership							√								
	Female Genital Mutilation				√											
	Child Marriage															
Education																

**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (BINTA)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	Name: Sarjo Camara Organisation: FOROYAA Newspaper Address: Churchills Town Contact No:															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> /8/12															
<b>Resource Person</b>	Name: Binta Age: 57yrs Status in the family: Mother Occupation: Activist Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: Sex: Female															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Her leadership in women's empowerment and as role model in her community.															
<b>Summary of experience authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage					√										
	Divorce															
	Employment						√	√	√							
	Mobility					√			√							
	Guardianship of children								√							
	Land Rights						√		√							
	Political Participation															
	Domestic Violence					√										
	Gender Based Violence							√								
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership									√	√	√	√			
	Female Genital Mutilation					√										
	Child Marriage															
Education					√	√	√									

**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (KADDY)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	Name: Isatou Jeng Organisation: GAMCOTRAP Address: Kanifing Contact No: 9844200															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2012, 28 <sup>th</sup> August 2012 and 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2013															
<b>Resource Person</b>	Name: Kaddy Age: 32yrs Status in the family: Mother and 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife Occupation: Finance Officer Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: professional Sex: Female															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Victim of Gender based violence: Wife battering, and FGM															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage							√								
	Divorce								√							
	Employment							√								
	Mobility							√								
	Guardianship of children								√							
	Land Rights							√								
	Political Participation						√	√	√							
	Domestic Violence				√	√		√	√							
	Gender Based Violence					√	√	√	√							
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership					√		√								
	Female Genital Mutilation		√													
Child Marriage																
Education		√	√	√	√	√	√									



**Resource Person's Summary Matrix (HAWA)**

<b>Interviewer</b>	Name: Isatou Jeng Organisation: GAMCOTRAP Address: Kanifing Contact No:															
<b>Dates of interview</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> June, 2012															
<b>Resource Person</b>	Name: Hawa Age: 36yrs Status in the family: Mother Occupation: Small Scale Business (Petty Trading) Relationship with the implementer of this documentation: Sex: Female															
<b>Reasons for choosing the Resource Person</b>	Survivor of abuse, violence and divorced with 5 children															
<b>Summary of experience on authority, protection and guardianship in the family</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>0-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>15-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25-29</b>	<b>30-34</b>	<b>35-39</b>	<b>40-44</b>	<b>45-49</b>	<b>50-54</b>	<b>55-59</b>	<b>60-64</b>	<b>65-70+</b>
	Marriage					√										
	Divorce								√							
	Employment					√										
	Mobility					√										
	Guardianship of children					√										
	Land Rights															
	Political Participation															
	Domestic Violence				√	√										
	Gender Based Violence					√	√	√	√							
	Marital Rape															
	Leadership								√							
	Female Genital Mutilation		√													
	Child Marriage						√									
Education		√														

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