

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

SAFE HANDS FOR GIRLS 2020 – 2021





PREFACE

Since the establishment of Safe Hands for Girls by Jaha Dukureh, the youngest African to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and a renowned Female Genital Mutilation activist and Women's Rights champion. The organization, is dedicated to ending harmful traditional practices that affect women and girls in our communities. Safe Hands for Girls also works on ending, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Education, protection and the promotion of rights of different vulnerable segments of society and promotion of economic empowerment for women. Every year, it gives us immense pleasure to present the annual report for the year 2021 - 2022. Another eventful year is completed despite the many obstacles as a result of the pandemic, which has impacted our work on the ground. The year has been meaningful in achieving some milestones in the field of development with our own unique experience and expertise in implementing different development initiatives. This is only possible due to the hard work and commitment of our staffs, volunteers and other individual(s) directly or indirectly associated with our mission. We are very much thankful to everyone and delighted to present our achievements and thoughts in this report.

Safe Hands for Girls believes that participatory approach of advocacy and community participation at grassroots level is one of the keys for success of our activities. We would never forget the felt support and positive attitude of the community and students towards our programmes, and at this juncture we are also inviting them to come closer and extend their full cooperation in the development process that is meant for them. Financial constraint has always remained as a barrier to shape up our vision. However, due to the support of our partners, we are marching towards our vision and mission in a collaborative approach. We are very much thankful to our many partners and donors all over the world, with a special thanks to UNICEF, Global Media Campaign to End FGM (GMC), Jaha Dukureh (Founder) for their support in our work.



Background & Formation

Safe Hands for Girls (SHFG) is a women-led non-Governmental Organization, dedicated to helping women and girls that have gone through Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or at risk of going through the practice. Founded in 2013 by Jaha Dukureh, a young Gambian-American woman who has experienced both FGM and Child Marriage. Safe Hands for Girls is registered in US, in The Gambia and Sierra Leone.

Legal status

Safe Hands for Girls is a US 501c3 registered non-profit organization and legally registered with the Anthony General Chambers in The Gambia and Sierra Leone. All donations to Safe Hands for Girls are tax deductible.

Broad Objective

Advocacy, education and community development through people's participation especially young people with the view of ending FGM in a generation. Women and girls empowerment, capacity building, economic empowerment for financial independence are some of the objectives of SHFG, building towards a healthy and conducive environment for all.

Vision:

A world where every woman and girl is free from FGM and all forms of gender-based violence and, and has the support, knowledge, tools and self-esteem to reach her full potential.

Mission:

To help end the practice of female genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women and girls and to end the abuse of women's rights, through programs and activities that address the many factors that perpetuate these conditions.

Board of Management

Safe Hands for Girls is managed by a board of directors that govern and provide oversight to the leadership of the organization. SHFG has an advisory board chaired by the Founder to guide the team from time to time in taking forward the mission of SHFG and execution of action programs.

Area of Operation in The Gambia

Implementation of direct advocacy projects – throughout The Gambia
Women Economic Empowerment projects – West Coast and North Banks Regions

ACTIVITIES ROUNDUP

Garden Seeds and Rice Donation

The women garden in farafenni located in the North Bank of The Gambia is a well renowned garden mainly due to its size and economical benefit to over 600 women working there and the food security and livelihood it provides for families. Earlier this year, there was a fire outbreak in the garden which burnt most of the crops and damaged properties in the garden, the incident resulted to an ongoing food security crisis and a lack of stable income as the women remained reliant on remittances and handouts to survive. This incident happened at a time when these women were already struggling because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The women were given 2000 bags of rice, seedlings worth over \$8000 and cash to help revive the garden.

The objective helped rebuild the women garden back to its original state and provide them with seeds and bags of rice to reduce the financial burden of feeding their families given the tragedy they experienced.



Our founder with some beneficiaries



Beneficiaries looking at seedlings

Community Sensitization

In light of the pandemic, FGM remains a major cause for concern in our societies. FGM is often considered an integral part in raising a girl, and a method of preparing her for adulthood and marriage. The team embarked on a community and media outreach on FGM and GBV, discussions centered on who makes the decision in our households. The outreach targeted 10 communities within the West Coast Region and the Kanifing Municipal Council interacting with female heads of households on some of the health implications of FGM.



Community discussion on FGM

FGM Awareness Raising & Drawing Competition

The FGM Awareness Raising & Drawing Competition was an activity held with the military officers in Farafenni in the North Bank Region as part of the continuous engagement with security personnel in the fight against FGM, GBV and Child Marriage. A diverse group of 50 military personnel both men and women were drawn from two Military barracks around the country participated in this program. During the 3 days training, participants were given in-depth overview of the different forms of FGM, health complications of FGM, the anti FGM law, different forms of GBV, legal instruments alongside interactive discussions on the role they can play to protect girls and women in the barracks.

The activity was followed by a drawing competition to gauge their understanding of these issues and express it in the form of art (drawing) which was printed and mounted on billboards around the regions from where the officers were from.

Since the beginning of this partnership in 2017, Safe Hands for Girls directly reached 1432 Soldiers of the Gambia Armed Forces, who have all being trained on Female Genital Mutilation and Gender Based Violence and their awareness raised on the legal instruments ratified by the Gambia to protect the rights of women and girls.



Billboard unveiling



Group of Military officers at a training

Empowerment Through Self-Defense Training

Empowerment through self-defense (ESD) is a holistic approach to personal safety which teaches tools to combat the whole spectrum of violence, from verbal harassment to physical violence. Every person has the right to learn how to defend themselves. Systems of violence are complex, so this requires more than just physical techniques. Safe Hands for Girls led 2 ESD training programs during this period. One targeting 15 young women of 18-22 years and teenagers of 12 – 16 years of age. The activity was implemented at a time when there were so many reports on violence against women happening on a daily basis, the National Coordinator of the Network against Gender Based Violence who we partnered with us for this implementation stated that “This training could not have come at a better time, I believe every young woman should be equipped with the basic tools to defend herself when the need arise”.



Participants practicing physical techniques

School Outreach

School outreach on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in the Upper River, Lower River and West Coast Regions. The outreach was conducted in 8 junior and senior secondary schools, the activity was geared towards raising the awareness of young people on issues of SGBV, the different forms of SGBV, and some of the available help they can get in their regions. The discussions covered a wide spectrum of some of the health complications of FGM, the anti FGM law and the reporting procedures.

During this activity, an estimated 1500 students and 30 teachers were reached. Given the sensitivity of discussing about FGM especially at the communities, this activity is part of a holistic approach to achieving our target of ending FGM in a generation. Students are encouraged to engage their parents in a respectful manner about the practice when they get home to try to also share some of the knowledge gained at the school.



A presentation FGM



Students listening

Day of the African Child

Safe Hands for Girls commemorated the Day of The African child with members of the Children’s National Assembly of The Gambia (CNA). The activity gave 5 Members of the CNA the platform to speak up about their rights and some of the issues they want the government to work on. Their speech and messages were pre-recorded and aired on TV and 5 radio stations around the country to reach a widespread audience and capture the attention of government, policy makers and development partners to remind them that laws need to be implemented as promised. The activity gave us the opportunity to highlight some of crimes against children committed daily with no actions from those entrusted with the law. SHFG jointly with CNA went through the provision of the Children’s amendment act of 2005 and selected crucial talking points such as the rights to education, the right of opinion, protection from harmful social and cultural practices. The pre-recorded videos were aired on the biggest television stations Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS) /QTV and five local radio stations and social media on the Day of The African Child. Given the global recognition and significance of the day, it served as the perfect time for Children to provide inputs and remind the government of its obligations to protect and preserve their rights.



Members of CAN



Videos on SHFG social media

Sensitization and awareness Raising for Vulnerable Groups

Safe Hands for Girls (SHFG) together with other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) is an implementing partner for The Gambia COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Project for the Ministry of Health of The Gambia's Essential Health Care Services waste management site in Farato, West Coast Region (WCR).

Funded by World Bank, the project is geared towards ensuring systems are put in place to prevent and address issues of Gender Based Violence, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment that may arise or be exacerbated by the Project. Noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a number of women, young people, children, the elderly, persons with disability, vulnerable and key population groups being marginalized. These vulnerable groups have little or no power to make important decisions about their lives and livelihood. Their low status in many communities, pre-existing high prevalence of GBV and high levels of poverty, are all likely to be exacerbated by the Project with the deployment of civil workers, and to some degree foreign workers whose culture may be alien to The Gambia or



who may not be conversant with Gambian legislations related to Gender Based Violence, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment.

The goal was to raise awareness on some of the key potential social risks and impacts related to this Project include risks of GBV, SEA, SH to Project workers and beneficiaries. These issues could result from community vulnerable groups such as women and children and civil workers who are employed by the project.

Safe Hands for Girls led the sensitization and awareness raising for vulnerable groups on Gender Redress Mechanisms (GRM), Gender Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Reporting and Procedures (SEA) and Sexual and Reproductive Health(SRH) with the People Living with Disabilities.



Participants listening to presentations