

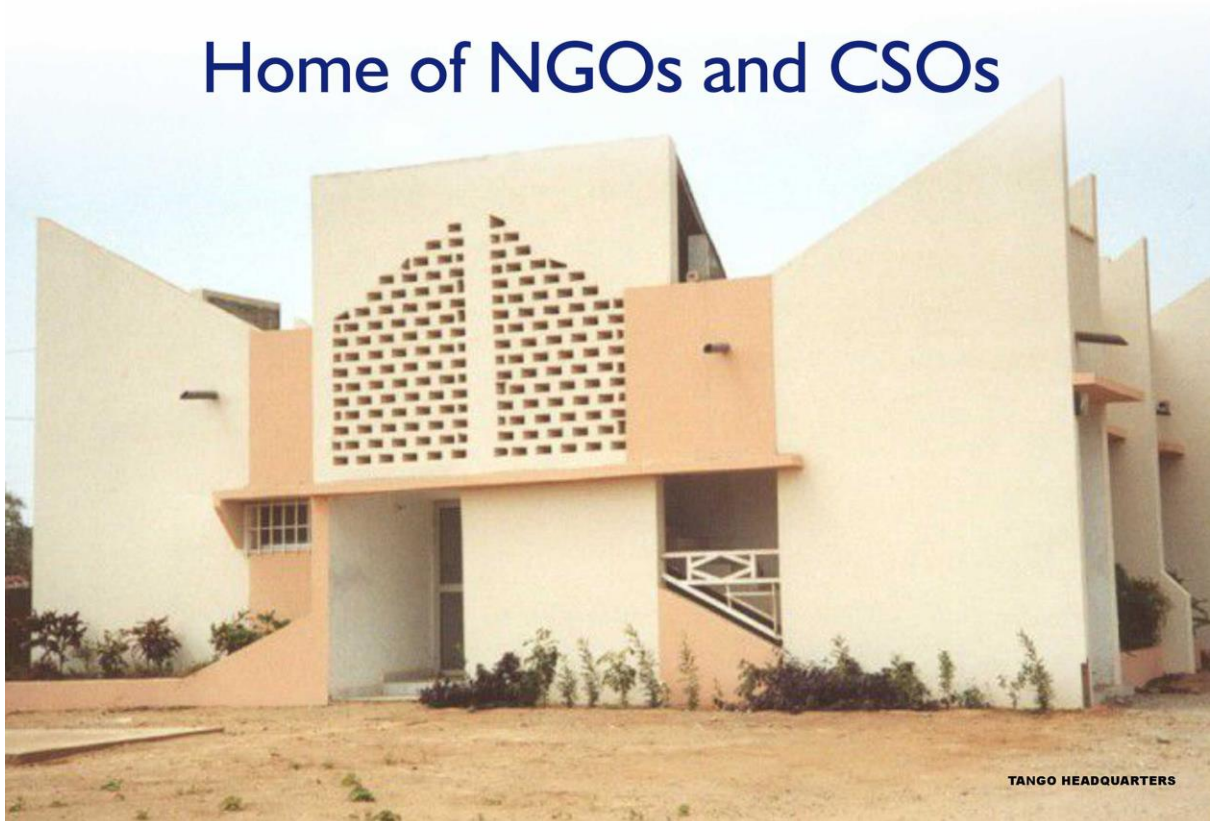


ANNUAL REPORT 2024



**“PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT”**

Home of NGOs and CSOs



FAJARA



Conference Services



The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations

**The Association Of Non-Governmental Organisations
In The Gambia**

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Enhancing NGO Contribution to The Gambia's Development

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Chairperson's Annual Report



The past year has been a dynamic and productive period for TANGO, marked by significant progress in

strengthening governance structures, expanding partnerships, and increasing our presence in both national and international fora. This report presents a detailed account of our activities and engagements. As Chairperson, my engagement included presiding board oversight meetings, representation of the organisation at strategic platforms, governance reforms, and collaborative initiatives with key stakeholders.

Special attention was given to the implementation of the newly adopted governance tools, particularly the **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy**, the updated **Human Resource Manual**, **Financial and Procurement Manual**, and the **Resource Mobilization Strategy**. The Board also closely monitored TANGO's advocacy activities, capacity-building programmes, and partnerships with both government and development agencies.

Throughout the year, I represented TANGO at numerous high-level national engagements, ensuring that the collective voice of NGOs and CSOs was heard in policy dialogues, programme planning, and sectoral consultations. These included:

- **Government Consultations:** Participation in policy review and validation processes organised by ministries such as the Ministry of Local Government and Lands, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. This also included representing Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in various government-led review committees and boards, ensuring that the perspectives and priorities of the CSO sector were reflected in national policies and programmes.
- **Development Agency Engagements:** Meetings and collaborative sessions with UN agencies, bilateral donors, and international NGOs working in The Gambia, where TANGO's contributions to national development were presented.
- **Civil Society Platforms:** Active participation in inter-CSO dialogues, thematic working groups, and sectoral coordination meetings to enhance solidarity, information sharing, and joint advocacy.

These engagements helped maintain TANGO's position as the umbrella body for NGOs in The Gambia and a critical partner in national development planning and implementation.

Beyond national engagements, I represented TANGO in strategic international platforms to expand our networks, share experiences, and advocate for support to Gambian civil society. These included:

- **Regional Conferences:** Participation in West African civil society fora focused on governance, human rights, and development financing.
- **Global NGO and CSO Networks:** Engagement with international coalitions addressing thematic areas such as humanitarian response, gender equality, and climate change adaptation.
- **Capacity-Building and Knowledge-Sharing Events:** Attendance at global workshops and policy discussions, where I highlighted the challenges and successes of Gambian NGOs, drawing lessons from other contexts.

These international engagements provided opportunities to forge new partnerships, mobilise resources, and bring best practices back to TANGO.

Strengthening Governance Structures

Over the past year, TANGO has made significant strides in enhancing its governance framework to ensure transparency, accountability, and institutional resilience. Under my leadership, the following key documents and strategies were formally adopted:

1. **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy** – reinforcing TANGO’s commitment to safeguarding vulnerable populations and upholding the highest ethical standards.
2. **Updated Human Resource Manual** – aligning our HR practices with current labour laws and best practices.
3. **Financial and Procurement Manual** – strengthening internal controls, accountability, and value-for-money procurement.
4. **Resource Mobilization Strategy** – providing a clear roadmap for diversifying funding sources and ensuring long-term sustainability.

The Board’s adoption of these instruments represents a significant milestone in TANGO’s institutional development.

I held a series of strategic meetings with development partners to present TANGO’s work, discuss collaboration opportunities, and advocate for increased investment in civil society initiatives. These partners included:

These engagements resulted in strengthened relationships, potential funding leads, and improved alignment of donor support with the priorities of Gambian NGOs.

A key part of my role has been to maintain and deepen relationships within the NGO and CSO community, both locally and internationally. This was achieved through:

- Regular consultations with member organisations to understand their needs and challenges.
- Facilitating capacity-building workshops and peer-learning sessions.

- Promoting collaborative advocacy initiatives on critical national issues, such as democratic governance, gender equality, and youth empowerment.

These efforts have reinforced TANGO's role as a unifying body for the civil society sector in The Gambia.

As Chairperson, I served on several high-level national steering committees and advisory boards of strategic importance to the development agenda of The Gambia. These included bodies focusing on:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation
- National Human Rights and Transitional Justice processes
- Climate Change and Environmental Management
- Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Through these platforms, TANGO has been able to influence policy direction, ensure civil society perspectives are considered, and strengthen government and CSO collaboration.

Reflections

I wish to share some reflections with our esteemed community. It was indeed a pleasure to serve you. I am ever grateful for your trust and confidence and the immense support and appreciation given to me.

First, I wish to highlight the need for members to prioritize their membership responsibilities by paying their dues in full and attending meetings on time. These have been perennial issues which have severely undermine the growth and strength of TANGO. In this regard, we urge more CSOs to also join the association. In this regard, we welcome our new members and tell them to feel at home.

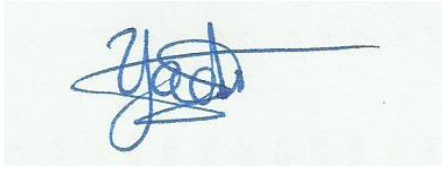
The country is still in a transitional justice process. While we welcome the proliferation of CSOs engaged in the TJ process, especially victim-led organizations, I would urge that we strengthen our collaboration among ourselves and also take concerted efforts to monitor, support and encourage the Government to play its rightful role in full in this process even more vigorously.

I wish to also reflect my mind on the prevailing issue of gender equality and women's empowerment. Much progress has been registered in this area over the years and decades but there is more room for improvement. Until now women are less represented in decision making institutions and centres of power. Furthermore, the menace of SGBV and harmful traditional practices in general continue to rear their ugly head.

Conclusion

The year under review was characterised by increased visibility for TANGO, stronger governance systems, and expanded partnerships. My representation of the organisation in multiple fora both national and international has reinforced our credibility and relevance as a central actor in The Gambia's civil society landscape.

Looking ahead, I will continue to prioritise governance strengthening, resource mobilisation, strategic partnerships, and advocacy to position TANGO and its members to respond effectively to emerging national and global challenges

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yadicon', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mrs. Yadicon Njie-Eribo

Chairperson of TANGO

Message from Executive Director



As I reflect on the year 2024, a single word comes to mind: resilience. It is a word that encapsulates the spirit of the TANGO member organizations and communities we serve, the dedication of our members, staff, interns and volunteers, and the unwavering commitment of our partners and donors. In a world marked by ongoing challenges, from climate-related crises to economic shifts, our collective ability to adapt, persevere, and innovate has never been more critical.

This past year, we witnessed the profound impact of your support. TANGO has made significant strides in enhancing its institutional effectiveness and that of its member organisations. Several staff and board members underwent targeted training in programming, leadership, communication, financial management and fundraising. The Board's capacity was strengthened through governance and leadership training, which has enabled more effective oversight and strategic guidance. In addition, CSOs and NGOs benefited from technical workshops on proposal writing, Information Technology skills and Monitoring and Evaluation systems. These initiatives have improved members' ability to design, implement and assess impactful development projects.

Recognizing the need for long-term financial sustainability, TANGO has laid the groundwork for effective resource mobilization and communication.

Furthermore, TANGO has reinforced its role as a key policy influencer and human rights advocate. Members have been trained various area including advocacy, policy influencing and Monitoring and Evaluation to enhance their engagement in governance processes. The organisation has popularised the Human Rights-Based Approach among members, embedding rights-based frameworks into programme design. TANGO has actively engaged with government to implement the recommendations of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission and has facilitated consultations with government to reintroduce the draft constitution. Sensitization activities have been conducted on the importance of press freedom and the Access to Information Law, and TANGO participated in the nomination of the Access to Information Commissioners. The organisation has also engaged with government to accelerate the promulgation and passage of the new NGO Bill.

As part of its mandate to strengthen civil society coordination and advocacy, the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) has reactivated and is actively coordinating several Thematic Working Groups (TWGs). These platforms bring together NGOs/Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working in related focus areas to foster collaboration, share knowledge, and align strategies for more impactful advocacy and programming.

This report is more than just a summary of numbers and activities; it is a collection of stories—stories of individuals who, with a little support, have overcome immense obstacles. You will read about specific human interest stories about our activities impact. These personal triumphs are the true measure of our success.

Of course, the journey was not without its challenges. We faced difficult fundraising conditions, logistical hurdles in carrying out our monitoring role as a secretariat reaching our members in different parts of the country. However, these setbacks have only strengthened our resolve and deepened our commitment to transparency and continuous learning. We have leveraged these experiences to refine our strategies and ensure our work is more impactful and sustainable than ever before.

As we look ahead to 2025 and beyond, we are filled with optimism. We are focused on expanding our reach to new intervention areas. We will continue to build on the foundations laid this year, harnessing the power of new technologies and fostering even stronger partnerships to create a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

None of this would be possible without you. To our membership, dedicated staff, interns and volunteers, your passion is the engine that drives our mission. To our development partners, your trust and generosity are the lifeblood of our organization. Thank you for standing with us and for believing in a better future.



Mrs. Ndey Sireng Bakurin
Executive Director
TANGO

1. Introduction

The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO), founded in 1983, is the premier and largest civil society umbrella body comprising international, national, and local associations across the country. It serves as both a platform for cooperation among CSOs as well as a mechanism to build their capacity and advocate for an open and free civic space in the Gambia. In this regard, TANGO serves as the voice and face of CSOs in which it represents the interests, rights and welfare of civil society organizations and actors. TANGO is committed to strengthening the ability of CSOs to not only perform and deliver quality, responsive and effective goods, services, and facilities to the population, but also serves to ensure that CSOs are upholding the highest values and standards of efficiency, transparency and accountability in their governance, management and programming systems, processes, structures, and activities.

The Association was founded by a group of NGOs out of the concern to avoid duplication of NGO efforts and to minimize conflict and competition between NGOs. The founders were also interested in ensuring maximum use of resources mobilized by NGOs for relief and social development purposes through collaboration, networking, and mutual reinforcement of each other's activities. TANGO has a membership of over 80 national and international NGOs and CBOs, who are working with communities in different parts of the country. TANGO's members play key roles in areas such as health, education, women's empowerment, agriculture, advocacy and small enterprises development projects such as vegetable gardening, food processing, and similar activities. Members also engage in peace-building activities and the promotion of human rights and good governance. TANGO and its members work towards improving the living standards of the poor and marginalized members of the Gambian society by supporting poverty reduction interventions as outlined in the national development plans.

Since its founding TANGO continues to play a catalytic role in generating and strengthening partnerships among stakeholders and networking and coordination among its members geared towards facilitating the attainment of national development goals. The core mission of the Association is therefore to empower its members, public institutions, communities, and other stakeholders to facilitate efficient national development processes to meet national development goals.

1.1 Our Vision

To become a dynamic, pro-active, innovative, and inclusive NGO consortium, playing a key and constructive role in building a strong, vibrant and independent civil society, in an environmentally sound, democratic, peaceful, and equitable Gambia.

1.2 Our Mission

To contribute to national poverty reduction efforts by expanding membership and improving services to members in a cost-effective and financially sustainable manner

1.3 Theory of Change

TANGO seeks to create a safe and open space for collaborative partnership building of Civils Society Organisations in the Gambia to advocate and influence policies in the fight for poverty reduction and democratic just governance. TANGO can achieve this objective through strategic collaboration, coalition-building, networking in an all-inclusive and participatory process of all CSOs in an independent and non-partisan association, providing a voice for the voiceless, the vulnerable, and the disadvantaged, by advocating for accountability and transparency in national development and governance process to achieve a safe, secured, democratic and just society for all.

1.4 Our Network

Since its inception in 1983, TANGO has developed an array of formidable partners in and outside the Gambia. We have cultivated a trusted partner status with various organizations and continue to nurture and enjoy these partnerships. Currently TANGO has a membership of over Eighty (80) organizations and still counting.

2. Thematic Working Groups

TANGO is not a thematic coalition; rather it has a diverse membership of various themes. Thematic groups comprising TANGO members and non-members is created to bring about better coordination, information sharing and partnership building and ultimately ensure that the NGO/CSOs community is recognized as a champion in policy and development work in the Gambia. The creation of the groups also serves as capacity building and accountability mechanism for TANGO as an umbrella organization to encourage peer review and critical assessment of one another's interventions, programs and chart a way forward collectively and individually. It is envisaged that the rejuvenation and effective functioning of these groups will further demonstrate the relevance and value of TANGO in national development processes.

2.1 Purpose

The thematic working groups are centred on key governance and development issues in cognizance of the Gambia's development blueprint, the National Development Plan and consolidation of the erstwhile SDGs- as well as the challenges it faces. Some years to the SDGs, achievement of all the goals remains a challenge as the country continues to be classified as a least developed country. The thematic working groups are in recognition of the governance and development challenges confronting the country which cuts across all sectors and aims to add value and strengthen current interventions. Through the working groups, the NGO/CSOs community is expected to identify, define and offer strategic solutions to the needs of the people and the country. Thus, the value of the thematic groups is to generate enlightened discourse and engagement among NGOs/CSOs who are already working in these areas. It presents NGOs/CSOs and other non-state actors with a better and stronger platform to engage all stakeholders as well as providing strategic direction for policy formulation and design, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Thematic groups create the environment for holistic approaches to policy and programming, as well as enable NGOs/CSOs and other non-state actors to play their watchdog role of holding both the government and partners accountable.

The thematic groups are:

- Gender, Poverty & Policy Issues
- Agriculture, Climate Change & Environment
- Education, Life Skills and Sustainable Development
- Health, Population and Family Life
- Youth, Child and Persons with Disabilities
- Governance, Human Rights and Legal Reform
- Transitional Justice

TANGO similarly serves as the Coordinating Body for the CSOs Coalition on Elections.

3. TANGO Strategic Plan 2023–2027

In 2023, TANGO adopted its **five-year Strategic Plan (2023–2027)**, designed to strengthen institutional capacity, foster effective advocacy, mobilize resources, and advance human rights, education, gender equity, and youth empowerment. This plan is anchored on four strategic pillars; each aimed at enabling TANGO and its members to serve Gambian civil society more effectively.

Two years into its implementation, TANGO is proud to report significant progress across all strategic pillars, despite the dynamic operating environment and the evolving needs of civil society.

3.1 Key Achievements by Strategic Pillars

3.1.1 Strategic Pillar 1: Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Organisational Performance.

TANGO has made significant strides in enhancing its institutional effectiveness and that of its member organisations. Several staff and board members underwent targeted training in programming, leadership, communication, financial management and fundraising. The Board's capacity was strengthened through governance and leadership training, which has enabled more effective oversight and strategic guidance. In addition, CSOs and NGOs benefited from technical workshops on proposal writing, Information Technology skills and Monitoring and Evaluation systems. These initiatives have improved members' ability to design, implement and assess impactful development projects.

3.1.2 Strategic Pillar 2: Building Sustainable Fundraising and Communication Strategies

Recognizing the need for long-term financial sustainability, TANGO has laid the groundwork for effective resource mobilization and communication. A Communication Unit has been established with staff appointed to manage organisational communications, ensuring clear and consistent messaging while improving engagement with stakeholders. A Fundraising Unit has also been created, with a dedicated Fundraising Officer appointed to lead resource mobilization efforts. A comprehensive Resource Mobilization Strategy has been developed to provide a roadmap for securing diversified funding streams. In collaboration with members, TANGO has prepared and submitted joint project proposals, thereby strengthening unity and pooling expertise for greater impact.

3.1.3 Strategic Pillar 3: Promoting Democratic Governance, Policy Advocacy, and a Culture of Human Rights

TANGO has reinforced its role as a key policy influencer and human rights advocate. Members have been trained in advocacy, policy influencing and Monitoring and Evaluation to enhance their engagement in governance processes. The organisation has popularised the Human Rights-Based Approach among members, embedding rights-based frameworks into programme design. TANGO has actively engaged with government to implement the recommendations of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission and has facilitated consultations with government to reintroduce the draft constitution. Sensitisation activities have been conducted on the importance of press freedom and the Access to Information Law, and TANGO participated in the nomination of the Access to Information Commissioners. The

organisation has also engaged with government to accelerate the promulgation and passage of the new NGO Bill.

3.1.4 Strategic Pillar 4: Promoting Quality Education, Gender Equity, Women and Youth Empowerment

Efforts under this pillar have focused on inclusive development and empowerment. Training programmes have been conducted for marginalised women to enhance their participation in social and political life. Civil Society Organisations have received training on gender-based violence prevention, advocacy and policy influencing to strengthen protection mechanisms. Youth have also been trained on policy advocacy to enable their active participation in governance and decision-making.

4. Update on Institutional Policies

During the year under review, TANGO made significant progress in strengthening its institutional policies to enhance accountability, efficiency and alignment with best practices. These updates are part of ongoing efforts to ensure that our internal systems remain robust and responsive to the evolving needs of the organisation and its members.

TANGO developed a **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy**, which sets out clear standards of conduct to protect the dignity, safety and rights of all individuals we serve or work with. The policy aims to prevent and address any form of sexual exploitation or abuse within our programmes and operations, while fostering a culture of respect and safeguarding.

A **Resource Mobilization Strategy** was also developed to guide the organisation's fundraising and resource management efforts. This strategy outlines a clear framework for diversifying funding sources, building partnerships, and ensuring sustainable financial support for TANGO's programmes and activities.

In line with organisational growth and changing operational needs, TANGO updated its **Human Resource Manual**. The revised manual provides updated guidance on recruitment, staff welfare, performance management, and professional development, ensuring that human resource practices reflect both legal compliance and our commitment to staff well-being.

Additionally, TANGO reviewed and updated its **Financial and Procurement Manual**. These updates are designed to strengthen financial management, promote transparency, and ensure that procurement processes are competitive, fair and in line with donor requirements and industry standards.

Through these policy developments and revisions, TANGO continues to reinforce its institutional foundation, enabling the organisation to operate with integrity, efficiency and accountability while delivering on its mission to support and strengthen civil society in The Gambia.

5 Projects and Programmes 2024

5.1 Equal Rights Through Education, Dialogue And Advocacy

TANGO in partnership with Future In Our Hands – The Gambia (FIOH) and Gambiagruppen/Fioh in Our Hands-, Sweden, is currently implementing a transformative three-year project titled “Equal Rights Through Education, Dialogue and Advocacy.” The initiative is funded Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) through ForumCiv Sweden and is now in its second year of implementation (2024).

The project was conceived in response to persistent governance, human rights, and development challenges in The Gambia. Recognizing the need for stronger civic engagement, responsive governance, and institutional capacity-building, the project brings together local and international partners to promote sustainable change through inclusive dialogue and strategic advocacy.

At its core, the project aims to strengthen both duty-bearers and rights-holders by enhancing their understanding and application of good governance, democracy, and human rights principles. Through tailored training and engagement platforms, the initiative supports government officials, civil society actors, and community leaders to become more effective, transparent, and accountable in their roles.

Another central pillar of the project is policy advocacy. The initiative actively engages government institutions and decision-makers to influence the development and implementation of pro-poor policies and programs that promote equity, social justice, and inclusive development. By fostering structured dialogue and evidence-based advocacy, the project contributes to shaping a governance environment that reflects the needs and rights of all Gambians especially marginalized groups, including women and youth.

In parallel, the project places strong emphasis on institutional development, particularly that of local partners such as TANGO. Recognizing that sustainable impact requires strong and resilient institutions, the initiative provides technical assistance, leadership training, policy development support, and digital systems upgrades to enhance TANGO’s internal capacity, governance frameworks, and service delivery.

By working at the intersection of advocacy, capacity building, and organizational development, “Equal Rights Through Education, Dialogue and Advocacy” is laying the groundwork for a more inclusive, democratic, and accountable Gambia; one in which civil society, government, and communities collaborate to uphold human rights and foster sustainable development for all.

The project has set out four goals to be achieved by the end of the project and TANGO is contributing to Goal 2, 3 and 4.

Goal 2: Influence, capacity building and development of duty bearers.

Implementing these initiatives has led to positive change by influencing government policies particularly in respect to women and girls’ rights, resulting in improved programs and opportunities for the women and girls. Quarterly policy dialogues ensured continuous advocacy, fostering collaboration between stakeholders and policymakers. These efforts drive the promotion of pro-poor policies that enhanced living standards and create sustainable livelihoods.

Goal 3: Strengthen the civil society and civil society organizations' for them to be strong change makers.

Through the implementation of these activities, it has significantly enhanced collaboration and coordination among NGOs and CSOs to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize use of resources. These initiatives have also strengthened civil society's advocacy and relations with duty-bearers and other stakeholders.

Goal 4: Capacity building of TANGO and its members

Upon implementing these initiatives and building on the initiatives started in 2023, staff capacity in TANGO have undergone significant shifts in quality and the ability to carry out task and organizational efficiency and effectiveness in both programmes and financial management. It has boosted organizational accountability and transparency.

5.1.1 Key Activities Implemented

Conduct quarterly engagement in policy dialogue

This activity was implemented through a policy dialogue with officials from the Office of the Vice President, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and representatives from civil society organizations. The policy dialogue focuses on The Gambia's performance in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and civil society contribution towards the SDGs.



Leadership and Management Training on Strengthening Existing Skills and Exposing Staff to Different Styles of Management

This activity was implemented through the hiring of a Consultant (leadership training expert), who took the Board Members of TANGO and Secretariat staff through strategic leadership and governance. The main focus of the training was on different leadership approaches and methods.



Key Achievements of the Project

- **Goal 2 – Strengthening Duty-Bearers and Safeguarding Women and Girls’ Rights**
 - The project successfully contributed to halting the proposed repeal of critical sections of the **Women’s Amendment Act**, thereby maintaining essential legal protection for women and girls in The Gambia.
 - Advocacy efforts targeting duty-bearers led to a heightened awareness and commitment to women’s rights, as confirmed through post-training assessments and observations of National Assembly proceedings and voting records.
 - These interventions contributed directly to **tangible improvements in human rights and gender equality**, which were acknowledged in **The Gambia’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Report 2024**.
 - TANGO’s sustained advocacy efforts were instrumental in the formulation and upcoming adoption of the **National Gender Policy (2025–2034)**, marking a major milestone in gender development and legislative progress.
- **Goal 3 – Empowering Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**
 - The project significantly enhanced the capacity and operational effectiveness of CSOs across the country, enabling them to secure new projects and strengthen partnerships with international donors and development actors.
 - A key achievement under this goal was the successful facilitation and establishment of the **CSO Coalition on Security Sector Reform**, which has improved coordination, collective advocacy, and civil society engagement in national reform processes.
 - The active operation of the Thematic working groups under the project continue to serve as platforms for strategic collaboration, reducing duplication of efforts and ensuring greater alignment in civil society action.

➤ **Goal 4 – Institutional Capacity Building of TANGO**

- The project delivered transformative capacity-building for TANGO Secretariat staff and Board members, resulting in **improved leadership, strategic planning, and program implementation**.
- The **renewal and continued use of the QuickBooks accounting system** significantly enhanced the organization's financial management, enabling accurate tracking of budgets and promoting transparency.
- In addition, key institutional policies, including a **Resource Mobilization Strategy** and a **Conflict-of-Interest Policy**, were developed and adopted, reinforcing good governance and sustainability within the organization.

6. Promote Vaccines and Routine Immunization Programmes in The Gambia

TANGO along with some of its members namely (GAFNA, GFPA, Tostan, and GFD) with funding from the World Health Organization (WHO) and in partnership with the Ministry of Health through the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) have worked together to promote uptake of Covid-19 vaccination and other antigens.



6.1 Key Activities Implemented

- ***Conduct Door- to Door Sensitization in Western Region 1 and 2, North Bank Region and Lower River Region.***

A door-to-door sensitization campaign was carried out in Western Region 1 and 2, North Bank Region, and Lower River Region to encourage the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines, Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccines, and other routine immunizations. The activity was focused on raising community awareness in their respective households about the critical role of vaccines in preventing serious diseases, addressing vaccine hesitancy, and countering misinformation. The teams along with Public Health Officers from the different regions visited households to provide accurate information, answer questions, and motivate individuals to access vaccination services at nearby health facilities and during vaccination campaigns.

- ***Engagement of aged/elderly people associations in Western Health Regions 1 and 2, Central and Upper River Regions on COVID-19 uptake and other vaccination antigens.***

A targeted engagement activity was conducted with associations of aged and elderly people in Western Health Regions 1 and 2, as well as Central and Upper River Regions, to promote the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines and other routine vaccination antigens. This activity focused on addressing the specific concerns and needs of older adults as a high-risk group who are among the most vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases. Through interactive sessions facilitated by CSO members and public health officers; participants were educated about the benefits of vaccination, safety and efficacy of vaccines, and the importance of timely immunizations. The sessions also provided a platform for open dialogue, allowing participants to voice their concerns and receive clarifications from health professionals.

- ***Community film shows activities on routine immunization.***

Key issues such as routine immunization, cervical cancer, HPV, and sexual reproductive health related issues were identified through consultations with local health providers and community leaders. Culturally relevant films, tailored to the

community's literacy levels and language, were screened in open public spaces like Community Bantabas during evenings for better attendance. The activity targeted 14 communities in the North Bank and Lower River Regions that have a history of low turnout during immunization campaigns. This was conducted with support from the EPI field officers.

- **Youth Orientation for door-to-door sensitization of parents and caregivers on the uptake of Covid 19 uptake, HPV, and other RI vaccination antigens.**

Door-to-Door campaign on vaccine uptake and other routine vaccination immunization antigens were sensitized on the importance of immunization / vaccination. These youth were orientated upon which they went on to sensitized different people (parents and care givers) in their households.

- **Orientation of Community Based Distributors (CBD)**

This activity was conducted among Community-Based Distributors (CBDs) to enhance their capacity to educate community members on the benefits of vaccines, with a focus on COVID-19, HPV, and other routine immunization (RI) antigens. The activity aimed to address common misconceptions and fears associated with vaccines, tackling vaccine hesitancy through accurate information and culturally sensitive communication strategies. CBDs were trained to engage effectively with community members, dispelling myths and building trust in vaccination programs. Additionally, the activity emphasized mobilizing communities to participate in immunization drives, ensuring improved access to vaccines and increased coverage in underserved areas

6.2 Key Achievements/Outputs

During the reporting period, TANGO reached and sensitized communities nationwide on the importance of vaccines, immunization, the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, and other routine immunization (RI) antigens. The outreach targeted men, women, children, and persons with disabilities, ensuring inclusivity and broad community engagement.

Monitoring and evaluation findings, drawn from tally sheets, feedback forms, and household surveys, showed that 90 percent of surveyed households expressed their willingness to seek HPV and COVID-19 vaccination. The initiative successfully addressed and cleared misconceptions and misinformation regarding vaccine safety and efficacy.

The sessions reached diverse audiences, delivering health information in clear, relatable ways that simplified complex concepts. Participants expressed high satisfaction, noting the use of practical scenarios to convey messages effectively. Observations during follow-up monitoring revealed immediate behavioral changes such as improved handwashing practices, increased use of mosquito nets, and proactive identification of defaulters during polio campaigns. Community dialogues also created space for open discussion, enabling individuals to voice concerns, clarify doubts, and seek advice on various health issues.

6.3 Data & Impact Highlights

Indicator	Result Achieved
Males Reached	30,126
Females Reached	37,481
Disabled Males Reached	235
Disabled Females Reached	207
Households Willing to Seek HPV and COVID-19 Vaccination	90%
Key Behavior Changes Observed	Improved handwashing, increased mosquito net use, identification of polio campaign defaulters

6.4 Notable Achievements:

- Cleared misinformation and myths about vaccines
- Promoted open dialogue on health issues
- Delivered relatable and accessible health messages
- Fostered immediate positive health behaviors in target communities

6.5 Challenges encountered during Implementation

- Technical challenges: power supply issues at times disrupted the screening of film shows
- Language barriers: Interpreting technical health concepts into local dialects requires extensive effort.
- Limited awareness and understanding of the diseases and the benefits of vaccination. (e.g., safety, side effects, or cultural /religion concerns).
- Hard-to-reach communities due to geographic and logistical barriers or limited availability of trained healthcare workers in rural areas.
- Cultural and Social Resistance, gender biases, or stigma surrounding certain vaccines like HPV (often linked to sexual health) resistance due to misinformation about vaccines.
- Women complained of distance to the RCH sites resulting in defaults.

6.6 Recommendations

- District Authorities and Traditional Leaders need to be fully engaged in the campaign to promote vaccine uptake.
- The above-stated interventions implemented above were supported by WHO funding and coordinated through TANGO and its membership NGOs/CSOs have helped in the uptake of vaccination/immunization in the communities. This partnership needs to be nurtured and supported to ensure that the current rate of vaccine uptake especially in the densely populated communities of Western Health Regions of One and Two is optimized.
- Developed culturally appropriate educational material in local languages
- Introduce mobile vaccination units to reach remote areas.
- Organize pre-orientation meetings to address cultural concerns and explain the safety and importance of the vaccines.

7. Sensitization On Demand Generation Activities

Immunization remains a fundamental pillar of public health, essential for protecting children against preventable diseases and reducing mortality rates. In support of this, TANGO, in collaboration with and supported by the Ministry of Health (MoH), alongside local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), implemented a comprehensive sensitization campaign targeting grassroots communities across the country in two distinct phases.



7.1 Objectives

- **Enhance Community Awareness:** To educate communities on the critical importance of immunization while addressing and dispelling prevailing myths and misconceptions.
- **Strengthen Local Capacities:** To empower CSOs and CBOs with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively advocate for immunization within their communities.
- **Improve Accessibility:** To ensure that immunization services are accessible to remote and underserved populations.
- **Foster Collaborative Efforts:** To promote and strengthen partnerships between government bodies and non-governmental organizations to support and expand immunization initiatives.

7.2 Key Achievements

- **Community Engagement:** Successfully organized a series of town hall meetings, radio programs, and community dialogues, which served as platforms to raise awareness about the benefits of immunization and vaccination schedules.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Conducted rigorous monitoring and evaluation exercises by the TANGO team to assess the effectiveness of the sensitization activities and inform any necessary adjustments.
- **Inclusive Participation:** The engagements featured broad-based participation, including religious leaders, youth groups, local authorities, parents, caregivers, students, and school officials from communities nationwide.

8. Scaling Up Interventions to Prevent the Repealing of The Law Against Female Genital Mutilation in The Gambia

Protecting and promoting human rights and Gender-Based Violence remains a key mandate for TANGO. Children continue to face challenges such as limited access to education, healthcare, nutrition, water and sanitation, and adequate food and shelter, all due to the high rate of poverty. Additionally, deeply rooted cultural practices expose children to harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. Through the funding from UNICEF, TANGO and its partners, civil society organizations (CSOs) played a key role in advocacy efforts to maintain the ban on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in The Gambia. TANGO plays a crucial role in coordinating the efforts of CSOs in The Gambia.

TANGO submitted a position paper to the National Assembly, emphasizing the urgent need to eradicate FGM, maintain the legal ban, and implement broader policy reforms to protect the rights of women and girls. TANGO, along with several civil society organizations (CSOs) and members of the National Assembly, embarked on a study tour to Egypt to learn from the country's experience in combating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

TANGO, in collaboration with the National Youth Parliament, the Network Against Gender-Based Violence, and Children National Assembly The Gambia (CNAG), held a joint press conference at the Paradise Suite Hotel. They called on lawmakers to uphold the Anti-FGM Law and consider the recommendations of the Health and Gender Committee.



TANGO and other civil society organizations (CSOs) attended the National Assembly session, where the Women's Amendment Bill 2024, which aimed to repeal the Anti-FGM Law, was rejected. The majority of Assembly members voted against all clauses of the bill, signaling a significant victory for anti-FGM advocates.

However, supporters of the practice have since taken the matter to the Supreme Court, challenging the ban's constitutionality.

8.1 Activities Implemented

Numerous activities have supported this advocacy through the coordination and leadership of TANGO. These initiatives include equipping National Assembly Members with evidence and tools to inform their debates, organizing youth football matches to raise awareness, training young people in advocacy, and strengthening youth networks. There have also been social media campaigns featuring youth champions, school-based workshops, teacher training, revitalization of girls' clubs, and community engagement targeting women, youth, and men. A communication was developed to guide consistent messaging and CSOs have been trained in its applications. Social media platforms are being used to amplify survivors' voices, highlight health risks and counter religious misconceptions.

8.2 Implementing Partners

Key implementing partners in these efforts included the following:

National Youth Parliament, Nova Scotia Gambia Association, The Network Against Gender-Based Violence, Paradise Foundation, TOSTAN, FAWEGAM, GAMCOTRAP, and BEAKANYANG.

Their collaboration continues to be instrumental in the national movement to end FGM and protect the rights and well-being of women and girls.

8.3 Challenges

Despite these efforts, the fight against FGM continues to face numerous challenges. Some of the challenges included but not limited to:

1. Resistance from traditional and religious leaders remains a significant barrier, as many still resist social change.
2. The widespread lack of understanding of the health risks and human rights implications of FGM contributes to ongoing misconceptions and indifference.
3. Political and legislative challenges also persist, with fluctuating support for the Anti-FGM Law and continued attempts to repeal it, highlighting the need for sustained advocacy.
4. Deeply rooted cultural norms further complicated progress, as changing societal beliefs requires more than legal reforms. It demands extensive education and community involvement.
5. Limited resources and funding also restrict the reach all, and effectiveness of advocacy efforts.

8.4 Recommendation

To address these issues, TANGO, and its partners recommend.

1. Strengthening engagement with religious and traditional leaders through respectful dialogue and education, enhancing public awareness about the dangers of FGM, and intensifying efforts to secure political support for the law.
2. They also advocate for programs that promote cultural change at the community level, increased funding for advocacy and education, and the inclusion of all

community members, especially opinion leaders and men, in the campaign against FGM.

3. The coordinated action of CSOs has been a key achievement in these advocacy efforts. The coalition of organizations opposing FGM led a unified, strategic campaign that effectively mobilized the public, engaged lawmakers, and maintained pressure on decision-makers.

8.5 Key Achievements

Coordinated Collective Action Drives Positive Change: Strategic partnerships and unified advocacy proved effective in the pushback against the proposed repeal with the Coalition of CSOs against FGM playing a central role.

Uniting a broad range of organizations, activists, and stakeholders, the Coalition was the cornerstone of this response, bringing together all anti-FGM actors in a synchronized campaign. Their multi-faceted approach incorporated grassroots mobilization, public awareness initiatives, and direct engagement with lawmakers.

Through systematic collaboration and strategic messaging, the coalition successfully articulated the significance of maintaining existing legal protections against FGM.

This collective effort played a critical role in the National Assembly's decision to reject the repeal of the Anti-FGM Law.



9. Gender Promotion Initiative 2.0

The **Gender Promotion Initiative 2.0 (GPI 2.0)** is a flagship program implemented by The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) with support from UNFPA The Gambia and funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. The initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to advance gender equality, and implement the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda in The Gambia.

The program adopts a multi-pronged approach focusing on **infrastructure development, capacity building, strategic resource mobilization, and direct financial support** to local CSOs, ensuring they can sustainably operate and deliver impactful gender-focused interventions.

9.1 Key Activities and Achievements

9.1.1 Construction of the CSO Office Complex in URR (Basse)



With funding support from UNFPA through the Peacebuilding Fund, construction of a dedicated CSO office complex in Upper River Region (URR), Basse, is underway. This facility is designed to address the long-standing challenge of inadequate office space and limited administrative infrastructure for local CSOs. Once completed, the office will serve as a hub for coordination, advocacy, and program implementation in the region, thereby increasing operational efficiency and strengthening local civil society presence.

9.1.2 Resource Mobilization and Strategic Management Training for CSOs and CBOs



The training aimed to equip CSOs and CBOs with practical tools to plan, manage, and sustain gender-focused programs, while building organizational resilience through improved fundraising and strategic

planning skills. It also sought to foster stronger donor engagement and enhance long-term financial sustainability. A total of 49 participants, comprising 20 from granted CSOs, 2 from umbrella organizations were trained. Participants gained knowledge on identifying funding opportunities, developing strategic plans, and strengthening donor relations, thereby enhancing their capacities to integrate gender equality priorities into their organizational strategies.

9.1.3 Capacity Building on Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) and Report Writing

GPI 2.0 conducted a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) and Report Writing training for CSOs and CBOs to strengthen their capacity to design, track, and evaluate gender-responsive programs, improve accountability, and effectively demonstrate program results to stakeholders. Participants enhanced their skills in results-based management, data collection, analysis, and reporting, positioning them to better measure impact, capture lessons learned, and make data-driven decisions. The training also improved their ability to produce high-quality reports for donors, government, and community stakeholders.



9.1.4 Subgranting of 8 CSOs

Following intensive capacity-building workshops covering Project Management, Resource Mobilization and Fundraising, Gender Transformative Approaches, Gender Mainstreaming, MEAL, and Report Writing, eight CSO partners were selected for sub-grants of Five Hundred Thousand Dalasis (D500,000) each to implement activities aligned with the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

Sub-granted CSOs:

1. Peace Hub The Gambia
2. Daughters of Africa
3. Kombo East Youth and Children Development Alliance (KEYCDA)
4. Wuli and Sandu Development Association (WASDA)
5. Sandu Youth Development Network (SANDU)
6. Youth Power Network International (YPNI)
7. Women in Liberation and Leadership (WILL)
8. Young Associates for Sexuality, Sexual Health and Sexual Rights (YASSHSR)

9.2 Impact

The GPI 2.0 project has significantly strengthened the institutional capacity and sustainability of local CSOs and CBOs across The Gambia. Skills enhancement was notable, with 49 participants acquiring critical competencies in strategic planning, resource mobilization, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL), and report writing. These capacity gains have translated into improved program quality, enabling organizations to design, implement, and effectively measure gender-responsive and peacebuilding initiatives.

Infrastructure development is underway with the ongoing construction of the CSO House in Basse, which will enhance coordination, reduce logistical challenges, and strengthen civil society presence in the Upper River Region (URR). Furthermore, sub-grants provided to CSOs have empowered them to implement context-specific interventions aligned with the Women, Peace, and Security agenda under UNSCR 1325, reinforcing local ownership of gender and peacebuilding efforts.

By combining infrastructure development, capacity building, and direct financial support, the GPI 2.0 project has laid a strong foundation for sustainable civil society engagement in national development processes. With continued backing from UNFPA and the Peacebuilding Fund, these strengthened organizations are well-positioned to drive forward the gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and peacebuilding agenda, ensuring that women and girls remain central to community resilience and development efforts in The Gambia.

9.3 Support to TANGO Thematic Working Group Meetings

As part of its mandate to strengthen civil society coordination and advocacy, the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) has established and is actively coordinating several **Thematic Working Groups (TWGs)**. These platforms bring together NGOs/Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working in related focus areas to foster collaboration, share knowledge, and align strategies for more impactful advocacy and programming. There are regular meetings of the different thematic working groups to coordinate the interventions of NGOs and CSOs. The thematic working groups streamline efforts, ensuring targeted solutions for pressing issues and strategic advocacy. These meetings also serve as an information sharing platform for civil society.



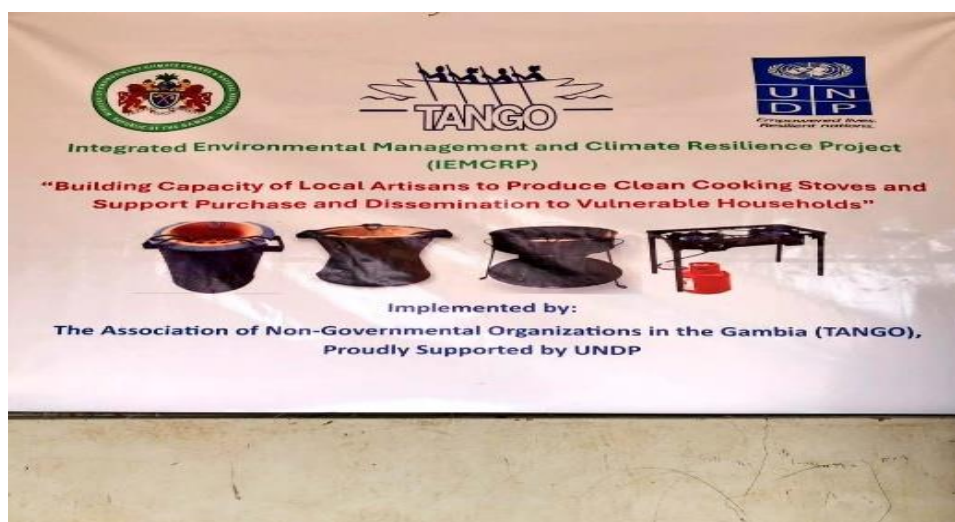
The TWGs that are supported by UNFPA under GPI 2.0 are as follows

- **Youth, Children, and Persons with Disabilities TWG:** Focused on promoting the rights, inclusion, and development of marginalized and vulnerable populations through policy engagement, capacity building, and community-driven initiatives.
- **Education, Life Skills, and Sustainable Development TWG:** Dedicated to advancing quality education, youth empowerment, and sustainable development by addressing systemic challenges and promoting lifelong learning and skills development.
- **Gender and Policy Development TWG:** Works to strengthen gender equality and mainstream gender-sensitive approaches into policy processes, legal reforms, and institutional practices, while supporting evidence-based advocacy for inclusive development.

Through regular coordination, dialogue, and joint action, these TWGs enhance sectoral alignment, avoid duplication of efforts, and ensure that civil society voices are unified and influential in national development processes and policy discourse.

10. Integrated Environmental Management and Climate Resilience Project (IEMCRP): Capacity-Building Training on Improved Cook Stove Production

The Integrated Environmental Management and Climate Resilience Project (IEMCRP), implemented by The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) with support from UNDP The Gambia, aims to foster sustainable energy practices, promote environmental conservation, and enhance climate resilience in local communities.



As part of this initiative, a capacity-building training was organized for 45 local artisans drawn from the communities of Medina Kanuma, Mayamba, and Essau. The training focused on equipping participants with the knowledge and practical skills to produce **energy-efficient improved cook stoves**, thereby addressing environmental, health, and economic challenges linked to traditional open-fire cooking methods.

10.1 Project Objectives

- **Equip artisans** with technical knowledge and practical skills in designing and constructing improved, energy-efficient cook stoves.
- **Enhance community access** to cleaner, safer, and more environmentally friendly cooking technologies.
- **Empower artisans** as local change agents, promoting sustainable household energy solutions.

- **Promote environmental conservation** by reducing fuelwood consumption and improving air quality.

10.2 Key Achievements

Skills Transfer and Hands-on Demonstrations



All 45 artisans successfully completed the training, gaining both theoretical knowledge and practical skills in constructing improved cook stoves using locally available materials. They were trained in durability, safety, and energy efficiency standards, and participated in hands-on sessions where they

built prototype stoves. These practical exercises not only enhanced their technical proficiency and confidence but also served as community awareness tools to promote the adoption of improved cook stoves. The training further facilitated partnerships between artisans and women's groups for stove distribution and promotion, with discussions encouraging strong community ownership of the initiative.

10.3 Environmental and Economic Impact

The adoption of improved cook stoves is expected to reduce reliance on fuelwood, slow deforestation, and mitigate climate change impacts, while contributing to better indoor air quality and reducing respiratory health risks for women and children. At the same time, trained artisans are now equipped to generate income through the production and sale of these stoves, creating a sustainable livelihood pathway that also advances environmental goals

10.4 Project Outcomes

- Increased adoption of improved cook stoves in target communities.
- Strengthened local capacity for sustainable energy solutions.
- Expanded artisan-led micro-enterprises focused on stove production.

The capacity-building training under the IEMCRP has successfully empowered 45 artisans with practical, marketable skills while promoting climate resilience and



environmental sustainability in Medina Kanuma, Mayamba, and Essau. The partnership between TANGO, UNDP, and local communities demonstrates the potential for grassroots solutions to address both environmental and socio-economic challenges.

11. Women Political Participation and Leadership

With support from UNDP The Gambia, TANGO implemented a project aimed at enhancing women's political participation and leadership in The Gambia. The initiative seeks to address barriers such as cultural norms, legal constraints, and limited capacity of aspiring women leaders by strengthening national legislation, promoting inclusive political party bylaws, and building the skills of women and gender advocates.



11.1 Project Objective

The aim of the project is to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions at all levels. TANGO through the project build the capacity of various stakeholders in addressing barriers such as cultural norms, patriarchy and limited skills among aspiring women leaders and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) advocates.

11.2 Key Activities:

- Advocacy Training Workshop to train civil society groups and political stakeholders on promoting women's political participation through quotas and gender-friendly policies.
- Grassroots leadership training of Traditional Communicators, media, and community members were trained to support women's leadership at the local level.
- Capacity Building for GEWE Advocates training on how to advocate for more women in politics and fight discrimination.

11.3 Key Recommendations

- **Develop Continuous Capacity-Building Programs:** Regular training on leadership, campaign management, public speaking, and understanding political systems to empower women at all levels.
- **Establish Mentorship and Peer-Support Networks:** Experienced female leaders should mentor emerging leaders, offering guidance and support.
- **Advocate for Gender Parity Laws and Quotas:** Push for enforceable quotas in political parties and government institutions to ensure fair representation.
- **Provide Political Skills Workshops:** Focused training on negotiation, advocacy, and communication to build confidence and political competency.
- **Address Cultural and Social Barriers:** Launch awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive governance.

11.4 Key Achievements

- **Training of CSOs:** 45 civil society organizations were trained in advocacy techniques and laws supporting women's political participation.
- **Media and Communicator Training:** 125 traditional communicators and media personnel attended 15 training sessions.
- **Wider Community Engagement:** 300 individuals from over five organizations participated in project-related activities.

12. Promoting and advancing Education initiative

TANGO, in partnership with Book Aid International UK, has embarked on a nationwide initiative to enhance education by distributing books and learning materials across public schools in The Gambia. This partnership seeks to improve literacy, support academic excellence, and expand access to quality learning resources, particularly within primary and secondary schools. Through this collaboration, thousands of students are benefitting from enriched libraries and improved access to relevant textbooks and reference materials.

In close collaboration with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, through the Curriculum and Research Unit, the distribution program also extends to tertiary institutions such as the University of The Gambia and the Gambia College. This intervention underscores the collective commitment to advancing education and human capital development in The Gambia, bridging gaps in resource availability, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for school children and students at all levels of the education system.



13. Strengthening Democratic Engagement: TANGO, GPU, and The National Assembly Sign MoU to Foster Collaboration

In a landmark move to enhance participatory governance, transparency, and legislative engagement, the Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in The Gambia (TANGO), the Gambia Press Union (GPU), and the National Assembly formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at institutionalizing collaboration among the three key actors.



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13.1 Purpose of the MoU

The MoU seeks to create a structured platform for cooperation between civil society, the media, and parliament, with the goal of deepening democratic governance, improving public participation in law-making, and enhancing the flow of information between the government and the public.



13.2 Key Objectives of The Partnership

- **Enhanced Civil Society Engagement with Parliament:** The MoU provides a framework for TANGO to engage more proactively with the National Assembly, including the submission of position papers, participation in committee hearings, and monitoring of legislative processes. It ensures that the voices of communities and marginalized groups are better reflected in policymaking.
- **Improved Media-Parliament Relations:** Through GPU's involvement, the agreement strengthens the role of the media as a watchdog and conduit for transparency. It also fosters a professional and respectful relationship between journalists and lawmakers, enabling accurate, timely, and accountable reporting on parliamentary affairs.
- **Capacity Building and Joint Programming:** The MoU includes provisions for joint trainings, policy dialogues, and technical support to improve the capacities of civil society organizations, journalists, and parliamentary staff in legislative analysis, public communication, and democratic accountability.
- **Public Access to Information and Participation:** By leveraging the strengths of TANGO and GPU, the partnership aims to increase public awareness and involvement in legislative processes, enabling citizens to better understand and influence laws and policies that affect their lives.

14. TANGO's Engagement with The National Assembly: Presenting Position Papers on Key Legislative Matters



As the umbrella body for civil society organizations in The Gambia, TANGO continues to play a vital role in policy advocacy and public interest engagement. Under the year in review, TANGO presented position papers to the National Assembly on three critical legislative proposals: the **National Social Protection Bill**, the **Women (Amendment) Bill** concerning **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**, and the **Cybercrime Bill**. Presentations were done for the Select Committees on Environment and NGOs Matters on the **status of NGOs** in The Gambia. Each submission emphasized the need for progressive, rights-based, and sustainable legislative frameworks aligned with both national needs and international standards.

14.1 National Social Protection Bill

➤ General Comments

TANGO welcomed the introduction of a legislative document focused on Social Protection, acknowledging it as a long-overdue yet critical step for The Gambia. The existence of such a law is essential to ensure that vulnerable groups including the poor, elderly, persons with disabilities, children, and other marginalized populations receive comprehensive support and services.

➤ Key Position Highlights

- **Holistic Social Protection:** TANGO emphasized that the Bill should lay the foundation for a universal, inclusive, and rights-based social protection system that addresses poverty, inequality, and vulnerability in a coordinated and sustainable manner.
- **Institutional Strengthening:** The proposal to **upgrade the National Social Protection Secretariat to a National Social Protection Agency** was strongly commended. TANGO underscored that this transformation is necessary to institutionalize and mainstream social protection as a national development priority.

- **Sustainability and Accountability:** The new Agency, as envisioned in the Bill, should be empowered with clear mandates, adequate resources, and independent oversight mechanisms to ensure accountability, effective implementation, and long-term sustainability.

14.2 Women (Amendment) Bill – Addressing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

➤ Context

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is a deeply harmful traditional practice with **no health benefits**, often performed in unsanitary conditions by untrained practitioners. It leads to severe health consequences—physical, psychological, and emotional—throughout the lifetime of affected women and girls.

➤ TANGO's Position

- **Support for 2015 Ban:** TANGO recalled its long-standing advocacy efforts, in collaboration with other civil society actors, which contributed to the 2015 passage of the **Women (Amendment) Act**, criminalizing FGM and imposing penalties of up to three years' imprisonment. This law marked a landmark victory for women's rights and the protection of girls in The Gambia.
- **Opposition to Repeal Efforts:** In response to recent attempts to repeal the anti-FGM law, TANGO took a firm and unequivocal stance against any rollback of protections. The organization stressed that repealing the ban would be a **devastating regression** for gender equality, human rights, and the international commitments The Gambia has ratified.
- **Call for Education and Community Outreach:** While reaffirming support for the law, TANGO also stressed the **importance of continuous community education and awareness** to facilitate behavioral and cultural change. Law enforcement must be coupled with grassroots-level sensitization, particularly in rural areas where the practice remains prevalent.

14.3 Cybercrime Bill

➤ Importance of the Bill

TANGO recognized the Cybercrime Bill as an important and timely response to the growing challenges and opportunities in the digital space. In an increasingly interconnected world, The Gambia needs strong and modern legislation to **regulate digital interactions**, safeguard rights, and prevent abuse.

➤ Key Areas of Focus in TANGO's Submission

- **Regulating Digital Space:** TANGO acknowledged the law's importance in addressing cybercrime in all its forms—ranging from hacking, identity theft, and online fraud to cyberbullying and child exploitation.

- **Protection of Digital Rights:** While applauding the effort to legislate the cyber environment, TANGO emphasized that **civil liberties must not be undermined**. The Bill should include robust provisions that protect **freedom of expression, data privacy, and access to information**.
- **Support for Digital Governance:** The organization also called for capacity building within law enforcement and judicial systems to effectively implement the law. TANGO urged the inclusion of **public education campaigns** to raise awareness about digital rights and responsibilities

15. TANGO's Submission to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – OHCHR



In addition to its national advocacy, TANGO contributed a civil society report to the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** process under the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**. This submission provided a comprehensive review of the human rights landscape in The Gambia, highlighting key areas of concern and recommendations for improvement.

Key Highlights of the UPR Submission:

- **Gender-Based Violence and FGM:** TANGO highlighted the need for sustained implementation of laws banning harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage. It also raised concern over recent political discourse seeking to reverse legislative progress.
- **Freedom of Expression and Civic Space:** The report called attention to ongoing threats to press freedom, freedom of assembly, and the shrinking space for civil society in some contexts. It urged the government to strengthen protections for human rights defenders and journalists.
- **Social and Economic Rights:** TANGO advocated for the implementation of social protection schemes, access to basic services, and efforts to address youth unemployment, poverty, and regional disparities.
- **Judicial and Security Sector Reform:** The report stressed the urgency of completing transitional justice processes and implementing reforms in the judiciary, security, and law enforcement to promote rule of law and accountability.
- **Implementation of UPR Recommendations:** TANGO called for improved mechanisms to monitor and report on the implementation of previous UPR recommendations, including better coordination with civil society stakeholders.

16. CSO-NGO End of Year Conference

The role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in shaping The Gambia's social and economic landscape is both significant and vital. Across multiple sectors such as governance, gender empowerment, education, health, economic justice, and environmental protection, CSOs and NGOs have worked tirelessly to address both longstanding and emerging challenges in the country. Despite their critical impact, these organizations often face substantial obstacles, including fragmented efforts, limited resources, and insufficient coordination. These challenges have, at times, hindered their ability to achieve sustained, transformative results.

In response to these challenges, the Association of NGOs (TANGO), in partnership Forum Civ and the UNFPA GPI 2.0 project, organized a landmark event: the CSO/NGO Engagement Conference held on December 19, 2024. The conference brought together an unprecedented number of civil society actors, government agencies, and international development partners. Its primary aim was to foster deeper collaboration, reflect on past achievements, share lessons learned, and strategize on overcoming the obstacles that have impeded progress. The event also served to align civil society efforts with national development priorities, ensuring that the voices of the people, particularly those from marginalized and vulnerable communities, were amplified.



As the largest gathering of civil society actors in The Gambia's history, the conference provided a rare opportunity for dialogue, capacity-building, and policy development. The event's overarching goal was to strengthen the collective impact of civil society, enhance sustainability, and advocate for the continued support of vulnerable communities across the country.

17. Monitoring And Membership Visits

➤ Membership Visits

As part of TANGO's commitment to continuous engagement and accountability, TANGO conducted visits to member organizations to discuss their ongoing activities, assess challenges faced, and explore opportunities for collaboration and support. These visits are a vital component of our organizational mandate to strengthen civil society through direct engagement, dialogue, and feedback mechanisms.

During the year under review TANGO visited the following member organizations:



- Gambia Organization for the Visually Impaired (GOVI) – The visit provided an opportunity to discuss GOVI's current programs aimed at promoting inclusive education and skills training for persons with visual impairments. Key issues raised included the need for increased funding, access to assistive technologies, and enhanced public awareness on disability rights.
- Forum for African Women Educationalists, Gambia Chapter (FAWEGAM) – Discussions centered around FAWEGAM's work in promoting girls' education, empowering young women, and advocating for gender-sensitive education policies. The team

highlighted ongoing projects and shared insights on the barriers girls continue to face in accessing quality education, especially in rural communities.



- Health Promotion and Development Organization (HePDO) – HePDO shared updates on their community-based health initiatives, focusing on maternal and child health, reproductive health education, and COVID-19 recovery programs. They

also discussed the challenges of reaching underserved populations and sustaining program impacts amidst limited resources.



- ActionAid International The Gambia (AAITG) – The visit to AAITG provided a platform to discuss their integrated development programs in the areas of women's rights, youth

empowerment, food security, and climate justice. AAITG also emphasized their advocacy work and community-driven approaches to development.

These engagements offered valuable insights into the efforts and experiences of our member organizations. TANGO reaffirmed its support and commitment to facilitating collaboration, resource mobilization, and capacity building to enhance the impact and sustainability of their initiatives

18. Monitoring And Evaluation of Immunization Sensitization Activities

TANGO successfully conducted monitoring and evaluation (M&E) exercises in all regions of the country. In the Upper River Region and Central River Region (Basse and Brikama Baa), the team engaged with local councilors, religious leaders, and community heads. In the Lower River Region (Soma Darusalam, Angalfuta, Buiba Jallow Kunda, and Medina), meetings were held with public health officials, households, and communities that had been sensitized. Community volunteers were also consulted in Western 1 and Western 2 (Banjul, Kampant, Sukuta, and Lamin), with follow-up visits to sensitized households in these areas.



The purpose of the M&E exercise was to verify the implementation of activities carried out by CSOs, ensuring that delivery content, targeted communities, and the number of people reached aligned with the project plan. The assessment also sought to gauge the communities' understanding of the sensitization topics covered during training.

Additionally, the M&E process aimed to identify gaps and challenges in program delivery, providing insights to inform the design of future interventions. While positive outcomes were recorded, the findings highlight the need for ongoing efforts to address persistent challenges. By applying the lessons learned from this exercise, stakeholders can strengthen the impact of the program and further improve immunization coverage in the targeted communities.

19. Monitoring Of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Activities



TANGO reached ten communities during the FGM monitoring exercise, including Sare Jatta, Sotuma Samba, Sabou Sireh, Manokoto, and Sare Jamu Mballow in the Upper River Region; Sami Madina, Kunting, Mabally Kuta, Boraba, Sankuleh Kunda, and Sare Chewtor in the Central River Region; as well as representatives of the National Youth Parliament and the Regional Mothers Clubs in the Lower River Region. In the North Bank Region, the communities of Illiasa and Farefenni were engaged.

The monitoring focused on assessing community perspectives on FGM and the legal frameworks surrounding the practice following CSO interventions in their respective areas. Sessions were conducted through focused group discussions in all visited communities.

Key findings included:

- **Cultural and Religious Significance:** Participants emphasized that FGM is deeply entrenched in cultural traditions and often regarded as a rite of passage. The combination of cultural norms and religious beliefs creates strong resistance to abandoning the practice. Many community members expressed their intention to continue the practice in secrecy despite awareness of its health risks.
- **Stigma and Discrimination:** There is substantial stigma associated with openly discussing FGM. Participants indicated that societal pressure often compels families to continue the practice, and those who oppose it or have not undergone it are frequently subjected to discrimination.

These findings underscore the complexity of addressing FGM and the need for sustained, culturally sensitive engagement alongside legal and advocacy interventions.

20. Human Interest Stories for Activities Implemented

M&E And Report Writing Training

SAMUEL MENDY, Participant (Youth Power Network International)



“Before this week, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and report writing felt like abstract concepts to me, but sometimes intimidating. This was my first time attending such long and in-depth training on the subject, and I am truly grateful to TANGO for making it possible.

From day one, I realized this was more than just a training; it was an investment in our growth. The skills I gained here will not only empower me personally but will also strengthen my institution’s ability to deliver accurate, impactful program reporting and effective monitoring.

One of the highlights for me was meeting and learning from so many passionate colleagues from different organizations. Each conversation, each shared experience, added a new perspective to my understanding.

Our facilitators were patient, engaging, and full of practical wisdom. They broke complex topics into simple, actionable steps, and for the first time, I had the chance to use the KIT tool for monitoring. Using that tool, I felt a sense of confidence like I finally had a map to guide our work.

This experience has left me inspired, better equipped, and determined to put these new skills into action”.

➤ **RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT**

Binta Gibba participant (KEYCDA)



“When I walked into this training room today, I carried with me years of experience in my institution and years of frustration over one persistent challenge: resource mobilization. No matter how passionate we were about our work, finding the funds to keep it going always felt like an uphill battle.

Thanks to TANGO, with the support of UNFPA under the GPI project, I now see that challenge in a whole new light. This training has opened my eyes to how resource mobilization and strategic development truly work. For the first time, I can see a roadmap not just for surviving, but for growing.

What struck me most was the facilitator's reminder that as CSOs, we cannot rely solely on donor funding. Donors may come and go, but our communities will always need us. We must think ahead, find creative ways to generate our own resources, and build resilience that lasts beyond any single funding cycle.

Today, I am leaving not only with new skills, but with hope and belief that my institution can secure a sustainable future, no longer limited by the fear of "what if the funding ends." This is more than a training; it is the beginning of a new way forward

Participants Testimonies in TANGO members' community Activities

When I heard that TOSTAN was coming back to our community, I felt both excitement and gratitude. But my deepest thanks go to TANGO, that made it possible for TOSTAN to return and share this life-changing knowledge with us.

Years ago, our community was one of the first that TOSTAN engaged. Their teachings on the dangers of FGM and child marriage opened our eyes and set us on a new path. But over time, without follow-up training, the urgency can fade. This new training made possible by TANGO's support was more than a lesson. It was a reminder, a renewal, and a call to stand even stronger.

We discussed again the harmful effects of FGM and learned new ways to protect our children and girls from such practices. We reflected on how far we have come and how much more we can do.

Today, we can proudly say that our community is an **FGM-free zone**. We do not practice it, and we will never return to it. Our commitment now is to take this message beyond our borders, to reach other communities who have not yet had the chance to receive this training, so that no child, no girl, will suffer from these harmful traditions again.

This training has reminded us of our power, our responsibility, and our promise to protect the future of our daughters.



Training Workshop of Media Personnel and Traditional Communicators In Basse



Training Traditional Communicators, Media Personnel and Community Members To Promote Women's Political Participation and Leadership.

Participants Testimonies “Seeing Gender in a New Light”

“Before this training, I thought I understood gender in media. I’ve been in journalism for years, reporting on politics, elections, and community issues. But the session on gender concepts completely changed how I see my role. For the first time, I understood how the way we report stories can either open doors or close them for women in leadership.

The practical exercises made it click for me. I could see how a single headline or the voices we choose to amplify could shape public perception. Going forward, I’m committed to making sure my stories give equal space for women’s voices, especially during elections. This training didn’t just teach me new concepts it reshaped my perspective”

Participants Testimonies – “Safety First in Election Reporting”

“Covering elections can be dangerous. Until now, I approached it without much thought for my own safety my focus was always on getting the story out quickly. But during this training, we talked about the real risks media personnel face during elections and, more importantly, how to prepare for them.



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I left the session feeling empowered. I now know what precautions to take, from verifying information before going to high-risk areas to understanding my rights if confronted. As we approach another election period, I feel more confident not just in my reporting skills, but in my ability to return home safely after covering the news”

Participants Testimonies – “Fighting Misinformation, One Fact at a Time”

“In today’s world, misinformation spreads faster than truth. As journalists, we carry the heavy responsibility of making sure the public gets accurate, verified information, especially during elections. The fact-checking session in this training gave me tools I had never used before.



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We practiced spotting false information and tracing it back to the source. It was eye-opening to see how easily rumors can take hold online. This training has equipped me to challenge that, using solid verification techniques to ensure my audience gets the truth. I’m leaving with the determination to be part of the solution in this fight against fake news”

Post-TRRC Project: Popularization of the TRRC RECOMMENDATION

Participant Testimonies

“Before today, the TRRC was something distant to me, something I had heard about in passing but never fully understood. From my perspective, the government had done nothing after the hearings. Seeing some of the very perpetrators still holding public positions felt like a deep injustice, almost a mockery to those who suffered.

But sitting in this popularization session changed that. For the first time, I learned about the steps the government has taken so far in implementing TRRC’s recommendations. It may not be enough yet, but now I can see that some progress has been made. More importantly, I realized how vital it is for ordinary people like me to understand this process.

What TANGO is doing, going out into communities, explaining the TRRC process, and engaging with us directly is exactly what the government should also be doing. Justice and reconciliation cannot happen behind closed doors; they must live in the conversations and understanding of the people.

I am grateful to TANGO for making this information accessible, and to UNDP for supporting such important work. Today, I leave not only better informed, but also determined to keep this conversation alive in my community”

21. Partnerships and Networking

- **Participation in The 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), CSW**



The 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), is the UN's largest annual gathering on gender equality and women empowerment, which was held from 11-22nd March 2024 at the UN Headquarters in America New York City. The

event was attended by three thematic group members of Gender, the Executive Director of TANGO, Program Officer (Research and M&E) and the Chairperson of TANGO.

The priority theme of this year was “Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective”.

As the most prominent annual global convening on gender equality and women's empowerment, the 68th Session attracted representatives from various countries, government entities, NGOs, the private sector, civil society, youth networks, experts, activists, and United Nations partners across the world to engage in frank discussions and renew commitments on actions and investments that can end women's poverty and advance gender equality through strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.

Participation in the UNGA and Summit of The Future



TANGO, represented by its Executive Director and a member organization from Future In Our Hands The Gambia, participated in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the Summit of the Future, high-level global gatherings

convened to assess progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and chart pathways for future multilateral cooperation. The events brought together heads of state and government, civil society leaders, private sector representatives, and development partners to deliberate on pressing global challenges and strategies for accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Civil society engagement was a central theme, with TANGO and other CSO leaders stressing the importance of open civic space, meaningful participation, and stronger partnerships between governments and NGOs.

TANGO's Contributions

TANGO presented The Gambia's CSO perspective on SDG implementation, stressing the value of localised approaches and community ownership. It highlighted grassroots monitoring and citizen-led accountability as vital tools for tracking SDG progress. The organisation advocated for greater investment in CSO capacity building to strengthen delivery and monitoring of development interventions. It also networked with international CSO networks and development agencies to explore collaborations in climate action, gender equality, and social protection.

Outcomes and Way Forward

As a result of its participation, TANGO formed new partnerships with global NGOs and UN agencies for potential joint programming in The Gambia. It secured commitments from international partners to support capacity-building initiatives for Gambian CSOs in SDG monitoring and reporting. An action plan was developed to align TANGO's advocacy and programming with the priority areas identified at the Summit of the Future. The engagement also reinforced TANGO's position as an influential voice in regional and global policy dialogues.

Elections Academy WAEON



TANGO, represented by the Chairperson and the focal person for the CSO Coalition on Elections, participated in the West Africa Election Observation Network (WAEON) Elections Academy.

The primary objective of this engagement was to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to enhance citizen observation of elections. The academy covered a comprehensive range of topics, including pre-election observation, observation during the electoral process, post-election observation, and methodologies for conducting Parallel Voter Tabulation (PVT). Participation in this training has strengthened TANGO's capacity, as well as that of the CSO Coalition, to contribute to credible, transparent, and inclusive electoral processes in The Gambia.

PARTNERSHIP MEETINGS

During this year, TANGO held considerable visits to government agencies and departments to further increase the collaboration and participation in national discourses. Partnership meetings were also held with international development organization and partners such as the ECOWAS, IMF and the World Bank. All these are geared towards enhancing CSOs contributions to national development efforts and the fights eradicate corruption, ensure effective and strong institutions that response to the need of the citizenry.



22 CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD FOR TANGO

TANGO is an important umbrella organization and this therefore makes it appropriate for its members to give it their undivided attention and commitment. There is high national expectation of TANGO, and the association could not manage the expectations due to inadequate institutional capacity.

The Association heavily depends on membership fees and donor funding. The current donor fatigue deeply affected the operation of TANGO. The very unpredictable donor fatigue and other drivers can further cripple its operations.

CHALLENGES

- The biggest challenge confronting the Association is funding given the changing nature of donor landscape.
- Despite the growing membership, TANGO is still confronted with membership commitment towards the Association.
- The work of the Association or broader NGO networks continue to be a challenge through the lack of a national legal framework by which NGOs can operate in the country.
- Membership arrears continue to accumulate on the part of certain members and the untimely payment of membership fees as well.
- The lack of mobility for the Secretariat continues to hinder the work of staff in effectively running the Association.

WAY FORWARD

- Vigorous fund raising using resource mobilisation strategy
- Strengthen the Association especially the Secretariat through capacity building.
- Enhance partnerships for better funding opportunities.
- Strengthen the visibility of TANGO and NGOs in general.
- Revenue generation: TANGO need to capitalize from its vast land space and construct buildings for legitimate revenue generation as a charitable organisation
- The Association should also utilize its brand image and tap from the expertise of the membership to improve performance and productivity.

23 CONCLUSIONS

TANGO continues to create a safe and open space for collaborative partnership building of NGOs and other Civil Society Organisations in the Gambia to advocate and influence policies in the fight for poverty reduction and democratic just governance. TANGO can achieve this objective through strategic collaboration, coalition-building, capacity building, networking in an all-inclusive and participatory process of all NGOs and CSOs in an independent and non-partisan association, providing a voice for the voiceless, the vulnerable, and the disadvantaged, by advocating for accountability and transparency in national development and governance process to achieve a safe, secured, democratic and just society for all.

PARTNERS

