

Community Dialogue in Gunjur Addresses Barriers to Peaceful Coexistence

Gunjur, The Gambia, 22 June 2024 – The Research and Action for Peace Network (RecAP), with funding from the European Union, organised a one-day community dialogue in Gunjur. The event brought together 15 participants from Gunjur and its surrounding areas, including traditional communicators, religious leaders, local authorities, women, and youths. The dialogue focused on documenting barriers and challenges to peaceful coexistence and social cohesion.



Gambians traditionally enjoy strong social networks across ethnic and religious lines, characterised by inter-regional affiliations and inter-family relationships. However, tribalism, land disputes, and inter- and intra-ethnic divisions have recently threatened social cohesion. Additional social issues, such as youth substance abuse, rising crime rates, early childhood marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriages,

high unemployment, and poverty, have been identified as major drivers of conflict in The Gambia, particularly in the West Coast Region.

Increased incidents of robbery, theft, and burglary have led to growing insecurity. Furthermore, privatisation and land-related profitability have exacerbated tensions over land access and ownership, especially in the Kombo South District. The region has also experienced xenophobic attacks, inter-communal violence, and other violent incidents, threatening national peace and security.

To address these challenges, a pre-assessment was conducted on 21 June 2024 promoting a "do no harm" approach to community intervention. Key community stakeholders were consulted to identify existing conflicts and the underlying issues contributing to them.

The dialogue emphasised the importance of sustaining peace through community engagement and research-driven initiatives. Presentations and group work sessions were conducted to identify key issues and strategise solutions. The information gathered will aid in developing programmes and interventions, supporting advocacy strategies for conflict prevention. The stakeholders viewed the dialogue as timely and necessary, providing a platform to discuss changes, conflict drivers, and potential solutions.

The RecAP Network and its partners will continue to support peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts, ensuring that early warning systems and community dialogues address the challenging issues and provide recommendations to relevant authorities. The intervention has been highly recognised by the communities, urging participants to initiate dialogues within their families and communities to sustain peace and harmony in the region.