



THE GAMBIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



The Gambian Red Cross Society
56 Mamadi Maniyang Highway
Kanifing, The Gambia

1. A Message from the Secretary General of the GRCS



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The GRCS*

The Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS) remains the largest and most trusted humanitarian institution in The Gambia with an enviable track record of alleviating human suffering and reducing vulnerabilities through its numerous interventions that are implemented by its dedicated staff and volunteers across the country.

The year 2023 has been a challenging year. Humanitarian needs continue to grow at a pace that vastly outpaces the resources envelope of the National Society.

Despite the increase in frequency and magnitude of disasters, economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the violent conflicts around the world, the National Society continues to consolidate on the gains in fulfilling its mission in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

I wish to express my special thanks to my dedicated staff and volunteers who are always there to provide timely humanitarian services with complete impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Special appreciations to the Governing Board for their support and oversight.

I thank the Government of The Gambia, International Federation of Red Cross Red Crescent Societies, International Committee of the Red Cross, UN System, SolHealth, Spanish Red Cross, Italian Red Cross, and other Sister National Societies and all our other valued partners within and outside The Gambia for their unwavering support to our lifesaving programmes and operations.

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3. List of Abbreviations

1. BOCA - Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment
2. CEA - Community Engagement and Accountability
3. COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019
4. CRR - Central River Region
5. ECOWAS-Economic Community of West African States
6. ERT-Emergency Response Teams
7. GA - General Assembly
8. GIZ-German Development Cooperation
9. GRCS - The Gambia Red Cross Society
10. HSSG- Healthcare Support and Strengthening in The Gambia
11. ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross
12. IFRC - International Federation of the Red Cross
13. IHL - International Humanitarian Law
14. LRR - Lower River Region
15. MHM - Menstrual Hygiene Management
16. MHPSS-Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
17. MOH - Ministry of Health
18. NAS - National AIDS Secretariat
19. NBR - North Bank Region
20. NEDI - National Enterprise Development Initiative
21. NCCRM- National Coordination Center Early Warning and Response Mechanism
22. NSGA-Nova-Scotia Gambia Association
23. NS - National Society
24. MDFC- Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance
25. MISP-Minimum Initial Service Package
26. MPA-Minimum Protection Approach
27. PFA-Psychosocial First Aid
28. PGI - Protection, Gender, and Inclusion
29. RFL - Restoring Family Links
30. SG-Secretary General
31. UN-United Nations
32. URR - Upper River Region
33. USAID - United States Agency for International Development
34. WASH - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
35. WCR - West Coast Region

4.0 Introduction

The Gambia Red Cross Society is legally constituted as a humanitarian relief organization in The Gambia by an Act of Parliament (Ref. Cap 51:01 of the Laws of The Gambia 1966). It was established in April 1948 as a branch of the British Red Cross. It became an Independent National Society on 5 October 1966, following the signing of the Geneva Conventions by the Government of The Gambia, in the same year. On November 10th, 1974, the National Society was recognized as the 122nd member of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) on 29 October 1975.

The GRCS is a credible and trusted player in the humanitarian services and continues to gain more reliance from the Government and People of The Gambia. It acts as auxiliary to the public authority in the humanitarian field and provides services ranging from disaster relief, health services and development. It also conducts campaigns and speaks on behalf of the vulnerable people and promotes international humanitarian law and humanitarian diplomacy.

4.1 Objective, Vision, and Mission of GRCS

Objective: To prevent and alleviate human suffering with complete impartiality, making no discrimination as to nationality, race, ethnicity, age, gender, religious beliefs, class or political opinion or any similar criteria and shall act in accordance with the spirit and the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and the Geneva Convention.

Vision: “Reducing Vulnerability and Improving Lives”

Mission: “Improving the lives of the vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.

4.2 GRCS Leadership and Management

The leadership of GRCS is composed of the **Governing Board** led by the President and **Management** headed by the Secretary General (SG). The President of the National Society, elected after every 3 years by the General Assembly. The President chairs the Governing Board. The Secretary General on the other hand, appointed by the Governing Board, manages the entire daily affairs of the National Society with the support of the staff members.

4.3 Strengths of GRCS

The GRCS is the major humanitarian organization in The Gambia. The Programmes and activities of the National Society are implemented by the Branch Officers with the support and guidance of the management and staff at the Headquarters. The comparative advantages of the National Society include having a pool of committed volunteers at community level, who are readily available to respond and build resilience to disasters and other emergencies across the country in partnership and collaboration with government, donors, local communities, and other stakeholders on many thematic areas such as health, social services, and disaster Management.

4.4 GRCS Programmes and Sectors of Intervention

The National Society remains committed to delivering on its humanitarian mandate in alleviating human suffering, promoting dignity and reducing vulnerabilities in all regions of The Gambia under the following thematic areas:

- Training and Dissemination of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Principles and Values of the Red Cross Red Crescent movement,
- Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management
- Primary Health care, Emergency Ambulance Services (GPlus), First Aid and WASH
- Migration, Displacement and Restoring Family Links
- Food Security, Livelihood, Nutrition and Cash Assistance
- Community Engagement and Accountability
- Youth Empowerment Initiatives and
- Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI)

5. Executive Summary

The GRCS is a legally constituted humanitarian relief agency in The Gambia by an Act of Parliament. It acts as auxiliary to the public authority in the humanitarian field and provides services including disaster relief, health services and development. The Programmes and activities of the National Society are implemented by the Branch Offices with the support and guidance of the management and staff at the Headquarters. The National Society ensures that gender is mainstreamed in all its programmes and operations. Despite the numerous challenges in 2023, the National Society made significant progress.

The year's seasonal rainfall began with massive torrential downpours accompanied by windstorms affecting scores of marginalized people across the country. The GRCS responded swiftly to the disaster through rapid assessment and provision of humanitarian aid to the affected communities. The GRCS supported 550 refugee families that fled the conflict in Casamance. GRCS continues to carry out Restoring Family Links (RFL) service focusing on preventing separations, restoring, and maintaining contact, and building the capacities of volunteers and staff. Using the Red Cross Red Crescent approach to migration and displacement, The GRCS implemented programmes to respond to the humanitarian needs of migrants and displaced populations across the country including host communities.

The GRCS continues to support the health system of The Gambia especially on strengthening primary health care focusing on disease prevention, health promotion and education, public health emergency management mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), Nutrition education and promotion. The GRCS continues to strengthen the capacities of volunteers and staff to attain the target of one first aider in every household. The GRCS WASH Unit supports the government of The Gambia in improving access to clean water, supply and sanitation facilities and hygiene education and promotion especially during emergencies. The GPlus Emergency Response Service provided safe evacuation of patients and covered events as emergency medical standby during this period.

The National Society continues the implementation of its food security and livelihood interventions including training of members of the tourism informal sector associations on business management, customer orientation and marketing and horticultural development.

6. Key Achievements of Programmes/ Activities Implemented

Despite the numerous challenges encountered in 2023, the National Society continues to consolidate on the gains registered over the past years under the following thematic areas:

6.1. Disaster Preparedness, Response and Management

The Gambia continues to face the impacts of climate change including flash flooding and windstorms across the country over the years. This situation is further complicated by the threats from pandemics, domestic fires, road traffic and other accidents.

In 2023, the National Society implemented the following activities under this thematic area:

6.1.1. Flash Floods and Windstorms

The frequency and intensity of natural disasters are increasing rapidly, with floods and windstorms becoming seasonal phenomena and common hazards causing the most damage to people's properties, infrastructural, fatalities and injuries, livelihoods, family separation and being temporarily homeless, the spread of waterborne diseases and erosion of fertile farmlands. The year's seasonal rainfall began on 14 June 2023 with massive downpours characterized by sporadic windstorms affecting scores of people in the Upper River (URR) and Central River (CRR) regions. Two weeks later, the West Coast Region (WCR), Lower River Region (LRR) and Kanifing Municipality (KM) also hit.

The GRCS actions in response to the flash flood and windstorm included the following:

1. Deployed Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) to the affected areas for rapid tablets and smart phones using the harmonized disaster household level assessment tool and verifications of potential household beneficiaries using the GRCS Verification tool.
2. Pre-positioning and distribution of relief supplies in all the regions of The Gambia.
3. Coordination with NDMA, UN and other bodies including providing situation reports.

6.1.2. The Crisis in Southern Senegalese Region of Casamance

Clashes between the Senegalese Army and MDFC rejuvenated on Sunday 15 January 2023 in Casamance. The GRCS supported 550 refugee families with shelter support of essential household items, hygiene kits and Psychosocial support. Through ICRC, 138 refugee households were provided food through with cash transfer of D5, 165 per household.

6.1.3. Other activities conducted by Disaster Management Unit.

- The National Society continues to collaborate with NDMA through the National Disaster Risk Management Coordination including the four thematic sub-committees (Shelter and Protection, Food, WASH and Health & Environment). The GRCS serves as a co-chair to the Information Management Technical Working Group (IMTWG). This group ensures the harmonization of national disaster assessment tools.
- A new partnership between the GRCS and the National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordination Center (NCCRM) was recently initiated. This Center was established by the ECOWAS in 2014 and the Gambia Chapter was open in 2019. The main functions of the Center are to monitor, collect, collate, centralize, and analyze data and early warning information for early actions. GRCS worked with NCCRM during the Foni crises.
- The guidelines for disaster and emergency response operation have been re-designed and the institutional Contingency Plan for Multi-Hazard preparedness and Response drafted.
- Submitted proposals on disaster preparedness and National Society capacity development to the USAID through the IFRC, done in April 2023.



Photo 1: *The Gambia Red Cross Society Senior Management Visit to 2023 Disaster Affected People*

6.2. Healthcare and Wellbeing

The GRCS continues to support the health system of the Gambia especially on the revitalization of the primary health care focusing on disease prevention, health promotion and education, public health emergency management mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), Nutrition education and promotion, provision of health and medical services and equipment. The National Society continues to support the Ministry of Health in strengthening the national preparedness and response to disasters and public health emergencies.

In 2023, the National Society implemented the following activities under this thematic area:

6.2.1 Health and care Activities implemented by our branch offices:

- ★ The KM Red Cross Branch in partnership with the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) has conducted HIV/AIDS training for 50 volunteers.
- ★ The WCR Red Cross Branch through the Branch Gender Committee trained 35 volunteers on gender and reproductive health.
- ★ WCR Red Cross Branch in collaboration with the National AIDS Secretariat trained 50 volunteers on sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and child protection and gender.
- ★ The WCR branch through Kombo South and Central Districts links jointly organized menstrual hygiene training and its production, gender, and inclusion for 50 volunteers.

6.2.2. Mental Health Psychosocial Support and Psychosocial First Aid (MHPSS & PFA)

The Gambia Red Cross Society, with funding from GIZ implemented a project “strengthening of mental health and psychosocial well-being of migrant returnees and their host and origin communities. This project seeks to improve the social reintegration of migrant returnees by ensuring their access to Mental Health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), Psychological First Aid (PFA) and other protection services including information sharing, RFL health care, shelter, food, WASH, and safe referrals for specialized care to other institutions. The project was implemented in LRR, NBR, URR, CRR and Banjul

- Overall, 700 people were trained on health, referral protocols, community engagement and accountability (CEA) and Restoring Family Link (RFL) services, Minimum Protection Approach (MPA) and Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for staff and volunteers, partners, and migrants in the context of PGI, Mental health and Psychological First Aid, Migrants on their rights, duties, and responsibilities to society, and against their stigmatization including access to services and opportunities.
- GRCS through GIZ conducted CEA and RFL training for 60 volunteers, partners, and staff of MHPSS project. The partners that participated in these training were immigration officers, social welfare officer, community development officer, migrant association, area council staff, youth group, teachers, hospital staff, National Youth Council, police, returnees, community members/authorities, and staff from the Regional Health staff.
- 24 GRCS Volunteers were deployed to conduct mapping of communities and households to establish the location of returnees and peer support by the trained Red Cross volunteers and supervised by a Red Cross staff responsible for Psychosocial support activities.

- Overall, 12653 people were reached once or many times with these project measures.
- The G-Plus Emergency response services was contracted to conduct mobile health caravans in communities with high migrant returnees. A medical team of social workers and MHPSS experts were deployed in hard-to-reach communities to ensure access to medical care for vulnerable migrants and their communities. Basic psychological interventions (counseling or Psychotherapy) at clinics and community outreach were done, coupled with referral of complicated cases to hospitals. Overall, 700 returnees and host communities' members were reached in 21 different sessions.
- The project supported the establishment of 7 Humanitarian Service Points (fixed/mobile) including 4 kiosks in NBR: Barra and Essau, Banjul; LRR: Jarra Soma; CRR: Bansang, Wassu and URR: Wuli and strengthen the existing ones to improve services.
- A community complaint/feedback survey was done in the target areas awaiting analysis.

6.2.3. Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) is a significant public health need in all communities. In emergencies, there is often a lack of access to SRH services. The GRCS in partnership with UNFPA conducted the following activities: Orientation of 60 volunteers in May on sanitation and hygiene promotion, epidemic control, reproductive health and SGBV in URR, CRR, NBR, LRR and Foni-WCR They were deployed in the field during July, August, and September to conduct sensitization using the house-to-house strategy. They reached 10,753 (5,987 Female and 4,766 Male). Among the trained volunteers, five were selected as focal points for SRH in all regions and they reached 105 Male and 193 Female.



Photo 2: GRCS empowering women and girls with knowledge and skills on SRH

6.3. First Aid and Sea Rescue services

First Aid has been at the heart of the GRCS since its inception. GRCS continues to reaffirm its commitment to IFRC Strategy 2030. The GRCS continues to support strengthening the capacities of volunteers and staff to attain the target of one first aider in every household.

The National Society continues to conduct sea search and rescue services at beach sides in KM and WCR including intensive sensitization and first aid services for drowning survivors.

In 2023, GRCS implemented the following activities under this thematic area:



Photo 3: The GRCS Life Saving at the Beaches (Lifeguards and Social Mobilization Volunteers)

Table 1: Number of people reached with First Aid

Key Activities/Interventions	Number of People Reached		Children Reached (0-18 years)		Adults Reached (19 above years)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Commercial First Aid training	80	138	0	0	80	138
Internal First Aid Trainings for Volunteers	313	235	0	0	313	235
Gambia Football Federation Coverage -	120	260	0	0	120	260
First Aid Coverage services during private and public gathering	140,000	280,000	0	0	140,000	280,000
Seaside Search and rescue outreach activities and key messages	55,000	27,000	5,000	7,000	50,000	20,000
Seaside Search - # Deaths	0	0	2	6	0	0
Seaside Search - # Rescue	0	0	0	0	0	0
Search and rescue - # training	3	22	0	0	3	22
Total Reached	195,518	307,661	5,002	7,006	190,516	300,655

6.4. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

GRCS WASH Office supports the government by developing, implementing, and responding to the needs of vulnerable communities, especially during emergency situations by improving access to clean water, supply and sanitation and hygiene facilities.

In 2023, the National Society implemented the following activities under this thematic area:

- ★ In partnership with SolHEALTH and UB-ONE, four boreholes with reticulated systems to provide clean water were handed over to the communities of Kantora Brikama and Musanding Kunda in URR and Sareh Babou and Boye Fulbeh in CRR.



The Gambia Red Cross Society, SolHEALTH and UB-ONE Drilled Boreholes for Domestic Use in 4 Communities

- ★ GRCS in partnership with UNICEF procured WASH emergency supplies such as cholera test kits, water level measuring kits, aqua tab, family WASH and hygiene kits, collapsible water tanks, mobile toilet facilities and preposition them at the GRCS HQ and some of supplies were moved to the regional/branch stores for onsite pre-positioning.
- ★ On the software side, we have a network of trained volunteers who were deployed to run hygiene promotion and behavior change activities to improve people's knowledge of good sanitation and hygiene practices during emergencies and beyond.
- ★ In July, thirty (30) LRR volunteers in partnership with Mansa Konko Areas Council conducted a massive cleanup exercise in Soma Market.
- ★ In support of the humanitarian work of the Voluntary Aid Detachment of the GRCS, the Central Prisons Mile II and the Juvenile Wing of the Old Jeshwang Prisons were fumigated against insects and ruminants. The VAD also awarded Certificates of Appreciation to companies and individuals that supported the Health Fair.
- ★ Fifteen (15) volunteers were deployed to support the community of Brikama Nyambai to pump out water from their compounds.

- ★ Sinchu Alagie Home link in WCR did cleansing exercise including donation of 4 dustbins.
- ★ GRCS and SolHEALTH under the Healthcare Support and Strengthening in The Gambia (HSSG) project embarked on a 4-day community engagement in CRR and URR at the borehole drilling sites to train the Water committees that are responsible for the care of the boreholes including their sustainability.
- ★ 13 CHNs at primary healthcare posts were given TV sets and electricity to motivate them.
- ★ Consultations between HSSG and partners recommended the need to expand the project to LRR and NBR in 2024. In preparation for this move, the project team conducted a baseline need assessment concerning the Water and sanitation situation with key stakeholders (Governor, DWR, MoH, DCD communities) in the regions.



6.5. Emergency Ambulance Services (GPlus)

The Gambia Red Cross Society, with support from partners, established the first ever emergency and pre-hospital care services commonly referred to as GPlus in the Gambia in 2019. GPlus offers a wide range of 24-hour, high-quality, affordable emergency ambulance and pre-hospital care services using a fleet of state-of-the-art ambulances that are fully equipped to the standards of Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS).

With a team of well-trained and experienced medical professionals called paramedics, GPlus offers on-site life-saving emergency services that continue all through the evacuation journey.

GPlus offers the following services at a cost to sustain and expand the services:

- Emergency standby services during public and private events,
- Airport medical transfers and international referrals,
- Inter-hospital referrals and VIP ambulance escort
- Provision of first aid kits for home and office use.

In 2023, the NS implemented the following activities under this thematic area:

- ★ Organized and successfully executed two board meetings and one annual general meeting.
- ★ Achieved successful completion of the 2022 audits.
- ★ Collaborated with Gambia Red Cross Society to conduct two medical camps, providing vital healthcare services to the community.
- ★ Ensured the safe evacuation of **119** patients and effectively covered **six** events as emergency medical standby during this period.
- ★ Eplus Kenya Red Cross transferred its shares to GRCS. Following this transfer, the GRCS is mobilizing funds to pay off the agreed USD262,000.00 to Kenya Red Cross.

6.6. Restoring Family Links (RFL)

RFL is a mandatory service offered by all National Societies to help restore contact between families separated by armed conflicts, disasters, and migration. GRCS continues to carry out this important service focusing on preventing separations, restoring, and maintaining contact, and building the capacities of volunteers and staff.

In 2023, the NS implemented the following activities under this thematic area:

- At the beginning of 2023, a training was organized for 30 participants in NBR by the Global Route based Programme project where officials from the Gambia Immigration Department (GID) and community members were trained on RFL.
- The immigration personnel were also provided with information posters and flyers for display at their border posts.
- Another training was organized in April by the MHPSS/PFA project targeting individuals from immigration, social welfare, volunteers, and community leaders.

Other achievements:

- Successfully transmitted 117 salamats of individuals who have been rescued by the SOS Mediterranean
- Provided 339 successful calls through our calls services to migrants who need to communicate with their loved ones.
- Transmitted 7 Red Cross messages for clients who are now in touch with their loved ones.
- Published photos of 41 families through the Trace the Face website to ease the search.
- Other support services, including referrals to relevant agencies were given to 26 families.
- Reunited a mother and her four children with the husband who was missing for 6 years.

6.7. Food Security, Livelihood, Nutrition & Cash Assistance

In the Gambia, climate impact has acute food insecurity projections for the 2023 lean season (June–August). Over 300,000 people in the Gambia are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity, an increase of 55 and 43 percent respectively compared to the 2022 lean season. The food security situation is likely to deteriorate further over the outlook period, due to very high food prices, macroeconomic challenges, localized impacts of flooding in the previous agricultural season in the Gambia. Due to flooding, windstorm, drought and other climate change issues, low crop production, and acute food insecurity is expected to worsen over the outlook period.

Several regions have been affected by floods, with serious consequences on livelihoods, while some other agricultural land has been affected by drought.

In 2023, the NS implemented the following activities under this thematic area:

In March and April 2023, a follow up capacity building training was organized to strengthen members of the tourism informal sector associations on technical training especially in the areas of business management, customer orientation and marketing, technical training (agricultural training for horticultural development). The listed areas of interest on capacity building are identified from the result of the monitoring conducted in December 2022 by The Gambia Red Cross Society volunteers of the project. The number of people trained was 181 male and 179 Female, out of the number trained, 35 people were trained on horticulture and the rest on business management and customer orientation & marketing to add value, promote their businesses and encourage diversification. The training was facilitated by the two government departments: - Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Horticulture) on horticulture and National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI) on Business Management and Customer Orientation & Marketing.

In April and July 2023, the quarterly monitoring and coaching by GRCS Volunteers was conducted for the tourism informal sector businesses, to be able to contribute to the improvement of evidence and information tools that may be useful for local institutions and authorities to improve their decision-making as well as their information tools towards the affected population. In this activity 31 volunteers participated, which included 28 volunteers (22 from KM, 3 from Banjul, 3 from WCR and 3 Branch Officers) as data collectors and coaches.

From 17th to 18th June 2023, the livelihood project conducted an open business/trade fair collaboration with executive members of the associations, beneficiaries, and Gambia Tourism Board. The purpose was strengthen the market access and support services by the members of the associations that have recovered or diversified their business. The activity hosted 50 vendors and service providers (7 people from each association and 8 from the Craft Vendors respectively) to showcase their products and services The vendors were able to interact with more 600 hundred people, who were mainly Gambians.



Photo 1: GRCS Secretary General and Livelihood Project Coordinator at the Trade Fair

From July 20th to 6th August 2023, endline monitoring and coaching visits to beneficiaries was organized as part of the last activities of the project implementation. The activity serves as a form of comparing the results of the project with respect to the baseline and the different monitoring and coaching done. In the light of the above, volunteers were orientated to conduct the endline monitoring and coaching.

From September 28-29, the NS conducted the lessons learned workshop as the last activities for monitoring and evaluation of the project: Consolidation of initiatives for recovering tourism sector livelihoods affected by COVID-19 in The Gambia": It was aimed at creating a platform for all actors to critically review the processes carried out from planning to implementation of the project with emphasis on what works, what did not work, challenges encountered and way forward. The following key lessons were observed:

- The training provided to the beneficiaries was generally useful.
- While some may have justifiable reasons for not starting the business or stopping later after having received the cash grant, others used it to meet their long-desired goals.
- Experience with getting cash through mobile money service was very good.

In November 2023, the GRCS hosted the meeting of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) West Coast Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) Community of Practice that brought together 7 National Societies (The Gambia, Benin, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Togo). The primary objective was to foster the exchange of ideas and experiences, explore new innovations and technologies, and enhance coordination in the realm of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) during disasters, crises, emergencies, and other interventions.



Participants from the seven sister National Societies

6.8. Protection, Gender, Inclusion & Humanitarian Education

In March 2023, with support from IFRC the Gender unit implemented a project on Anticipatory Action in Foni, West Coast Region.

- The Anticipatory Action Project has supported training of 20 Adolescent Girls, 10 volunteers and 3 teacher coordinators from the 4 schools on Anticipatory Actions
- Training of 20 adolescent girls and 10 volunteers and 3 teacher Red Cross link coordinators on menstrual hygiene, and volunteer code of conduct
- Distribution of dignity kits to 30 adolescent girls
- Distribution of learning materials to 30 adolescent girls



The GRCS Anticipatory Action Project beneficiaries in Foni, West Coast Region

- The WCR Red Cross Branch engaged volunteers on menstrual hygiene education for 15 volunteers and Anticipatory action on Gender Based Violence for volunteers in Foni.
- In June the GRCS Gender Focal Point attended a 3-day training with UNFPA and other partners, on Prevention and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- In October, the Gender Focal Point attended the Global Education Network (GEN) working group on safe, continuous, and equitable access to education, especially in Emergencies.
- Part of the celebration of the 16 days of activism, sensitization on SGBV and its negative effects on women, girls and their communities were done in schools and communities in Kanifing Municipality, totaling 213 Females and 71 Males.
- Offering immediate psychological support to survivors of SGBV to access referral pathways including child protection, counseling, and shelter.
- 50 volunteers (30 female 20 male) were trained on SRH & PHI,
- The Kombo South district through WCR Central Link conducted a training on Gender and Inclusion for 50 volunteers 25 male and 25 female.

6.9. Migration and Displacement

Migration and Displacement is an important thematic area of the National Society, with The Gambia regarded as an origin, transit, and destination country for migrants. The GRCS is implementing programmes to respond to the humanitarian needs of migrants and displaced populations across the country including host communities. The National Society continues to strengthen its and that of other relevant state and non-state actors to guarantee the protection and dignity of people on the move. Active in the reinforcement of its humanitarian diplomacy efforts to strengthen the positioning of the National Society, and advocates for policies and laws in favor of migrants, and displaced populations. The GRCS Migration file has been actively engaging in its three (3) focus areas: Direct assistance to migrants and host population members; capacity building and evidence-based advocacy, coordination, and partnership.

In 2023, the NS implemented the following activities under this thematic area:

- Establishment of two (2) new humanitarian service points in Essau (NBR) and Soma (LRR), where migrants can access essential services including food, shelter, sanitation, information, and referrals to relevant organizations. The GRCS receives referrals from the government and NGOs heavily positioning our trust and reliability in the migration discourse.

- Context Analysis training for branch officers and volunteers who were later engaged in data collection across their regions to establish a national migration context. This data collected will inform the GRCS Migration Strategy development.
- Community Disaster Response Team training for community members, border officials, volunteers, and staff in LRR and NBR branches including a population movement simulation exercise to measure the response capacity of GRCS and state authorities in NBR in January 2023.
- A training of fifty (50) hotel workers on the protocols for the identification and referrals of victims of trafficking. This is due to the close correlation between sex tourism and trafficking in person in the Gambia.
- Support both technically and financially the capacity building camps organized by some of its branches and links, training about two hundred (200) volunteers, staff and partners on migration and related affairs while focusing on the RCRC principled approach to migration.
- Financial support for the renovation of branches/ HSPs notably KM, WCR and URR through the EUTF Migration project.



The Gambia Red Cross Society, NBR Essau Red Cross Office Rehabilitated to serve as Humanitarian Service Point

- The GRCS organized an external advocacy workshop in March bringing together the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Interior, National Coordination Mechanism on Migration, . The workshop focused on identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in migration-related intervention in The Gambia and the commitment of all stakeholders.
- The National Society participated in the drafting of the SOP on Handling of Smuggling Migrants and other documents using our humanitarian lenses and advocating and providing input for the protection of the rights of smuggled and smuggling migrants.
- A high level filed mission on the Global Route-Based Migration Programme by the **Secretary General of the IFRC (Jagan Chapagain)** served as an opportunity to not only

visit the work of GRCS on migration, but an additional strength of advocacy with the authorities including the president of the republic of The Gambia the vice president's office, relevant ministries, and other stakeholders. This also shows the IFRC network's unique strengths and leadership in supporting people on the move along migration routes, through HSPs providing support regardless of status.



IFRC SG Jagan Chapagain with GRCS Staff

- Participation in the Gambia's first National Dialogue on Migration which brought together the governments, NGOs, the UN system, local authorities, and migrants facilitated a frank discussion on migration including employment creation, facilitation of regular pathways and of essence to the GRCS the humanitarian assistance and protection of migrants.
- The GRCS organizes periodic coordination meetings internally for its various projects, as well as lesson-learning sessions on the EUTF Migration project with volunteers and staff internally in March 2023.
- GRCS together with Senegalese, Mauritanian, Mali, and Cape Verde RCs continue to coordinate efforts in supporting Gambian Migrants who got stranded or deported to the borders of their countries, while working together with the Gambian Embassies/High commissions who facilitates the voluntary return processes, the GRCS receives and support the migrant returnees according to their needs and vulnerabilities.
- The GRCS continued to benefit from closed partnership and collaboration with the EU and other relevant partners and visits to GRCS HQ and project areas to secure first-hand information on achievements and current humanitarian challenges.

- The GRCS participated in the Global Route-based Migration Programme Africa in person meeting in Dakar in May 2023, as well as actively participated in the regional and global meetings including those of the Sahel Dakar Cluster coordination meetings.
- GRCS now sits in the Trafficking in Person (TiP) Task Force Committee where it focuses on the humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities of victims of trafficking.
- The GRCS as dictated by the Gambia Commission for Refugees legal frameworks continues to participate in the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) of asylum seekers.
- Partnered with the Netherlands RC and Global Migration Lab on CEA in migration and meaningful participation (of migrants in humanitarian programming) respectfully, this has also led to the initiation of a humanitarian trust index research.
- Completed building hygiene facilities (6 toilets) at Tanji Immigration Reception Centre for migrants intercepted or rescued at sea who usually come in large numbers with limited sanitary facilities exposing them to unfriendly hygienic conditions.
- More than 14,477 migrants supported directly with various services including immediate assistance with information, hot meals, hygiene kits, RFL, PSS, First Aid, Medical assistance, and referrals.
- Conducted numerous information and communication sessions in communities, bus stations, garages and border points and continued to operate HSPs (kiosks) at border points with inclusion of Amdali border point (new).
- Climate induced migration training for 15 volunteers in LRR and NBR and follow up sessions in communities affected by climate and environmental disturbances.

6.10. Organizational Development including Branch Offices

6.10.1. Youth and Volunteer Engagement Initiatives

- Across the Country in **January 2023**, more than 500 volunteers participated in the National Cleaning Day organized by National Environmental Agency (NEA)
- In March 2023, All the area youth representatives, youth commission members, organized a day meeting. The main purpose of the Youth Commission meeting was to discuss the National Youth Plan, identification of co-opted members, and discussion on pressing issues concerning volunteers. The meeting also allowed the Area youth representatives of Branches to present brief updates on recent youth activities at branch level for the past months.

- In February and March 2023, the Volunteer Management unit supported the GRCS Election Committee to complete the pending elections in NBR and URR (Deputy Area Youth Rep. and Branch Treasurer for NBR and Branch Treasurer for URR).
In June, KM Branch organized Miss & Master competition to harness volunteers’ talents.
- In September GRCS Youth Commission and First Aid unit conducted regional and national first aid competition in commemoration of the World First Aid Day 2023.
- In April, LRR Volunteers donated food items to poor families and patients at Soma Hospital.
- GRCS celebrated the World Red Cross Day with the Theme: **“From the Heart”**. This celebration was done at National and Branch levels.
- Branch Offices organized an “UMOJA” camps for participants from community based and school links, Overall, 319 participants (136 male and 183 Female) took part in these camps.
- During the ‘Nawettan’ football tournament, volunteers across the country supported the sport committees to provide First Aid services. The partnership has helped GRCS Regional officers and the First Aid unit to raise awareness on First Aid. It also created an opportunity for some volunteers to serve as team medic with the football clubs.



In partnership with local community-based organizations, volunteers took part in tree planting exercises as part of our actions to fight against Climate Change.

6.10.2. Youth and Volunteer Development Initiatives

- WCR Branch established two youth farms in Kombo central and Kombo East Districts.
- WCR Branch trained 15 volunteers on food processing and pepper sauce production.
- 5 female Volunteers from WCR Branch were supported to apply for the ROOT project and they were part of few to benefit from the cash support of GMD 450,000.
- 15 Volunteers from the WCR Branch in partnership with YEP Africa were trained in entrepreneurship and business development.
- KM Branch in collaboration with Gambia Nova Scotia Gambia Association (NSGA) conducted entrepreneurship training for 60 volunteers.

6.10.3. Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment (BOCA)

The journey to transform The Gambia Red Cross into a well-functioning National Society continues. The Transformation process is based on the recommendations of the last Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) report, the GRCS strategic plan and the Secretary General's Terms of Reference. However, some of the issues highlighted in the OCAC report are correlated to those already identified through the visits and discussions with the various stakeholders. There is a need to continue the transformation process and to consolidate the gains. The next stage includes moving the transformation from the headquarters to the branches. To this end, Branch Organizational Capacity Assessment (BOCA) was undertaken in all the 7 branches of the National Society, and the outcome should be used for branch development.

BOCA is a self-assessment tool developed for branches of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies to identify and assess their strengths, limitations, and challenges in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities. It can be used as the first step in a branch development process since it focuses on basic capacities, structures and conditions that are the core of what a branch needs to be able to function and perform well. This process guides the branches to be more functional and contributes to moving GRCS to become a well-functioning National Society.

6.10.4 Digitalization

The GRCS strengthens its information and technology management systems. The National Society continues to implement its digital transformation plan with impressive results so far. Plans are at an advanced stage to scale down our traditional ways of responding to disasters and scale up anticipatory actions. This requires digitalization of the Emergency Operation Center to collect data and information.

In our continuous effort to enhance operational efficiency and ensure that our staff are equipped with the latest skills in information technology, a 4-day comprehensive training and knowledge sharing workshop on Microsoft tools and products including MS Teams, Cloud Storage, SharePoint, and Excel with emphasis on Security & Data Protection, Asset Management, and IT Standardization was done for all the staff of GRCS.

7. Challenges

The following were the challenges encountered by the NS in implementing its programmes:

Thematic Area	Challenges
Health	The MHPSS and PFA project has a very short implementation period (8 months) coupled with two months delay of receiving funds for implementation and its importance cannot be overemphasized.
RFL	Access to ASPERA- the secure file transfer was a challenge due to technical problems.
GPlus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The membership-based business model has not yet been adopted by the population. ● The organization has faced financial challenges, prompting the implementation of cost-saving measures. As of March 1st, 2023, the Finance Officer started working remotely from Kenya until when GRCS assumed full responsibility. ● Also, the current staffing level is inadequate, with only three dispatchers, one Paramedic, and three drivers on the payroll. Due to this limitation, two paramedics are now on a locum basis, and one driver is also serving in a similar capacity
Migration and Displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emerging humanitarian needs of migrants and displaced persons/families due to conflict and other emergencies (e.g. emergency tents, etc.), a need for resource mobilization to expand the NS reach. ● Within the period under review, the NS did not have an established Migration Unit, as it is project based. The Migration file continued to be supported by a National Volunteer Focal Point after the phasing out of the projects. ● Inadequate coordination and commitment of external authorities, a need for strengthening coordination mechanisms with stakeholders working around migration. ● Reintegration and livelihood support for returnees and families of missing migrants, a need to expand beyond immediate assistance to a livelihood support to migrants including returnees
PGI	Volunteers are interested in capacity building on PGI and its related issues, resource are limited to build the capacity of more volunteers

8. Recommendations

Thematic Area	Recommendations
Disaster Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finalizations of the GRCS SoPs and Contingency Plans ● Make available equipment and materials required for the EOC. ● Better structural organization and management for ERTs in all Branches.
RFL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intensify promotion of RFL services across all regions and communities. ● Prioritize the PSS aspect to support families dealing with loss of loved ones especially those in Gunjur and not just limit to restoring the link. ● Support in socioeconomic activities since most of the cases the breadwinners are missing, leaving the family behind to struggle.
GPlus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diligently follow up on potential government contracts. This is significant in providing us with a stable foundation for our operations. ● Explored partnerships with local businesses and organizations to expand our reach and enhance the impact of our services in the community. ● Bolster marketing initiatives, reaching a wider audience, and facilitating the support of the membership-based business model.
Migration and Displacement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Setting up of a specific migration unit with a migration officer for the continuity of migration file ● Development of a migration strategy for the National Society could be an effective way of NS migration management and in the expansion of NS migration actions for migrants in vulnerable solutions.
Organizational Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adoption of Branch development plans and inclusion into the National society development framework. ● Governance roles Inductions and continuous sensitization. ● Membership policy guidelines review (transfer of membership and corporate membership considerations etc). ● Considerations for policy reviews on First Aid business model, staff engagement (Volunteer focal points and logistics). ● Consideration for Inter branch resource sharing (revolving fund policy development). ● Review of the GRCS Act 1966 and Emblem law enactment lobbying. ● Branches to conduct yearly review of their Branch Development Plans to better plan for the subsequent year(s). ● Branches conduct BOCA after every 2 to 3 years with the participation of the BOCA Facilitators and Branch BOCA/Development Committees. ● Establish The Gambia Red Cross Training Institute for Paramedicine, Emergency Medical Technicians and First Aid.

9. Conclusion and Plans for the year 2024

Despite the numerous challenges encountered in 2023, the GRCS maintains its impressive performance in delivering humanitarian services in the Gambia.

The journey to transform The Gambia Red Cross into a well-functioning national Society continues to gain momentum including strengthening of existing structures to deliver effective and efficient services. For 2024 and beyond, our focus will be on the following three work streams help in achieving the desired results of the transformation process:

- ★ Business continuity and development,
- ★ Implementation of the transformation
- ★ Capitalizing on existing and emerging opportunities.

We count on our numerous partners and collaborators for their continued support and guidance.