young women's media guide

an empowerment tool for young gambian women

https://yomil.org/
info@yomil.org

Project Initiator and Content Lead: Nyima Jadama
Guide Editor: Mariatou Ngum
Editorial Contributors: Meita Touray and Banna Sabally
Guide and App Editorial Reviewer: Caroline Shukuru Patrick
App Developer: Dan King'ori
Design and Illustrations: Heike Bluthardt

Distribution Strategy: Young Women's Media Guide
To ensure broad and equitable access to the Young Women's Media Guide across
The Gambia, we will implement a multi-channel distribution strategy that combines
print and digital formats:

Printed Copies:
A total of 1,000 physical copies will be distributed through targeted partnerships with media schools,
press clubs, and community centers. These locations have been selected to reach young women who
are most likely to benefit from the guide's practical insights and resources.
Digital Access:
To address varying levels of internet connectivity and digital access, the guide will also be made
available in the following formats:
Offline App Version:
Designed for users in areas with limited or no internet access, the app will offer full offline
functionality to maximize usability in remote regions.
Downloadable PDF:
The guide will be available for free download on the #YoMIL website, enabling easy access
for those with stable internet connections.

This structure will ensure the field guide is comprehensive, practical, and user-friendly,
while aligning with the project's goals to empower women across The Gambia.

With financial support from the

Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

young women's media guide
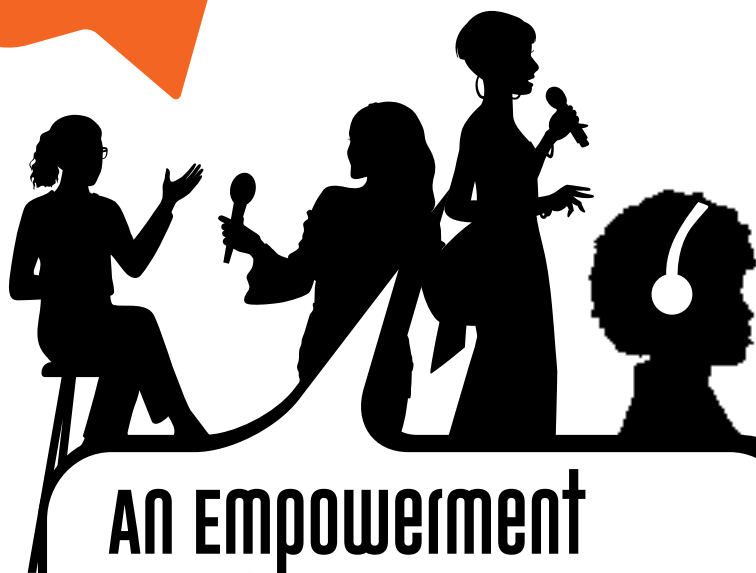
An Empowerment tool for young Gambian women in the media

To every young woman reading this: may this guide fuel your ambition, affirm your voice, and remind you that you belong in the media, not tomorrow, but today.

When I first entered the world of journalism over a decade ago, I never imagined how powerful – and necessary– it would become to claim space as a woman in the media, especially in a society where voices like ours are often silenced. Today, it is with immense pride and purpose that I introduce the *Media Guide: An Empowerment Tool for Gambian Women in Media* – a milestone publication of the **Young Women's Media and Information Literacy Initiative (#YoMIL).**

#YoMIL was born out of a deep desire to challenge the barriers that hold back young women from actively participating in The Gambia's media sector. From cultural limitations and gender bias to lack of access and training, these challenges are not unfamiliar – I have lived them myself. That is why this guide is not just a document; it is a declaration of potential, a practical resource, and a source of inspiration.
This Media Guide is the first of its kind in The Gambia
 – *created by women, for women.* It reflects the voices, aspirations, and experiences of 280 young women across the country's seven regions. From understanding media and information literacy (MIL) to media ethics, podcasting, digital storytelling, to navigating newsroom cultures etcetera, this guide equips our sisters with the tools not just to enter media spaces but to thrive in them.

At its heart, lies a bold commitment to transform the media landscape of The Gambia by centering the voices, perspectives, and leadership of young women. #YoMIL aims to promote a **free, diverse, and independent media landscape** where women are not just represented but recognised as leaders and changemakers. With the generous support of our partners and the dedication of our participants, this publication marks a step forward toward inclusive democracy and empowered storytelling. This **Media Guide** is a key outcome of our initiative – a pioneering resource created *by* and *for* Gambian women in media. To every young woman reading this: may this guide fuel your ambition, affirm your voice, and remind you that **you belong in the media**, not tomorrow, but today.

Let's change the narrative, one story at a time.

Nyima Jadama
Project Initiator & Content Lead, #YoMIL Gambia

highlights from the regional sprints:

In Central River Region (CRR): "I have never attended a training of this kind where all participants are women. It was a safe space for us because we could talk freely and discuss our problems and challenges during the training. The knowledge we have gained from the training will go a long way in helping us in our work. We hardly benefit from such impactful training. Most of the opportunities for training are given to men. It is why we are not elevated to senior levels, because men always say we lack the capacity," Sainabou Saine, Women's Rights Activist, Department of Community Development, CRR.


In Lower River Region (LRR): "These skills are not only empowering but also essential in today's fast-paced and information-driven world. This training has shown us the importance of being informed, responsible, and proactive when engaging with the media. It has also given us the confidence to navigate the digital space safely and effectively while contributing positively to our communities," Salimatou Jallow, women's rights activist said, while thanking the project initiator for coming up with such a project for the young women in The Gambia.

In Upper River Region (URR): "Our families have deeply rooted cultural beliefs that tend to protect women from being exposed in society. To many of them, joining the media means exposing oneself and one's family in a negative light. The awareness level is low, and such training is very important for us young ones," Stainislausia Addo, a Press Club Member from Nasir senior Secondary School.

In the West Coast Region (WCR): "The most important lessons for me were critical thinking, fact-checking, and responsible media engagement. I plan to apply these skills by promoting accurate information to avoid misinformation." Michel Faith Wright, reporter, The Fatu Network, Online.
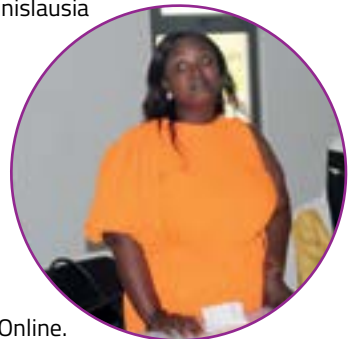
In Banjul: ""The training is very helpful because it enlightens me on factual information and ethical use of the media. My advice to women and girls would be to prioritise their education over trends and fashion. Young girls in Banjul, while so many youths are drug addicts or busy going to parties, believe in themselves, build skills to achieve success and make efforts to escape negative peer influences." – Fatoumatta Betts, Feminist working for Global Platform.

In Kanifing Municipality (KM):
"I recently had the privilege of participating in the Young Women in Media and Information Literacy (YoMIL) training held in the Kanifing Municipality. This workshop, part of a nation-wide initiative, brought together 50 young women from diverse backgrounds to engage in insightful discussions on media ethics, digital literacy, and gender sensitive reporting. The training not only enhanced my understanding of the media landscape but also connected me with inspiring peers dedicated to fostering positive change in our communities. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be part of this empowering experience."
– Alimatou S. Bajinka, Freelance Journalist .

In the North Bank Region (NBR): "The YOMIL initiative is the gathering with the most women I have ever attended so far. The sessions were not only engaging but also enlightening and relevant to the everyday challenges we face in the media. Young women must be given this platform to share their stories, explore new horizons in MIL, and grow together. It is never a competition with men but a quest to overcome barriers and be able to stand firm as women." – Mam Jarra Camara, News Reporter and Presenter at North Bank Community Radio

Acknowledgment

*Meita Touray -
Project Manager*

*Banna Sabally -
Community Outreach Coordinator*

*Alhagie Jobe -
Financial Administrator*

contributors led by Mariatou Ngum, who transformed grassroots input into actionable knowledge for this guide.

The **Young Women's Media Guide** is more than a resource; it is a catalyst for democracy. By equipping young women with media skills, fostering critical thinking, and amplifying the voices of underrepresented individuals, the guide challenges patriarchal norms and elevates women's participation in public discourse. Its offline app prototype ensures accessibility, bridging the digital divide for rural and marginalised communities.

As young women leverage this guide to enter newsrooms, lead campaigns, and advocate for justice, The Gambia's media sector grows stronger, more inclusive, and reflective of its people. Together, we can build a future where every Gambian woman thrives as a storyteller, leader, and guardian of democracy.

Media Academy for Journalism and Communication (MAJaC) The Gambia, 2025

For her, by her, with her, the journey continues.

Table of contents

List of Acronyms

Central River Region (CRR)
Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)
Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
Gambia Press Union (GPU)
Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS)
Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices (Gamcotrap)
Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ)
International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)
Kanifing Municipality (KM)
Lower River Region (LRR)
Media and Information Literacy (MIL)
Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST)
Network Against Gender-Based Violence (NGBV)
Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)
North Bank Region (NBR)
Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA)
Technical and Vocational Training Centres (TVET)
Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)
Upper River Region (URR)
University of The Gambia (UTG)
Virtual Private Network (VPN)
West Coast Region (WCR)
Women Journalists Association of The Gambia (WoJAG)
Young Journalists Association of The Gambia (YJAG)
Young Women in Media and Information Literacy (YoMIL)

Definitions

Media refers to any outlet or platform, whether electronic, print, or digital, that is used to convey messages, stories, ideas, or information to a target audience. There are three main components of media: news media, Mass Media, and Multimedia.

News media are platforms that share news and information with their audiences, including newspapers, radio, television, and online platforms.

Mass media is a type of media that reaches a broader audience using print, broadcast and digital media.

Multimedia is a type of media that combines various elements, such as text, video, audio, and images, to convey information effectively over the internet.

Source (a source) is a person, place, document, or other resource from which a piece of information originates. As a media practitioner, you will interact with various sources through personal conversations, interviews, and research that can be used to gather information or data.

media channels

These channels include print, broadcast, and digital media, as well as film, photography, and other forms of visual and written communication. It is essential to utilise multiple channels for broader coverage. Each channel has its own appeal and audience. Here are ways you can use the media channels.

Print Media

Print media is generally referred to as one of the oldest forms of media. It involves the traditional format of writing news and information through the use of newspapers, magazines, posters, placards, or newsletters. It takes the form of in-depth analysis, accompanied by a combination of visuals, such as photos and graphics, to complement the text.

Tips for writing for print

- Writing for the print requires in-depth research and critical thinking skills. When writing an article for news, press releases, or advocacy messages, provide detailed information and background analysis to engage the audience effectively.
- Use the proper structure to tell the story with a high sense of objectivity, credibility, simplicity and trustworthiness in your work.
- To capture readers' attention, use headings, subheadings, and breakers to enhance the understanding and comprehension of the information. Use catchy headlines and captivating leads to draw the reader's attention.
- Focus on relevant topics that are relatable to your audience, such as economic, socio-cultural, and political issues, among others. The topics should be simplified to provide context and a broader understanding to readers.

Digital Media

Digital media is one of the fastest-growing media today. It is also referred to as the 'New Media', which allows users to share information with a broader audience and generate quick reactions. Digital media provide platforms for various news presentations through websites, blogs, podcasts, online tele-vision, magazines, newsletters, and more. It also allows you to incorporate various multimedia elements, such as text, images, videos, and audio, to convey your message.

Tips for writing for digital media

- Know your audience when writing for digital media.
- To facilitate quick reading, keep your headings, subheadings, sentences, and paragraphs concise and visually appealing to capture your audience's attention.

- Utilise keywords and hashtags relevant to your topic to improve searchability and stay current with trends, enabling you to participate in real-time conversations.
- Utilise a combination of various multimedia elements, including text, images, videos, and audio, to convey a message effectively. For instance, in a digital media article about a music festival, you can include a video of a live performance, images of the crowd, and audio clips of interviews with the artists.
- Keep your sentences and paragraphs short, simple and to the point.

Electronic/Broadcast Media

Broadcast media, also known as the 'Electronic Media', is a form of media that shares information through the use of text, pictures, audio and videos to convey news and information. The types are radio and television, which remain the most popular in The Gambia. Unlike print and Digital Media, broadcast media is time-sensitive and often requires conversational scripting and on-air delivery of information. The broadcast media facilitates spontaneous and broader audience engagement.

Tips for writing for Electronic/Broadcast Media

When writing for the Broadcast Media, use simple language, direct sentences and short scripts that sound natural and conversational when spoken.

- Use simple language, present tense, short scripts, pauses, punctuations, spell out numbers and symbols.
- Ensure your writing aligns with visuals; describe important visuals or scenes thoroughly to increase listeners' or viewers' understanding of your message.
- Always strive for clarity and brevity, ensuring that crucial information is communicated effectively.
- Always verify the accuracy of your information before broadcasting, as mistakes made on air can harm society.

Note: Attribute all opinionated information and use fact-checking tools that enable you to properly verify the accuracy of information before publishing and broadcasting any info. It helps to maintain your credibility as a media practitioner.

Tips for broadcast presentation:

- Thoroughly research your topic and prepare your script before going on air.
- Practice your delivery multiple times to feel comfortable and confident.
- Be prepared to handle unexpected situations that may arise during the presentation.
- Use short, easy-to-understand sentences, and simplify jargon to avoid confusing your audience. For example, instead of using technical terms, explain concepts in a way that anyone can understand.
- Focus on active voice to make your language more direct and impactful.
- Maintain a conversational tone that feels natural and relatable. This helps the audience feel more connected to the message, making it more engaging and memorable.

Effective communication in Media presentation

Media presentation refers to the process of presenting information, ideas or messages through various media channels to engage the audience. The media serve as a vital tool for effective communication. Through the use of multiple channels, including print, electronic, digital, and broadcast media, we share information, engage with our audiences, and generate feedback. Young women interested in media can utilise these channels to communicate effectively. Below are tips for effective communication.

Tips for effective communication

- Understanding your audience is crucial. Tailoring your information to their needs not only encourages constructive feedback but also makes communication easier and creates a better atmosphere for open dialogue.
- Clear and concise communication is key. It helps to avoid misinterpretation and ensures that your audience is well-informed without feeling overwhelmed.
- During interviews, ask open-ended questions and engage in in-depth discussions to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter.
- Be in control of the communication process by minimising distractions and engaging fully in the conversation.
- Non-verbal communication is equally important. Pay attention to your body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. They can be a distraction and have a significant impact on the message you are sharing.

2. MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY (MIL)

Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is the ability to access, analyse, and produce media content or information.

It has become increasingly significant with the rise of technology and the increase of information sources. For young women in the media industry, the understanding of MIL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical tool that can significantly influence their career growth and development. It is crucial to understand the dynamics of the sector, where access to information and media representation play a pivotal role in shaping the sector's landscape. Information literacy enhances the advocacy skills of female media professionals, enabling them to critically evaluate and verify information. This empowerment extends to advocating for women's issues, such as sexual harassment, gender stereotypes, and cultural barriers. MIL equips women with the tools to challenge these issues and bring about positive change.

Key Definitions

Information Literacy is the ability to recognise when information is needed and to locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information.

Misinformation refers to false or misleading information shared without harmful intent.

Disinformation refers to fabricated and deliberately manipulated content that is intentionally created and shared.

Mal-information refers to false or misleading information that is intentionally or unintentionally spread, often through digital means, to damage a person's reputation, credibility, or relationships.

Key components of MIL

There are different components to understanding MIL. The following elements help young women in the media execute their work smoothly.

- **Access:** the ability to find and retrieve information from various sources.
- **Analysis:** to critically assess the credibility and relevance of information.

- **Evaluation:** the skill to differentiate between fact and opinion, and to understand the intent behind shared information.
- **Creation:** producing and conveying media content while understanding the ethical implications of the produced content.
- **Communication:** to effectively share ideas and engage with the audience through media platforms.
- **Verification:** the process of fact-checking and cross-referencing information to ensure it is accurate and factual before publishing or broadcasting. It includes verifying the information, source, figures, dates, time, location, and other details.

Importance of MIL

For young women in the media industry in The Gambia, MIL is crucial as it concerns their protection, involvement, and empowerment in the digital age, where misinformation and disinformation can be misleading and very harmful.

- MIL helps young women in the media understand the various components of media and how to engage their audience professionally.
- It offers resources to evaluate sources and recognise trustworthy information.
- It encourages young women in the media to adopt the right ethical approaches when telling stories about women.

- It also boosts women's confidence to use the media to advocate for women's empowerment and equity.

Importance of media verification

- It helps to boost the credibility of women media workers
- It enhances the quality of reporting by ensuring that women in the media adhere to strict standards of accuracy and authenticity in sharing information.
- It helps establish and maintain public trust in the reliability of the information source.
- It promotes informed discussions and decision-making on key matters of public interest.
- It promotes accurate reporting and thorough cross-checking of information to avoid misinformation.

Tools and Techniques for verification

The tools and techniques in media verification empower young women in the media sector to effectively evaluate the credibility of information.

- Reverse Image Search, also known as Google Search by Image, is a service that lets users search for images by starting with an image instead of a spoken or written search query. **Reverse Image Search**
- TinEye is also another form of image verification. It helps you find, confirm, and track images online. **TinEye**
- InVID: as part of its innovation action, InVID creates a knowledge verification platform to identify new stories and evaluate the credibility of content and video files that are shared on social media. **InVID**

Techniques for verification

To verify information, you can:

- Cross-check the authenticity of the content by consulting with at least three independent and reliable sources that can reveal differences or support statements.
- Track the source, evaluate its reputation, background, and potential biases.
- Request supporting documents, conduct research, or make direct phone calls to sources.
- Women should not be judgmental in verifying information based on affiliation.
- Add Citation; example referencing, footnoting and headers
- Always conduct a plagiarism check.

Scenario on verification:

This scenario is created to help you learn how to verify information.

Jonfolo's First Big Story

Jonfolo had always dreamt of becoming a journalist. As a young woman in The Gambia, she wanted to tell stories that mattered – stories that could make a difference. So, when her editor assigned her to report on a viral claim that a new law would ban young women from using social media after 9 PM, she was both excited and nervous.

The story was already spreading fast. People were outraged, sharing posts, arguing online, and calling for protests. Jonfolo's first instinct was to write about it immediately – after all, everyone was talking about it. But before she did, she remembered something her journalism mentor had told her: "Always verify before you amplify." Determined to get the facts right, Jonfolo began her verification process.

🔍 First, she checked the source. The original post came from an anonymous social media account with no known credibility. That was a red flag.

📞 Next, she reached out to official sources. She called a trusted contact at the Ministry of Information, who confirmed that no such law existed.

📄 TThen, she cross-checked with reliable news outlets. None of the respected newspapers or broadcasters had reported anything about the supposed ban.
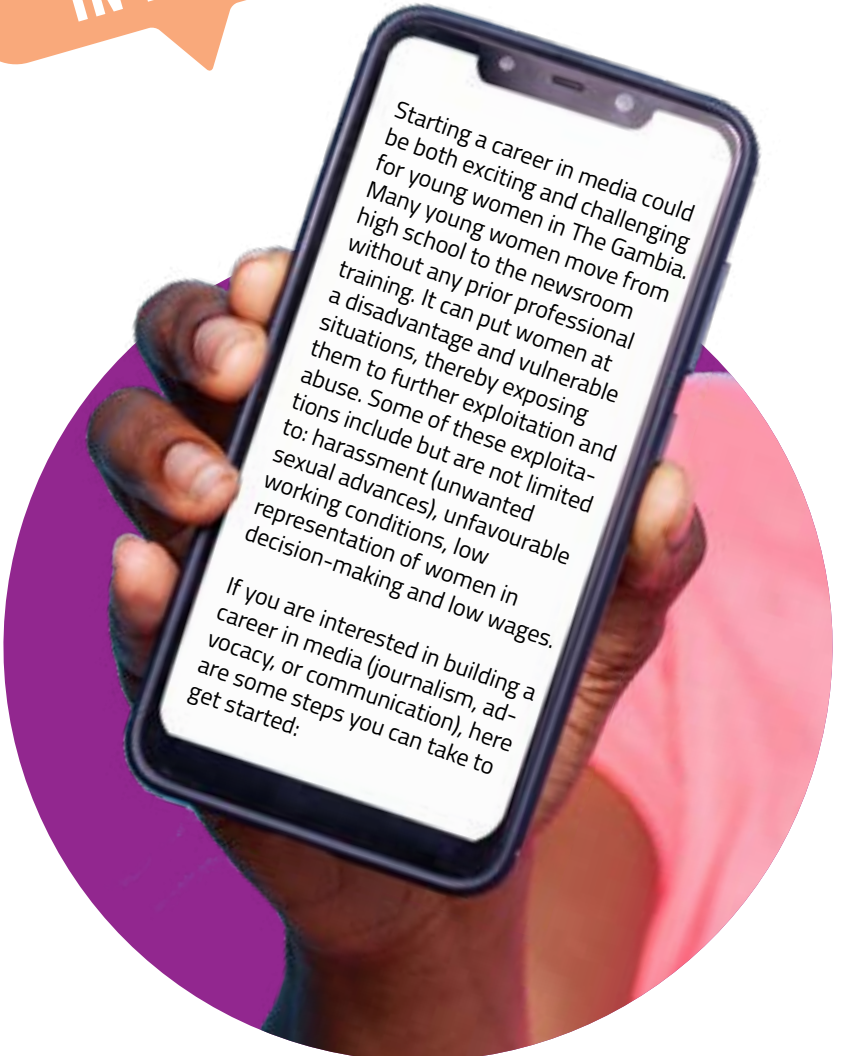
🖼️ Finally, she looked for evidence. A photo supposedly showing a government document about the ban was circulating online. Still, when she used a reverse image search, she discovered it had been edited from an old, unrelated press release. With all this information, Jonfolo realised the story was completely false–just a rumour designed to create fear and panic.

Instead of publishing the claim, she wrote a different article: "No, The Gambia is NOT Banning Young Women from Social Media: How to Spot Fake News." In her piece, she not only debunked the false claim but also educated her audience on how to verify news for themselves. The response was overwhelming. People thanked her for setting the record straight. Her editor praised her for her professionalism. And Jonfolo felt proud–she had upheld the integrity of journalism and protected public trust. From that moment on, she knew that verification wasn't just a step in the reporting process – it was the heart of responsible journalism.

women who inspire us
Agnes Ayatunde John-Thomasi
Manager/ Director,
West Africa Democracy Radio (WADR)

3. HOW TO GET STARTED IN MEDIA

Starting a career in media could be both exciting and challenging for young women in The Gambia. Many young women move from high school to the newsroom without any prior professional training. It can put women at a disadvantage and vulnerable situations, thereby exposing them to further exploitation and abuse. Some of these exploitations include but are not limited to: harassment (unwanted sexual advances), unfavourable working conditions, low representation of women in decision-making and low wages.

If you are interested in building a career in media (journalism, advocacy, or communication), here are some steps you can take to get started:

Training and scholarship opportunities

Continual training opportunities in specialised areas are crucial for young women to advance smoothly in the media sector. Training opportunities, such as professional courses at Technical and Vocational Training Centres (TVETS) and Universities, are often made easier with scholarship opportunities. Women can prioritise their academic and professional development to remain relevant in the media.

How to find training opportunities

- University and media training institutions, such as the University of The Gambia (UTG), the Media Academy for Journalism and Communication (MAJaC), and the Insight Training Centre, offer training opportunities for young and aspiring media professionals.
- Associations and unions, such as the Gambia Press Union (GPU), the Women Journalists Association of The Gambia (Wojag), the Young Journalists Association of The Gambia (YJAG), and other industry-specific groups, offer specialised training opportunities for young women in the media.
- Online Learning Platforms: There are platforms, such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Dubawa, YouTube, and Google, among others, where you can access a range of courses on media-related subjects.
- Learning on the job in roles you are interested in.

Scholarships

Young women can acquire merit- and award-based scholarships provided by the Gambian government, such as those offered by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science, and Technology (Moherst), as well as other government bodies, educational institutions, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOS).

Where to find a scholarship

- Search and apply for scholarship opportunities online by visiting websites and social media platforms of universities, training institutions, NGOs, and the government to increase your chances of getting a scholarship.
- Government bodies, local and international organisations, and philan-thropists provide scholarship packages to students pursuing professional courses.
- Carefully read scholarship guidelines and requirements to show whether you stand a chance and ensure it matches your interest area.
- You are also encouraged to self-fund if you are interested in taking up a career in the media.

Engage in internships

You can develop essential skills, obtain hands-on experience, and have a significant impact in the media industry through internships.

benefits of internships

- Build valuable connections by meeting and engaging professionals while contributing to meaningful courses.
- Interning for media organisations, community projects, non-profit organisations, or government agencies can provide valuable insights into the realities of the media industry.
- Young women should seek internship opportunities that align with their career goals and enable them to develop skills and establish connections.
- An internship in a professional setting can help develop young women's confidence and resilience, preparing them for a long-term career in the media.
- It enhances women's employability, giving you a competitive edge.

how to find internships

- Utilise resources, e.g. noticeboards at your university, schools, and career centres, which may have listings for internships related to media.
- Visit or write to media outlets or institutions to seek internship opportunities.
- Websites of potential job recruiters, such as GAMJOBS, government agencies, and local and international organisations, often feature internship opportunities.
- Leverage on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Facebook, which are primarily used in The Gambia.
- Reach out to contacts in your network or join professional organisations to learn about internship opportunities that may not be widely advertised.
- Regularly check the careers page of media companies, networks, and production firms for internship openings.

seek mentorship opportunities

Mentorship allows for a smooth career advancement of young women in the media sector. The following are tips on how to seek mentorship opportunities.

- Identify what your goal is and the type of skill development you will need.
- Look within your network to build connections to find potential mentors
- Identify potential mentors in the media to provide guidance and coaching to help you navigate your career path.
- Attend mentorship programmes organised by professional media

organisations such as WoJAG and the Young Journalists Association of The Gambia (YJAG) to connect with experienced professionals.

- Mentors and mentees should respect time, be proactive and professional.

Types of mentorship programmes

- Formal mentorship programmes are structured programmes usually organised by universities, professional associations, or industry organisations. They typically include matching mentors and mentees, scheduled meetings, and clear goals.
- Informal mentorship may develop naturally through networking, work relationships, or mutual interests. Informal mentorship is more flexible and personalised.
- Peer mentorship is a type of mentorship programme where individuals at similar career stages work together to support each other. It can be fruitful in learning environments where collaboration is key.
- Group mentorship involves one mentor guiding a group of mentees. This model encourages discussion and shared learning experiences, often around specific topics or themes.
- Industry-specific mentorship is a specialised mentorship programme that can provide focused insights relevant to your area of interest.

Building professional networks

Professional networks are groups of people from the same or similar industries or with similar interests who nurture relationships to connect, share information, and explore opportunities for career growth. For young women in the media, establishing a professional network is crucial for career development, accessing opportunities, gaining exposure, and staying informed about industry trends.

To effectively build and maintain your network in the media sector, here are some strategies and tips you should follow:

- Identify your goals by determining what you want to achieve through networking.
- Select your areas of interest within the media industry, such as journalism, public relations, communication, digital media, film, and photography, to inform your networking efforts.
- Attend workshops, conferences, and seminars relevant to your interests. These events are often attended by industry leaders and peers, offering a valuable networking opportunity.
- Participate in online volunteering, internships, fellowships, traineeships, and mentorships to develop your career.

Leverage online platforms

Establishing online platforms helps young women to connect with peers locally and internationally. It allows them to have their voices heard and to succeed in the media industry. Here's how to use them to your advantage

- Join social and professional networking sites like LinkedIn, X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp and Telegram to connect with professionals, share content, and engage in groups.
- Follow and engage with journalists, media organisations, communication experts and influencers. Participate in social media chats related to media topics, such as Twitter Spaces, WhatsApp group messaging, or calls, among others.
- Join discussions on professional media groups such as the GPU official online platforms, Associated Press, International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and other professional media platforms. These are some of the online hubs for networking, collaboration, and opportunities.
- To take up online courses and training in career development, e.g. webinars, certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, undergraduate and graduate.

The following points can help you navigate your networking goal:
- Approach networking with a focus on building genuine relationships rather than just transactional interactions. Take the time to get to know individuals and understand their interests.
- Reach out to school press clubs or the university's alumni network to connect with peers and explore possible opportunities for career development.
- Join organisations like the WoJAG, YJAG, GPU and other relevant Civil Service Organisations (CSOs) to access resources and networking opportunities.
- Stay in touch with people you meet by exchanging emails, messages or phone calls to keep the conversation going and explore possible opportunities.

create and share content

With the advancement of technology, young women can smoothly transition into the media by creating and sharing impactful content to keep the audience engaged. You can also create conversations and increase awareness on issues affecting women and society that are relevant to your audience.
To enhance your prospects in the media sector, you should consider the following:

- Possess a strong knowledge and skill set in content creation, encompassing writing, research, public speaking, and technical production.
- Create a story idea or concept on what you want your audience to know.
- Start a blog, podcast, or video series to share impact-driven stories, insights and experiences on relevant issues.
- Write and produce articles for relevant publications. This can help you establish credibility and make connections with editors and senior media professionals.
- Participate in discussions relevant to your work.

stay informed

Staying informed and connected can help young women to be mindful of biases and misinformation, which can taint their reputation in the media. To help you stay informed, consider the following points:

- Regularly follow, monitor, and observe current trends and developments.
- Be curious and assertive, and maintain a questioning attitude to broaden your understanding of issues relevant to your work.
- Get to know the sources and purpose of the information you come across to guarantee its accuracy.
- Share relevant articles with your network to spark conversations that would engage the audience.
- Maintain contact with your connections. Periodically reach out to see how they are doing, share updates about your career, or arrange formal meetups.
- Research to broaden your understanding of the topic.

Tips for improvement

Writing is a fundamental skill in media. It allows you to communicate ideas clearly while engaging your audience. For beginners, you can start practising through letters, essays, personal daily stories, journals and more.

- Try writing in various formats, such as short stories, simple news reports, opinion pieces, features, podcast scripts, and band log posts, to diversify your skill set.
- Seek feedback by sharing your writing with peers or mentors and asking for constructive criticism to identify areas for growth.

Research is needed for developing credible content and gaining a deeper understanding of your audience. It helps you gather relevant facts, analyse trends, and provide well-informed arguments.

- Familiarise yourself with research methods, including qualitative and quantitative research techniques, as well as how to analyse information and evaluate sources for credibility and reliability critically.
- Utilise a variety of sources, including books, journals, online databases, and social media research methods, to gain well-grounded perspectives.

Public Speaking is vital for the effective exchange of ideas and engaging the audience. It is a key skill for presentations, media interviews, community engagements and hosting events.

- Seek out opportunities to speak in public, whether in formal settings such as presentations or informal ones like community events.
- Tailor your message to the interests and needs of your audience, and maintain eye contact, use gestures, and maintain an open posture to engage your audience more effectively.
- Record practice sessions and review them to identify strengths and areas for improvement, such as pace and clarity of expression.

Technical production **includes the skills required to produce and edit content, including audio, video, and graphics. It involves understanding the technology used in media production.**

- Follow industry trends and familiarise yourself with software and equipment, e.g. Photoshop and Premiere Pro, and more to remain relevant in the sector.
- Practice hands-on skills by creating your projects, such as podcasts, video clips, or visual art, to apply your technical knowledge in a real-world context.
- Learn about recording techniques, lighting, sound design, and editing principles to produce high-quality content.
- Compile your production work into a portfolio that showcases your skills and projects.

women who inspire us
Fatoumata (Fatu) Camara
CEO & Founder of The Fatu Network

To excel in media work, a genuine passion is essential. It requires commitment, consistency, and dedication to achieve success. My journey in this field has had its challenges, but I'm proud to say that I have always given my best effort. Passion, perseverance, and dedication are the pillars of success in media. No matter the challenges, give your best – because every step you take shapes the future of storytelling.

4. WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

The media is a key pillar in influencing public views and opinions, serving as an essential platform for advocacy, empowerment, and representation. In The Gambia, young women working in the media face various challenges, including low wages and unfavourable working conditions, which limit their potential to excel in the sector. However, there are exciting opportunities for personal development which have, over the years, boosted impact-driven storytelling and strengthened women's representation in the media.

Role of Women in Media

- Women in the Gambian media sector continue to play a vital role in spreading information, connecting communities and advocating for social change. They are often key pillars in providing in-depth analysis, especially on stories related to women and children. The participation of women in the media promotes a more equitable portrayal of gender across various media sectors.
- With the existing male dominance in key positions in the media sector, some women have defied the odds and have created media platforms and organisations that serve as a primary source of news to Gambians. Their involvement in establishing media platforms and women-led advocacy organisations has challenged the saying that *'women often do not do as well as their male counterparts in the media.'*
- Women journalists and media professionals can confront stereotypes, break barriers, challenge critical issues affecting women, and shape public discourse by sharing their distinct experiences and perspectives to counter the narrative.
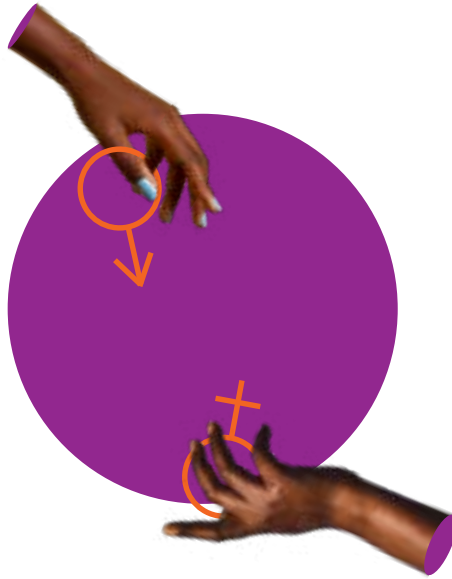
challenges women face in the media:

Advancement in the Gambian media sector can be a challenging task for young women seeking to build a career in the industry. The existing challenges, such as gender-based discrimination, inadequate representation in leadership roles, workplace harassment, and gender stereotypes, all hinder their career development. The following are some of the challenges you could face in the media industry:

- **Male-Dominated Leadership** – Decision-making roles are predominantly occupied by men, which limits women's career growth.
- **Limited Training and Mentorship** – Women, especially those in rural areas, often lack access to professional development opportunities.
- **Challenges in Critical Reporting** – Covering sensitive topics like gender-based violence is difficult due to patriarchal norms, with men often controlling final edits.
- **Overlooked Concerns** – Women's issues in media are frequently sidelined due to unequal representation in leadership.
- **Salary Gaps and Career Stagnation** – Women earn significantly less than men, and have fewer opportunities for career growth, leading many to leave for better-paying jobs.

How to overcome these challenges:

- **Invest in Professional Growth:** Continual training enhances skill development and personal growth.
- **Consistency and resilience:** Women should establish specific objectives and maintain a strong work ethic, even when faced with challenges such as discrimination or limited opportunities.
- **Challenge Cultural Barriers:** Speak out against patriarchy and workplace discrimination to promote gender equality.
- **Join Advocacy Groups:** Support organisations that fight for media workers' rights and push for gender-inclusive policies.
- **Promote Positive Representation:** Use media platforms to challenge stereotypes and encourage diversity.
- **Negotiate Fair Pay:** Advocate for salaries that match your skills and experience. Refer to the GPU Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) for guidance. Collective Bargaining
- **Engage Men & Boys:** Involve them in initiatives advancing gender equality, such as the Network Against Gender-Based Violence (NGBV)

opportunities

In recent years, there has been a significant transformation in the Gambian media, with an increasing number of women emerging in the media sector. Opportunities flourish across various media sectors, including communication, journalism, and digital media. Through advocacy and storytelling, you can shape the narrative on women's empowerment and representation in the media. Below are some of the opportunities you can leverage:

- Make use of digital media platforms and tools to create content and make your work visible to organisations locally and internationally that align with your content. Additionally, social media is a fantastic way to network with specialists in the field, share their work, and locate mentors.
- By coming up with interesting programmes on television, radio and columns in newspapers, you can address vital issues, boost your professional growth and employability.
- You can benefit from numerous local and international training programmes designed to empower women, improve their skills and boost their confidence in the media.
- Your exposure in the media can expand your professional network within The Gambia and globally. By maintaining trust, credibility and professionalism in your work, you can partner with organisations that advocate for women's empowerment, such as the NGBV or WoJAG, among others, to promote women's involvement in the media.

- You can benefit from project support, training opportunities, or exchange programmes offered by regional and international organisations, embassies, or unions that support gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives.

scenario on women in media

Note: This scenario is created to help you learn about the challenges women face in the media.

on how to overcome challenges

Suntou, a 25-year-old journalist, activist and married woman from Basse, is passionately working to raise awareness about the risks associated with Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and to promote women's rights. Drawing from her own experience as a survivor of FGM, which is also common in her region, she utilises her Facebook page to share her story and educate others on the dangers of FGM.

However, after her live weekly show on her page discussing the trauma imposed by FGM, she encounters significant online harassment, including bullying and threats, from individuals, most especially men, saying she wants to transform their culture.

Despite the emotional challenges she faces, Suntou remains steadfast in her mission, establishing a support network for fellow survivors and partnering with organisations that address gender-based violence.

As she felt insecure, the support from her organisation helped her overcome the trauma. With advice from her organisation and mentors, she took precautions to safeguard her online presence.

Suntou's journey is a testament to resilience, illustrating that speaking out can foster positive change and motivate others to combat harmful practices such as FGM in rural Gambia.

When I entered the media, there were few women in leadership and even fewer who looked or spoke like me. The landscape was largely male-dominated, and it took resilience, curiosity, and self-belief to find my place. I didn't always feel seen or heard, but I stayed and I learned.

Throughout my 11-year journey with The Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS), I started from the very bottom as an intern, eager to learn and prove myself. I moved from Announcer to Assistant Producer, then Producer, and ultimately served as a Senior Producer. Every stage of that growth taught me something new: the importance of teamwork, the power of storytelling, and the responsibility that comes with shaping narratives in a national space.

The newsroom and production studio became my classrooms. I found my voice, sharpened my skills, and most importantly, began using what I had to amplify the voices of others, especially women and marginalised groups. I've always believed that journalism is not just about reporting facts, but about giving people a reason to care; as a result, I grew and eventually rose.

One of the most fulfilling parts of my journey has been mentoring young women entering the field. I see in most of them the same fire I once had, and I know how far encouragement, opportunity, and guidance can go.

5. MEDIA ETHICS

Media Ethics are the principles and standards that regulate media work. It emphasises responsible reporting, protecting integrity, and accountability, especially in the gathering and dissemination of information through the media. The basic principles of media ethics hold significant importance in every society, including The Gambia. Such ethical principles serve as a basis for media workers to uphold professional standards by promoting accountable communication that honours the rights and dignity of individuals and communities. The following are some of the ethical principles in the media you must know:

Truthfulness: This principle requires that you adopt truth as an essential pillar by ensuring that the stories you share accurately represent reality and connect with your audience. As a young woman in the media, it is encouraged to be honest in your reporting to avoid misinformation and disinformation, and to present accurate information.

Accuracy: It goes along with the principle of truthfulness as it ensures that the information you share is accurate, reliable, and free from error. It entails verifying facts, statistics, and statements before sharing, publishing, or broadcasting to ensure that the information provided is accurate and correct.

Impartiality/Fairness: This entails presenting all aspects of a narrative in a balanced and impartial manner, free from bias or favouritism. It helps you present information fairly, capturing various voices, especially from marginalised communities, to promote inclusive conversations that strengthen societal understanding.

Accountability: This principle emphasises the importance of taking responsibility for the content you create or share, promoting ethical practices that safeguard your credibility while fostering a more positive public discourse. As a media professional, you should accept responsibility for your reporting and correct errors when they occur.

Public Interest: This principle guides media practitioners, especially journalists, in reporting and sharing content that is in the best interest of the public. For journalists, news content must be relevant and of interest to the public.

Privacy: It is essential to build trust by guaranteeing that your source identity and any personal information will remain confidential. Violating this trust can lead to significant consequences for both the source and the journalist's reputation.

Humanity: The principle underscores the importance for media professionals to engage with individuals and communities in a manner that reflects respect and dignity. It advocates for the inclusion of a diverse range of perspectives and voices, ensuring that reporting avoids causing harm and perpetuating stereotypes.

Independence: This principle is vital for journalists to fulfil their commitment to truth and to act in the public's best interest without bias or censorship. Upholding independence strengthens the credibility of news organisations and facilitates thorough, transparent reporting that educates the public and promotes accountability.

Avoid sensationalism: This principle advocates for a balanced approach that acknowledges the complexities of news stories while upholding integrity and ethical standards in journalism. Sensationalism tends to favour eye-catching headlines or stories, often sacrificing context and truth, which can lead to audience misdirection or manipulation.

Source Protection: You should bear the duty of protecting the identities of vulnerable or marginalised sources, particularly those who might encounter revenge or danger for voicing their concerns. When covering sensitive issues involving such sources as victims of violence or whistleblowers, you must thoughtfully assess the potential impact of your reporting on these individuals.

Say no to bribery: Female media professionals can be exposed to threats that can tarnish their reputation, such as bribery. It is essential to reject any instances of bribery or corruption that may put your integrity at risk, diminish your credibility and further result in distorted reporting. It is vital to maintain transparency regarding your information sources and to be accountable to your audience. Bribery significantly weakens public trust in the media.

ethical considerations you must know

Reporting on Gender
- Avoid biases and use gender neutral terms when writing or reporting stories on gender.
- Protect the identity of survivors and victims, their families and specific locations when necessary to avoid societal stigma or discrimination.
- Get expert analysis when reporting on critical gender issues.

Online Reporting
- Avoid sharing defamatory or false content online.
- Correct false publications and, where necessary, delete the original content on online platforms.
- Research credible online platforms and give a reference.

Reporting on Children
- To protect the identity of the child, such as their name, specific address, voice, image, and close relatives, when the story is negative.
- Seek the consent of parents or guidance before interviewing, publishing or broadcasting any information about children.
- Be sensitive when reporting complex matters involving children. Your story should be in the best interest of the child.
- Promote positive and success stories about children when reporting.
- Do not report cases of children to the children's courts.

Reporting on Court
- Respect the integrity of the court to avoid contempt.
- Simplify jargon and technical legal terms.
- Seek permission from cthe ourt before recording or taking photos during hearings.
- Avoid discussing the merits or substance of an ongoing case.

scenario on ethical reporting
The scenario below is designed to help you learn about ethical reporting in sensitive situations.

reporting on a rape case
A case of rape has surfaced in the North Bank Region involving a young female student. The accused is a prominent public figure employed by a

major company in Banjul. This incident has drawn attention from local media houses, prompting critical discussions regarding gender-based violence and the effectiveness of the legal system in addressing such matters within the country.

Sohna, a journalist working for a leading media organisation, has been tasked by her editor to report on the court proceedings related to the case. In her interview with the victim, Sohna discovers that the young woman is very anxious about her privacy, fearing potential backlash from her community and personal consequences, particularly due to the high-profile nature of the alleged abuser. While engaging with various community members and online commentators, Sohna encounters a repeating narrative that shifts blame onto her (the victim), saying her actions or lifestyle may have played a role in the assault.

How would you report on this case?

This is what Sohna did: In her coverage, Sohna chooses to respect the victim's privacy. She uses an anonymous identifier to protect the victim's privacy while concentrating on the consequences of the case regarding gender-based violence in The Gambia. She highlights the necessity for changes needed to assist rape victims and others that faced gender-based violence and ensure that offenders are held answerable to their crimes. Sohna's approach shows responsible journalism, saying that it is possible to address sensitive topics such as sexual violence with honesty, while also creating a societal dialogue on the essential changes needed in the management of such cases.

6. MEDIA LAWS IN THE GAMBIA

The media is generally referred to as the fourth estate in a democracy. A free press is a vital component of the governance process in a democratic state. A nation without a free press is vulnerable to manipulation and propaganda. The role of a free press in a democracy is to investigate, report, question, interrogate and analyse situations in holding duty bearers accountable to the people.

Legal Framework for the Media in the Gambia

The 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia is the supreme law of The Gambia, guaranteeing media freedom, albeit with certain restrictions.

Freedom of Speech and Expression

Section 25 (1) Every person shall have the right to (a) freedom of speech and expression, which shall include freedom of the press and other media; The constitution also provides rights that deal with or are connected to freedom of expression and these rights include freedom of thought, conscience and belief, which shall consist of academic freedom; freedom to assemble and demonstrate peaceably and without arms and freedom to petition the Executive for redress of grievances and to resort to the Courts for the protection of his or her rights.

Freedom and responsibility of the media

Section 207(1) of the Constitution, 1997, guarantees the freedom and in-dependence of the press and other information media. It is an expression of commitment to The Gambia that such media rights and independence are or should be adequately fulfilled.
It requires that an Act of the National Assembly may make provisions for the establishment and operation of the press and other information media.

More importantly, the press and other information media shall always be free to uphold the principles, provisions, and objectives of this Constitution, as well as the government's responsibility and accountability to the people of The Gambia.

Restrictions on Freedom of Expression

While freedom of expression is a fundamental right in the 1997 constitution of The Gambia, it must be exercised within the boundaries of the law. It means that Gambian laws have imposed certain restrictions on speech and expression.

These restriction are contained in section 25 (4), wherein free speech and expression is exercised subject to the law of The Gambia in so far as that law imposes reasonable restriction on the exercise of the rights and freedoms thereby conferred, which are necessary in a democratic society and are required in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of The Gambia, national security, public order, decency or morality, or to contempt of court.

Furthermore, Section 209 of the Constitution also restricts the rights and freedoms of the media, subject to laws that are reasonably required in a democratic society, in the interest of national security, public order, public morality, and to protect the reputations, rights, and freedoms of others.

The law, as discussed, has outlined limitations on freedom of expression as follows:

- **Sovereignty and Integrity of The Gambia:** The law limits speech that threatens the country's sovereignty and unity.
- **National Security**: Limits making statements that endanger state security, such as inciting violence or terrorism.
- **Public Order:** The law limits speech that may lead to unrest, riots, or disturbances.
- **Decency or Morality:** This restricts content that is deemed offensive, obscene, or harmful to public morals.
- **Contempt of Court:** This prevents making statements that could undermine the judiciary, interfere with fair trials, or disrespect the court system.

Note: There are also restrictions regarding legal proceedings on minors before the children's court.

Other Relevant Legislation Relating to Freedom of Expression

Other relevant legislations are relevant to the work of media practitioners, as they are directly or indirectly connected to the work of journalism or the journalists themselves.

Women's Act, 2010

The Women's Act 2010 empowers and protects women and girls from discrimination and all forms of violence or harmful practices. The act reflects The Gambia's commitment to upholding women's rights, bodily autonomy, and gender equality, aligning with both national priorities and international human rights obligations. It empowers women and girls by ensuring legal protection from practices that endanger their health, dignity, and future.

Domestic Violence Act 2013

The Domestic Violence Act 2013 focuses on the prevention, protection, and response to domestic abuse, particularly against women and children. It clearly states that no form of violence is justified by consent, including physical, emotional, sexual, or psychological abuse.

Sexual Offences Act

The Sexual Offences Act 2013 is a landmark law in The Gambia that defines and criminalises various forms of sexual violence, including rape, harassment, and exploitation. It aims to protect survivors, especially women and children, by ensuring justice and promoting a safer society.

Labour Act, 2023

The act is passed to regulate the recruitment of labour, apprenticeship, the rights of employers and employees and for connected matters.

Section 60 (1) of the act provides that there shall be no night work or overtime by pregnant employees, except with their written consent, an employer shall not-

a. Assign or employ a pregnant employee to do work between the hours of ten o'clock in the evening and seven o'clock in the morning; or

b. Engage for overtime work, a pregnant employee or a mother of a child less than eight months old.

Section 62(1) requires maternity leave. Female employees, on production of a medical certificate issued by a medical officer indicating the expected date of their confinement, are entitled to a period of six months' maternity leave with pay, as per the Women's Act.

(2) A female employee who is nursing her unweaned child is entitled, each working day, at a time convenient to her, at least-
a. two nursing breaks of thirty minutes each; or
b. One one-hour nursing break during her working hours.

Information and Communications Act, 2009

This act outlines the requirements for obtaining a media license, such as the provision of documentation verifying the applicant's business, a detailed description of the intended media operation, and proof of financial stability. The Act also deals with cybercrime and the processing of personal data. Moreover, the act provides for the licensing of all broadcast media.

Section 227 requires the broadcasting media to promote the development of broadcasting services which are responsive to the needs of the Gambian audience; preserve and promote the plural nature of the Gambian culture by ensuring that licensees include in their services programmes reflecting the linguistic and cultural diversity of The Gambia, and also ensure that broadcasting services-
(i) are of such a nature as not to encourage or incite crime or racial hatred leading to disorder or offending public feeling,
(ii) give adequate coverage to information, education, culture, entertainment and recreation, and
(iii) are impartial and accurate;
(iv) advertisement content related to medicine shall be approved by the medicine control agency and;
(v) Where advertising is not medicine-related, such advertisement must be approved by the competent authority.

The Criminal Code Cap 10: Vol III Revised Laws of The Gambia, 2009

This legislation encompasses numerous offences that criminalise specific acts, including the publication of false news, false publication and broadcasting, incitement to violence, sedition, and other related media offences.

Access to Information Act of 2021

The Access to Information Act of 2021 is a significant piece of legislation designed to enhance government transparency and accountability. It grants all persons resident in The Gambia, including journalists, the legal right to access information held by public authorities, particularly those funded by the state.

Key Provisions:
- Right to Access Information: Citizens, including media workers, have the right to request government-held information, and public authorities must respond to these requests within a reasonable time frame.
- Public Authorities' Obligations: Public bodies are required to proactively disclose information related to government policies, budgets, projects, and official reports. These bodies must maintain well-organised records and ensure public access to them.

Exemptions:
Some information can be withheld if it poses a threat to national security, invades personal privacy, or interferes with law enforcement activities. Sensitive materials, such as state secrets, cabinet submissions, minutes, or ongoing investigations, may also be exempt from disclosure.

Impact of these laws on Media Work
Transparency in Reporting: With these provisions, media workers now have a solid legal foundation to request government documents, which supports investigative journalism. With access to data on government spending, decisions, and policies, media professionals can better hold authorities accountable.

- Empowerment and Engagement: This law not only helps media workers but also encourages citizens to engage in governance. By making government information more accessible, the law fosters transparency and active participation in decision-making.
- Fight Corruption: The law empowers the public and the media to access key information, which can help reduce corruption and foster trust between the government and the people.
- Strengthen Democracy: The Access to Information Act is an essential tool for upholding democracy. It supports the media's role in ensuring government accountability and empowering citizens to make informed decisions.

Institutional Framework for Media in the Gambia

Media Council of The Gambia: The Media Council is responsible for overseeing the conduct of media professionals and ensuring adherence to ethical standards. It plays a crucial role in promoting responsible journalism and maintaining public trust in the media by ensuring that content follows established guidelines and moral norms.

The Gambia Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA): The Gambia Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) is the body responsible for issuing broadcasting licenses to radio and television stations in The Gambia. It includes ensuring that media outlets comply with national broadcasting standards and regulations. Stations must demonstrate their ability to provide high-quality content, meet technical requirements, and adhere to local laws. PURA helps maintain the integrity of broadcast media by ensuring that only qualified entities are allowed to operate.

Gambia Press Union (GPU): While not a regulatory body, the Gambia Press Union (GPU) holds a vital role in advocating for the rights and welfare of journalists. The GPU monitors compliance with media laws and works to protect journalists' freedoms, ensuring that they can operate without undue pressure or harassment. It also serves as a powerful voice in advocating for reforms and improved working conditions for media professionals in The Gambia.

Access to Information Commission of The Gambia: The Access to Information Commission is an independent body set up under the Access to Information Act. Its role is to ensure that public institutions comply with the law and that citizens' right to access information is upheld. Media workers can file complaints with the Commission when they are denied access to information by public bodies.

Key Responsibilities:
- Monitoring Compliance: The Information Commissioner oversees how public bodies comply with the Access to Information Act.
- Handling Complaints: It handles complaints from citizens or media workers who feel their requests for information have been wrongly denied or delayed.
- Referral Powers: The Commission can refer cases of non-compliance to the appropriate legal bodies, such as the courts.
- Advisory Role: It provides guidance to public bodies on how to properly implement and comply with the ATI law.

Legal actions relating to media work

In the media industry, journalists and media outlets must be aware of various civil actions that can arise from their reporting. These actions can have serious legal consequences, particularly when involving matters of reputation, speech, and the delicate balance between freedom of expression and the protection of individuals' rights. The civil action relevant to media professionals in The Gambia is defamation. Understanding this legal concept

is crucial for navigating the legal landscape, avoiding potential liabilities, and ensuring responsible journalism.

civil liabilities

These are legal wrongs for which the affected party may take legal action in court, and if the person is found liable, they will be ordered to pay damages, costs, and interest.

Defamation involves spreading false information about someone that harms their reputation, either personally or professionally. It can lead to a loss of respect, reputation, or business opportunities for the individual targeted. In the past, defamation was considered a criminal offence. Still, it has since been decriminalised in The Gambia *(as seen in the case of The Gambia Press Union, Saikou Jammeh, and Baboucarr Ceesay v. Attorney General).*

types of defamation:

Slander: Defamation through spoken words.
Libel: Any defamation on television, radio, online and print.

criteria for defamation:

The following criteria must generally be met to establish a defamation claim:

- Person and Defamatory Matter: The defamatory matter must refer to the person in question.
- False Information: The statements, words, or signs must be false.
- Communication to a Third Party: The defamatory matter must be communicated to someone other than the person defamed.
- Intention to Harm Reputation: There must be an intention to lower the individual's reputation in the eyes of society.

Note: The defence to defamation includes truth, opinion, qualified Privilege, consent and fair Comment.

contempt of court:

Contempt of court refers to behaviour or actions that disobey or disrespect the authority, justice, and dignity of the court. It occurs when an individual fails to comply with a court order, disrupts court proceedings, or shows disrespect toward legal authority.
There are generally two types of contempt:

- **Civil Contempt:** This occurs when a person willfully disobeys a court order intended to benefit another party, such as failing to pay child support or

comply with a custody arrangement. Civil contempt is often remedied by requiring the individual to comply with the order, and sometimes by imposing fines or imprisonment until compliance is achieved.

- **Criminal Contempt:** This involves actions that show disrespect or disrupt court proceedings, such as yelling at the judge, interrupting a trial, or refusing to testify when ordered to do so by the court. Criminal contempt typically involves a punishment such as a fine or jail time, designed to punish disrespectful behaviour and maintain order in the court.
- **Invasion of Privacy:** This relates to the unreasonable intrusion of an individual's right to privacy as protection under section 23 of the 1997 Constitution.
- **Trespass:** The law requires that no person should enter another's private premises without being expressly or impliedly permitted to do so. As such, when a journalist is to enter the private premises of any person, they must seek and obtain permission to enter when in the line of their work.

Criminal Offences:

These are crimes for which media practitioners can be arrested, prosecuted, and, if found guilty, fined or sent to jail, or both.

- **Sedition** refers to conduct, speech, or writings that incite rebellion or resistance against the established order. It involves actions or statements intended to provoke discontent or hostility toward the government, to undermine or overthrow it. Sedition is considered a criminal offence in many countries, including The Gambia, as it poses a threat to national security and public order. The Gambia Criminal Code includes provisions on sedition, covering any utterance that incites dissatisfaction, ill will, or discontent against the president, the judiciary, or different classes of the population.
- **False publication and broadcasting:** Section 181a of the Criminal Code creates a similar provision on false news, which provides that the negligent dissemination of false news or information is punishable by a minimum of one year's imprisonment and/or a fine between D50,000 and D250,000 dalasis.
- **Publication of false news with the intent to cause fear and alarm**
  The publication of false news with the intent to cause fear and alarm to the public is criminally punishable under section 59 of the Criminal Code. The law provides that, a person who publishes or reproduces any statement, rumour or report which is likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or to disturb the public peace, knowing or having reason to believe that the statement, rumour or report is false, commits a misdemeanor and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of two years. The fine for this offence is between D50,000 and D250,000 dalasi.

- **The press before the courts**

  The court is an adjudicatory body that plays an essential role in interpreting and enforcing media laws. Courts ensure that journalistic practices align with constitutional rights, such as freedom of speech, and address legal disputes related to press freedom, defamation, and ethical reporting. They act as a check on potential abuses of power that may affect the media. However, media practitioners in The Gambia have faced numerous prosecutions, especially under the previous regime.

cases against women journalists

- In the case of *Inspector General of Police v. Fatou Jaw Manneh*, a U.S.-based Gambian journalist and political activist, Ms. Fatou Jaw Manneh, was charged with sedition and fined 250,000 dalasi (approximately $9,000) on August 18, 2008. She would serve four years in prison if payment were not made. The Gambia Press Union and its well-wishers paid the fine. She was arrested at Banjul International Airport in March 2007 and held for six days (beyond the 72-hour legal limit) before being charged with four sedition-related offences based on remarks she made during a 2005 interview with an online newspaper in the United States.

- Sarata Jabbi (nursing a baby at the time) on the case *The State v Pap Saine & 5 Others* was indicted and sentenced by the High Court along with the other five members of the Gambia Press Union (GPU) to various terms of imprisonment for insulting the President through a Rejoinder published in the local press. However, they received a Presidential pardon shortly after beginning their time in jail.

- Another case before the ECOWAS Court is the case of *the Federation of African Journalists & Others v The Republic of The Gambia*, where the defendants Fatou Camara, Fatou Jaw Manneh, Alagie Jobe and Lamin Fatty were forced to flee their own country for fear of physical and mental harm, as a consequent of their work as journalists. The 2nd defendant, Fatou Camara, was arrested in The Gambia and charged with the publication of false news with intent to cause fear and alarm, as well as the publication of false news on the internet, for falsely accusing the president. The 3rd defendant, Fatou Jaw Manneh, was charged with sedition and publication of false news and was convicted and fined D250,000 for failing to serve a four-year imprisonment. Fatou Camara's trial commenced, but she fled the country after being released on bail.

women who inspire us

Tobaski Tabu Njie Sarr

Country Director, Westminster
Foundation for Democracy.
Human Rights Activist

As an advocate for gender equality, I encourage young women to pursue careers in the media. If you want to make a change and contribute to national development, journalism is a weapon. The media ecosystem presents numerous opportunities in various areas of the media and has established mechanisms and processes to protect the safety, welfare, and rights of women. This approach dismantles barriers such as gender-based violence, stereotypes, and discrimination, thereby enhancing effective participation and leadership positions for women in the media fraternity.

7. SAFETY AND SECURITY OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

Women in the media sector continue to face numerous challenges related to their safety and security while performing their work. In The Gambia, women media professionals face a series of threats such as cyberbullying, physical attacks, workplace harassment, gender-based discrimination, among other safety threats both online and offline, which exposes many to fear, impacts on their wellbeing, and freedom in the media.

Here are some personal safety tips for young women media workers during official engagements:

safety tips

- Always get employment contracts with clear terms of reference, pay, and other benefits.
- Know your employment number and always verify that your Social Security and other deductions are being paid correctly.
- Planning, researching the event, and managing logistics enable you to feel confident in how to prepare and respond to any issues that may arise.
- Consult the GPU, WOJAG, or other professional bodies for advice on any workplace complaints.
- Familiarise yourself with the Labour Act or General Orders for private and public sector employees, respectively, and follow the correct procedure to lay complaints if rights are violated.
- As an intern, adhere to the standard six-month internship duration and negotiate for compensation.
- Gather evidence when you are assaulted or harassed.
- Observe the environment to ensure it is safe and secure
- Dress professionally and in line with the occasion. It can show your professionalism rather than attracting unwanted attention.
- Avoid conflict and remain neutral during a dispute to safeguard your safety.

- Do not respond to threats directed at you during official engagements
- Comport yourself professionally in your engagement with peers, dignitaries and security officials.
- Abide by the laid-down rules and laws regulating your work
- Uphold your position as an observer or mediator rather than an active party in disputes.

online security practices

- Use complex and unique passwords for each account and consider a password manager.
- Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) for added security using authenticator apps.
- Regularly update software to address vulnerabilities and enable automatic updates where possible.
- Use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to encrypt internet traffic and protect your data, especially when using public Wi-Fi.
- Implement full-disk encryption and strong locking mechanisms on devices.
- Be vigilant against phishing, and consider email encryption for sensitive communications.

- Limit sharing personal information online and enable account access alerts.
- Use encrypted messaging apps and secure video conferencing tools to protect your data.
- Clean sensitive metadata before sharing documents and adjust privacy settings.
- Regularly backup important data both locally and in the cloud, using encryption to ensure security.
- Stay informed about security threats through training and share knowledge with colleagues.

scenario

Note: This scenario is created to help you learn how to remain safe in executing your work.

Fanna is a young journalist who anchored a weekly women's column at a widely read newspaper in The Gambia. On 4th April, she was assigned by her editor to cover an international women's rights conference in Banjul. Upon her arrival at the gate, Binta was stopped by a male protocol officer due to her dress code, which the officer described as informal. Binta, who has a sense of style, wore a knee-length dress with block-heeled shoes. She tried to explain to the officer that she had been attending such events in this attire and had never been stopped before. Still, the officer insisted that Binta would not be allowed to enter the hall because her dress violated their dress code policy.

Embarrassed by the situation, Binta stepped aside, where she saw her male counterparts being granted entry without similar scrutiny. She got angry and confronted the officer to stop being biased, but the angry officer pulled her with force outside the building.

Her colleagues from other media houses overheard her quarrelling with the officer, and they rushed to the scene to rescue and support her. She later wrote on her Facebook page about the humiliation she encountered at the hands of the protocol officer, which attracted lots of views.

Note: Any journalists who encounter such a situation should refrain from engaging in quarrels, as this will only escalate the situation. As a journalist, you should either request the dress code policy or calmly leave the venue for your safety.

It is also essential to gather evidence and report to the nearest authority to protect yourself from future harm. By doing so, you not only protect yourself from potential harm but also lay the ground for addressing any unfair treatment from such people.

resources for ongoing Learning

Recommended Books and Articles

- Press Freedom and Democratic Governance in The Gambia: Gambia
- Right to Information in Africa. Manual
- Supreme Court Judgements- Supreme Court Judgement
- Closing the Gender Gap in Technological Access Gender Gap
- GPU Collective Bargaining Agreement GPU
- Research on Hate Speech in The Gambia Media Hate Speech
- The State of Access to Information and Elections in The Gambia: Access to Information
- Guidelines on Access to Information and Election in Africa: Guidelines
- Assessment of Media Development in Gambia 2019-2021 Assessment
- GPU Coronavirus Safety and Reporting Guide for Journalist GPU Coronavirus
- Assault & Battery- Guide for journalists- is meant to address matters concerning assault and battery as journalists hold a significant responsibility in educating the public, promoting accountability, and championing the rights of those impacted by violence.

Online Courses and Workshops

- The International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ): ICFJ
- Fray College of Communications: Fray College
- International Federation of Journalists IFJ
- Dubawa: Dubawa
- Media Foundation for West Africa: mfwa
- UTG School of Journalism & Digital Media: Digital Media
- Media Academy for Journalism and Communication: MAJaC
- Networks and Organisations Supporting Women in Media
- The Gambia Press Union: GPU
- Women Journalist Association of The Gambia: (WoJAG)
- Women's Bureau and National Women's Council
- The Association of Non-governmental Organisations (TANGO): Tango
- The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices (Gamcotrap): Gamcotrap
- Links to laws relating to media work
- The Constitution of The Gambia was enacted in 1997: Constitution
- The Access to Information Act of The Gambia: Access to Information
- The Gambia: Analysis of Selected Laws on Media: Laws on Media
- Memorandum on the Gambian National Media Commission Bill: Media Commission Bill
- Information and Communications Act, 2009: IC Act
- Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010-2020: Policy
- The Constitution of The GPU: GPU Constitution
- GPU Legal Assistance Policy: GPU Legal

- GPU Code of Conduct: Cherno Jallow Charter of Ethics for Journalists
- Workplace Sexual Harassment Policy for the Media in The Gambia: GPU Policy
- Women's (Amendment) Act 2015 in The Gambia: Women's Amendment Act

credits

The Gambia Team
Meita Touray: Project Manager
Banna Sabally: Community Outreach Coordinator
Mariatou Ngum: Media Guide Editor
Alhagie Jobe: Financial Administrator

Trainers
Isatou Keita - Lead Trainer
Halimatou Ceesay
Madeline Ileleji
Fatou Bintou Sallah

Expert team
Adama Sarr
Juldeh Njie
Jainaba Sonko
Tabaski Njie Sarr
Amie Bojang Sissoho
Haddy Badgie
Ya Amie Touray
Bintou Jaiteh
Amie Sanneh
Annette Anta Camara

rog_agency team
Nyima Jadama
Seda Seusing
Susanne Bellinghausen
Stephen Kovats
Caroline Shukuru Patrick
Dan King'ori
Heike Bluthardt
Kendi Gikunda

access the whole young women's media guide and more #YoMIL online resources with this QR code - https://yomil.org