



# PLANNING FOR INCLUSIVE GREATER BANJUL



**UNOPS**

**Cities Alliance**

Cities Without Slums



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Street view  
in Banjul,  
The Gambia

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## FOREWORD

**Shabnam Mallick,**

*UNOPS Country Director for The Gambia*

As the world reels from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), it is becoming increasingly clear that the inclusive development of cities and urban areas is not only of economic importance, but can save lives by reducing COVID-19 'hotspots' flaring up in congested urban areas. The pandemic has also reminded us that the deficit of public social infrastructure hits women harder, since they end up assuming essential unpaid caring jobs at high risk of exposure.

UNOPS is aware of how cities and infrastructure may impact people differently and places gender equality at the heart of its work. In The Gambia, UNOPS is currently supporting the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government, the Banjul City Council, the Kanifing Municipal Council, the Brikama Area Council and the Gambia Ports Authority through the African Development Bank funded *Greater Banjul 2040* project, which aims to create a digital Urban Plan for Banjul and its surrounding area, including an infrastructure investment plan based on evidence, citizen participation and inclusion principles.

*“The pandemic has also reminded us that the deficit of public social infrastructure hits women harder, since they end up assuming essential unpaid caring jobs at high risk of exposure.”*

*Shabnam Mallick*

To this end, our project team developed a Gender Action Plan at the start of the project which is regularly monitored to ensure gender is incorporated in all activities. Together with Cities Alliance, in August 2020, the team conducted an urban survey to understand the challenges faced by women and girls living in the Greater Banjul Area and a participatory workshops with council representatives to define planning recommendations from a gender and inclusion approach. Through these interactions, we learnt that gender responsiveness in the country is low, there's a need to support tertiary education for girls, women's access to land is limited, they usually experience sexual harassment in public transport, and they have little access to capital and market opportunities.

On behalf of UNOPS in The Gambia, therefore, it is my great pleasure to present the *Inclusive Greater Banjul Report*, which compiles meaningful findings derived from these activities and will inform the future Urban Plan to make sure it addresses the different needs of people.



## FOREWORD *(continued)*

**Giulia Maci,**

*Urban Specialist, Gender Focal Point, Cities for Women Programme, Cities Alliance*

Women experience and use the urban environment in different ways from men; they have different priorities in terms of services and infrastructure, for example regarding transport, housing and public spaces. Such priorities rarely feature in urban policy or investments - leading to exclusion and lost opportunity for both women and society in general.

*“Cities Alliance believes strongly that women are sources of positive and transformational change in cities, and we are committed to helping make this change happen.”*

*Giulia Maci*

Cities Alliance believes strongly that women are sources of positive and transformational change in cities, and we are committed to helping make this change happen.

For us, the issue of gender is closely linked to citizenship. Everything the city does, such as in the delivery of services, affects people differently. How can we design the city in such a way that it is gender inclusive, all the way from vision to infrastructure and services? How do services affect women?

Answering these questions becomes difficult when gender-disaggregated data are missing. For this reason, we have developed the Women’s Engagement City (WEC) profile, a tool for city stakeholders, women and policy makers to guide the collection and analysis of data on how women and girls interact with their city. What is key in this participatory approach to planning, particularly given current COVID-19 restrictions in most countries, is to build strong collaboration amongst local and international experts and actors. In Banjul, The Gambia, in partnership with UNOPS Gambia office, we implemented a variety of participatory processes to ensure that women were able to share their experiences of the city and voice their concerns and wishes for the new city plan.

The *Inclusive Greater Banjul Report* shows that women bring a totally different set of experiences into the urban conversation. Women talked about collaboration and co-creation as ways of making cities, diversity in local leadership, non-driving modes of transport, safe and clean public toilet, plowed sidewalks, and shared care work. They talked about a city where barriers – social and physical – are dismantled, where everyone is welcomed and included. We hope that this report can inspire policy makers and local organizations to work together on improving women’s wellbeing in Banjul.

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Street view in Banjul, The Gambia

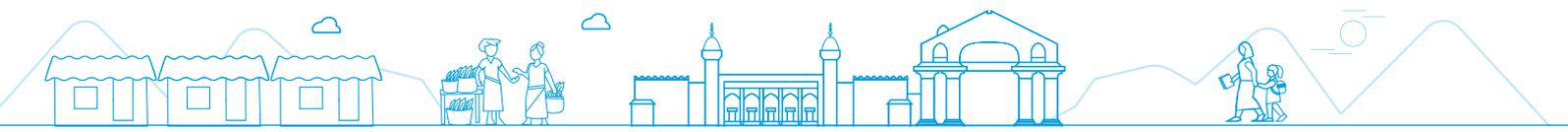
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Gambia has one of the fastest urbanization rates in sub-Saharan Africa, with more than two thirds of the country's population now living in Greater Banjul Area (GBA). To address the environmental and socioeconomic challenges that arise from this, UNOPS is supporting The Gambia's government to develop a strategic urban plan, through the Greater Banjul 2040 project, which will drive urban development and improve services, while promoting climate resilience, economic development and social inclusion. UNOPS is currently working on the Greater Banjul 2020-2040 vision exercise and planning scenarios, which provide an opportunity to allow women to participate in planning their future, exploring their lived experiences in the city (including accessibility, services and use of public spaces) and promoting women's social and economic empowerment. It is important to do this as many urban plans are developed without women's meaningful participation, knowledge and interpretation, even though women actively use urban space and public facilities. To capture and include women's needs and ideas in the future urban plan, UNOPS Gambia is collaborating with Cities Alliance on a women-focused participatory process for the Greater Banjul Area. This process will assist in identifying potential key strategic interventions that could improve the lives and opportunities of women in the city and promote greater inclusion in the city.

This participatory process focuses on assessing the level of women and girls' engagement in the city across four main domains: economic, political-institutional, human and social capital, and spatial. For this process, national data and policy information are collected, along with women's individual and collective experiences and perceptions. The first stage involves initial engagement with women's associations and groups; this stage is followed by a participatory process involving representatives from local institutions and organizations, such as representatives from the municipality, business community, professional networks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)-advocacy groups, women's associations, and other groups. The process includes stakeholder mapping, an individual survey, and participatory workshops, which allow for an assessment of the city from a gender perspective and serve to raise awareness of the need to include women and their experiences in the process.

A further step planned for 2021 focuses on public spaces and collective mapping of public spaces and neighbourhood amenities. Outcomes of this engagement will be included in the city's Digital Urban Plan expected to be completed in July 2021.



# 2

## GENDER EQUALITY IN THE GAMBIA: THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

As part of the City for Women process, key national statistics are gathered. Table 1 provides this information as of 2019.

**Table 1: Key National Statistics Relevant to Women**

INDICATOR	VALUE	SOURCE
Gender Inequality Index <sup>1</sup>	0.439	Human Development Reports (HDR)
Population vulnerable to multidimensional poverty	6.1%	HDR
Violence against women experienced	18% (compared to 24% in less developed countries)	HDR
Proportion of population covered by 3G/4G network	51%	Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) database
Proportion of women in managerial positions	27%	SDG database
Labour force participation rate (male/female) <sup>2</sup>	54.7 (women = 55% labour force against 93.7% for men)	HDR
Proportion of time spent in unpaid domestic chores	Women = 3x men	HDR
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	24.3%	SDG database
Proportion of seats held by women in local government	40%	SDG database
Percentage of women in national legislative body	50%	SDG database
Expected urban growth rates, by 2022	7%	UNOPS Urban Profile
Proportion of population under 10 years old	30%	UNOPS Urban Profile
Proportion of population under 24 years old	49.7%	UNOPS Urban Profile



**51%**

of the population is covered by a 3G/4G network.



Women spend **three times**

the amount of time on unpaid domestic chores than men



**24%**

of seats in the national parliament are held by women

With regard to increasing the participation of women in the city, several important factors should be considered. The constitution of The Gambia protects property rights and interests, and these laws and policies are enforced; however, obtaining leaseholds is expensive and time consuming. Municipalities have a limited mandate for collecting local taxes, with inconsistent policies related to revenue collection.

Gender responsiveness in the country is low because of limited awareness of gender issues, bureaucratic resistance to gender mainstreaming, and weak support, advocacy, coordination, and monitoring. To address these issues, the government has taken several steps to mainstream women into the development process, such as developing a National Policy for the

<sup>1</sup> This measures the proportion of the working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work.

<sup>2</sup> UNOPS, 2020 Urban Profile: Key Highlights.



Advancement of Gambian Women (NPAGW 1999-2009), along with enacting the Trafficking in Children's and Persons Bill in 2005 (amended in 2007), the Women's Act in 2010, the National Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010-2020, and the Gender Mainstreaming and Women Empowerment Strategic Plan (2010-2015). Despite these advances, the following challenges remain: data not being adequately gender-disaggregated, which prevents planners from addressing gender issues adequately; a lack of formal professional education of most women; women's limited access to land, capital and market opportunities; and gender-based violence and sexual abuse. In education, gender parity has been achieved at primary level, but not yet at secondary and tertiary levels. However, women continue to be disadvantaged by socio-cultural practices and discriminatory provisions in customary law. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is still widely practiced as a result of dominant religious beliefs<sup>3</sup>. Non-governmental organizations, such as The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP), are actively working to stop this practice.

# 3

## URBANIZATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE GREATER BANJUL

The Greater Banjul Area (GBA) consists of Banjul, Kanifing and Brikama town in the western region. The population of GBA is expected to be 3.66 million by 2040. Between 30 to 43 per cent of women in GBA have not received any education, although nationally more girls are enrolled in primary and lower secondary school than boys. Most schools in GBA have poor infrastructure and limited access to safe water, electricity and computers.

In GBA, land transactions are becoming increasingly monetized, and there is a shortage of affordable housing. Informal trade dominates the retail sector. Ecosystems provide services for many communities, such as oyster harvesting, fishing, sand mining, tourism and agriculture, yet industrial and household waste dumping is a major problem.



Between  
**30 to 43%**  
of women in GBA  
have not received  
any education.

In terms of infrastructure, pedestrians in GBA account for half of all daily trips, and river transport has largely ceased. Household consumed water is sourced from boreholes and is sufficient for two thirds of the urban population. There are no piped sewer systems in Kanifing and Brikama, and liquid waste removal trucks pipe out sewage of septic tanks. During the rainy season, the sewage system is overloaded, particularly in GBA. High proportions of households in Banjul and Kanifing Local Government Areas (LGAs) have access to electricity (86.4 per cent and 83.2 per cent in 2016)<sup>4</sup>. Because there are no formal solid waste disposal systems in these urban areas, refuse is often burned, either at dumpsites or where it is generated. By 2040, the socio-economic dependency on the employed will be extremely high, with a total dependency ratio of 68 per cent on the economically active, that is, 1.5 dependents per economically active person.

<sup>3</sup> UNOPS, 2020 Urban Profile: Key Highlights.

<sup>4</sup> UNOPS, 2020.



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# 4

## CITY PROFILE AND ENGAGEMENT

### 4.1 Methodology

The Women’s Engagement City (WEC) profile is an approach to engaging women and women’s organizations in planning for their future in the city. It is a way of describing the extent to which an urban area is gender-responsive and of representing the nature of women’s engagement in the city. It is designed to be adapted according to the context and the objectives for each city.

UNOPS Gambia in collaborating with Cities Alliance used the approach of the WEC for the GBA, with an initial engagement involved in identifying key stakeholders and contacting leaders and women’s groups. Next, UNOPS Gambia and Cities Alliance finalized the indicators to be used in the assessment. After this, on-line surveys were sent out, and women from Greater Banjul completed the surveys anonymously, based on their own perceptions and knowledge. Following the survey, UNOPS Gambia and Cities Alliance held two collaborative workshops, one in English and one in Wolof, a language of The Gambia, with a total of 12 women from local organizations and institutions sharing their views on a range of issues that women face in the city. Most participants occupied leadership positions, either as directors in planning and development, or as councillors. In both the surveys and the workshops, women were asked to evaluate various aspects of women’s lives in their cities, on a scale from 1 (critical) through 5 (almost satisfactory), to 9 (full), looking at questions relating to the preconditions, economic, political-institutional, and human and social capital aspects of their lives.

Following the workshops, a radio show took place on 21 October 2020, to reach a broader audience, raise awareness and provide opportunities for further feedback. Participants included the Greater Banjul 2040 Deputy Project Manager, an engineer from National Roads Authority, the Directors of Development and Planning in Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC) and Brikama Area Council (BAC), the Mayoress of Banjul City Council (BCC), and the principal planner of the Department of Physical Planning and Housing from the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government.

A further step will be a collective data mapping process in 2021.



## 4.2 Voices of Women in Greater Banjul Area

The key issues raised by women in the Greater Banjul Area through the participatory processes (particularly the survey and workshops) are discussed below.



### PUBLIC SPACES, WOMEN'S SAFETY, AND LIVING CONDITIONS FOR WOMEN

A prominent issue is lack of safety in public spaces, particularly spaces where women can meet and connect. Reasons for this lack of safety include a lack of land use planning, selling public space for profit, and a lack of support. However, women's safety varies according to different locations in the city.

***“There are very few community centres, and these cannot be accessed for just women gatherings. As a result, most meetings are conducted in our houses.”***

*Workshop participant*

During the radio show, it was noted that in KMC there are some community centres, although some are dilapidated; however, the local government is in process of rehabilitating them. In 2020, the government created ward offices for each councillor, which can be used to hold meetings.

Other safety concerns are gender-based violence, inadequate police training to deal with this, and increasing incidences of rape. *“Most market sellers are women. They wake up very early in the morning to get to the market, sometimes they get attacked by criminals, as the place is usually dark at that time. Streetlights should be installed in most areas to reduce the risk of being attacked. Parking lots are also important for those of us driving,”* stated a radio show participant.

Areas that need improvement are public spaces (with lighting, toilets and transport facilities), maternal health, and addressing the prevalent “culture of silence”.

Living conditions for women in the city generally are seen as extremely poor, relating mainly to the high cost of living.

***“The risk of poverty is too high. We are willing to do anything for our families to survive.”***

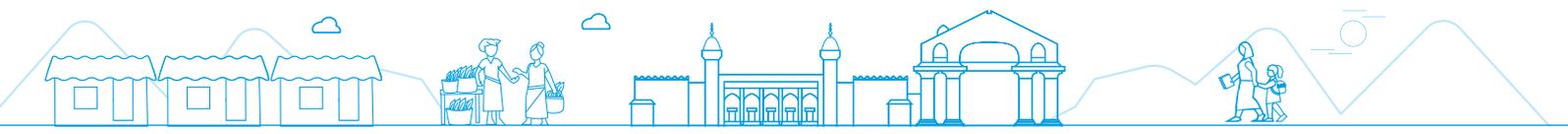
*Radio show participant*



### URBAN MOBILITY AND AVAILABILITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Urban mobility for women is low, although many women do drive. Challenges relate to poor transport infrastructure, narrow and crowded sidewalks, unaffordable fares, long travel times and limited public transport.

Availability of technology for women is also unsatisfactory, mainly as a result of the high cost and the lack of education.



***“Women are always pushed by men during the struggle; the cost of transportation is very expensive; women spend a lot of money on transportation because of the multiple trips they do.”***

*Radio show participant discussing public transportation*



#### TRUST IN PUBLIC AUTHORITIES, AND CITY POLICIES DIRECTED TOWARDS WOMEN

Women do not generally trust or have confidence in public authorities, as men are dominant in these institutions and women are not able to participate in them, because of corruption and the tendency of authorities to favour men. One participant told how, despite a woman councillor being supported by all women in her application for a chief position, the position was given to a man.

*“In the National Assembly of 58 members, only six are women. When it is voting time, we are not at the front. There is nobody stand for our rights,”* stated a workshop participant. However, it is important to note that the law does often allow for participation by women. For example, the Local Government Act promotes the empowerment of women. It states that women living in a municipality should be given the chance to speak and let their voices be heard, and that women should be members of the committees in their areas. Each committee has a representative called a ‘councillor’ and each councillor has a Ward Development Committee (WDC), and these will form sub-WDCs for those living in that constituency. The Local Government Act states that when electing leaders, the candidates should be 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men.

*“We always encourage women to be members of these committees and participate in community activities. The laws and policies are there to support women, but if the women are not part of the grassroots decision makers, it will be hard for the people on the top to hear their grievances,”* said a workshop participant.

***“The laws do not discriminate against women; now it is left to the women to get involved in their committees”***

*Radio show participant*

It is important that women seize the opportunities available to them through the law, and that social and cultural norms embrace this, rather than suppressing women’s participation. On the positive side, some women at the workshops noted that women are more trustworthy and perform better in public office, with less involvement in corruption. On the other side, although city policies directed to women do exist to a certain extent, women feel they are not always actually implemented, and the systems meant to protect women often fail them.



Adama Bojang,  
Director of  
Development  
and Planning  
Department,  
Brikama Area  
Council (BAC)

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**“Women need to be sensitized about acquiring land, because most of them are not aware or don’t have the knowledge. The land administrative bodies in the country have more men than women, which we should think about.”**

*Workshop participant*



#### ACCESS TO LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS, AND TOLERANCE TOWARDS WOMEN

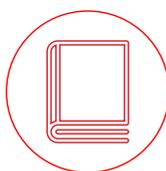
Most women feel that access to land and property rights for women are both unsatisfactory. Challenges faced by women relate to lack of funds, customary male dominance and intolerance in the political and religious realms. Although the land laws do not discriminate between men and women, statistics show that men own most land.

Thus, while women should have the same access to land as men, in reality they need to be encouraged to apply for land ownership and provided with support because of such challenges as traditional and religious customs, lengthy documentation needed, unscrupulous land-owners selling to more than one buyer, and lack of information about available land and how to acquire it.

**“Women can buy land if they have the money, but religion gives more rights to men when it comes to inheritance.”**

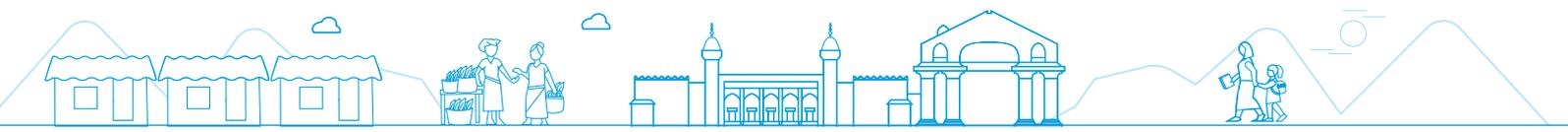
*Workshop participant*

Workshop participants explained that *“male relatives and husbands often find ways of preventing women from land ownership. Even if a woman already owns a piece of land, her husband can get the lands office to change the name on the title simply by claiming he pays for the property tax - whether this is true or not, some male authorities will accept this as a valid reason.”*



#### TRAINING AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Women seem to have few training opportunities, with lack of opportunities and cost being prohibiting factors. However, in terms of formal education, opportunities for girls at primary school level have improved, but not at tertiary level. Education opportunities for girls are also constrained by high costs, as well as harassment from their teachers, and overcrowded schools.



### ABILITY TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT, TO HAVE THEIR OWN BUSINESS, OR BECOME EMPLOYED

The ability of women to be financially independent and make a living is seen as low. Challenges include high interest rates, and the need to pay other costs, such as school fees, expensive transport, and clothing. This is similar to women’s views on the ease with which women can have their own businesses, where problems they face include high rentals and lack of finance and micro-credit.



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*“I would like to narrate a story of a particular time when we filled a container of fish and exported it to Europe. We would wake up at 1 a.m. and take off to the fish landing sites at the beaches. We would collect the fish and take them to the factory to load the container. On arrival in Europe, our container was burnt, because the authorities claimed the products were not properly packaged. We knocked on all doors in government seeking assistance, but none was forthcoming. All we wanted was to ask the authorities in Europe to return the container and not burn it. Eventually we were advised that we should have insured our container, this way we would have received payment from the insurance brokers when the container was burnt. How could we have known this? We are uneducated and have no guidance or support. We didn’t know about registering our business, hiring a lawyer, or getting our products insured. As a result of this incident, some of our members lost the homes they had submitted to the bank as collateral. It was painful and distressing.” (Workshop Participant)*

The quality of the job market for women is poor, because of a variety of reasons: policies designed to help women are not usually followed; there is nepotism; women often experience sexual harassment; and scholarships are not awarded fairly.



### TOP CHALLENGES AND CHANGES NEEDED

Women were asked what they feel are the three *most challenging problems* for women’s participation in the city. Their top responses were poverty, lack of finances and high costs, followed by lack of skills, education and training. These responses were followed by gender roles, domestic duties and family needs, then gender-based violence and harassment, no meaningful public voice or authority, and unsafe public spaces and public transport.



# 5

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS EMERGING

Based on the various inputs of women in the survey and workshops, several key recommendations emerged for consideration in developing an inclusive Greater Banjul in 2040, a metropolitan area that promotes and protects active participation by women in all aspects of their lives.



**Facilitate meaningful decision making:** Greater access for women in decision-making is important. A quota for political involvement would help, as would encouraging women to take up the legal opportunities currently available to them and ensuring that they are given support to do so. As Rohey Malick Lowe, the Mayoress of BCC noted, building the capacity of women involved in local politics is important, as is training people working in the councils and some government institutions. Lowe stated, "Women are underrepresented in the decision-making process. How can women trust male-dominant public authorities and male-made policies? Women know better what their needs are in many policy areas and know best how to address them."

*"Women are typically given public roles that carry zero authority - decorative pieces that check the necessary gender boxes, that have, ultimately, no voice or authority. We need adequate space in the decision-making process at higher levels."*

*Workshop participant*



**Improve ability to operate businesses:** Women at the workshops recommended that the government provide more financial support and management training to women. They recommended: "They should try to promote local initiatives to empower women, in the event that funds for women should be centralized." They also suggested: "Markets are mostly filled with women, so developing the markets would be beneficial to women."

In the long run, improving women's ability to do business would boost council revenues and in turn enable them to support more women.



**Improve safety in the city:** As the workshops' participants pointed out, improving safety and making living in the city easier does not necessarily take big efforts as simply mapping areas properly and providing street names and addresses "will make life a lot easier."



Ndey Mbye, Participant of the workshop

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*“Women are left behind in all areas: lack of water access, public toilets, and poor public transport and street lighting, are not only infrastructure issues, these are safety issues for women*

*Workshop participant*

*“Women are left behind in all areas: lack of water access, public toilets, and poor public transport and street lighting, are not only infrastructure issues, these are safety issues for women – thus, we need to **equip our markets with toilets** for women who are the majority of the vendors, **guarantee adequate street illumination**, and **access to water** should be facilitated also through a **more efficient public transportation system and better and safer roads**,” stated a workshop participant.*

*A participant pointed out that handling “maternal issues includes addressing **access to safer public clinics and facilities for women in the workplace** (for example, breastfeeding).”*



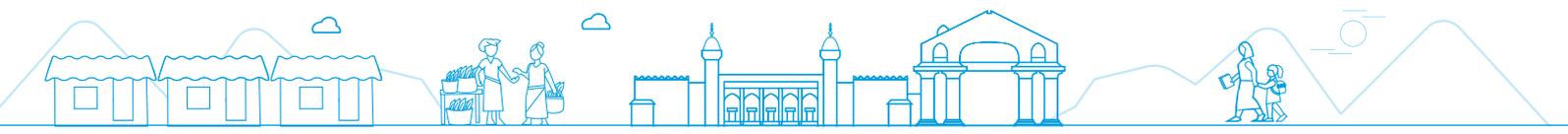
**Improve access to land:** Women at the workshops also suggested a **quota for land allocation**. Participants stated:

*“Equal land rights can go a long way to strategically empower women in the long term. There’s no law stopping women from **buying land**, but there’s no policy for them to acquire it either.” They also noted that having access to land would enable women to have collateral for business opportunities. They also proposed exploring the concept of land banking and wondered how to start it and who does this.*



**Uphold laws and policies meant to protect women:**

Participants at the workshop noted that **laws and policies** meant to protect women need to be upheld. *“Reports of harassments need to be taken seriously by authorities without stigmatizing the victim. Perpetrators should be held responsible.”*



# 6

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The engagement of women in the survey and the workshops raised awareness of the challenges they face, enabled them to share experiences, and provided a forum where they could discuss and debate what can be done to improve their lives in the city. Several women in the workshops said how much they had valued this process. This radio show provided an opportunity to raise awareness not only of the process being followed in planning for an inclusive Greater Banjul, but also of the experiences and challenges women encountered across the city. In 2021, women will have another chance to participate, when groups of women will be able to map collectively public spaces and neighbourhood amenities, an issue raised as a priority in the process thus far.

These findings of the Cities Alliance's City for Women Programme will be incorporated into the Greater Banjul 2040 strategic planning process.

All these activities and processes will assist with investigating the economic, political-institutional, human and social capital, and spatial engagement of women and girls in the city.

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# Greater Banjul – Women Engagement in the City (WEC) Profile

CHARACTERISTIC	CONSENSUS RATING
ABILITY OF WOMEN TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT AND MAKE A LIVING	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
THE CITY AS A PLACE FOR WOMEN TO HAVE THEIR OWN BUSINESS	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
CITY POLICIES DIRECTED TOWARDS WOMEN	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
QUALITY OF THE JOB MARKET FOR WOMEN IN THE CITY	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
CURRENT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN THE CITY	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
TRUST TOWARDS PUBLIC AUTHORITIES	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
SAFETY FOR WOMEN IN THE CITY OVERALL	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
ACCESS TO LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
URBAN MOBILITY IN THE CITY FOR WOMEN	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

## SCALE OF ENGAGEMENT



# Cities Alliance

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