



REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND VISIBILITY SURVEY OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS

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ABOUT US

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As a department, we would like to express our profound appreciation to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this research piece.

First, we extend our sincere gratitude to the Clerk of the National Assembly and the Office of the Clerk for their strong belief that research is the gateway to informed decision-making, institutional reform, and effective parliamentary engagement. The Clerk's leadership, vision, and unalloyed commitment to evidence-based practice have been instrumental in the conception and successful execution of this initiative and indeed remain the hallmark of our motivation and continued pursuit of excellence in parliamentary research and public engagement.

We also wish to acknowledge the staff of the Budget Office Department of the National Assembly for their constructive collaboration and technical support throughout the course of this study. Their active participation and valuable input significantly enhanced the quality, coherence, and overall coordination of the research process.

Our special appreciation goes to all respondents across the regions under study, as well as those who participated through the digital platform, for their willingness to take part in the survey and focus group discussions. Their insights and responses constitute the foundation of this report and provide invaluable perspectives for strengthening parliamentary engagement with citizens.

This initiative represents a critical step towards enhancing the visibility, accessibility, and responsiveness of the National Assembly. It underscores the central role of evidence-based research in informing institutional reforms and deepening democratic governance. We remain strongly confident that the recommendations contained herein will receive due consideration and be effectively implemented, with a view to strengthening public trust and fostering meaningful citizen participation in parliamentary processes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a survey conducted by the Library and Research Department of the National Assembly to assess public awareness, engagement, and perceptions of the Assembly's proceedings in Banjul, Kanifing Municipality (KM), and West Coast Region (WCR). The study forms part of broader institutional efforts to enhance transparency, strengthen citizen engagement, and improve the visibility of parliamentary processes.

The initial target of the study was 200 participants; however, a total of 185 respondents were reached through a combination of both physical data collection and digital tools (Google Form), representing a shortfall of approximately 7.5%. In addition to individual interviews, focus group discussions were conducted in each region, providing qualitative insights that enriched the interpretation of the survey findings.

The study reveals that while the National Assembly operates within an open democratic framework, there exists a gap between institutional visibility efforts and actual public awareness, engagement, and trust. Although a slight majority of respondents demonstrate general awareness of the Assembly, this knowledge remains largely superficial, with limited understanding of key functions such as oversight and committee work. Awareness is also uneven across parliamentary activities, with greater recognition of plenary debates and lawmaking, while committee hearings and public engagement initiatives remain largely unknown.

The findings further indicate that public engagement with parliamentary proceedings is low and irregular, with only a small proportion of citizens following proceedings consistently and very limited direct interaction with Members of the National Assembly. This is compounded by a heavy reliance on informal and media-driven information channels, particularly social media, television, and radio, while official platforms such as the National Assembly's website remain significantly underutilized. Consequently, a clear disconnect exists between institutional communication efforts and the channels most accessible and preferred by respondents.

In addition, the study highlights a notable deficit in public trust, with a majority of respondents expressing low or no confidence in the Assembly's ability to represent their interests effectively. Awareness of existing opportunities for citizen engagement is also limited, with many respondents uncertain about how or where to engage. Key barriers identified include lack of time, insufficient information, low levels of trust, and the perceived complexity of parliamentary processes. These findings are reinforced by focus group discussions, which further reveal weak citizen-representative linkages and limited feedback mechanisms.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the study identifies a strong underlying public interest in parliamentary work, particularly in relation to laws under consideration, opportunities for participation, and outreach activities. There is also a clear demand for more accessible, simplified, and decentralised communication, as well as stronger engagement between Members of the National Assembly and their constituencies.

Based on these findings, the report recommends the development of a comprehensive and citizen-centred communication strategy. This should include expanded use of community radio, improved digital platforms tailored for accessibility, simplified reporting of parliamentary proceedings, and regular outreach initiatives such as open-day events. Collectively, these measures are intended to bridge the existing visibility gap, enhance public trust, and promote more meaningful citizen participation in parliamentary processes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary institutions occupy a central position in democratic governance, serving as arenas for representation, law-making, oversight, and public accountability. The effectiveness of these functions, however, is not determined solely by constitutional mandates or procedural efficiency, but also by the degree to which citizens are aware of, understand, and engage with parliamentary processes. In emerging democracies such as The Gambia, especially its emergence from 2016 post Jammeh-era, strengthening the visibility and public engagement of the legislature is critical, given the ongoing efforts to consolidate democratic norms, enhance transparency, and rebuild public trust in state institutions.

Across comparative political communication literature, visibility is widely acknowledged as a prerequisite for democratic legitimacy. Scholars argue that citizens' awareness of parliamentary proceedings enables informed participation, fosters accountability, and enhances the responsiveness of elected representatives. Yet, empirical studies on parliamentary visibility have largely concentrated on individual legislators rather than the institution itself. For instance, Ireri (2012)¹ examined the determinants of newspaper visibility of Members of Parliament (MPs) in Kenya, identifying factors such as engagement in contentious debates, criticism of government, ministerial status, and ethnic identity as key predictors of media coverage. Similarly, the later work by Ireri and Ochieng (2024)² demonstrated that media visibility of women legislators was influenced by issue-based engagement, particularly commentary on corruption and criticism of government, alongside seniority.

¹ Ireri, K. (July 2012). Newspaper Visibility of Members of Parliament in Kenya. Accessed on: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288822241_Newspaper_Visibility_of_Members_of_Parliament_in_Kenya

² Ireri, K & Ochieng, J. (June 2024). Determinants of women legislators' media coverage in a male-dominated Kenya political landscape. Accessed on: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382424080_Determinants_of_women_legislators'_media_coverage_in_a_male-dominated_Kenya_political_landscape

Beyond the African context, research in advanced democracies reinforces this individual-centric approach. A recent study by Yildirim et. al (2026)³ found that parliamentary activities such as speechmaking significantly increase legislators' media visibility, though such effects vary depending on factors like seniority and government affiliation. While these studies provide valuable insights into the media dynamics shaping political careers, they reveal a notable gap: the absence of a systematic focus on how the public perceives the visibility and accessibility of Parliament as an institution.

This gap is particularly significant because institutional visibility extends beyond media representation of individual MPs. It encompasses the accessibility of parliamentary proceedings, the effectiveness of communication platforms (such as radio broadcasts, social media, and public outreach programmes), and the extent to which citizens feel connected to legislative processes. In its 2025 Activity Report⁴, the National Assembly reported that its official digital platforms generated approximately 2.95 million engagement touchpoints, reflecting deliberate efforts to expand public outreach through digital channels; however, the extent to which such reach translates into meaningful public awareness, understanding, and engagement remains uncertain. Evidence from perception-based studies underscores this distinction. For example, a field survey conducted by Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis Skopje (2017)⁵ on citizens' perceptions of parliamentary work revealed that while a portion of the public was aware of parliamentary activities, significant barriers persisted, including limited access to information, low trust in legislative outcomes, and weak channels for citizen participation. The study further demonstrated that citizens' perceptions of transparency and effectiveness were closely linked to how well parliamentary activities were communicated and understood by the public.

³ [Yildirim, T. M., Thesen, G., De Vries, E. and Jennings, W. \(Jan. 2026\). The determinants of the media coverage of politicians: The role of parliamentary activities. Accessed on: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-political-research/article/abs/determinants-of-the-media-coverage-of-politicians-the-role-of-parliamentary-activities/474196848CE0424DCAF1F327218643DF](https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-political-research/article/abs/determinants-of-the-media-coverage-of-politicians-the-role-of-parliamentary-activities/474196848CE0424DCAF1F327218643DF)

⁴ National Assembly Activity Report 2025

⁵ "Results from a field survey on citizens' perceptions about the work of Parliament (August 8 - August 29, 2017)": <https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Parliament-Watch-Field-Survey-Citizens-perceptions-of-the-work-of-the-Parliament-2017-ENG.pdf>

In this regard, perception surveys provide a critical methodological tool for capturing dimensions of democratic governance that are not observable through institutional metrics alone. Unlike media-content analyses or administrative data, perception surveys directly assess citizens' awareness, attitudes, and experiences. They enable researchers to identify gaps between institutional intent and public understanding, uncover barriers to engagement, and generate evidence-based recommendations tailored to the needs and preferences of different population groups. This is particularly relevant in contexts where formal communication mechanisms may exist but fail to reach or resonate with the broader public.

This study by the Library and Research Department on the Public Engagement and Visibility of National Assembly Proceedings is therefore both timely and necessary. It responds to a dual imperative: first, to assess the extent to which existing parliamentary visibility initiatives such as live broadcasts, radio programming, social media engagement, and outreach activities are effectively reaching citizens; and second, to understand how these efforts translate into meaningful public engagement and participation. The study was conducted in three administrative regions, namely Banjul, Kanifing Municipality (KM), and West Coast Region (WCR). These locations were mainly identified to ensure wide regional representation and to capture diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Importantly, the study is distinctive in its conceptual and empirical orientation. While existing literature predominantly interrogates the visibility of individual parliamentarians and the determinants of their media coverage, this research shifts the analytical lens to the institutional visibility of Parliament itself. It seeks to answer not merely who is visible in the media, but whether the legislative institution as a whole is accessible, understood, and perceived as relevant by the citizenry. This distinction is crucial for policy and practice, as strengthening democratic accountability requires not only prominent legislators but also an institution that is transparent, inclusive, and responsive to public needs.

As envisioned, the findings are expected to inform strategic interventions aimed at enhancing parliamentary communication, expanding citizen outreach, and reinforcing democratic accountability. In doing so, it contributes to a growing

body of knowledge on parliamentary openness and public engagement, while addressing a critical gap in the literature on institutional visibility in African legislatures.

1.1 Objectives

The primary objectives of the survey were to:

- Measure public awareness and visibility of National Assembly proceedings, platforms, and activities across Banjul, KM and WCR.
- Identify barriers to citizen engagement and preferred channels of parliamentary communication and participation.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing visibility initiatives, including social media broadcasts, radio programming, outreach engagements, and Open Day activities.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations to strengthen parliamentary communication, outreach, and democratic accountability.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Survey Design

A structured survey questionnaire was developed in English and translated into Mandinka, Wolof, and Fula – the three most widely spoken languages in the survey areas. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-two (22) closed-ended, eight (8) open-ended and eight (8) focus group questions.

Key themes included:

- Frequency of following National Assembly proceedings.
- Preferred information channels (TV, radio, social media, newspapers, community meetings, etc.).
- Knowledge of how to access live broadcasts, to attend plenary sittings, and committee hearings etc.
- Perceived barriers (e.g., language, accessibility, lack of awareness etc).
- Suggestions for improvement.

2.2 Sampling and Data Collection

A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure representation across the three regions. The target sample size was 200 respondents, targeting Banjul, KM, and WCR. However, the total number of respondents reached or administered was 185. These include respondents for the questionnaires and participants for the focus group discussion, as well as the digital platform (Google questionnaire form) that captured real-time responses. Fieldwork was carried out between 12th March to 7th April 2026.

2.3 Limitations

- The survey was limited in scope to three regions and therefore does not provide a nationally representative assessment. Additionally, the survey relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability biases.
- The unwillingness of some people to be interviewed also hindered the survey, due to perceptions of research being politically motivated.
- There was no communication or sensitization from the National Assembly to the general public to inform them before the research.
- Some respondents could not differentiate between the roles of the National Assembly Service and the Members of Parliament.

3. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

3.1 Demographic analyses

A total of 83 respondents were administered on the open-ended and closed-ended questions, with a response rate 95%. Of these, approximately 47% are female and 53% are male, with all respondents aged 18 years and above. The distribution indicates that the majority fall below the age of 45, demonstrating a clear concentration among younger and middle-aged participants, with a gradual decline in representation as age increases. Specifically, 23.8% of respondents are between 18 and 24 years, 21.2% between 25 and 34 years, and 30% between 35 and 44 years. This is followed by 17.5% in the 45–54 age bracket, while only 7.5% are aged 55 years and above.

In terms of regional distribution, 16.5% of respondents were from Banjul, 44.3% from Kanifing, and 39.2% from the West Coast Region (WCR). These statistics are by no means representative of the actual population sizes or demographic proportions of the respective regions. Rather, they reflect the composition of the survey sample, which was influenced by accessibility and response dynamics during data collection. Accordingly, the regional breakdown should be interpreted within that context and not as a basis for making generalized inferences about the national population.

The highest educational attainment recorded among respondents is university-level education, with approximately 29.7% having completed either a first degree (19.8%) or a master's degree (9.9%). The largest proportion of respondents (39.5%) reported secondary school as their highest level of education, while 13.6% indicated that they have no formal education.

The employment characteristics of the surveyed sample indicate that the majority of respondents (70.4%) reported being employed, with civil servants constituting the largest share at 33.3%, while the remainder were either self-employed in the informal sector or engaged in private sector employment. At least 7.4% indicated that they were not employed, while 21% identified as students. This trend suggests a relatively high level of economic and institutional engagement among respondents, which may have implications for how perceptions of the National Assembly are formed and articulated, particularly given the potential influence of professional exposure and educational environment on levels of political awareness and participation.

Below is a summary of the demographic analysis of the study:

Fig. 1: Gender Representation

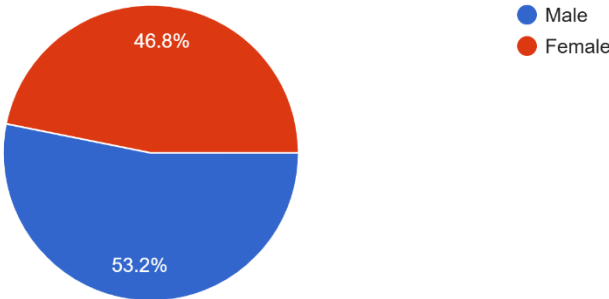


Fig. 2: Age Distribution

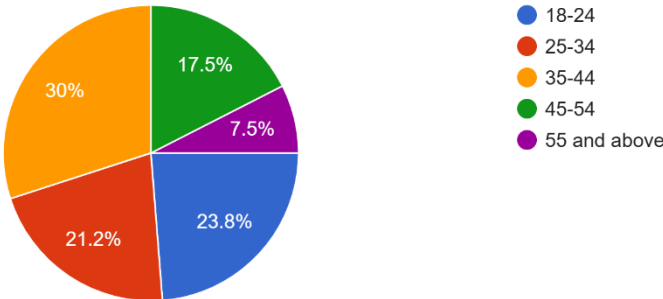


Fig. 3: Regional Participation

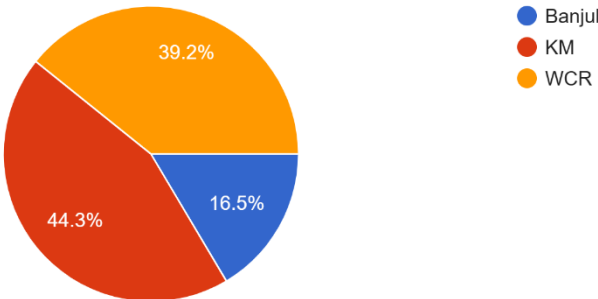


Fig. 4: Level of Education

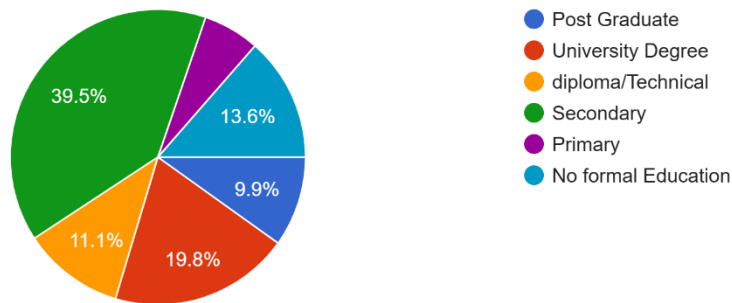
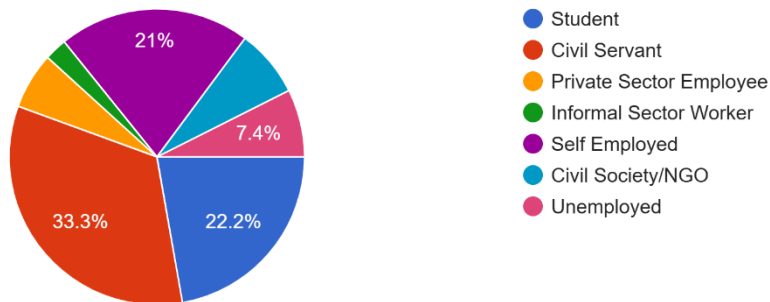


Fig. 5: Occupation



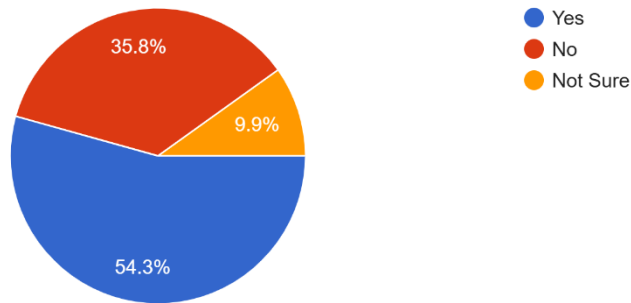
3.2 Analyses of the administered questions

3.2.1 Are you aware of the role and functions of the National Assembly?

On the question of whether respondents were aware of the roles and functions of the National Assembly, the responses reveal a moderate level of public awareness with 54.3% of respondents indicating that they are aware, while a substantial 45.7% reported a lack of knowledge. Although a slight majority demonstrate awareness, the near parity between informed and uninformed respondents points to a significant knowledge gap within the population. This suggests that the institution's core mandates such as

lawmaking, representation, and oversight are not sufficiently understood by a considerable segment of citizens.

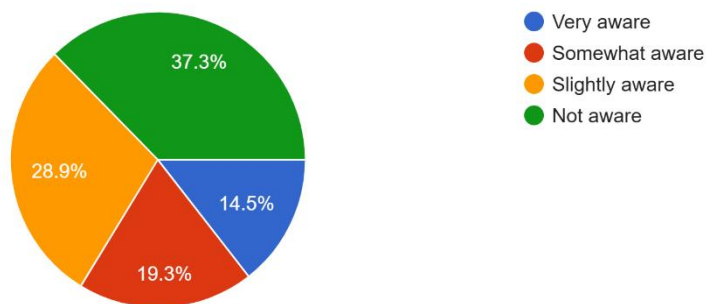
Fig. 6



3.2.2 How would you rate your level of awareness of National Assembly activities?

The responses on how respondents rate their level of awareness of the activities of the National Assembly indicate a generally low to moderate level of awareness. While 14.5% reported being very aware, a larger proportion (48.2%) indicated that they are only somewhat or slightly aware, and a significant 37.3% stated that they are not aware at all. This distribution suggests that although a majority of respondents possess at least some level of awareness, it is largely superficial rather than in-depth. The relatively small proportion of highly aware individuals points to limited comprehensive understanding of parliamentary activities.

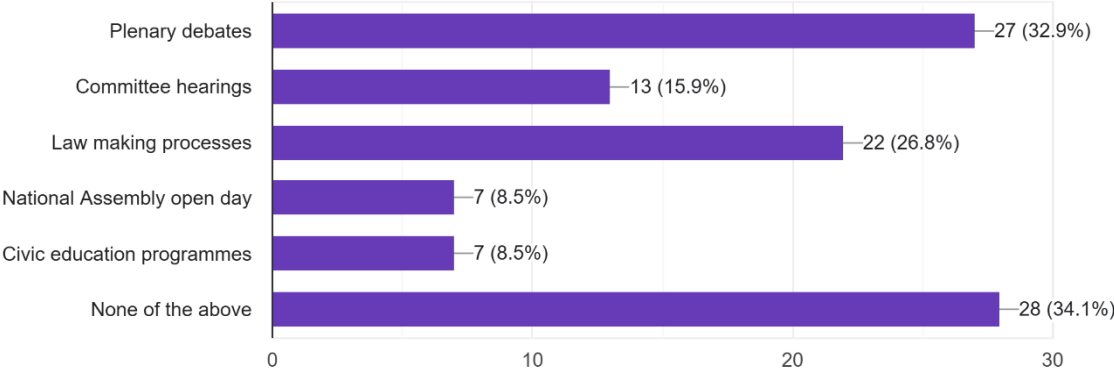
Fig. 7



3.2.3 Which of the following National Assembly activities are you aware of? (Select all that apply)

On awareness of specific National Assembly activities, the findings reveal uneven visibility across the institution’s core functions. Plenary debates recorded the highest level of awareness at 32.9%, followed by lawmaking processes at 26.8%, while committee hearings, despite being central to legislative scrutiny, were known by only 15.9% of respondents. Public engagement initiatives such as National Assembly Open Days and civic education programmes recorded particularly low awareness levels at 8.5% each. Notably, a substantial 34.1% of respondents indicated that they were not aware of any of the listed activities. This pattern suggests that the more visible and publicly broadcast aspects of parliamentary work receive relatively greater attention, whereas equally critical but less publicized functions, particularly committee work and outreach programmes, remain largely obscure to the public.

Fig. 8

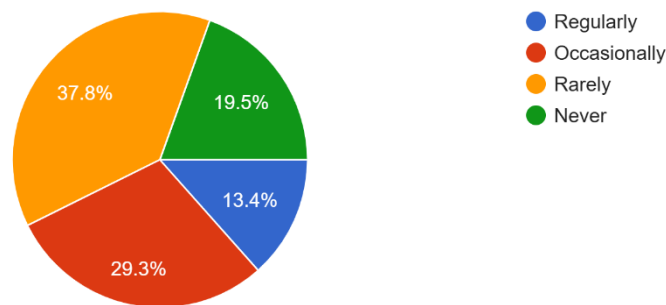


3.2.4 How often do you follow or hear about National Assembly proceedings?

On the frequency of following National Assembly proceedings, the data indicates limited and irregular engagement among respondents. Only 13.4% reported following proceedings regularly, while the majority engage

either rarely (37.8%) or occasionally (29.3%). Additionally, 19.5% indicated that they never follow parliamentary proceedings at all. This trend reflects a low level of sustained public interest or access to parliamentary information. The predominance of irregular engagement suggests that exposure to parliamentary activities is not habitual for most citizens, which may contribute to the observed gaps in awareness and understanding.

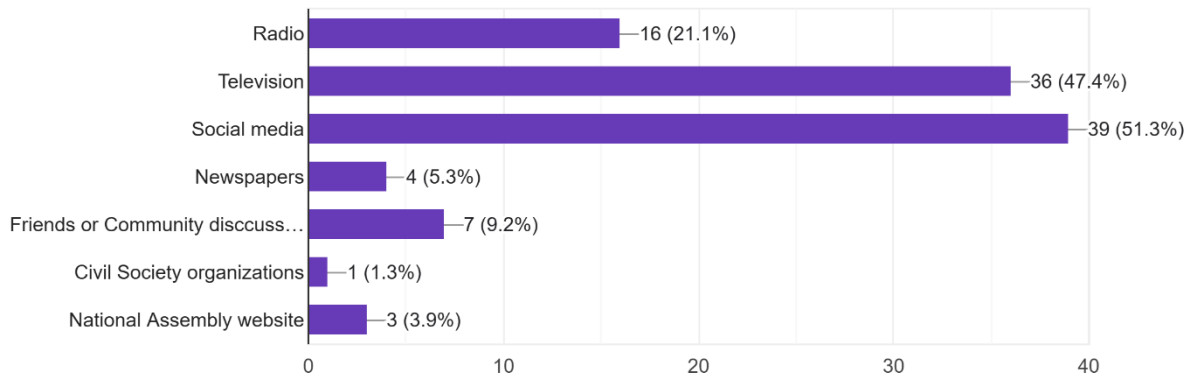
Fig. 9



3.2.5 Through which channels do you receive information about the National Assembly?

With respect to the channels through which respondents receive information about the National Assembly, the findings indicate a strong reliance on digital and mass media platforms. Social media emerges as the most dominant source (51.3%), closely followed by television (47.4%) and radio (21.1%). In contrast, traditional print media such as newspapers account for only 5.3%, while interpersonal and institutional channels such as friends or community discussions (9.2%), civil society organisations (1.3%), and the National Assembly's official website (3.9%) play a relatively minimal role. This distribution suggests that information dissemination is heavily skewed towards informal and media-driven platforms, with limited utilisation of official or structured communication channels.

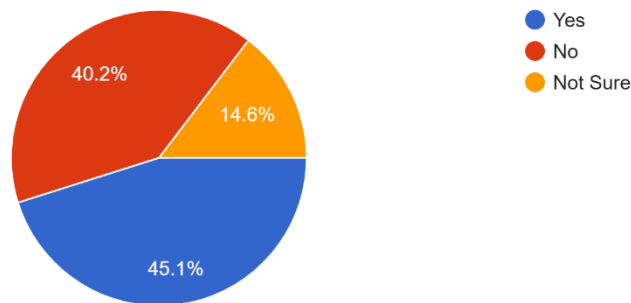
Fig. 10



3.2.6 Are you aware that the National Assembly broadcast some proceedings live on social media?

Responses to this question reveal a divided level of awareness. While 45.1% of respondents indicated that they are aware of such broadcasts, a comparable proportion (40.2%) stated that they are not aware, and 14.6% were uncertain. This near balance between awareness and lack thereof suggests that, despite the availability of live-streaming initiatives, their reach and visibility remain limited. It indicates a need for more deliberate promotion and public sensitisation to ensure that such transparency measures effectively reach and engage the wider population.

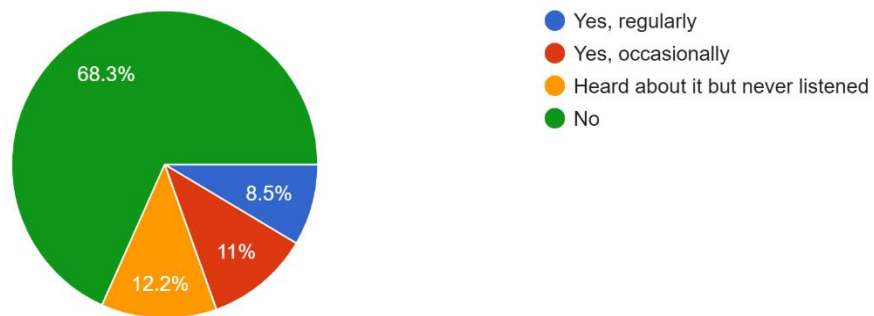
Fig. 11



3.2.7 Have you ever listened to or heard about the “National Assembly Hour” radio programme?

A significant majority of respondents (68.3%) have indicated to have never heard of this weekly radio programme aired on West Coast Radio 2. While about 31.7% of respondents have at least some level of awareness (comprising 8.5% who listen regularly, 11% who listen occasionally, and 12.2% who have heard of it but never listened), consistent listenership remains minimal.

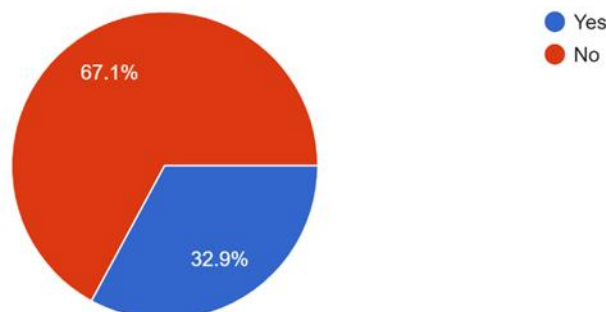
Fig. 12



3.2.8 Have you ever watched or followed a National Assembly plenary session online?

The findings indicate low levels of engagement with clear majority of respondents (67.1%) reporting that they have never watched or followed a National Assembly plenary session online. Only 32.9% indicated that they have done so, suggesting that while a segment of the population is accessing digital platforms, overall utilisation remains limited.

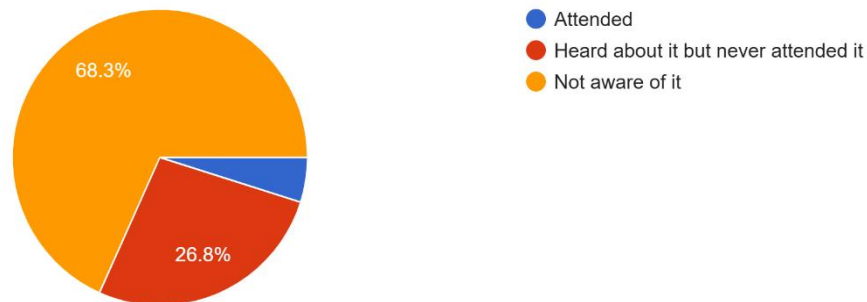
Fig. 13



3.2.9 Have you ever attended or heard about the National Assembly Open Day?

Regarding awareness and participation in National Assembly Open Day activities, the results show very low levels of public engagement. A substantial majority (68.3%) reported that they are not aware of such initiatives, while 26.8% indicated that they have heard of them but have never attended. Only 4.9% of respondents reported actual participation. This pattern highlights a significant gap in public outreach and participatory engagement efforts, suggesting that existing initiatives are either insufficiently publicised or not accessible to a broad segment of the population.

Fig. 14

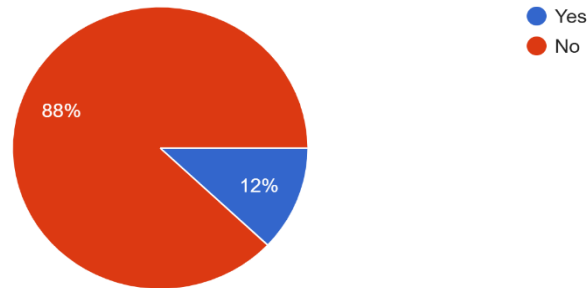


3.2.10 Have you ever contacted your Member of the National Assembly regarding an issue affecting your community?

The findings reveal very limited interaction between respondents and their representatives, with only 12% of respondents reporting that they have ever made contact regarding a community issue, compared to an overwhelming 88% who have never done so. Disaggregated by region, none of the respondents from Banjul (15% of the sample) reported any contact, while in Kanifing Municipality (43%), only 8% indicated having engaged their representatives. In the West Coast Region (37%), a slightly higher proportion of 13% reported contact. An additional 5% of respondents did not indicate their region. This suggests a weak linkage

between citizens and elected representatives, potentially undermining the representative function of the legislature.

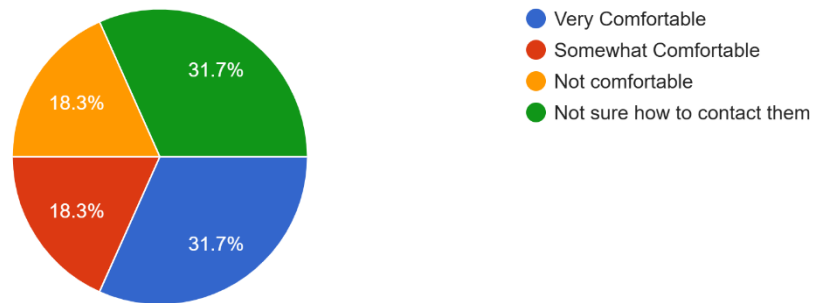
Fig. 15



3.2.11 How comfortable would you feel contacting you NAM if necessary?

In terms of respondents' comfort in contacting a NAM, the responses are notably mixed. While 31.7% indicated that they would feel very comfortable, an equal proportion (31.7%) stated that they are unsure how to contact their representative. Additionally, 18.3% reported being somewhat comfortable, and another 18.3% indicated that they are not comfortable. This distribution reveals both an accessibility and information gap: although a segment of respondents is open to engagement, a significant proportion lacks the knowledge or confidence to initiate contact. This underscores the need for clearer communication channels, improved accessibility to representatives, and enhanced civic education to strengthen citizen-parliament linkages.

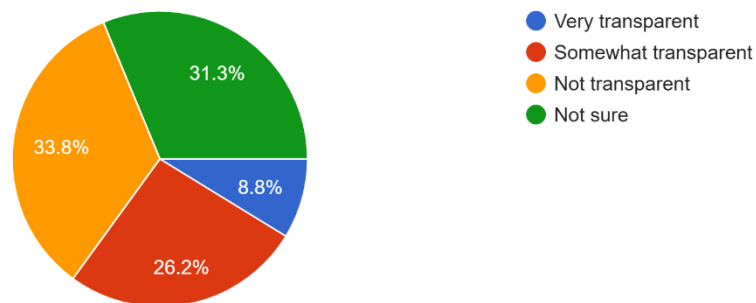
Fig. 16



3.2.12 How transparent do you believe the National Assembly is in its activities?

Regarding perceptions of transparency, the responses suggest a predominantly negative public assessment of the National Assembly's openness. Only 8.8% of respondents consider the institution to be very transparent, while 26.2% perceive it as somewhat transparent. In contrast, a combined majority expresses scepticism, with 33.8% indicating that it is not transparent and 31.3% expressing similarly unfavourable views. This distribution points to a credibility deficit in how parliamentary activities are communicated and perceived, suggesting that existing transparency mechanisms are either insufficient or not effectively reaching the public.

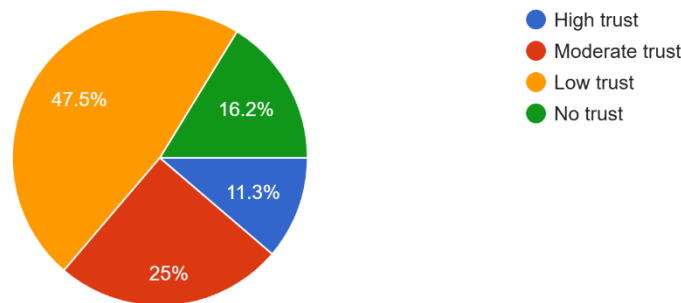
Fig. 17



3.2.13 How much do you trust the National Assembly to represent citizens' interest?

The findings reveal a significant trust deficit. While 11.3% of respondents expressed high trust and 25% moderate trust, a substantial proportion reported low trust (47.5%) and no trust at all (16.2%). This indicates that nearly two-thirds of respondents hold limited or no confidence in the institution's representative function, raising concerns about perceived responsiveness, accountability, and alignment with citizens' priorities.

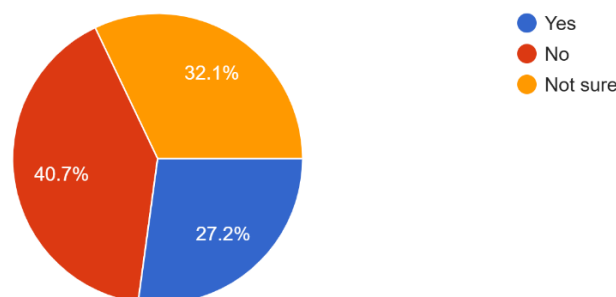
Fig. 18



3.2.14 Do you believe citizens have enough opportunities to engage with the National Assembly?

In relation to opportunities for citizen engagement, the results further reinforce concerns about inclusivity and participation. Only 27.2% of respondents believe that citizens have sufficient opportunities to engage with the National Assembly, while 40.7% disagreed and 32.1% were uncertain. The high level of uncertainty, coupled with a larger proportion expressing dissatisfaction, suggests both a lack of awareness of existing engagement platforms and possible inadequacies in their accessibility or effectiveness.

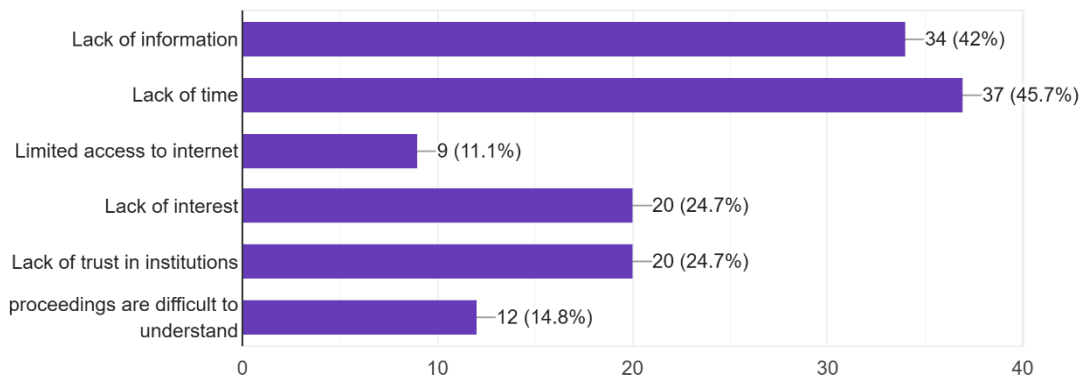
Fig. 19



3.2.15 What prevents you from engaging more with National Assembly activities?

Examining the barriers to greater citizen engagement, the data highlights both structural and perceptual constraints. The most frequently cited limitation is lack of time (45.7%), followed closely by lack of information (42%), indicating that practical and informational barriers are primary impediments. Additional factors include lack of interest (24.7%) and lack of trust (24.7%), which point to attitudinal challenges, as well as limited internet access (11.1%), reflecting infrastructural constraints. The mention of parliamentary proceedings being difficult to understand further suggests that the complexity of legislative processes may discourage broader public participation.

Fig. 20

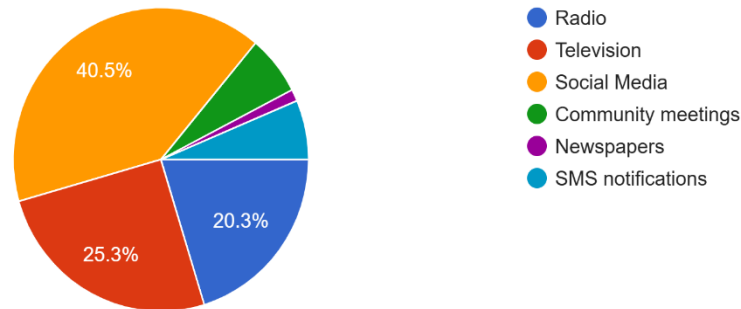


3.2.16 Which channels would you prefer for receiving information about the National Assembly?

Considering preferred channels for receiving information, respondents show a clear preference for accessible and widely used communication platforms. Social media leads at 40.5%, followed by television (25.3%) and radio (20.3%), while community meetings, newspapers, and SMS notifications account for smaller shares. This pattern underscores the

importance of leveraging digital and broadcast media to enhance outreach, while also maintaining complementary traditional channels to ensure inclusivity.

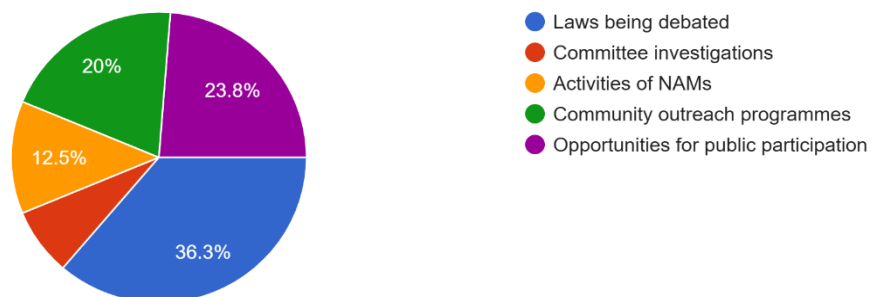
Fig. 21



3.2.17 What type of information would you most like to receive from the National Assembly?

Finally, in terms of the type of information citizens most wish to receive, the results indicate a strong interest in core legislative functions. Information on laws being debated ranks highest at 36.3%, followed by opportunities for public participation (23.8%) and community outreach programmes (20%). Interest in the activities of National Assembly Members stands at 12.5%, while committee investigations account for the remaining share. This distribution suggests that citizens are particularly interested in substantive legislative processes and avenues for engagement, highlighting the need for the National Assembly to prioritise clear, timely, and accessible communication on these areas.

Fig. 22



3.3 Analysis of Focus Group Discussions

- 3.3.1 Besides administering both open- and closed-ended questions, the research also incorporated focus group discussions to provide deeper qualitative insights into citizens' perceptions. Generally, these discussions reveal important variations in how citizens understand the roles and procedures of the National Assembly, reflecting disparities across educational background and exposure. Some participants demonstrate a relatively high level of procedural knowledge, including an understanding of legislative stages and constituency representation, derived from active engagement with parliamentary content through social media, live proceedings, and occasional in-person exposure. Others exhibit a sound but more general understanding of the Assembly's core constitutional functions, lawmaking, oversight, and representation, without familiarity with procedural detail. Taken together, this indicates that while awareness exists, it is unevenly distributed, suggesting that current civic education and outreach efforts are not reaching all segments of the population with equal effectiveness.
- 3.3.2 In relation to information access, the findings show a strong reliance on digital platforms, particularly social media, online news sources, and live-streamed proceedings. However, patterns of engagement differ. Some respondents encounter parliamentary information passively and irregularly, often as part of broader media consumption, while others follow proceedings more deliberately through online platforms. Despite this, awareness of institutional outreach initiatives such as Open Days and programmes designed to bring Parliament closer to citizens remains limited across respondents. This suggests that although information is available, it is not sufficiently visible, structured, or sustained to ensure broad public reach, particularly beyond digitally connected audiences.
- 3.3.3 Perceptions of the National Assembly's communication efforts are generally critical, with respondents indicating that existing channels do not effectively translate parliamentary activities into widely understood and

accessible information. While initiatives such as radio programmes, plenary broadcasts, and outreach efforts are acknowledged, they are not perceived as sufficiently frequent, coordinated, or impactful to generate sustained public awareness. There is a strong consensus on the need for a more integrated communication approach that combines digital platforms with direct, community-based engagement, ensuring that information reaches both urban and rural populations in formats that are easily understood.

- 3.3.4 With respect to citizen engagement, the discussions point to a notable gap between formal opportunities for interaction and actual practice. Respondents generally acknowledge that engagement mechanisms may exist in principle; however, these are perceived as underutilised, inconsistently implemented, or insufficiently publicised. Interaction between citizens and National Assembly Members (NAMs) is often described as episodic, particularly concentrated around electoral periods, rather than continuous and institutionalised. This contributes to a perception of limited accessibility and responsiveness, further discouraging active citizen participation.
- 3.3.5 Trust in the National Assembly emerges as a critical concern, shaped by both institutional performance and public perception. Respondents frequently associate low levels of trust with limited transparency in decision-making and resource allocation, as well as perceived disparities between the living conditions of citizens and the privileges of elected officials. While there is acknowledgement that individual NAMs may demonstrate positive engagement, these instances are seen as exceptions rather than the norm. Trust appears to be contingent on visible accountability, ethical conduct, and sustained connection with constituents.
- 3.3.6 Barriers to engagement are identified as both structural and informational. These include limited awareness of the roles and responsibilities of NAMs, uncertainty regarding available channels for interaction, time constraints, and, in some cases, low levels of interest. Additionally, the perceived complexity of parliamentary proceedings acts as a deterrent, reinforcing the need for simplified communication. Variability in the accessibility and

responsiveness of individual NAMs further contributes to inconsistent citizen experiences.

3.3.7 Across the discussions, there is strong emphasis on the importance of transparency and accountability as prerequisites for strengthening public trust. Respondents highlight the need for clearer, more detailed communication on how decisions are made and how public resources are allocated and utilised. There is a clear expectation that the National Assembly should not only perform its constitutional functions but also demonstrate these functions in a manner that is visible, understandable, and relevant to citizens' everyday lives.

4. KEY FINDINGS

The findings from the survey, complemented by insights from focus group discussions across the regions, present a consistent and compelling picture of the current state of public engagement with the National Assembly. While the institution operates within an open democratic framework, significant gaps persist in awareness, accessibility, trust, and citizen participation. These findings highlight both structural and perceptual challenges, as well as clear opportunities for strengthening the relationship between Parliament and the public. Among others:

1. A slight majority of respondents demonstrate general awareness of the National Assembly; however, this knowledge is largely superficial, with limited understanding of core functions such as oversight and committee work.
2. Awareness is uneven across parliamentary activities, with greater visibility accorded to plenary debates and lawmaking, while committee hearings and public engagement initiatives remain largely unknown to the public.
3. Public engagement with parliamentary proceedings is low and irregular, with only a small proportion of citizens following proceedings consistently

and very limited direct interaction with Members of the National Assembly.

4. The public relies predominantly on informal and media-driven channels, particularly social media, television, and radio for information, while official communication platforms of the National Assembly such as its website are, significantly underutilised.
5. There exists a disconnect between institutional communication efforts and the channels most accessible and preferred by citizens.
6. A majority of respondents express low or no confidence in the National Assembly's ability to represent their interests, reflecting concerns about transparency, accountability, and responsiveness.
7. Awareness of existing opportunities for citizen engagement remains limited, with many respondents uncertain about how or where to engage with the institution.
8. Key barriers to participation include lack of time, insufficient information, low levels of trust, and the perceived complexity of parliamentary processes.
9. Focus group discussions highlight weak citizen–representative linkages, including limited feedback mechanisms and a perception that engagement does not yield tangible outcomes.
10. Despite these challenges, there is strong public interest in parliamentary work, particularly in relation to laws under consideration, opportunities for participation, and outreach initiatives.
11. There is a clear demand for simplified communication, decentralised engagement initiatives, and stronger linkages between Members of the National Assembly and their constituencies to enhance public participation.

5. PUBLIC SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING VISIBILITY

Respondents were asked an open-ended question: “What communication channels would be most effective for reaching communities?” The most common suggestions were to:

- Strengthen the use of community radio to air summaries of debates in local languages and interactive phone-in programmes.
- Develop simplified and accessible communication materials of parliamentary proceedings, alongside the provisions of sign-language interpretation, using everyday terms and avoiding legal or technical jargons to the barest minimum.
- Expand community-based outreach initiatives such as the introduction of “Parliament on the Road” to engage communities directly in markets, places of worship, and schools.
- Enhance digital and social media engagement through short, animated video clips, infographics and live interactive sessions on Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, TV and radio stations, particularly community radio stations.
- Produce user-friendly printed leaflets and bulletins, and distribute them widely in public places.

6. CONCLUSION

The survey identifies a significant visibility gap in relation to National Assembly proceedings, particularly in terms of public awareness, engagement, and trust. While the Assembly has taken commendable steps to enhance transparency, most notably through the live broadcasting of its sessions, these efforts have yet to effectively reach and resonate with a broad segment of the population. As a result, public engagement with parliamentary processes remains relatively

limited, despite ongoing initiatives aimed at improving accessibility and openness.

The findings further suggest that public perceptions of the National Assembly are often shaped more by views of individual Members than by an understanding of the institution. In this regard, relatively low levels of trust and interest in elected representatives appear to influence broader attitudes towards the Assembly. In addition, although parliamentary proceedings receive some degree of media coverage, many citizens continue to face challenges in accessing timely, clear, and relevant information, particularly on legislative debates and committee work. This limited visibility contributes to gaps in public awareness and constrains meaningful citizen participation in governance processes.

Insights from the survey and supporting focus group discussions point to several key conclusions. First, awareness of National Assembly proceedings is uneven across regions, with comparatively lower levels recorded in the West Coast Region. Second, language remains a significant barrier, as the predominance of English in parliamentary communication limits accessibility for a large segment of the population, underscoring the need for greater use of local languages. Third, traditional media particularly community radio, continues to play a critical role as a widely accessible and trusted source of information, especially in rural and peri-urban areas.

Furthermore, while digital platforms have expanded opportunities for access, they remain underutilised due to constraints such as limited internet penetration, affordability challenges, and varying levels of digital literacy. Finally, there is a clear and consistent demand for more proactive, decentralised, and community-based engagement approaches. Citizens expressed a strong expectation for the National Assembly to strengthen its outreach efforts through regular community engagements, simplified communication, and more inclusive platforms that facilitate direct interaction and feedback.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study presents a body of clear evidence that a significant proportion of Gambians hold misconceptions about the National Assembly, while others possess limited knowledge of the Assembly Service as an integral component of the institution. Considering these findings, it is imperative for the authorities of the National Assembly to consider the following measures to enhance the visibility, accessibility, and public understanding of its proceedings:

7.1 Short-term Recommendations

1. Launch a weekly radio programme in partnership with community radio stations to provide a 15-minute summary of the week's key debates in local languages.
2. Produce and distribute a simple "Guide to Follow Parliament" leaflet in graphic designs available at public facilities.
3. Establish a dedicated social media team to post short video clips (2–3 minutes) of important debates and committee highlights on Facebook and TikTok, with captions in local languages.

7.2 Medium-term Recommendations

1. Organise quarterly "Parliament on the Road" open days in major towns where citizens can meet NAMs, watch a recorded debate, and ask questions.
2. Develop a mobile-friendly version of the National Assembly website with minimal data requirements and a simple interface for accessing live streams, schedules, and simplified summaries.
3. Train parliamentary staff and selected NAMs in plain-language communication and public engagement techniques.

7.3 Long-term Recommendations

1. Invest in a National Assembly mobile app that provides real-time notifications of live sessions, push summaries in local languages, and an easy way to submit questions or comments to NAMs.
2. Establish a citizens' feedback mechanism (e.g., a toll-free hotline or WhatsApp number) where citizens can ask questions about proceedings and receive quick, accurate responses.
3. Conduct a follow-up survey in two years to measure progress and adjust strategies, with an expanded geographic scope to include the rest of the country.

8. ANNEXES

The Team

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Alhagie M. Dumbuya | - | Director of Library and Research |
| 2. Amie Barrow | - | Principal Research Officer |
| 3. Modika Bah | - | Senior Research Officer |
| 4. Mary T. Mendy | - | Research Officer |
| 5. Omar Fofana | - | Budget Officer |
| 6. Ousman Sanyang | - | Library Assistant II |
| 7. Fatoumata Fadera | - | Intern |
| 8. Bakary Fadera | - | Intern |
| 9. Kaddyjatou Jandi | - | Intern |

Some of the snapshots taken



Albert Market, Banjul



Faraba



Jiboro Border Post



Bakau Market



Palma Beach, Senegambia

Lamin Daranka Garage



Westfield



UTG, Faraba Campus



MDI