


## CONTACT

### ADDRESS

 Entrepreneurship  
Development Centre (EDC),  
Sait Matty Road, Bakau,  
KMSD, The Gambia.  
Khamsys, Bijilo

### PHONE

 ITC / YEP +220 3900088 /  
+220 4497942  
GIZ +220 2558238,  
IMVF +220 7048481  
ENABEL +220 7927306

### ONLINE

 [yep@intracen.org](mailto:yep@intracen.org)  
 [www.tekkifii.gm](http://www.tekkifii.gm)  
 [www.ysd.gm](http://www.ysd.gm) for opportunities  
 YepGambia  @yepgambia



# TEKKI-FII STORIES



[www.tekkifii.gm](http://www.tekkifii.gm)

# Build A Future

## About the Tekki-Fii Project

The “Make it in The Gambia-Tekki Fii” is a program that aims to improve economic development and future prospects for The Gambia’s youth, including returning migrants, by promoting attractive employment and income opportunities. Moreover, the objective is to support the Government to boost economic development with a focus on generating training, entrepreneurship, employment and access to finance opportunities for Gambians. The Tekki Fii campaign is a movement by Gambians, for Gambians. It is about helping young people in the country to see the benefits of choosing to ‘make it’ at home.

For more information visit: [www.tekkifii.gm](http://www.tekkifii.gm)

## About the funder European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa

The European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) supports all aspects of stability and contributes to addressing destabilization, forced displacement and irregular migration in particular by promoting resilience, economic and equal opportunities, security and development, and the improvement and implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. The EUTF aims at improving living conditions in Africa. It seeks to help people live in a peaceful and stable environment, and to work in dignity.

For more information visit: [www.ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index](http://www.ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index)

## About the

# Implementing Partners



International  
Trade  
Centre

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is a joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. ITC assists small and medium-sized enterprises in developing and transition economies to become more competitive. Under the Tekki Fii Programme, ITC is implementing the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP). For more information: visit [www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org) / <http://www.yep.gm>



International  
Services

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is a German development agency that provides services in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development. The Tekki Fii component implemented by GIZ International Services is targeting youth and youth-led small businesses through skills training and business development. For more information: visit [www.giz.de/en/](http://www.giz.de/en/)



Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr

Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr (IMVF) is a foundation for development and cooperation based in Lisbon. Established in The Gambia in 2018, IMVF is implementing a three-years' project targeting the youth and women of North Bank Region, Central River Region, Lower River Region and Upper River Region. For more information: visit [www.imvf.org](http://www.imvf.org)



Enabel is the development agency of the Belgian federal government, implementing and coordinating Belgium's international development policy. Enabel's intervention in The Gambia through the Rural Infrastructure for Economic Growth is designed to support socioeconomic development and positive prospects for local populations and returning migrants. For more information: visit [www.enabel.be](http://www.enabel.be)

# INSPIRING STORIES





# Taking One Step At A Time

**ABASS BAH**



**T**he Business Development component under GIZ focuses on building the skills of aspiring entrepreneurs or assist newly established startups that are struggling to stand on their feet. Abass Bah is one of those beneficiaries. He was born and brought up in Bundung and graduated from Gambia High Senior Secondary School in 2012. Abass conceived the idea of doing business when he was working in a hotel as a glass cleaner, where he used modern technology and equipment to carry out his job. Being amazed by the possibilities of what such a job could offer in a relatively small market, Abass decided to utilize his skills more productively by setting a cleaning business called Smart Cleaning. A total of 5000 dalasi was what Abass could put together as startup capital, but he was determined to get the business started with the support of few friends he worked with at the hotel: “We did not have enough equipment to do the cleaning, we also had no idea how to start a business neither knew where to obtain the

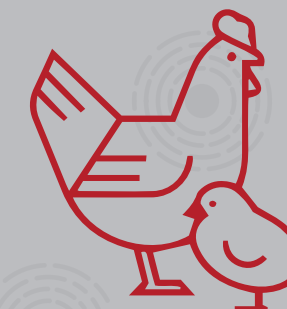
documents to run our own company. We also found it difficult to get contracts because we were overlooked and underrated due to our age,” he explains.

Abass continued working with the little resources he had available until he received the YEP Tekki Fii mini-grant of D47,000 which he used to develop the business. He also received training and coaching from GIZ through GIEPA which he explains, has molded and shaped his experience in the field: “They helped me become confident and showed me a path towards achieving my goals. They helped me to become creative and gave me ideas towards expanding my business.” His professional cleaning service deals with private residences, commercial structures, offices and industrial cleaning. Not forgetting sofas, carpets, high level, and low-level glass cleanings.



# Pursuing her Dream

**ISATOU K. JALLOW**



**W**e are a product of our environment. The people we live with, our surroundings and especially the facilities and institutions that shape and propel our development and growth. These elements unconsciously shape our dreams, goals and to the larger extent the path, we take, to become everything we want to be. For Isatou K. Jallow, a young poultry farmer in Basse Santa Su, It was the Veterinary Clinic right opposite her house. Beyond just a clinic and a place to learn about animals, their health and care, the veterinary clinic was the home to Isatou's dreams and aspirations.

Since the inception of her poultry farm in 2019, Isatou has discovered learning guides and opportunities to develop her capacity and skills in the path she has chosen for herself. Currently, she has about 200-250 chickens which serves as her stable source of income and hopes to expand to a bigger farm in a few years to cater to the growing market demands and needs in her community. Isatou's

journey started in the veterinary clinic with Ousman Mballow who encouraged her to venture into the business and provided her with the necessary guidance to start. Recalling their first conversation about this venture, Isatou shared the kind words extended to her by Ousman Mballow. She said, "He told me to keep my head up and take this business seriously. That even though I am a woman, I will never regret this decision for myself, my family and others around me". These words and more they have shared is her pillow of hope and guidance in times of stress, hardship and any form of disruption in her business.

In striving to develop her capacities and excel in her business, Isatou is a member of the current poultry track of the Andandorr Programme under the Youth Empowerment Project. This programme provides her with the learning space, resources and access to successful persons in her field of work to develop and harness her knowledge and skills. She said "the Andandorr Programme has been a



great improvement and benefit to my work and business. I have learnt a lot and acquired valuable experience that I did not know through the training”. Through the training, Isatou shared that she has been able to improve her management skills and averse the loss of her chickens because of the heat. This she described as the most valuable addition to her business in recent years.

As a strong believer in “knowledge is power”, Isatou currently pays for her Accountancy program at the University of The Gambia from proceedings of her poultry farm. This she believes will help her develop and improve her financial management skills and other aspects of her business.

Through her work, growth and journey, Isatou chooses to challenge gender stereotypes, representation and equality for women and girls in The Gambia. She wants her work, beliefs and drive to inspire more women to carve their own paths and follow their dreams.



**When asked what she wants to leave for women and girls, she shared:**

*We should work hard and provide for ourselves. We must invest in production and help ourselves. We cannot depend on other people who might end up maltreating us*

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“Belief is what gets you started, keeps you going and gets you where you want to be

LUCY NICHOL



Inspired by her love for jackets and saddened by the low quality she and many young women were faced with in The Gambia, Lucy Nichol the Creative Director of The Jacket Lady ventured on establishing her business to give women within the greater Banjul Area an experience the market was not catering for.

The Jacket Lady is a start-up fashion business that offer jackets customized with Inspired African Wax print that are neatly sewed, perfectly finished, branded and high-quality. The 30-year-old Lucy Nichol officially started her business in October 2020 after 6 months Fashion Incubation and Product Photography supported by the Youth Empowerment Project Andadorr programme.

The Training gave her business a facelift and inspired a new path for her and others that benefited from the training. Lucy shared “the business training gave me the

professional push I needed for the growth of my business. It helped me develop my business brand and packaging of my products”. In just a few months, she has seen major growth in her business and profit margin.

For Lucy, she is moved by the message and the story behind every tailored jacket. With every woven African print on a jacket, she wants her clients to feel empowered, beautiful and remember their roots. She wants them to stand tall, be bold and fall in love with the beauty embedded in their skin and culture.

In 5 years, Lucy wants The Jacket Lady to be a recognised brand worldwide that furthers the African story to global spaces. She calls on young people to believe in themselves because “Belief is what gets you started, keeps you going and gets you where you want to be”.





# A realised dream in The Gambia - Tekkii Fii

**LUWANG CESSAY**



Our childhood is painted with dreams, hopes and aspirations of who we can be and what we can do. Children everywhere have a visual representation of the super heroes they want to become to save and protect the world. At just 9 years, Luwang Cessay found solace in her father's tailoring shop where she found joy operating sewing machines of all kinds. Even when her tiny feet failed to touch the pedals, her dreams and hopes to become a tailor in the future kept her on her toes.

Luwang Cessay, the only seamstress in Pakalinding, is on a journey to realise her dreams and grow her father's legacy. As a beneficiary of the Tekki Fii Mini Grant, she has grown a business that operated within the four corners of her living room and a single sewing machine to a tailoring shop along the highway with 3 sewing machines and other necessities for the growth of her business. According to her, "Before the grant, my only market was my relatives and people in my immediate surrounding. Now, many people see my shop and they get to see me work. This past

Eid-ul-Adha celebration is a perfect depiction of how much my business has grown." Just like a lot of young people in The Gambia with dreams and ideas to make it in the country, she was caught up in financial obstacles she never imagined would happen. However, with persistence, dedication and support from the European Union Luwang has jumped past these hurdles closer to her goals. She believes "Everything you aim for can be achieved and everything you tell yourself can be done - will be done".

Luwang sends sincere gratitude to the European Union for their support. She said, "They are the reason I am who I am today. They fueled my aspirations and made it a reality".

When asked what her message to young people of The Gambia is, Luwang called them to work. She said, "Do not lose hope and idle around. Just like a scroll through a grant application on facebook bought my dreams a few feet closer to me



# Success through hard work

**LAMIN SAIDY**



In Soma, a community about 125km away from Banjul, the capital city of The Gambia, resides a young man motivated to make ends meet and pull his family out of the pits of poverty. Lamin Saidy, a renowned auto-mechanic in his neighborhood is inspired by the deep desire to ensure his younger siblings live a better life, have access to quality education and other basic amenities to create a better future for themselves. Lamin has worked as a mechanic for over 15 years now where he earns a living and provides for his family. Lamin shared “My family and I have lived through many difficulties. I wake up every day with thoughts of them and ways to make their lives better”.

Like a lot of young people in The Gambia, Lamin spent long nights in his room contemplating about embarking on the irregular journey to Europe. This, like the many young and hungry people The Gambia has lost in the deadly mediterranean

sea, he believed was his easy pass to make his dreams and desires for his family come true. Deep in thoughts, Lamin reflected on those gloomy days.. “I remember how I told myself that I will embark on this journey for my family. That I was useless if I could not make their lives better”. After hearing about the Social Development Fund mini loan scheme through the International Trade Centre, Lamin decided to give life one more shot in The Gambia.

In 2019, on a very sunny afternoon with little motivation and will to complete his tasks for the day, Lamin was met with the news of his successful application. With a broad smile and eyes hungry to conquer the world, lamin said “I felt happy. I was engulfed with immense joy and my first thoughts were ways to expand and grow my business”. When Lamin received the loan, he bought materials for the mechanic workshop he works for, started his own establishment and bought a



tractor to deal stones and sand where he has employed 5 young people in Soma. He said: “Before the loan, I was working for someone else but now I have my own business where I have employed other young people in my community. The grant has really changed my life”. Now in his final loan payment phase, Lamin shared that this is the best thing that have happened to him.

Lamin wants every young person that reads his story to be inspired and walk down the streets of The Gambia with hopes that they too can make it in The Gambia.

*The population of The Gambia is dominated by young people and for this we should work hard for the development of the country.”*

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# Taking One Step At A Time

**ISATOU SIMAHA**



**H**owever, starting a business requires much more than courage. The ability to keep moving even when things get tough has been Isatou Simaha's mantra. Isatou couldn't complete her high school studies due to financial difficulties. She later got married and became a housewife with two sons. Her love for doing anything fashion-related motivated her to get into the fashion industry. Isatou started with a small shop where she sold threads, sewing pins, zips, buttons and little materials people needed to sew clothes as a way of starting a business since she couldn't have enough money to buy a sewing machine nor open a tailoring shop. "I didn't have any source of finance at first. As a housewife, I keep some money from my monthly allowance given to me by my husband which I used to start my little business. Later on, I bought one sewing machine costing D7000 which I eventually used to start my tailoring business," Isatou narrates.

Isatou later also benefitted from the Tekki Fii mini-grant of D50,000 which bought her two industrial machines and one over-loop machine making it three, including the one she bought herself which made it 4 machines in all. She now employs two people who are working with her. Isatou further explains that she has grown beyond measure with the help of her coach: "GIZ through GIEPA helped me personally by giving me a coach to assist me on how to run my business up to the level that it is today. I can say that I have one of the best coaches who was always there to listen to me all along the six-months coaching, and even today he is there for me for any assistance I need."





# Instilling hope with every haircut

**MODOU KORKA**



**W**ith the strong desire to succeed and live a better life, Modou Korka took the irregular route to Europe to seek greener pasture. His journey stopped at Morocco where he was forced to use his skills for survival. With the endless hardship and the daily struggle to survive in a foreign land, Modou decided to come back to The Gambia and give his dreams one more shot.

Modou currently manages two barbershops called “China man Barbershop” in Bakau where he earns a living, trains and employs other young people and takes care of his family needs. He started barbing in school, fell in love with art, and explored ways and means to better himself in this area.

As a beneficiary of the Youth Empowerment Project Andandorr programme, Modou has developed skills to support the management and growth of his business. When reflecting on his Andandorr journey, he said “through this

programme, I have learnt better ways to manage my business and maintain a standard record of my earnings. It has given me room to network with other professionals and realise my ambitious dreams”.

Modou believes in hard work and his goal in life is to support young people in his community with transferable skills and knowledge they can explore to realise their potentials. He said “my dream is to turn around and see young people of Bakau doing great things and living decent lives. Through my business, I am working to achieve this by training and employing as many young people as I can. I strongly believe that development cannot happen with the majority of the population still struggling for daily survival”.

When asked what his message to young people is he said “I want every young person to believe in themselves. To explore their talents and strive to be better at everything they do”.



# Championing Dance Entrepreneurship in The Gambia

**NDEY FATOU JABANG**



“I was drawn to the world of dance at an early age. My mother was a dancer with a '70s music band in The Gambia, she encouraged me a lot but it was a self-driven passion that spurred me to follow through her legacy and leave my mark dancing to the rhythms of the beautiful African drums.

Ndey Fatou Jabang (Elektra) is the founder and proprietress of Flex Fuzion Entertainment and Dance Academy, a Dance company and academy offering dance classes to promote a healthy lifestyle and the art of dance as a full-time career thus creating a source of livelihood for young Gambians with a passion for dance. Flex Fuzion is The Gambia's first Dance company grooming and empowering youth in the creative industry.

This led to the formation of the first professional female dance group named “Afric Divas” and eventually transformed to a company that gave birth to Flex Fusion

Dance Academy. Today, Flex Fusion hosts the biggest dance competition in The Gambia dubbed The Dance Gambia Championship, The Gambia's premier National Dance platform that empowers Dancers for the first time in the history of The Gambia and was launched with a total number of 135 participants ready to battle it out and be crowned the Dance Champion.

Ndey, now the founder of Fuzion Dance Academy and Entertainment, The Gambia's only dance school, is working to empower youth across the country to express themselves and embrace their traditions in a warm and inviting atmosphere. This, she continues to do through rigorous training & mentoring of young people in the Academy.

“Our classes combine djembe dances from Guinea with Gambian dances like the Wolof and the Jola,” Ndey said reflecting on the breadth of traditions covered in the academy.



Ndey and the Dance Gambia Team watching these dances, one can be overwhelmed by the warmth and kinship on display, so natural are the movements and so talented are the performers. But establishing a dance school in the West African country wasn't easy, as Ndey explains, not least because dance is still viewed in much of The Gambia as a hobby rather than as a career that could provide economic gains for youth.

"People think dance doesn't pay the bills," Ndey says. "So I had to work to change minds, to sensitize the community, not only to the importance of dance but also to its role in creating jobs in the country. Our dancers are contracted by musician's every time to perform in videos, live performances and in some cases serve as extras and get paid for this".

To counter the misperception, Ndey first worked to establish an all-girls dance troupe, one that was able to make a living from its work, underscoring that dance not only keeps traditions alive but is also a viable source of income. "Your work has to be rooted in something you really love doing," Ndey says. "If you're not passionate about the goals you're setting, you'll never achieve them."

The value of her work extends well beyond her troupe's performances and her students' skills. For her, the importance of dance hinges on the people it uplifts and the opportunities it fosters for Gambian youth.

"I want to create a platform in my country using dance. I want to restore hope to each and every one of them and contribute to the growth of the country's creative industries and change mind-sets regarding dance entrepreneurship in the country." The EU funded Youth Empowerment Project has been crucial to supporting dance entrepreneurship in The Gambia, the project actively supported flex fusion to host the first ever Dance Gambia Championship which led to the growth of flex fusion dance Academy.

As Ndey sees it, it's that servant leadership and interest in The Gambia's youth that gives her work meaning and what gives it motion.