REPORTS

Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

From Regional Dialogue to National Transformation: How the FES-TUCC Advisory and Advocacy Group is Strengthening Trade Union Power in The Gambia

John Mark Mwanika, April 2026

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), through its Trade Union Competence Centre for Sub-Saharan Africa (FES-TUCC), is advancing its flagship initiative "*Driving a Just Transition through Social Dialogue*." This regional effort ensures Africa's shift to low-carbon economies is inclusive, equitable, and firmly cantered on workers' rights and livelihoods.

At the core of this work stands the Advisory and Advocacy Group (AAG)—a dynamic, cross-sectoral platform that unites trade unionists, feminist leaders, and climate justice advocates. Established to foster deeper regional coordination, alliance-building, and cross-movement cooperation, the AAG recognizes that climate change, inequality, and labour precarity demand integrated solutions rather than siloed responses.

Building Alliances for a Just Transition

Sub-Saharan Africa contributes minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions yet faces some of the most severe impacts: intensified poverty, widening inequality, and heightened labour insecurity. In this context, the AAG serves as both a strategic advisory body and a practical catalyst for collaboration and shared learning.

Its key objectives include:

- Strengthening alliances between trade unions, feminist movements, and climate justice actors.
- Providing strategic guidance on joint advocacy priorities.
- Identifying capacity gaps and facilitating knowledge exchange.
- Translating regional dialogue into tangible national-level action.

While these ambitions are significant, success is best measured through real-world impact. A compelling example has emerged from The Gambia.

From Dialogue to Action: A Historic Milestone in The Gambia

What started as active participation in regional AAG discussions has blossomed into a landmark achievement for Gambian workers.

Baboucarr Nyang, AAG member and representative from the Climate Action Network (CAN-Africa), leveraged the platform to learn directly from trade union peers across the region. Through formal sessions and informal exchanges—including lively WhatsApp conversations—he gained a richer understanding of trade union structures, strategies, and key concepts.

As Baboucarr reflected:

"For the first time in our history, we have a Federation of Labour Unions in The Gambia! I am so excited that I have initiated this and supported them to this stage. I remember when terms like 'tripartite' or 'affiliates' came up—I had to google them. But through learning from comrades, I was able to grow and contribute."

This peer-learning process—a hallmark of the AAG—played a pivotal role in establishing the Federation of Labour Unions of The Gambia (FLUG), the country's first unified national trade union federation. Previously fragmented, with unions operating in isolation, Gambian labour has now consolidated under a single national umbrella. This marks a transformative step toward stronger worker representation, enhanced collective bargaining power, and more effective social dialogue.

Regional Solidarity in Practice

Fellow AAG members have warmly celebrated this breakthrough, reflecting the spirit of cross-border solidarity:

- "You've come a long way indeed. Well done, comrade, on this great feat!"
- "From WhatsApp discussions to ground mobilisation—this is powerful. We wish you well as you advance workers' rights in The Gambia. Aluta continua."
- "Amazing work, Baboucarr! Thanks for your dedication and efforts. Amandla!"

These messages go beyond congratulations—they embody the power of shared struggle and mutual support.

Lessons for the Just Transition Agenda

The Gambian experience offers valuable insights for Africa's broader just transition efforts:

- Cross-sectoral spaces matter — Platforms that unite trade unions, climate activists, and feminist movements enable mutual learning and spark unexpected, transformative outcomes.
- Capacity building is practical, not abstract — Mastering concepts like tripartism and union federation structures directly fuels institution-building and stronger worker organisation.
- Regional processes drive national change — The AAG shows how regional dialogue can catalyse concrete achievements at the country level.
- Informal learning spaces are powerful — Knowledge exchange thrives across formal workshops and casual conversations alike.

Looking Ahead

The birth of the Federation of Labour Unions of The Gambia represents more than a national milestone. It serves as powerful proof of the FES-TUCC model: investing in alliances, dialogue, and shared learning not only shapes regional strategies but also builds lasting worker power across the continent.

As the just transition agenda advances, these "spin-off" successes may prove its most enduring legacy—where ideas evolve into institutions, and solidarity translates into systemic change.

Aluta continua. Amandla.