



Conflict and Development Analysis The Gambia

UPDATED MAY 2024

Executive Summary	4
Abbreviations	18
Style and Structure of the Report.....	19
Part 1: CDA Strategic Approach and Methodology	20
2024 Updated: Rationale and Results Framework.....	20
2024 Updated: Approach.....	22
2024 Updated: Methodology	24
Parameters and Limitations of the 2024 CDA.....	28
Part 2: Conflict Analysis	29
1. Manifestations of Conflict And Instability: Domestic Context	29
Section Summary: 2024 Manifestations of Violence, Tension and Instability	36
<i>Issue 1: Economic imperatives</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Issue 2: Polarisation – Political and Religious.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Issue 3: Land Disputes.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Issue 4: Challenges to the State-Citizen Social Contract.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Issue 5 (Regional): Bilateral with The Gambia - Senegal Relations.....</i>	<i>66</i>
<u>Issue 6 (Regional) Transnational Serious and Organized Crime</u>	<u>74</u>
<i>Issue 7 (Regional): Policy decisions of the wider West Africa and Sahel region.....</i>	<i>79</i>
B. Factor Assessment	81
Factor 1: Structural economic barriers and economic incentives	82
Factor 2: Social norms and patterns of power	86
Factor 3: Polarisation at convergence of identity: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation.....	97
Factor 4: Land as root cause of conflict	99
Factor 5: Pace of reform	103
Factor 6: Corruption.....	106
Factor 7: Government transparency, accountability and communication	107
Factor 8: Climate and environmental degradation	110
Factor 9: Transnational threats.....	111
C. Peace engines.....	112
<i>Finding 1: The Gambian people</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Finding 2: Social networks and customary peace mechanisms.....</i>	<i>114</i>
<i>Finding 3: The 2019 CDA and a strong enabling policy environment for peace</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Finding 4: Implementation Plan to the Government's White Paper on the TRRC Recommendations.....</i>	<i>119</i>
<i>Finding 5: A “national conversation” where dialogue and discussion on a vision for the Gambia</i>	<i>120</i>
<i>Finding 6: Inter-faith dialogue</i>	<i>121</i>
<i>Finding 7: Political leadership.....</i>	<i>121</i>

Finding 8: “Un-learning dictatorship”..... 123

Part 3: Response Mapping 125

Part 4: Recommendations 127

Annex A: Conflict sensitivity and risk mapping for CDA process..... 136

Annex B: Donor mapping of peace and security programming..... 137

Executive Summary

The 2024 Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) report aims to be practical, offering busy readers a user-friendly *aide memoire*. It draws from the tested “Agency neutral” approach developed by the United Nations (UN) Development Group, “Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis.” CDA is an inclusive and participatory process that takes into consideration the views of all stakeholders — including men, women, young people, persons with disabilities and minority groups. A CDA has three main components: a: Conflict analysis assessing the context, conflict factors (drivers) and peace engines; b: Current response mapping and c: Recommendations.

Why re-fresh the CDA in 2024? The rationale is to target and maximise the impact of peacebuilding programming. In 2018, the United Nations in The Gambia led an inclusive, participatory, and gender-sensitive CDA process. Given the rapidly changing transitional context, a CDA update was commissioned in 2019. Since 2019, delivery on the democratic dispensation dubbed the “New Gambia” - has seen progress politically, economically, and socially. However, shifts in national, regional and transnational externalities are threatening The Gambia’s transition to democracy. This CDA process was therefore designed to deliver the following outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** State and non-state peacebuilding actors in The Gambia share an aligned understanding of conflict drivers and peace engines
- **Outcome 2:** State and non-state peacebuilding actors are better informed when designing and delivering evidenced-based, conflict-sensitive programmes that sustain The Gambia’s transition
- **Outcome 3:** State and non-state peacebuilding actors are better able to track and mitigate risks to peace and development and respond to early warning signals.

CDA Approach: Nationally owned and nationwide: As in 2019, the Government of The Gambia, under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) again led and chaired the designated Project Team (PT), which comprises of the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery - part of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination, and Delivery. Given the need for national and community consultation, as in 2018 and 2019, technical and logistical support was provided by the West African Network on Peacebuilding (WANEP) The Gambia. The PT also included advisers from funding partners, like the UN Resident Coordinators Office, UN Development Programme and the World Bank. With the support of a national and an international technical consultant, the PT conducted the CDA exercise in the following phases::

- **Phase 1: Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** In March 2024, FGDs were held in all regions of The Gambia: Greater Banjul; West Coast; Lower River; North Bank; Central River and Upper River regions. The consultation were held in Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, Jola and Sarahulleh languages. As a result of the learning from 2019 CDA that women did not speak freely in mixed groups, the FGDs in the 2024 CDA organised separate discussions for male and female.
- **Phase 2: Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and stakeholder consultation (March/April 2024).** This approach engaged representatives from the central government, civil society, and the international community. One-to-one KIIs were complemented by a multi-stakeholder consultation on the theme “Leaving No-one Behind”. This Included roundtable group discussions with the private sector, women and girls, migration and vulnerable groups experience of violence and tension. Those consulted included the Vice President Mohammed BS Jallow, Gambian Supreme Islamic Council and the Gambia Christian Council, The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), Women’s Association for Victims’ Empowerment (WAVE), the National Youth Council, National the Youth Parliament, TOSTAN, the Gambia Federation for the Disabled. and the Gambia Network of AIDS Support Societies. Regional experts in transnational threats were consulted. The full list of institutions consulted is annexed to the CDA report.
- **Phase 3: Report drafting, review and validation. (April/May 2024).** Drafting the report was led by the international consultant was highly consultative. It included a zero-draft reviewed by the PT, and a validation draft which was scrutinized during four different Banjul workshops with the Team, the UN Country Team, High-level government and a multi-stakeholder workshop.

CDA Approach: Conflict sensitive - The process was as important as the final product. The PT recognized members’ respective roles as actors within the Gambian context and the risk of the CDA

process itself, i.e. how it could be instrumentalized and become a conflict driver. It also recognized that failure to carry out an inclusive exercise could fuel the perception that the GoG is marginalizing segments of the population. It mapped exclusion, and reputational risks as safeguards.

to mitigate the risks associated with the CDA process. - Annex A. This assessment led to the Delivery Principle: .

CDA Approach: Inclusive and participatory

The 2024 CDA exercise consulted **443 people – 247 (56%) men and 196 (44%) women**. This sample size makes its findings statistically significant. ¹ Details are as follows:

48 Focus Group Discussions consulted **288** people: **144** men, **144** women.

- Of these 288, 54 were young people under the age of 25 (37 young women and 17 young men)
- Of these 288, 20 considered themselves to be Persons With Disabilities.

155 subject matter experts (103 men and 52 women) at the national level from **89 different** institutions – government, civil society and faith-based organizations, political parties and the international community. See Annex C. Of these 155, two considered themselves to be Persons With Disabilities.

- **67** of these were consulted through one-to-one KIIs.
- **45** experts from civil society, government and the international community were consulted through a multi-stakeholder engagement technical event in April 2024
- **43** new and additional experts took part in the report review and validation events in May 2024.

Conflict analysis: Headline findings

The 2024 CDA used an issues-based analysis methodology which identified what, how and where the different issues **manifesting in violence, tension and instability are**. This was the evidence based from which conflict factors (drivers) were diagnosed accurately. In this Executive Summary, this section first highlights a critical criminality dynamic and then presents the seven issues identified during the FGDs and KIIs.

2024 criminality dynamic: The drug Kush was reported as a critical concern for citizens during the CDA 2024 FGD and KII consultations. However, according to the Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG) Kush is one among a complex panoply of substances sold and used ².

- a) Kush was reported as a critical concern throughout the district level FGDs and national level KIIs. Kush is a cannabis strain which is highly potent and addictive³ FGDs reported young people self-harming and being hospitalized, committing crime to fund their habit, or committing murder when high or when family members refused to give them money.
- b) Kush represents the tip of the iceberg in terms of drug use and should not crowd out a focus on the broader threat. According to the DLEAG, the consumption of Kush within communities may in fact be interacting with users of other drugs. Cannabis ruderalis (skunk) and Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS) and other forms of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) are new entrants into the local market. Their impact is worsened through a new youth trend in toxic cocktails of drugs mixed with alcohol.⁴

Domestic Issue 1: Economic imperatives are the most critical issue driving violence, tension and instability. They serve as a multiplier effect for other sources of dispute.

Current sources of violence, tension and instability

1. Negative coping mechanisms resulting from economic vulnerability were the most frequently raised issue at district and national level. These coping mechanisms included crime, forced sex work, “back way” migration, corruption, drug peddling and abuse.
2. There was a direct correlation between economic vulnerability and an increased impact / frequency of other manifestations identified by the CDA. These include the withholding of remittances (Issue 2: political polarisation) and contestation over land and climate insensitive exploitation of natural resources (Issue 4: Land disputes and environmental degradation)

¹ For the consultation sample size to be statistically significant, the CDA needed to consult at least 386 people. This would give us 95% confidence in findings within a margin of error of +/- 5%.

² KII Written inputs, CDA May 2024, The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG)

³ KII Written inputs, CDA May 2024, The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG)

⁴ KII Written inputs, CDA May 2024, The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG)

3. Likewise economic interests underpin legitimate business and organized crime's interests in The Gambia, which in turn heightens vulnerability. These include real estate investors' land grabbing and market manipulation (Issue 4: Land disputes) and an array of illicit economies (Issue 6: Serious and Organized Crime) including recruitment into supply chains and exploiting economic vulnerability through peddling drugs and get rich-quick scams.
4. The Gambia's strong extended family and community structures have begun to disintegrate under the economic pressure of the cost of living. Wives and children are being abandoned and increased levels of Gender Based Violence reported both of which are challenges for men's role as economic provider.
5. Under or unemployment, particularly of youth, impacts their economic resilience, undermines their self-worth and increases the impact of frustration with a system which excludes young people from decision-making. This compels them to take the risk of irregular migration.
6. A lack of social safety nets (social protection) exacerbates the impact of hard times.
7. Climate-induced shocks are increasing and heightening contestation over land and natural resources, and economic vulnerability, e.g. flood damage. (Issue 4: Land disputes)

Potential sources of violence, tension and instability in the next 12 – 24 months

8. Spikes in the cost of basic goods or ends to subsidies could further exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis and could lead to popular protests.
9. ECOWAS free movement of goods and people is perceived as a risk, with early signs of xenophobia. This *could lead* to targeted attacks on foreigners. This links to both the influx of Kush as well as alleged overfishing and market capture by foreigners from the sub-region and beyond.

Domestic Issue 2: Polarization – political and religious – is undermining the unity of purpose necessary to deliver the country's democratic dispensation.

Current sources of violence, tension and instability

1. At the national level, polarization risks at best delaying and at worst derailing the necessary constitutional and legal reforms required to deliver the TRRC White Paper, implementation Plan and broader National Development Plan.
2. Politicization of women's rights is already generating tension, especially around the repeal of the FGM Bill.
3. Political division at local level ranked as the third most frequently cited district FGD issue affecting stability – behind economic vulnerability and family disputes – is often linked to differing political affiliation. This issue was reported equally among men and women, as undermining inter and intracommunity ties, as families no longer attend each other's naming ceremonies or funerals; and access to water points is prevented due to political affiliation. The same can be said as reported to have impacted the willingness of relatives abroad to send remittances to their families
4. Since the 2019 CDA, four elections have been held, accompanied by an increase in hate speech. The 2021-2023 electoral cycle particularly recorded a spike in hate speech along political and ethnic lines. The (NHRC) voiced profound concerns regarding what it termed a "tense political environment," citing WhatsApp audio and text messages inciting violence, including physical attacks and threats against the lives and properties of public figures, political leaders, and government officials.
5. In 2024 intra- and inter-religious tensions are escalating. This is resulting in physical violence and undermining social cohesion more broadly. This compares with the 2018 and 2019 CDAs which emphasized positive interreligious relations in The Gambia, largely due to ongoing dialogue between the GSIC and the GCC.⁵

Potential sources of violence, tension and instability in the next 12 – 24 months

6. The need for a new constitution which reflects the aspirations of The Gambia is pressing. In 2020 the new draft constitution failed in the National Assembly due largely to disagreement over the retroactivity of presidential term limits. Similar disagreements may yet appear, given the political parties' insistence on the return of the original 2020 draft. The reform process also divides along religious lines: according to the KII's conducted with the GCC, it opposes the new constitution on the basis

⁵ For a recent example, see: Muslim, Christian councils preach peace amid rising religious tension, The Standard newspaper, 10 May 2023 - <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/muslim-christian-councils-preach-peace-amid-rising-religious-tension>

of its proposed primacy of sharia over secular concerns. Both political and religious interests at best *could* put on hold the constitutional reform and at worst generate civil unrest.

7. The frustration and isolation of returning migrants who feel let down by European Union and the Gambian state, as well as disenfranchised young people more broadly *could* serve as a ready constituency for those seeking numbers or protest around polarising political or religious issues.
8. An increase in anti-Western sentiment aligns with KII's reports of growing affinity, especially among Gambian youth with nations in the Sahel region. The formation of the Alliance of Sahel States (ASS) established on 16 September 2023 between the military governments of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso was as a defensive and cooperative effort in response to regional instability and external threats, underlining a commitment to "collective security"⁶ rather than Western military cooperation. "From a people-to-people perspective, there is sympathy for the new governments of Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger for their respective and collective pronounced intentions to redeem their countries historically looted of their resources and provide more effective protection of their peoples against rebels that have infiltrated their nation."⁷
9. The extent to which Gambian citizens' affinity with ASS and its military leadership is related only to its counter-colonial ideology rather than in support of military rule was not clear from KII and requires further analysis. If the former, it could represent a concern for those working on transitional justice.

Domestic Issue 3: Land dispute remains a significant source of tension

Current sources of violence, tension and instability

1. A lack of secure land tenure undermines citizens' ability to feel truly safe. In a country with a predominantly agriculturally based economy, land ownership equates to economic resilience.
2. The continued lack of normative framework is a barrier to progress. The Gambia lacks a land policy. There is no national mapping of land parcels, no subsequent cadastre for land registration.
3. Since the 2019 CDA land value has skyrocketed, driving speculation. This is increasing land grabbing. Lack of real estate regulation is leading to agricultural land transformed into residential areas and exploitation of economic vulnerability of landowners.
4. Capacity of Local Government Authorities to manage disputes is low, exacerbating frustration. The customary dispute resolution role played by Alkalis is being undermined by pursuit of their own interests manifested by the contestation between the Alkaaos and the Village Development Committees.

Potential sources of violence, tension and instability in the next 12 – 24 months

5. Land reform, including the validation and drafting of the much-needed landed reform bill and digitalization of records may prove divisive. It will impact several vested interests within government, the private sector and the citizenry. It will also affect customary land practices and structures as these will both be a legally emotionally charged process.

Domestic Issue 4: The social contract is being undermined by the slow pace of reform and in establishing state – citizen dialogue and accountability mechanisms

Current sources of violence, tension and instability

1. The TRRC White Paper set out an ambitious legislative reform agenda encompassing the revision of existing laws and the drafting of new ones. Priority is given to strengthening the Law Reform Commission to ensure that it has the required resources to revise any laws that are inconsistent with democratic society, good governance, and the rule of law. However, The Gambia's Law Reform Commission has been largely inactive for more than a decade and will need to be revitalized to be able to execute its mandate.⁸ Legislative reforms required to operationalize the TRRC prosecutions and reparations functions have been expedited, for example the National Assembly passed a Special Prosecutors Office (SPO) bill and Special Accountability Mechanism (SAM) bill during an extraordinary session on 22 April 2024. However, legislation to put in place an Infrastructure for peace – including the establishment of critical mediation / dialogue mechanisms including the Peace and Reconciliation Commission – is delayed. The Security Sector Reform

⁶ [Alliance of Sahel States: Challenging Colonial Borders and UN Representation? - Kujenga Amani \(ssrc.org\)](#)

⁷ 2024 CDA stakeholder workshop intervention.

⁸ Chief Justice talks tough on law reforms - <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/chief-justice-talks-tough-on-law-reforms> (15 March 2023)

- (SSR) has seen some, if unequal, progress. Commitments to establish a National Security Office and establish a Vetting Agency that would help remove from public offices, individuals responsible for abuses under the Jammeh regime have advanced, while commitments to restructure the army and enhance the prisons system are delayed. Outdated or non-existent legislation governing land tenure, Public Order, and electoral reform, including diaspora voting, are all long delayed.
2. An honest national dialogue to manage expectations and mitigate tension was a recommendation in the 2018 and 2019 CDAs. Until the February 2024 National Dialogue with the theme “Preserving the Nation, safeguarding the State and securing our resources” this conversation appears to have been lacking. While the 2024 National Dialogue was welcomed broadly by all political parties, participants noted that the national dialogue was “a long time coming” and were disappointed at the five-minute length of their interventions.
 3. A more structured and regular engagement, with accountable measures against which to report progress, is under discussion and would be an important development. Not least as in FGDs and KIIs “dialogue” was offered universally as a solution: Political parties proposed the need for a political dialogue on FGM and the Constitution; The Supreme Islamic Council and Gambia Christian Council both recognised the need for inter-faith dialogue. The success, or otherwise, of these dialogues, and associated follow-up could be the difference between these sources of tension being managed and eventually mitigated, versus escalating into civil unrest or community division.
 4. The Peace and Reconciliation Commission as recommended in the TRRC report, and its implementation plan will be tasked to facilitate dialogue and mediate to resolve conflicts across the country. At present this function is lacking. This is a risk. The Peace and Reconciliation Commission is critical not only as a place for national healing but also as a platform to coordinate a range of currently siloed interventions which could address the polarization affecting Gambian social cohesion today.
 5. Constraints for certain segments of civil society were reported. Civil society’s growth and diversification since 2016 is very welcome and ongoing. Concerns raised in October 2023 and echoed in KIIs noted shock over the overt and covert threatening of media houses, journalists, and activists made during political utterances.
 6. Accountability by civil society and not only government is required. Given significant investment made through CSOs, KIIs noted the need for these organisations to be financially transparent.
 7. In May 2024 the Gambia’s media freedom ranking dropped from 4th in Africa to 10th in the World Press Freedom Index. “Draconian media laws introduced by the former regime, which are still in the law books” were cited as one of the reasons for the decline in ranking. While media freedom is critical to the democratic space, misinformation and hate speech were raised by KIIs. This was linked to Gambians’ lack of experience of freedom of expression during the Jammeh era, to rapid sharing capacities of social media, and a lack of digital literacy and fact checking capacity.

Potential sources of violence, tension and instability in the next 12 – 24 months

- The forthcoming prosecution phase of the transitional justice process may present significant challenges since prosecutions, especially in relation to the former president and his most senior accomplices, while the former ruling party is an ally of President Adama Barrow. On the other hand, there is also a risk of unmet expectations with the reparations process. Both *could* open old wounds and deepen political rifts. Other critical recommendations that speak to accountability, transparency, protection of civic space and freedom of expression come from human rights mechanisms. Failure to implement these could lead to the perception of government failing to address past and or present violations. This could also lead to increased social tension.
- Without a visible government response to the Kush crisis, public trust could be undermined. While as outlined in Criminality above, there is a panoply of drugs being used within Gambian society, Kush is the substance most concerning to the population, and therefore against which they are judging the performance of security and justice actors. The use of social media and misinformation can quickly intensify public concern. Clear, consistent communication will be crucial. Addressing the broader drug issue would also address an increased rate of drug-related crime, and the threat to the physical and mental health of Gambian youth, and the country’s future social capital.

Regional Issue 5: Bilateral relations with Senegal

Current sources of violence, tension and instability

- 2023 cross-border tension over Darsilameh-Tranquil elevated the visibility of the Senegalo-Gambian Joint Boundary Commission (S-GJBC). The November 2023 talks between The Gambia and Senegal agreed to return the Gambian and Senegalese soldiers to the pre-2016 border positions; Senegalese and Gambian armed forces to jointly patrol a buffer zone in the area; and the S-GJBC would properly demarcate the border within three years. This resolution is currently being implemented and is on track.
- The spillover of the Casamance conflict continues to impact the human security of Gambian communities while continuing illegal wood smuggling from Casamance continues to undermine the rule of law and democratic governance in The Gambia. However recent progress in negotiations between the *Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance* (MFDC) and The Gambian government is considered a positive development
- At the community level the seasonal movement of cattle in search of pasture and water, especially across the Gambia's porous border with Senegal, is igniting conflicts within communities and causing environmental degradation. The FGDs in the URR particularly highlighted this concern, including the increase in armed pastoralists, accused of cattle rustling and deforestation.
- The issue of territorial integrity was a priority at the March 2024 National Strategic Dialogue hosted by the President. It is a critical point of contestation after ECOMIG's prolonged presence, as multiple polls have indicated that most Gambians are in favour of ending the mission and handing over the responsibility of the country's security to the Gambian and security forces.⁹

Potential sources of violence, tension and instability in the next 12 – 24 months

- **Timing of ECOMIG's exit.** ECOMIG retains an important role in accompanying Security Sector Reform (SSR) and TRRC prosecutions. Unless the mandate of ECOMIG is communicated clearly, this may result in tensions. This could be instrumentalised by actors with an anti-ECOWAS agenda. Protests could escalate.

Regional Issue 6: Impact of transnational Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) is felt increasingly

Current sources of violence, tension and instability

- The diversification and reach of SOC supplies chain for drugs, fake goods, people trafficking is reported to have increased significantly. These interests fuel corruption, do harm through poor quality goods or drug related crime.
- In this context, Serious and Organised Crime networks continue to expand illegal wood export especially from Casamance.
- Porous borders, lax customs controls, and proven networks are reported as enablers. Kush is reportedly brought into the country from Sierra Leone by road via Guinea Conakry and from Senegal.

Potential sources of violence, tension and instability in the coming 12 – 24 months

- **Intersection between SOC and Violent Extremism .** In June 2023 the Gambian Minister of Foreign Affairs disclosed to the Gambian media that he had learned through conversations with returnee migrants that Gambian migrants in Libya were being radicalized and recruited into jihadist movements.¹⁰ While at present evidence is anecdotal on VE, the evidence of SOC is compelling. Globally, the intertwining of transnational SOC and violent extremism recruitment, illicit economy supply chains and financing are proven and often leading to violence over control, for example, in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique. This trend could emerge in The Gambia.

Regional Issue 7: Policy decisions of wider west Africa and Sahel Region

- The breakdown in relations between ECOWAS and Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Guinea places barriers to much-needed regional cooperation on transnational threats. This includes

⁹ Gambians feel less safe but want ECOMIG to leave, Afrobarometer survey shows - https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/news_release-gambians_feel_less_safe_but_want_ecomig_to_leave-afrobarometer-v2-28may21f.pdf

¹⁰ "Gambians may have joined jihadist groups in Libya," *The Standard* newspaper, 26 July 2023 - <https://standard.gm/gambians-may-have-joined-jihadist-groups-in-libya>

communication on whether Gambian football fans and returning migrants were barred from entry due to identification of Gambian nationals allegedly fighting for extremist organisations in Mali.

And so? Factors driving manifestations of violence, tension and instability

In the section above, we asked what issues, where and who is involved in violence and instability and “how” it surfaces in society. The full CDA identified a set of “factors” (**otherwise known as conflict drivers or root causes**) against each issue. These were mapped and grouped into headlines below.

Factor 1	Structural economic barriers and economic incentives at the macro-economic level including the enabling environment of poor business , which in turn impacts on the provision of effective education to employment pathway for youth. These in turn are impacted by slow COVID- 19 recovery and cost hikes in food and fertilizers linked to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
Factor 2	Social norms and patterns of power , underpinning often negative impacts on the voice, choice and control of women, youth and Persons With Disabilities, and therefore their lived experience of violence.
Factor 3	Polarization at the convergence of identity - ethnic, religious and / or political.
Factor 4	Land , including the complexity of the dual system – statutory and customary.
Factor 5	Pace of reform , particularly land, the constitution, the establishment of the PRC.
Factor 6	Corruption
Factor 7	Lack of government transparency, accountability and communication encompassing basic services, expectation management and access to Information.
Factor 8	Climate and environmental degradation including more regular, more severe natural disasters and environmental degradation.
Factor 9	Transnational threats , including SOC and the influence of violent extremist organisations.

Status of peace engines Peace engines are actors and factors that might have the capacity to mitigate or manage tensions and may help promote peace and stability. The 2019 CDA reported Civil Society Organisations, National Reforms, Commissions & Committees, Religious and Traditional Leaders and the Media Sector as key peace engines. The importance of these remains in 2024. In this section we assess the current context, including new peace engines which have emerged, or which were not explored in detail in 2019.

Finding 1	The Gambian people are the country’s strongest peace engine.
Finding 2	A decline in “griots” - local networks and contestation between customary peace mechanisms undermines effectiveness. Yet these are as important ever .
Finding 3	Since the 2019 CDA The Gambia has put in place a strong enabling environment for peace. This includes legislations, institutions and the 2024 CDA .
Finding 4	Delivery of the Implementation Plan to the Government’s White Paper on the Recommendations of the TRRC is a critical peace engine.
Finding 5	At present, the loudest voices – hate speech, polarized views – are the ones grabbing the headlines. A “national conversation” where dialogue and discussion on a vision for The Gambia remains a goal and a powerful peace engine which should be balanced, with an evidenced-based media.
Finding 6	During the CDA KIIs the Supreme Islamic Council and the Gambian Christian Council both expressed willingness to continue inter-faith dialogue and efforts

Finding 7	Political leadership are best placed to tackle polarization and political hate speech. They can lead by example through positive messaging among their constituencies with the support of the inter-party committee at all levels .
Finding 8	“Un-learning dictatorship” and understanding what it means to live in a democracy is work in progress. This includes the rebuilding of trust between the state and civil society – and their role as a watchdog of the government.

Main recommendations. Full recommendations can be found in Part 4.

Recommendations	Rationale	Specific recommendations
Recommendation 1: The security and peace architecture must continue to use the CDA proactively - to assess the factors driving conflict and adapt policy and programming accordingly.	Conflict analysis can risk being launched and sitting on shelf gathering dust. However, The Gambia's 2018 and 2019 CDAs bucked this trend by being widely used to this day. Commitment to reviewing and applying the findings and recommendations takes time and investment but ultimately underpins The Gambia's commitment to a transition to democracy, and "Never Again." This 2024 Conflict and Development Analysis is a call to action for a renewed cross-government, international community and civil society effort on conflict sensitivity.	Recommendation. All government ministries should undertake a conflict sensitivity audit. This would assess the extent to which policies and programmes currently being designed or delivered are in line with the findings of the CDA. This would also include the extent to which they are contributing towards addressing the conflict factors identified and whether their processes risk doing harm. An assessment of how the ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) feed early warning mechanisms should also be included. This would inform the design and delivery of a capacity building package to support MDAs. Recommendation: UN / World Bank programme teams should undertake a similar review and align with MDA findings. Subsequently they should update their project conflict and risk tracking matrices, and where needed programme activities, to reflect the findings of the CDA. These conflict and risk tracking matrices should be refreshed on a quarterly basis and where indicators demonstrate programming may be generating negative impacts. The team should consider how and in what way related activities can be modified, or whether they should be stopped
Recommendation 2: UN RC and the World Bank should build on its Turnaround Allocation and CDA funding partnerships to deliver impactful programming which addresses conflict drivers through system-level challenges.	To address the most prevalent factors driving crime and instability requires structural change - addressing lack of jobs or land disputes, for example. Systemic challenges require funding and longevity of a scale such as the newly announced World Bank's Board \$92.71 million financing for the five-year The Gambia Resilience, Inclusion, Skills, and Equity Project (The Gambia RISE Project). ¹¹ The PBF is designed to be a smaller scale, catalytic and nimble.	Recommendation: The CDA partnership has allowed the World Bank and UN RC (PBF funding) to work to their respective technical strengths. This should continue, through for example (i) scoping of bespoke packages of support for deported migrants under the RISE programme or (ii) as proposed in recommendations on land - PBF funds the Ministry of Lands to kick start its real estate regulation activity – something which the World Bank land support is not yet able to finance. By targeting activity which specifically understands and addresses the root causes of the conflict driver, the World Bank's investment will be more effective, and the UN RC (PBF) multiplier effect for its funding will increase.
Recommendation 3: Address economic vulnerability through a human security approach	Negative coping mechanisms resulting from economic vulnerability are the main factors driving crime and instability. Increased household vulnerability has caused diseases, malnutrition, domestic violence, and street begging.	Recommendation: Human security encompasses economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. There are needs to increase investments in social safety nets to reduce vulnerability to climate change, economic shocks, and protection of human rights.

¹¹ [World Bank Provides \\$92.71 Million Through The Gambia RISE Project to Enhance Economic and Educational Outcomes](#)

Recommendation 4: Early warning is only as effective as the response which occurs. Government and civil society must effectively communicate community-level reporting to the centre and the centre respond	Both the Office of the National Security Adviser and the National Centre for National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordinating Centre (NCCRM) are relatively new institutions. There is an opportunity to proactively integrate planning and reporting mechanisms from the start. This will increase effectiveness and vertical accountability from central to decentralised levels. Moreover, other institutions with capability to track indicators and warnings of unrest / potential tension should be integrated.	Recommendation: Early warning is only as effective as the response, which occurs. Government should prioritize the design of a fit-for-purpose reporting mechanism through which NCCRM can inform decision-making by the NSC. Recommendation: Likewise, community-level early warning monitors – particularly women – are critical actors to track and report increased incidences of hate speech, radical ideology or drug peddling. Government should invest time in building capacity to receive, analyse and identify trends which allow government to place the right resources in the right place. The mechanisms to receive this information at the national level in a timely manner and agree and operational response are key.
Recommendation 5: Government must communicate clearly and regularly through a range of media platforms and outreach channels.	The TRRC process gave a common goal and a unifying purpose for The Gambia. While citizens' concern for economic security and poor basic services remained, between 2017 and 2023 they accepted prioritisation of the TRRC for the "greater good" of the country. In 2024, with the process complete, this common goal and unity of purpose have disappeared. The reality of financing costs of the past (reparations and prosecutions), present and future are now very real. Communication on what government can and cannot do and why has never been more important.	Recommendation: Government should design and deliver a new Strategic Communications Strategy. This would be a strategic and public communication plan that provides regular high-level authority messaging to inform the public about reforms and progress. Ideally, this should be done in a coordinated way among institutions, to avoid mixed messaging, and in ways that demonstrate coherency and representative voices from relevant institutions, who can weigh in on specific steps and timelines of reforms. All such communications should be delivered through carefully considered channels or sources, which must be informed by evidence through consultation processes to identify citizens' media consumption behaviours (especially social media), as well as translated into various languages, so as to reach across regions, ages, and ethno-linguistic backgrounds. Recommendation: Government should increase and enhance investments in Open Government as per the TAA milestones in place. This includes transparency of resource allocation and budget management.
Recommendation 6: Coordinated and rapid action to establish fit-for-purpose dialogue are required. These	Throughout the FGD and KIIs "dialogue" was offered as a solution – Political parties proposed the need for a political dialogue on FGM and the constitution. The Supreme Islamic Council and the Gambia Christian	Recommendation: The drafting and enactment of the PRC Act should be expedited. April 2024's extraordinary session which passed the Special Accountability Mechanism (SAM) has demonstrated precedence for expediting legislation in support of the TRRC Implementation Plan. Preparatory Technical Assistance to

are needed for a place not only to heal past wounds but also mitigate the polarisation affecting social cohesion today.	Council both recognized the need for inter-faith dialogue on the aforementioned issues among others. A National Platform (Bantaba)” is required. In the long term, this “meeting place” will be a role of the Peace and Reconciliation Commission. However, the legal and institutional framework of the PRC is currently being developed which will set the stage for the establishment of the PRC . The success, or otherwise, of these dialogues, and associated follow-up actions could be the difference between these latent sources of tension being managed and eventually mitigated versus escalating into civil unrest or inter-community division.	support the PRC’s establishments including the scoping of decentralised structures should be done in parallel. Recommendation: In the meantime, Government should consider increasing its work with trusted non-state actors to convene a dialogue to address polarizing issues. While the work of the MoI is critical towards the establishment of the Infrastructure for peace, the partisan nature of politics creates challenges for its role as a national mediator. Recommendation: In the absence of the PRC, an inter-faith dialogue space should be established. The Government could consider the role of the National Human Rights Commission, civil society and customary leaders, including the council of chiefs as facilitators.
Recommendation 7: Those with the power to shape the narrative must hold each other to account	KIIs across the board worried for The Gambia’s current trajectory of polarisation, with issues in the coming year which are fraught with risk. KIIs also highlighted the power of political and religious leaders to guide their members and followers. The direction of travel is very much in the hands of these leaders, who have it in their power to be peace engines. Media freedom – be it print or social media-is a critical tenet of democracy but also a driver of hate speech and misinformation which is increasing exponentially in The Gambia. Likewise, media responsibility for balanced, evidence-based journalism is vital. Journalists are pivotal actors with the potential to fan the fires of hate and polarisation or build public trust.	Recommendation: The Inter-party Committee should intensify its efforts, particularly in preventative action around hate speech. Coalitions with civil society partners to broaden impact should be prioritised. Recommendation: Political party leadership should be given training in conflict-sensitive voter education techniques to support their outreach to members on a future referendum. Recommendation Support to the Gambia Media Council and the Gambia Press Union on credible, balanced media should be increased. This could include the introduction of a journalist accreditation system.
Recommendation 8: Targeted support to enhance Persons With Disabilities’, women and youth	To tackle the social norms which exclude women, youth and People With Disabilities from society, behavioural change is required. This is at individual, institutional (State) and community levels.	Recommendation: Empower Persons With Disabilities in delivering on their mantra “Nothing about us without us.” This could include support to leadership and communication training; advocacy for inclusion on national and local governance and development

engagement with and in peacebuilding / early warning		platforms; and inclusion in national budget oversight and other accountability mechanisms. Recommendation: Continue to build the evidence base and advocate for a quota system for women in political parties Recommendation: Capacitate men and young boys as the advocate for women. This is critical to addressing the social barriers to women running for office as well as the physical security and hate speech related challenges. Recommendation: Heighten focus on youth and digital literacy should be prioritized. This includes understanding how to fact check, what is fake news and how to assess reports critically before forwarding and spreading misinformation across their networks. Recommendation: Strengthen the Inter-Party Committee's Youth branch (or similar agency based on detailed delivery partner mapping). IPC youth branch should be a driving force behind youth led and youth centred initiatives such as the upcoming constitutional reform process This could have several strands of activities including a) support to political parties on real, rather than "transactional" youth engagement including via strengthening the IPC youth wings, and inter-party dialogue at youth level b) support the leadership of political parties to enhance their digital literacy and communication style with young people c) IEC to engage the IPC youth branch on what democracy means in 2024.
Recommendation 9: Land reform and dispute resolution capabilities are underfunded. It must be prioritised politically, technically and financially.	Indeed, land is a structural driver perpetuated by deep-rooted interests that maintain the <i>status quo</i>. The land sector is slow to see change and hard to quantify that change when it comes. However, it is a critical issue which impacts Gambian economic, social and cultural resilience. As one KII said, "<i>Land is everything.</i>"	Recommendation: Support to land reform and regulation in all aspects should be prioritized. Recommendation: UN PBF should focus support on areas where its funds can be catalytic, i.e. address urgent issues or to provide seed funding and pilot new initiatives. For example, support towards expediting the real estate regulation should include drafting of the land reform Bill and a scoping study on land/real estate regulation should be done in parallel . Recommendation: Duplication and poor management of land under customary law is exponentially increasing the number of land-related disputes and court cases. Technical support to the standardize land

		management processes at the customary level should continue in parallel with drafting the land reform Bill.
Recommendation 10: Implementation of TRRC recommendations should be holistic.	Progress on prosecution and repartitions are pivotal to The Gambia's peaceful transition. As such, their successful and conflict sensitive implementation should be supported by all means possible. Reconciliation should receive equal attention. It impacts The Gambia's social fabric, and citizens' collective resilience to polarising narratives.	Recommendation: When designing reconciliation programmes, conflict analysis which overlays historic abuses of the Jammeh era with 2024 issues should inform hyper-localised understanding. Recommendation: Government should take heed of other recommendations such as those from the human rights mechanisms that contribute to the implementation of the TRRC recommendations and contribute to peace.
Recommendation 11: Improve migration management by mitigating the risks of irregular migration and promote alternatives through regular pathways.	Migration management can have an impact on peace and development. Policies and programmes should be designed to strengthen migration governance to minimise the risks and foster positive impact.	Recommendation: Regular migration contributes significantly to The Gambia's economy and its citizens' economic resilience. Bilateral cooperation should continue to be prioritised to facilitate the safe and orderly migration of Gambians. Recommendation: At present it appears there is a lack of insight on the Serious and Organised Crime supply chains which facilitate irregular migration. Government should consider working with regional expert partners to understand the issues and based on evidence with the work of neighbours. Anecdotal evidence of vulnerability to recruitment into extremist organisations should also be tested. Recommendation: Support services for the re-integration of returning migrants should be scaled up and better designated through a referral pathways. .
Recommendation 12 (Regional): Responses to The Gambia's increasingly complex drug market should blend law enforcement and health education.	While in the short term, state and civil society responses must focus on kush, in the short to medium term they should respond to youth experimentation with a wide range of deadly drug and alcohol cocktails. Combined law enforcement and health responses can learn from Mauritius. Synthetic cannabinoids arrived in the region between 2011 and 2013 in the form known as <i>Chimique</i> . While not identical to kush, it is believed both are synthetic cannabinoids. ¹²	Recommendation: The Gambia can learn from the experience of Mauritius when it comes to addressing kush. A combination of law enforcement and health education is required. It is this health impact which is making <i>chimique</i> less socially acceptable. This provides a potential direction for The Gambia in terms of youth peer awareness alongside law enforcement. Recommendation: Gambian authorities should engage quickly and broadly with regional neighbours to agree areas of cooperation.

¹² [GI TOC-Changing-Tides-The-evolving-illicit-drug-trade-in-the-western-Indian-Ocean.pdf](#) ([globalinitiative.net](#))

		Recommendation: For health education on kush’s impact to be successful, the education must be delivered by “credible voices”.
--	--	--

Abbreviations

ASS Alliance of Sahel States	NAM National Assembly Members
ADRS Alternative Dispute Resolution Secretariat	NAWEC National Water and Electricity Company
CDA Conflict and Development Analysis	NBR North Bank Region
CSO Civil Society Organization	NCCE National Council for Civic Education
CRR Central River Region	NCP National Convention Party
ECOMIG ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia	NCCRM National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordinating Centre
ECOWAS Economic Community of West African States	NDP National Development Plan
EU European Union	NGO Non-Governmental Organization
FGD Focus Group Discussion	NRP National Reconciliation Party
FGM Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting	NYC National Youth Council
FLAG Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia	OIC Organization of Islamic Cooperation
GAF Gambia Armed Forces	ONS Office of National Security
GBA Greater Banjul Area	PDOIS Peoples Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism
GBV Gender-Based Violence	PRC Peace and Reconciliation Commission
GCC Gambia Christian Council	PT Project Management Team
GDC Gambia Democratic Congress	SIC Gambia Supreme Islamic Council
GDP Gross Domestic Product	SOC Serious and Organised Crime
GID Gambia Immigration Department	SSR Security Sector Reform
GMC Gambia Moral Congress	TANGO The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations
GPDP Gambia Peoples Democratic Party	TDA Tourism Development Area
GPF Gambia Police Force	TRRC Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission
GPU Gambia Press Union	UDP United Democratic Party
GRTS Gambia Radio and Television Services	UN United Nations
IEC Independent Electoral Commission	UNDP United Nations Development Programme
IOM International Organization for Migration	UNODC United Nations Office on Drug Control
IPC Inter-Party Committee	UNOWAS United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
ISGS Islamic State in the Greater Sahara	URR Upper River Region
JNIM Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen	US United States of America
KII Key Informant Interview	VDC Village Development Committee
LGCoI Local Government Councils	WAVE Women's Association for Victims' Empowerment
LGA Local Government Area	WANEP West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
LRR Lower River Region	WCR West Coast Region

Style and Structure of this Report

The 2024 Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) report aims to be practical and easily accessible, offering the busy reader a user-friendly *aide memoire* based on a robust analysis and widely consulted opinion. It draws from the tried and tested “Agency neutral” approach developed by the United Nations Development Group, “Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis.”¹³ The CDA is an inclusive and participatory process that takes into consideration the views of all stakeholders — including men, women, young people, persons with disabilities and minority groups. A CDA has three main components, namely:

1: Conflict analysis. This assesses the current context, conflict drivers and peace engines.

2: Current response mapping

3: Recommendations, i.e. identification of the way forward

Using the above structure, this 2024 updated:

- Digs deeply into the **existing manifestations** of instability in The Gambia. It analyses and seeks to understand their root causes, the actors and their power structure and incentives, and the change pathways which could help to sustain the peaceful nature of The Gambia’s transition
- Pays particular attention to the impact of **social norms and patterns of power** including on vulnerable and marginalised groups such as women, youth, older persons and Persons with Disabilities
- Recognises the increasing **impact of regional influences and transnational actors** on The Gambia. This includes assessing the political economy of The Gambia’s neighbours, as well as the threats of Serious and Organised Crime and Violent Extremism
- **Horizon scans**, identifying correlations of factors which could trigger new instability

Based on this **aligned understanding**, the report then makes recommendations of what can be done and presents project and policy **options** for consideration.

¹³ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/conducting-a-conflict-and-development-analysis.html>

Part 1: CDA Strategic Approach and Methodology

Starting point: The Gambia's 2018 and 2019 Conflict and Development Analyses

In 2016, President Jammeh's refusal to accept defeat in the presidential election triggered a constitutional crisis and a military intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Negotiations resulted in Jammeh's peaceful departure and President Barrow's inauguration as The Gambia's third president in January 2017. This ended the 22-year authoritarian rule, a regime characterised by serious human rights violations and abuses, a highly personalized and politicised security sector, the absence of basic civil liberties, weak institutions and poor governance.

Moving quickly to show The Gambia's citizens the benefits of democratic and accountable governance, the new government immediately sought the assistance of the United Nations and the international community in support of "the New Gambia." This reform agenda included overhauling the country's institutions, laying a new foundation of respect for the rule of law, addressing past human rights' abuses, promoting national reconciliation and opening the public space.

To inform, target, and maximise the impact of peacebuilding programming, in the United Nations in 2018 led an inclusive, participatory, and gender-sensitive CDA process. A Project Management Team, led by the Government of the Gambia through the Ministry of the Interior, together with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding-The Gambia (WANEP) was supported by the United Nations through the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme for Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention.¹⁴

The CDA was the first of its kind in the Gambia. It generated a robust evidence-based understanding of the structural and proximate conflict drivers and risks posed to the transition process. It assessed their potential impact and proposed mitigations, which were then developed into programming options for the UN Peacebuilding Fund. Fieldwork was carried out covering all regions of Gambia's national territory, with the support of regional research teams reflecting Gambia's ethno-linguistic and age diversity. This analysis succeeded in attracting significant investments from the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund and helped UN agencies, international partners, and civil society to address important peacebuilding challenges in the country. This included ensuring that programming was designed through a conflict-sensitive lens.

Given the rapidly changing transition context, a CDA update was commissioned in 2019. It revisited and updated the collective knowledge of peace and conflict dynamics shaping The Gambia, refining the understanding of concerns or promising initiatives shaping the 2019 context, with the intention of supporting actors to refine their orientation to the country's most urgent peacebuilding priorities.

2024 Updated: Rationale and results framework

Rationale

Since 2019, delivery of the democratic dispensation - "New Gambia" - has seen some progress politically, economically, socially and towards good governance. However, as we assess in the following analysis, local, national, regional and transnational externalities are threatening full implementation of The Gambia's transition to democracy. Within this rapidly evolving and increasingly complex context, a conflict and development analysis are more important than ever.

Why does this CDA look different to the 2018 and 2019 documents?

The 2024 CDA uses the three components with innovations and "Gambianization" of the A: Conflict analysis as follows:

1. An **issues-based analysis** of what, how and where the different issues generating tensions and instability in The Gambia are. This is the evidence from which the conflict factors (drivers) are accurately identified from real-time manifestations of violence in the society.

¹⁴ 2019 Conflict and Development Analysis, p. 6

2. **Gender, age and disability analysis:** While the 2018 and 2019 CDA examined women and youth as actors, they did not delve deeply into the patterns of power and social norms which underpinned those issues. Given these factors' intrinsic role in exclusion as a conflict driver, the 2024 CDA addresses these issues..
3. **Regional and transnational threats analysis:** Since 2019, global conflict analysis best practice has evolved. It now understands that conflict drivers do not stop at national borders. The 2024 CDA assesses the transnational dimension of regional and global actors' interests and incentives in The Gambia, and how these are driving domestic tensions and instability.

2024 CDA – An expansion of the United Nations – World Bank cooperation in The Gambia

Experiences in The Gambia demonstrates that strong partnerships between the UN, the World Bank, governments, and local stakeholders play an essential role in fostering peace and stability. By leveraging each other's comparative advantages and expertise, these partnerships can catalyse transformative change by helping to coordinate investments and amplify impact.

In 2017, The Gambia celebrated a historic democratic transition, breaking with 22 years of authoritarian rule. The new government seized this window of opportunity to pursue major reforms, including transitional justice, constitutional reform, land reform, and security sector reform. At this critical juncture, the World Bank provided enhanced support to the government, through the Turn Around Allocation (TAA). The Gambia gained eligibility to the TAA in November 2021, topping up its IDA Performance-Based Allocation by 125%, and bringing the country's allocation (for FY22-23) to \$246.24 million – more than double what it would have received otherwise.

The Gambia also benefited from the UN Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) Partnership Facility, which facilitated UN support to the government's implementation of its Turn Around Strategy, and the sharing of information and data between the UN and the World Bank on the government's annual performance in achieving key milestones under the strategy. **An important component of this facility is the joint UN-World Bank analytical work, which includes this update to The Gambia's 2019 Conflict and Development Analysis.**

The Government of The Gambia integrated the World Bank and other partners, including the UN, into the TAA governance and monitoring structures, by inviting the World Bank Resident Representative to participate in the steering committee, jointly with the UN Resident Coordinator, including relevant UN agencies in the TAA Technical Committee and working groups. The result has been richer technical inputs into the TAA review process, underpinned by strong government leadership, sustained dialogue on addressing the drivers of FCV, and a significant sharpening of the indicators used to measure the government's performance against its TAA milestones.

This CDA will support the Government of the Gambia, the UN and World Bank **to continually assess, design and deliver responses which mitigate these domestic and external threats**, while ensuring that these responses serve as peace engines and do no harm, i.e. exacerbate existing or generating new tensions. The World Bank formed part of the CDA Project Team.

Outcomes of this process

By the conclusion of this CDA process, the following change will have been achieved:

- **Outcome 1:** State and non-state peacebuilding actors in The Gambia share an **aligned** understanding of conflict drivers and peace engines.
- **Outcome 2:** State and non-state peacebuilding actors are better informed when **designing and delivering evidence-based, conflict sensitive programmes** that sustain the peaceful nature of Gambia's transition.
- **Outcome 3:** State and non-state peacebuilding actors are better able **to track and mitigate risks** to peace and development and respond to early warning signals.

Objectives

Given that it has been five years since the last CDA process, the 2024 updated will:

- **Objective 1:** Deepen understanding of the current situation in The Gambia by identifying the main factors that fuel conflict (conflict drivers)¹⁵ and build peace (peace engines),¹⁶ including the ways in which gender, youth, climate and conflict interact.
- **Objective 2:** Uncover strategic entry-points for UN- and World Bank-supported early warning, conflict prevention and peacebuilding that would help build national capacities to sustain peace.
- **Objective 3:** Support programming by the UN, the World Bank and other stakeholders by helping to make it more conflict-sensitive, gender- and age-responsive, and climate proof; and contribute to updating the UN's Common Country Analysis (CCA) and Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF), as well as the World Bank's Risk & Resilience Assessment (RRA).

2024 Updated: Approach

Applying lessons learned from the 2018 and 2019 processes and international best practice, the 2024 updated was governed by two guiding principles: **Guiding Principle 1: The CDA process is as important as the final product** and **Guiding Principle 2: Assess influences on the peace and stability from all angles**.

We now set out how these guiding principles were applied during the CDA process, and why.

Guiding Principle 1: The CDA process is as important as the final product.

Cognisant that conflict analysis is an inherently political activity and can be a **connector or divider** within The Gambia and the broader region. To generate opportunities for peace and avoid harm, the CDA process was designed and delivered under four delivery principles:

Delivery principle 1: Conflict sensitivity

The Project Team recognised the Ministry of Interior (MoI) / UN / World Bank's role as an actor within the context and the risk of the CDA process itself i.e. how it could be instrumentalised and become a conflict driver. To inform a conflict-sensitive CDA process during the design phase, the Project Team, chaired by the Ministry of Interior delivered a risk analysis for CDA process.. Failure to execute an inclusive exercise could fuel the perception that the GoG is marginalising particular segments of the population was considered the greatest risk. The full matrix can be found in **Annex A**.

Delivery Principle 2: Nationally owned

The Government of the Gambia, under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, again took up its leadership role of the process and its designated project team. This Project Management Team was chaired by MoI and was closely supported by the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery - part of the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination, and Delivery. Given the national reach, which included community-level consultation, expert technical and operational support was provided by the West African Network on Peacebuilding (WANEP) The Gambia. The Project Team also included advisers from the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. With the support of a national and an international consultant, the project team was directly engaged in all activities, beginning with a participatory approach to research design, which included design consultation with national stakeholders and working throughout the process through consultation and validation processes.

Delivery principle 3: Inclusive and participatory

¹⁵ Conflict drivers are dynamic processes that contribute to the ignition or exacerbation of destructive conflict because of structural and/or proximate factors. Conflict drivers usually manifest themselves in violence or directly contribute to the emergence of violent conflict.

¹⁶ Peace engines are elements and/or processes that exist within a society that mitigate the emergence and proliferation of violent conflict and strengthen foundations for peace. Peace engines draw upon and reinforce the innate resilience of a society.

As outlined above, a key risk of the CDA process was a sense of exclusion. Therefore, the CDA prioritised inclusion in two domains:

i) Geographic inclusion (please see methodology section below for full details) and intersectional social inclusion

ii) Intersectional approach to social inclusion

The CDA's approach to inclusion recognised women and men not as homogeneous groups. The intersection of their gender and key identity markers - marital status, social class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, (dis)ability – have a significant impact on their day-to-day experience, including the way they are impacted by violence and conflict, as victims, perpetrators and agents of change. This understanding affected the participatory and inclusive approach to the CDA as follows:

- Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Analysis deep dive in the CDA document. The 2018 and 2019 CDA documents offer a rich seam of analysis on many issues. However, they did not provide a specific analysis of the gendered experience of peace and stability in The Gambia and the patterns of power which underpin it.

The 2024 document presents a thorough analysis of the social norms and patterns of power which affect women and girls' experience of peace and stability:

1 the different roles that women, men and vulnerable people of all ages play in preventing or driving conflict, or as the victims of conflict.

2 the socially constructed gender and age norms (i.e. notions of masculinity and femininity, and of age and youth) that govern relationships between males and females of all ages

3 how gender and age intersect with other identity markers and systems of power to experience or influence conflict dynamics. The intersection of gender, age and disability was also assessed.

- *Safe spaces and safeguarding to enhance women's participation:* To generate the evidence for a deeper focus on GESI in 2024, the CDA Project Team prioritised inclusion strategies. This included assessing why, in the past, women had not been so vocal in the consultations. A lesson identified by WANEP from the 2019 CDA process found women's participation decreased during mixed gender Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Therefore in 2024 women and men only FGDs ensured a safe space for the full participation of women. Female enumerators were used for women's FGDs if possible. To ensure these groups were delivered to the highest standards of sensitivity and ethics, all staff deployed on the programme were vetted and received safeguarding and ethics training as part of their onboarding for the CDA. A safeguarding focal point was appointed from WANEP.
- *Youth participation was prioritised through a blended approach.* Across the FGD 54 were young people under the age of 25 (37 young women and 17 young men attended. The lack of participation was perhaps due to the time of the session but also to the intergenerational tension over the control of influence, and decision-making (See factor assessment.) Thankfully, in 2023 the United Nations and the Government of The Gambia commissioned no less than three different engagements and consultations with young people, including the preparation of the National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security. The findings of these reports provided a good, firsthand source of insight for the CDA from which we have drawn heavily. This was updated and triangulated through KII with the National Youth Council and the involvement of the National Youth Parliament, Peace Networks, Peace Hubs, Future in Our Hands, TOSTAN, Team Gomm Sabopa, Child Fund and Activista at the April 2024 multi-stakeholder engagement event, which included working groups on several themes (see below). Youth representatives were integrated across themes – rather than being asked to focus only on a “youth” theme. This ensured a youth perspective was heard. At validation, the National Youth Council was invited to assess the findings and recommendations.
- Persons With Disabilities led organisations were consulted through one-to-one KII with the Gambia Federation for the Disabled; The Gambia Network of AIDS Support Societies (GAMNASS) - an umbrella body of HIV/AIDS support groups – participated in the April 2024 stakeholder engagement. The stakeholder event included a specific working group focused on vulnerable groups and the intersection of disability / people living with HIV's vulnerability and violence; follow

up written submissions on the specific lived experience were included as feedback on the validation draft.

Delivery principle 4: Sustainable: A CDA should be a living document and provide a resource which will be owned not only by the MOI but utilised across government. A CDA can also contribute to the threat assessments and civil protection scenario planning by national security actors. As such, the analysis and recommendations were designed to underpin long-term national ownership and application. Moreover, while the CDA process mitigated against the risk of doing harm, it also aimed to identify new agents of change, coalitions and partnerships for peace.

Guiding Principle 2: Assess influences on the peace and stability from all angles

Since the 2018 and 2019 CDA processes, the influence of regional and global actors on The Gambia has increased exponentially. From international investment in construction driving land grabs to the increased illicit rosewood timber export, to the impact of the war in Ukraine on food and energy insecurity - the destabilising risks to The Gambia's peaceful transition from outside the country are pronounced. Therefore, this CDA firstly viewed the structural and proximate drivers for conflict in The Gambia through a sub-regional and national lens. It then looked through a regional, transcontinental and global lens, assessing how external actors, networks are exacerbating domestic risks and conflict drivers.

2024 Updated: Methodology

To help the government and people of The Gambia continue to navigate the delicate transition process in a changing environment, the UN and the World Bank are supporting The Gambia to expand and strengthen capacities and platforms for early warning, conflict prevention, social cohesion and sustaining peace. This “re-fresh” is designed to update the evidence base from which this support is designed and delivered. It builds up and out from the 2018 CDA particularly. The 2018 CDA benefits from a deep analysis of factors, Gambia society, social norms, and institutional structures. This report focuses on how these interact with proximate drivers in the current context, leading us to “so what do these mean for our responses during the next 5-year period?” Therefore, the reader will benefit from reviewing this report in conjunction with the bedrock of the 2018 CDA.

Applying global best practice: Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)

This CDA updated drew on Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) as its strategy for identifying conflict drivers. PDIA brings together supply (government) and demand (citizen) side actors to identify and understand an issue which affects their community. PDIA not only identifies the problem but also collectively articulates the change pathways which need to occur to move towards peace; the capabilities and skills required to deliver that change; the actors within communities with those skills who should be involved as well as their role. This includes identifying women, girls and People with Disabilities' role, when often it may be informal. Finally, it agrees a proposed course of action. While detailed PDIA mapping was not possible for every conflict driver or tension noted by the Project Team, using this way of thinking helped to proactively identify peace engines, including coalitions for change across a range of issues and therefore a solid evidence base for the recommendations.

The CDA 2024's issue-based approach is directly in line with the Government of The Gambia's 2023 Infrastructure 4 Peace Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

I4P and its SOP establish the “institutional arrangements for coordination of the various peacebuilding pillars and collaboration between and among government agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs), academia, faith-based organisations (FBOs) and other stakeholders in peace and security.”¹⁷ The SOP also outlines how I4P is based on “joint problem-solving of conflicts and ensures institutionalizing processes of response to conflicts that produce outcomes leading to conflict transformation, social, political and ethno-cultural reconciliation.”¹⁸ Likewise, the approach of the CDA is to use joint problem identification and problem-solving as the framework for data collection and analysis.

¹⁷ Government of The Gambia: Infrastructure 4 Peace Standard Operating Procedures, 2023, p 1

¹⁸ Government of The Gambia: Infrastructure 4 Peace Standard Operating Procedures, 2023, p 1

Design phase

Risk analysis: To deliver a conflict-sensitive and inclusive CDA process, the Project Team conducted workshops on:

- 1) a conflict / risk analysis of the potential impact of the CDA process
- 2) an exclusion / gender analysis to identify barriers to engagement with the process. Both analyses resulted in risks, impacts, mitigation measures and responsible parties. The insight then informed the design of the methodology. The analysis can be found in Annex A.

Literature review: A desk-based review began with the rich seam of knowledge in the 2018 and 2019 CDAs themselves. It then moved to assess key touchstones of the national policy and strategy framework (i.e. National Development Plan, World Bank Turnaround Strategy and Reporting, Truth and Reconciliation Commission White Paper and Implementation Plan 2023-27). It assessed thematic analyses of the impact of drivers and threats on The Gambia. Finally, given the objectives of this CDA are to provide recommendations and guidance to the UN CT and World Bank, the review included their institutional strategy documents.

Geographic prioritization criteria

Achieving geographic inclusion meant meeting the aspiration to consult across all the regions. However, there were three constraints at play which had to be factored in in the prioritization criteria:

1. Like the 2019 CDA updated, delays meant the CDA Project Team was under time constraints to complete consultation at the local level before the start of the holy month of Ramadan.
2. The Team had neither time nor resources for a detailed national level perception study. Therefore, it had to combine ambition with realism as to the scale of consultations at the local level.
3. Some regions have more complex dynamics; therefore, they needed to spend longer in some regions.

The CDA Project Team **prioritised**, while remaining demographically and geographically inclusive.

Selection criteria for locations

To make the best use of resources, the international and national consultants and WANEP drafted **sub-regional-level conflict scans**. These scans were snapshots which begin to answer the following questions:

- What is the current prevalence and nature of violence in the six regions of The Gambia?
- What are the issues WANEP is tracking which may not yet be causing violence but cause social tension and mistrust?
- Based on this mapping, which are the most unstable / at risk districts within a region where the CDA should deploy more time and resources?
- Based on this mapping, which are the more stable regions, with possible best practice / mitigation strategies from which the peace architecture can benefit?

To prepare these conflict scans, drew on the following existing local information and resource:

- A review of WANEP's 2023 monthly early warning data which records incidents and nature of violence regions in The Gambia
- Conflict and instability mapping of trigger issues in each of the six regions. This was conducted by the national consultant with WANEP's early warning monitors.

Consultations were delivered in all the regions of The Gambia: Greater Banjul; West Coast; Lower River; North Bank; Central River and Upper River. Consultations team members **spoke** Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, Jola and Sarahulleh languages.

Based on initial findings from the methodology outlined, **24** districts were prioritised for consultation:

Region	District
BANJUL	Banjul North Banjul South
KANIFING MUNICIPALITY	Tallinding Bakau
WEST COAST REGION	Busumbala Kombo East Kombo South Foni Kansala
LOWER RIVER REGION	Kiang West Kiang Central Jarra East Jarra West
NORTH BANK REGION	Upper Niumi Central Baddibu Lower Baddibu Upper Baddibu
CENTRAL REIVER REGION	Niamina Fulladu Niani Nianija
UPPER RIVER REGION	Jimara Tumana Wuli West Fulladu East

Consultation phase

2024 Updated sample size

For the consultation sample size to be statistically significant, the CDA needed to consult at least 386 people. This would give it 95% confidence in findings within a margin of error of +/- 5%.

The 2024 CDA consulted 443 people – 247 (56%) men and 196 (44%) women through:

48 district FGDs which consulted 288 people: 144 men, 144 women.

- Of these 288, 54 were young people under the age of 25 (37 young women and 17 young men.)
- Of these 288 20 considered themselves to be People with Disabilities.

155 subject matter experts (103 men and 52 women) at the national level from **89 different institutions** – government, civil society and faith-based organisations, political parties and the international community. See *Annex C*. Of these, two considered themselves to be People with Disabilities.

- 67 of these were consulted through **one-to-one KIIs**.
- 45 experts from **civil society, government and the international community** were consulted through a **multi-stakeholder engagement technical event**.
- 43 new and additional experts took part in the report review and validation events in May 2024.

Phase 1: District consultation

- Under the leadership of the national consultant, WANEP deployed 7 early warning monitors and 2 HQ staff. This included 6 men and 3 women. These were complemented by staff from the MOI and Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery.

All district FGD enumerators received an intensive two-day inception training course

- Before deploying to their respective districts, all enumerators received training in gender-inclusive consultation strategies, risk management (duty of care), safeguarding and ethics alongside a step-by-step guide to understanding the questionnaire and its PDIA approach.

The Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation methodology was turned into practice during consultations by taking an issues-based approach:

- During March 2024, the Conflict and Development Analysis team ran 48 FGDs in the seven regions of The Gambia – 24 for men and 24 for women, with a total of 288 people.
- While CDA consultation process is not designed to be a perception survey, it does provide a snapshot in terms of violence and instability their communities are facing. As such, it allows triangulation of issues across the nation – bottom-up and top-down – i.e. from the village level to high level-KIIs.
- During each FGD, citizens were asked what the critical issues are generating violence and instability in their communities. The range of issues was broad – and for women numbered more than 30 different issues. The findings are explored in detail below. Likewise, respondents were asked for their peace engines and sources of resilience.

A post fieldwork findings workshop identified trends across districts

- Following successful completion of individual district-level consultations, all WANEP and government enumerators came together for a day-long workshop. It was an opportunity for the national and international consultants to check the findings in written questionnaires; summarise findings at the regional level across districts and identify trends. The issues of cost of living, land, drugs, and familial disputes emerged as consistent across the regions

Phase 2: National KIIs and multi-stakeholder consultation

- Under the leadership of the international consultant, a multi-disciplinary team. The team was made up of, Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery, United Nations Resident Coordinators Office, WANEP, the international and national consultants
- Working in mini teams to ensure the greatest number of consultations conducted within a tight timeframe, The team delivered KIIs with central government, political parties, faith leaders, civil society and international donor partners
- Using the same issues-based approach as deployed in the FGD, KIIs were asked for their critical issues for national peace and stability, and their views on peace engines. The KIIs – from the Vice President Mohammed BS Jallow, civil society to international donors were conducted.
- The team also coordinated a multi-stakeholder engagement event to ensure as broad a range of institutions were consulted as possible. The theme of the event was “Leaving no-one behind” and focused on gathering evidence to inform an inclusive approach to peace and stability
- The findings from the FGDs and KII were then triangulated with desk review, which informed this report.

Phase 3: Report drafting and validation

- Under the leadership of the international consultant, drafting the CDA was a collaborative process, with continual checks and balances from the Project Team. A zero draft was reviewed initially by the CDA Project Team. The initial draft was further developed into a validation draft which formed the basis of four separate in-person review events:

Event 1: In-person review of findings by the CDA Project Team (May 13, 2024)

Event 2: In-person review of findings by the United Nations Country Team (14 May 2024)

Event 3: In-person review of findings by high-level government (15 May 2024)

Event 4: In person validation by a multi-stakeholder group of government (technicians, civil society, faith leaders, political parties and international partners. (16 May 2024)

- The review and validation process tested
 - 1) the conflict analysis findings
 - 2) the peace engines and sources of resilience identified
 - 3) that the recommendations were practical and realistic in the Gambian context
 - 4) identified any knowledge gaps and shared the missing information or clarified the positions of those who had attended KIIs and whose opinion had been reflected in the report.

Parameters and limitations of the 2024 CDA

- *Scope of the FGDs:* The CDA FGDs are designed to gather group opinion and are not a perception survey. They give a snapshot in time of the key issues which are affecting women and men
- *Regional data:* While data analysis has been produced from each region, the sample size (48 people per region) does not give it sufficient statistical significance to extrapolate views as representative. For example, the WCR has 699,704 people (2013 census). It is also not conflict-sensitive to generalise given the sensitive nature of views on personal security. Therefore, data gives a national view.
- *Ramadan sensitivities.* KIIs at the national level conducted during Ramadan. Thanks to the hard work and commitment of the teams, the process operated smoothly.

Part 2: Conflict Analysis



Section structure

1. Manifestations, we ask “**what**,” “**where**” and “**who**” is involved in violence and instability and “**how**” it manifests in different forms. We identify **issues and trends** at local, national and regional levels. We ask ourselves, “**So what** does this mean” for the Gambia’s peaceful transition? We then analyse gendered conflict and instability trends emerging from the CDA FGDs at the district level in 2024.

2. Based on those current manifestations and potential issues - in the factor assessment, we explore the long-term and more recent **factors** which generate the conditions for these manifestations to occur – “**how**” and “**why**”? This includes the intersectional impact of conflict and instability on women, youth, older people and Persons With Disabilities.

3. For peace engines and sources of resilience, we map the state and non-state structures and mechanisms which can address the root causes identified. This includes a focus on the role of women, youth, older people and Persons With Disabilities.

1. Manifestations of conflict and instability: Domestic context

The status of “peace”

- The 2023 Global Peace Index (GPI) ranks The Gambia as the 59th most peaceful country in the world (out of 163 measured). It is the 8th most peaceful country in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁹ The Index ranks the state of peace in The Gambia as “high,” which is the second-highest ranking after “very high,” achieved by only 14 countries.²⁰
- However, despite being a peaceful country, The Gambia suffers from a “positive peace deficit”, according to the same report. This means that the country has a high level of peace but lacks the socio-economic development required to sustain it. 2024 reporting from The Institute of Economics and Peace place Gambia among the top 10 countries with highest positive peace deficits, with the greatest likelihood to experience increased violence over the next decade.²¹



¹⁹ <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps>

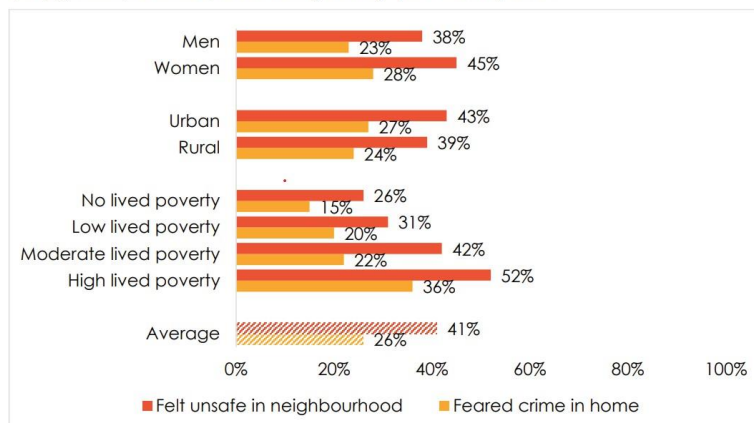
²⁰ In the Global Peace Index (GPI) a lower value mean lower levels of violence.

²¹ <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PPR-2024-web.pdf>

Criminality is increasing

- Violent crime and some types of property crime remain a significant source of fragility in The Gambia. A 2022 nationwide survey found that 76% of respondents agreed that domestic crime had either increased or increased rapidly in The Gambia since the beginning of the transition in 2017.²² December 2023's Gambia Bureau of Statistics integrated household survey backed up these findings, reporting 13 per cent of Gambians experienced crime during the period 2015-2020, with the rate in the urban areas (14 per cent) being higher than in the rural areas (11 per cent)²³
- Afrobarometer's 2022 perception survey found that the most vulnerable feel the most unsafe in their homes, particularly when walking in their neighbourhoods.²⁴ This was exacerbated by lack of police presence
- The same 2022 Afrobarometer field teams found police stations in or within easy walking distance of about one-third (35%) of the census enumeration area (EA) visited. They saw police officers or police vehicles in 30% of the EAs, and police or army roadblocks in 17% of them. Other signs of security-related activity were less common, including presence of soldiers or other military personnel (15%), roadblocks by private security or the local community (7%), and customs checkpoints (4%).
- The CDA March 2024 FGD found similar trends, with communities reporting lack of police presence, mobility and capacity as key concerns.
- Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Fabakary Tombong Jatta, emphasised the need for a multi-faceted approach to addressing crime, including interventions at individual and community levels, implementation of prevention strategies, counselling, education, and law-enforcement efforts focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment. This was in a March 2024 National Assembly intervention highlighting what he called "an alarming increase in violent crimes such as armed robbery, gang violence, rape, murder, drug use, and child disappearances."

Figure 3: Experienced insecurity and fear of crime at least 'several times'
| by gender, location, and lived poverty | Gambia | 2022



Respondents were asked: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: Felt unsafe walking in your neighbourhood? Feared crime in your own home? (% who say "several times," "many times," or "always")

According to the Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG), The Gambia is experiencing an increase in drug use, arrests and related crime. Kush was reported as a critical concern for citizens during the CDA 2024 FGD and KII consultations. However, it is one among an increasingly complex panoply of substances being sold and used.

- The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG) reported that it registered 623 cases involving 633 people who were arrested for drug-related offences in 2023. (539) of the arrestees are Gambian nationals while the remaining ninety-four (94) are non-Gambian nationals. In comparison to the seizure statistics for 2022, there was a decrease in the total number of cases and arrestees from 632 in 2022 to 623 in 2023 and 650 in 2022 to 633 in 2023. However, the total number of non-Gambian nationals arrested increased from 87 in 2022 to 94 in 2023 while Gambian arrestees decreased from 563 in 2022 to 539 in 2022.²⁵
- While DLEAG statistics show a fluctuating trend in the seizures and arrest for drug-related offences, Kush was the most frequently cited drug by the FGDs and KII participants from district-level FGDs to the highest level of government. Kush a cannabis strain specifically cannabis indica known also

²² https://ceprass.gm/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CepRass_NED_Post_Election_OP_Dissemination_Final.pdf

²³ The Government of The Gambia, Integrated Household Survey, Gambia Bureau of Statistics, December 2023, Volume 1, pp. 83-85.

²⁴ <AD665-Gambians-cite-lack-of-professionalism-among-police-failings-Afrobarometer-1july23.pdf>

²⁵ KII Written inputs, CDA May 2024, The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG)

as K2, is highly potent and addictive²⁶. The mixture of this drug with other chemical substances “like fentanyl, formalin, tramadol as well as human bones as reported in Sierra Leone makes all forms of its intake and abuse dangerous. The intake or abuse of kush in even smaller quantity can produce adverse pharmacological effect that affects the health and general well-being of people and societies. The adverse health effects can result in immediate or permanent confusion, severe medical conditions and sometimes death.”²⁷

- Similarly, the country’s only psychiatric hospital reported an increase in the admission and treatment of Drug Induced Psychosis (DIP) cases. DIP, it revealed, accounts for most of its admission and treatment cases.²⁸
- Throughout the district level FGDs and national-level KIIs, first-hand experiences of young people self-harming and being hospitalized or being closely linked to those who have died from kush’s side effects were widely reported. District-level FGDs reported theft to fund the habit – including stealing gates of the local mosque – as well as murder of family members when funds to buy the drug were not given freely. Murders between friends using the drug were also reported. The use of kush is not limited to the most economically vulnerable – one KII reported the tragic death of a son of a prominent politician.
- Kush is the drug at the forefront of discussions at present not least due to a national state of emergency called by Sierra Leone’s President Bio: “Our country is currently faced with an existential threat due to the ravaging impact of drugs and substance abuse, particularly the devastating synthetic drug kush.”²⁹ As well as addressing treatment, the president said law enforcement agencies should “dismantle the drug supply chain through investigations, arrests, and prosecutions”. It is also affecting Liberia and Guinea.
- However, kush represents the tip of the iceberg in terms of drug use and should not crowd out a focus on the broader threat. *Cannabis ruderalis* (skunk), Amphetamine Type Stimulants (ATS) like ecstasy, methamphetamine and other forms of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) are new entrants into the local illicit drug market. Their impact is exponentially worsened through a new youth trend in toxic cocktails of Skunk

Through rapid preventive action, The Gambia can avoid the Kush crisis facing Sierra Leone. It should heed the advice of President Bio “....as well as addressing treatment, law enforcement agencies should “dismantle the drug supply chain through investigations, arrests, and prosecutions”.

and amphetamines (respectively) mixed with alcohol. Women are also reportedly using a stimulant called *tabba*.³⁰

- In a press conference held at the MOI, the Director of Health Services who was represented by his deputy Dr. Nyassi and the Deputy Chief Medical Director Dr. Jagne both revealed to the media that “most of the persons said to have died from kush were brought in dead. Therefore, they cannot evidently say that they died from kush (please refer to a facebook livestream of the said press conference in the comment section).³¹
- Kush is reportedly brought into the country from Sierra Leone by road. It is reported that the drugs are transported from Sierra Leone through Guinea and Senegal.
- Porous borders, lax customs controls, and proven networks are reported as enablers. Across all the KIIs, when respondents were asked the causes of the rapid kush influx, these issues were cited. Corruption was also cited as a major enabler and concern not only regarding kush but illicit economies more broadly.

The Gambian Police Force has launched “Operation Stop Kush.” However, there are logistical and institutional challenges that face the broader security sector, including intelligence gathering and regional interoperability of security forces” and sharing information.

²⁶ KII Written inputs, CDA May 2024, The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG)

²⁷ KII Written inputs, CDA May 2024, The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG)

²⁸ KII Written inputs, CDA May 2024, The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG)

²⁹ [Sierra Leone declares emergency over drug kush - made from human bones - BBC News](#)

³⁰ KII Written inputs, CDA May 2024, The Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia (DLEAG)

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/Vcke5Msa9KVyqxsN/?mibextid=WC7FNe> link to DLEAG ministry of health press conference

Safety actors: Lack of fire and rescue capacity to respond is also fueling tension

- Fires were identified as a major issue listed during CDA FGDs. The local topography of the communities, including the way structures are built, exacerbates the lack of access and ease of fire spreading from one building to another. This creates frustration among communities as they feel that the fire service is not responding in a timely manner, leading to violent confrontations towards fire force officers.
- Outdated legislation is also hindering public safety, as the Fire Service Act dates to 1948.³²

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a critical issue

The April 2024 GBV Incidence Report from The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare managed Gender Management Information System (GMIS) reported that:

- A total of 653 cases were recorded from platform inception (January 2023) to April 2024
- Many of the cases reported were from the West Coast Region and the Greater Banjul Area

where most Government One-Stop Centres are concentrated. The one-stop centre receiving most cases is the Kanifing-General Hospital. However, these results can have different meanings. Either there are many GBV cases in those regions, or survivors living there have a greater propensity to report their GBV incident, or simply the fact that there are many one-stop centres in those areas tends to support more survivors. Or simply that the awareness level is higher in those areas. However, there is at least one one-stop centre in each region of The Gambia currently.

Classification of GBV cases by sex

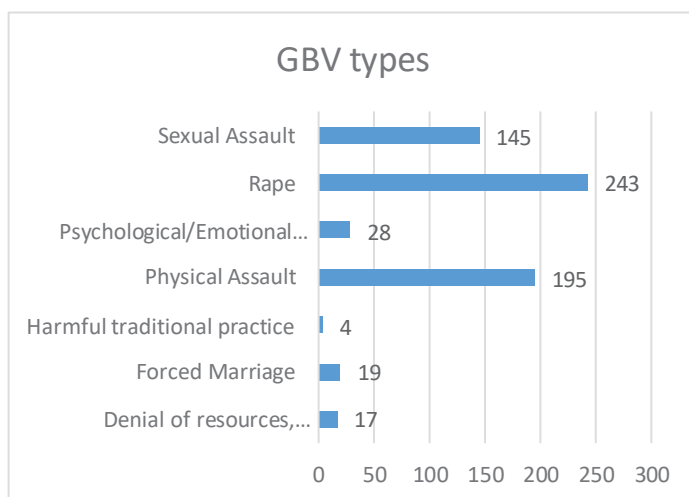
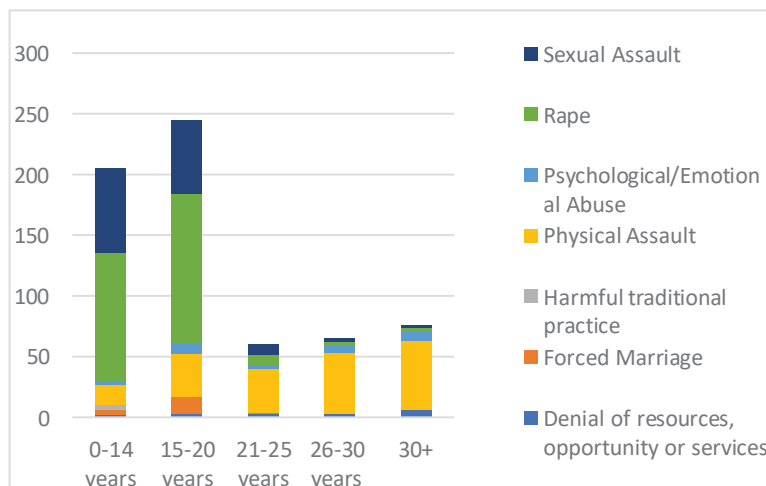
- 96% of survivors are female. These results are in line with the global knowledge that women are more affected by GBV than men.
- Unfortunately, of those male survivors, more than 50% are children less than 14 years old

Types of GBV reported

- Sexual violence alone represents up to 60% of all reported cases. According to the Gambia DHS, in 2019-2020, only 2% of women had experienced sexual violence 12 months before the survey. The GDHS results are lower than the GMIS results
- This can be explained by several factors. The age constraint of the GDHS is 15-49 years, whereas there is no age limit on the GMIS. It might also be easier for people to report their case when they know they will receive services than when they know it is only for research purposes.

Classification by age and type of GBV

- Adolescents followed by children are mainly affected by rape and sexual assault

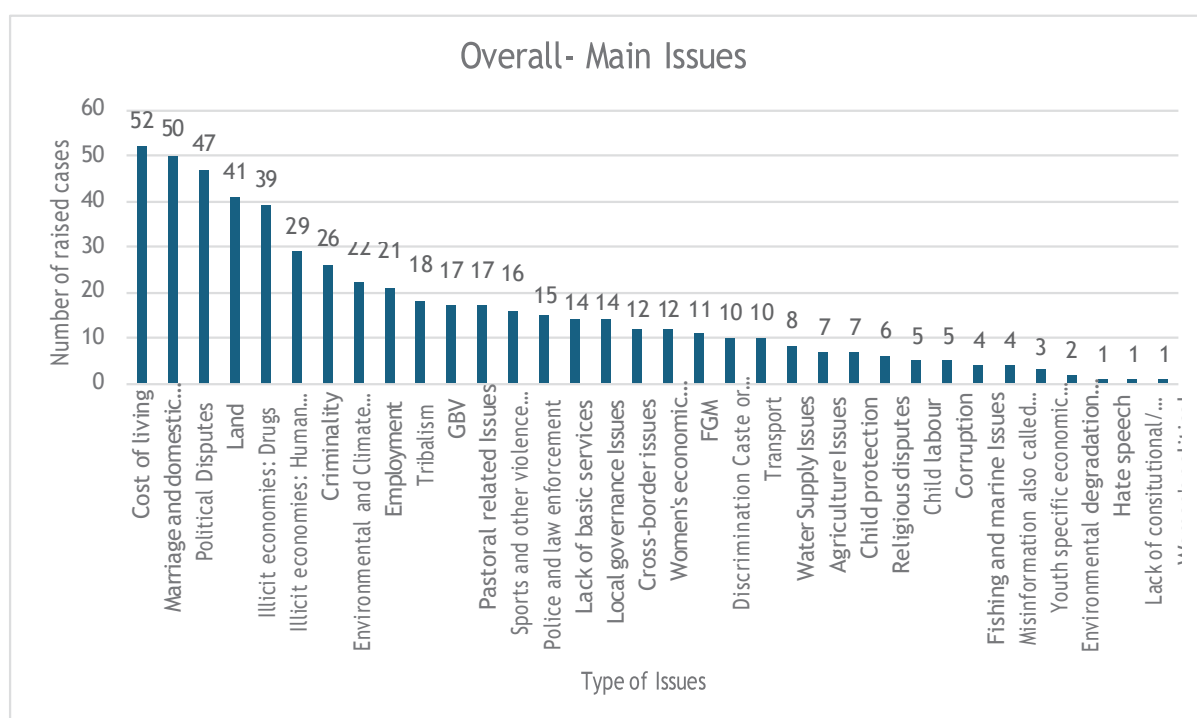


³² KII March 2024

- Physical assault affects all the age ranges, but the majority are aged above 30 years old
- Children aged 0-14 years are affected by all types of GBV

Gendered experiences of violence and instability: March 2024 CDA Focus Group Discussions findings

- As indicated above, the CDA district level FGD was a consultation process, and was not designed to be a perception survey. However, it does provide a useful snapshot in time of the issues which women and men are facing in their communities. As such, it allows triangulation of issues across the nation – bottom-up and top down – i.e. from the village level to high-level KIIs.
- During each FGD, citizens were asked what critical issues were generating violence and instability in their communities. The range of issues was broad – and for women numbered more than 30 different issues. The chart below allows us to see the spread and frequency of issues raised. While some issues were not vocalised specifically by women, e.g. hate speech, this does not equate to them not being an issue, given that hate speech may have been covered in the broader discussion on political division.



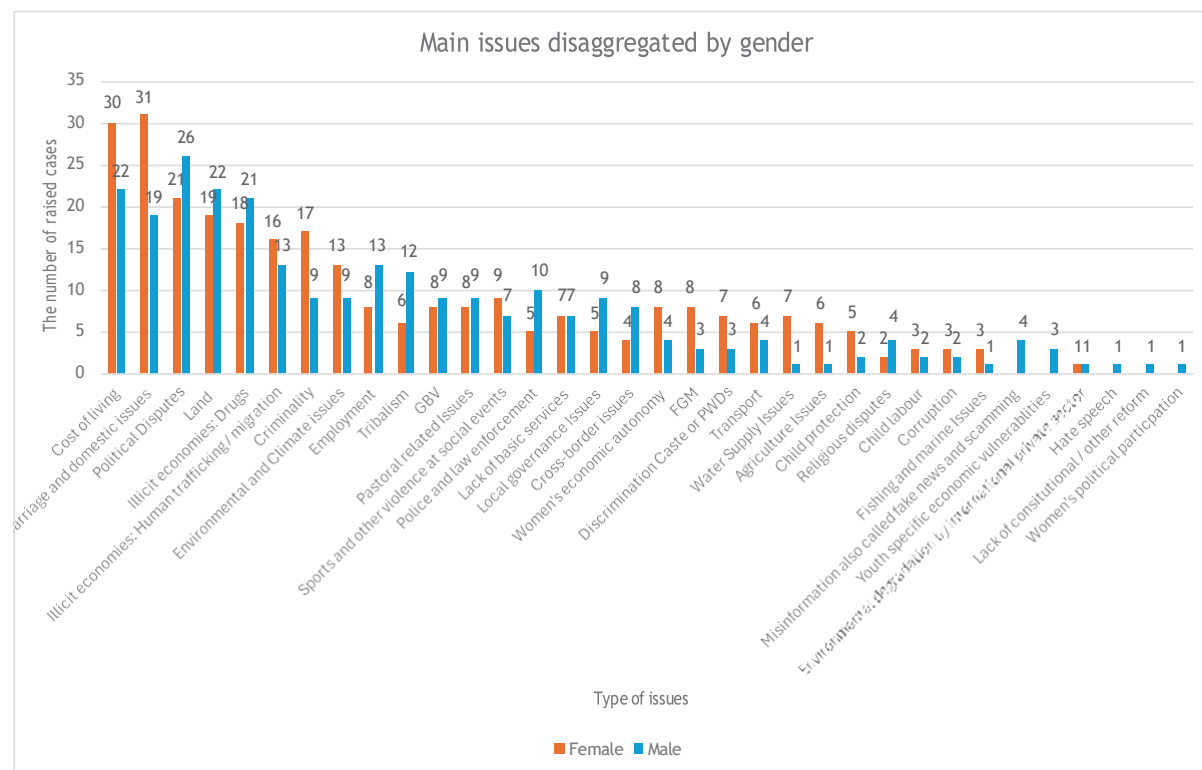
Key findings

- Most frequently raised issues across M/F were:
 - Cost of living (52 times)
 - Marriage and Domestic issues (50 times)
 - Political disputes (47 times)
 - Land disputes (41 times)
 - Drugs (39 times)
- For women, the issues of marriage / domestic disputes and cost of living far exceeded any other
- For men, their most frequently mentioned issues - political disputes, land, drugs, cost of living and marriage disputes– were roughly equal
- On the issue of FGM, while there were limited specific cases where the written questionnaire response noted either being for or against the repeal of the ban, the overriding concern was the polarisation which the issue was creating within communities
- While the sample size was limited to 48 people in each region, two interesting trends emerged: First, for the URR, the issue of back way migration far exceeded any other issue. Second for NBR,

it was climate related risks which dominated. As outlined above, this may relate to the October 2023 heavy flash-floods, which left farmers helpless and vulnerable

We now break down the findings and assess the gendered implications.

Most frequently raised issues broken down by gender



For women, the most frequently raised issues were:

1. *Marriage and domestic disputes, including divorce, intra-martial disputes between wives, forced marriage and early pregnancy.* As outlined above in Issue 1, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on income is affecting the ability to treat each wife and family equally. This results in increased levels of divorce and abandonment. It was also reported as increasing the level of GBV. A major concern is the increase in vulnerability which divorce, or dispute has on children, including the economic necessity to send children for prostitution.
2. *Cost of living.* As outlined in Issue 1, among the households experiencing moderate food insecurity, 19% are headed by females, and among those facing severe food insecurity, 37% are headed by females;³³ Moreover, the nexus between martial dispute and cost of living are exacerbating women's vulnerability.
3. *Political disputes.* These included intra-and inter-party tensions and political violence. Concerns on the impact of disputes on family cohesion were raised particularly.
4. *Land disputes including land inheritance.* In addition to the incidences of land conflict outlined in Issue 3 below, contestation over land is highly gendered, always favours men. The Gambia's inheritance system is governed by strict patriarchal norms which mostly exclude women and increase their vulnerability. The male head of the family represents the family's interests to the outside world. While the family head allocates all family land to male members of the family, yet the family head remains the custodian of the family's territory. He will distribute lands to his younger brothers or, in their absence, to their sons. Upon the death of the family head, he is succeeded by the next oldest

³³ World Food Programme The Gambia National Food Security Survey Report p 3

brother or, this lacking, by the elders of the sons within the extended family. The land of the next, oldest brother or son is thus increased by the addition of land formerly held by the deceased family head. Even the house of the family head is taken over by the oldest brother or son. This situation continues until the demise of the last brother or the youngest son³⁴.

³⁴ WANEP, Assessment of land and natural resource-related disputes in WCR, LRR, CRR and URR, 2019.

Section Summary: 2024 Manifestations of violence, tension and instability

Drawing on findings from the FGDs, KIIs and desk reviews of available literature, the following table maps issues driving violence, tension and instability.

Issue	Current: Why and how are violence, tension and instability happening NOW?	Potential: Why and how COULD violence, tension and instability manifest in the COMING YEAR?
Issue 1: Economic imperatives are the most critical issue driving violence, tension and instability.	• Intra-marital / domestic conflict, including between spouses over limited resources • Gender-Based Violence associated with a man's diminished capacity to provide economically • Vulnerability to exploitation by Serious and Organised Crime, including forced sex work and get-rich-quick scams. • Regular and irregular migration • Corruption driven by low and delayed salaries • Contestation over land and climate-insensitive exploitation of natural resources, including by real estate and other investors	Spikes in cost of basic goods or ends to subsidies exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis and could lead to popular protests.
		ECOWAS free movement of goods and people is perceived as a risk , with early signs of xenophobia. This could lead to targeted attacks on foreigners.
Issue 2: Polarisation – political and religious polarisation – is undermining the unity of purpose necessary to deliver The Gambia's democratic dispensation	• Political division undermining inter-and intra-community ties • 2021-2023 electoral cycle spike in hate speech along political and ethnic lines • Hate speech more broadly has increased • Intra-Islamic tension • Inter-religious tension • Female Genital Mutilation repeal bill	Constitutional reform fraught with procedural and political challenges, including high thresholds for adoption, exacerbated by political and religious interests could lead to civil unrest or increasing division at the community level
		Mobilisation of anti-Western sentiment. This could be harnessed for civil unrest as seen in the Sahel states in 2022-24.

Issue 3: As in the 2019 CDAs, land disputes remain a significant source of tension	• A lack of secure land tenure undermines citizens' ability to feel truly safe economically. They link directly to food security. • The Gambia lacks a land policy, cadastre or land registration. This makes addressing disputes challenging. This is compounded by parallel customary land law processes. • Land management is undermining public trust. It takes 5+ years on average to resolve cases; many remain open • Value has sky-rocketed, driving speculation, increasing land grabbing and disputes • Lack of real estate regulation leads to agricultural land transformed into residential areas/ exploitation of landowners • Local Government Authorities capacity dispute resolution capacity is low • Customary resolution role of Alkaaloo is being undermined by the pursuit of their own interests as is Alkaaloo - VDC contestation	Land reform, including the validation and drafting of the much need landed reform bill and digitalisation of records may prove divisive. It will impact several vested interests within government, the private sector and the citizenry. It will affect customary land practices and structures as such will be both a legal and emotionally charged process.
Issue 4: The social contract is being undermined by the slow pace of reform and establishing a state–citizens dialogue and accountability mechanisms	• Gambia is making progress. But the message is not getting through • Trust in the state institutions has decreased, according to the latest Afrobarometer. It reported a drop between 2018 and 2022. • While commissions of inquiry are welcome, accountability tools and questions regarding their political motivations are being raised • Accountability for national resources remains high on the agenda • Freedom of expression/speech and of assembly remain contentious • Space for some civil society actors is reported as fluctuating • While still high in a comparative perspective, the Gambia's media freedom ranking recently dropped from 4th in Africa to 10th in the World Press Freedom Index. • Accountability by civil society for their financial resources was raised during stakeholder workshops.	The forthcoming prosecution phase of the transitional justice process may present significant challenges since prosecutions, especially in relation to the former President and his most senior accomplices. Likewise, there is also a risk of unmet expectations in the reparations process. Both <i>could</i> open old wounds and deepen political rifts.
		Without a visible government response to the kush crisis, public trust could be undermined. Addressing the broader drug issue would also address an increased rate of drug-related crime, and the threat to the physical and mental health of Gambian youth

Issue 5 (Regional): Bilateral relations with Senegal continue to impact The Gambia's security	• 2023 cross border tension over Darsilameh-Tranquil elevated the work of the Senegalo-Gambian Joint Boundary Commission (S-GJBC). • The overspill from the Casamance conflict continues to impact the human security of Gambian communities. However recent progress in negotiations between the <i>Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance</i> (MFDC) and central government are welcome. • At the community level the seasonal movement of cattle in search of pasture and water, especially across The Gambia's porous border with Senegal, is sparking conflict in communities and causing environmental degradation. accused of cattle rustling and deforestation.	Timing of ECOMIG's exit. ECOMIG retains an important role in accompanying Security Sector Reform (SSR) and TRRC prosecutions. Unless the mandate of ECOMIG is communicated clearly, this may result in tensions. This could be instrumentalised by actors with an anti-ECOWAS agenda. Protests <i>could</i> escalate as they did in the context of MINUSMA's exit from Mali. Sambangalou Hydroelectric Dam and Power Station development in Senegal highlights conflict - sensitivity challenges of the green transition projects. While the project will deliver electricity to the Gambia and can be a vehicle for bi-lateral cooperation, it will also impact water levels in the River Gambia - exacerbating the salination of rice fields – a crop grown predominantly by women.
Issue 6 (Regional): The impact of transnational Serious and Organised Crime is being felt increasingly within The Gambia.	• The Gambia remains a hub and transit point for drug trafficking. DLEAG reports a number of new entrants into the market. • Monopoly of the illicit rosewood trade by conflict actors appears to be waning. However, this is due to contestation over this lucrative illicit supply chain by an increasingly diverse range of actors • Fake medicines were a concern during FGDs • There is a regional trade in which Gambian children are forced into labour in neighboring West African countries, while Gambian women are often trafficked by air to the Middle East • There appears to be a lack of analysis on the supply chains for backway migration facilitation	SOC, Violent Extremism and their intersection. In June 2023. The Gambian Minister of Foreign Affairs disclosed to Gambian media that he had learned through conversations with returned migrants that Gambian migrants in Libya were being radicalized and recruited into jihadist movements.³⁵ While at present evidence is anecdotal on VE, the evidence of SOC is compelling. Globally, the intertwining of transnational SOC and VE recruitment, illicit economy supply chains and financing are proven and often leading to violence over control, for example, in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique. This trend could emerge in The Gambia.

³⁵ "Gambians may have joined jihadist groups in Libya," The Standard newspaper, 26 July 2023 - <https://standard.gm/gambians-may-have-joined-jihadist-groups-in-libya>

Issue 7 (Regional): New policy decisions of the wider West Africa and Sahel region impacts The Gambia's peace and security	• The lifting of Niger's Sahara migrant smuggling ban makes migration "safer." However, at the same time the removal of legal and physical barriers, enriching the SOC networks which facilitate it, enable this risky journey. • While not confirmed publicly, the government of Mali's refusal to allow Gambians to transit the country is related to the recruitment of Gambian nationals into armed groups in the NE of Mali. This could indicate recruitment into ISGS or JNIM	As outlined in Issue 2 above, the anti-Western, pan-African narrative and withdrawal of Sahel states are resonating with (some) Gambians, according to KIIs.
--	--	--

Issue 1: Economic imperatives are the most critical issue driving violence, tension and instability.

Current: Why and how are violence, tension and instability happening NOW?	Potential: Why and how COULD violence, tension and instability manifest NEXT YEAR?
Intra-marital / domestic conflict, including between spouses over limited resources Gender-Based Violence associated with a man's diminished capacity to provide economically Vulnerability to exploitation by Serious and Organised Crime, including forced sex work and get-rich-quick scams. Regular and irregular migration Corruption driven by low and delayed salaries Contestation over land and climate-insensitive exploitation of natural resources, including by real estate and other investors	Spikes in cost of basic goods or ends to subsidies exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis and could lead to popular protests. ECOWAS free movement of goods and people is perceived as a risk, with early signs of xenophobia. This could lead to targeted attacks on foreigners.

This section explores when, where and with whom economic imperatives manifest, or risks generating violence, tension and instability.

Context of increased economic vulnerability: 2024's cost-of-living crisis

While this section assesses where and how violence, tension and conflict are appearing in society – as opposed to its root causes – it is helpful to situate economic vulnerability within the 2024 context. Further analysis of the root causes of these issues, such as the cost of living, macroeconomic structural deficiencies and unemployment are explored further in B: Factor assessment.

- “By eroding the purchasing power of poor households, persistent inflation - notably food price inflation - is expected to have increased poverty to 16.9 per cent in 2023. According to the World Bank's May 2024 Economic update, this is up from 16.4 per cent in 2022 - an increase of over 25,000 people, using the international poverty line of \$2.15 (in 2017 PPPs).”³⁶
- Poverty rose in 2020 to 53.4% largely due to COVID-19 and sustained at the same level in 2022 according to the 2022 World Bank Poverty Report.³⁷ Poverty fell in 2019 under Barrow government to 45.8 % compared with 48.6% in 2015 under former President Jammeh.
- In 30 years, per capita income barely increased - USD 637 in 1991 to USD 772 in 2021.³⁸ Although economic growth averaged 3.5% from 2000 to 2018, per capita growth averaged less than 0.5% per year due to population growth.
- Unemployment rate nationally is at 7.6% and among men it is at 7.8%, among women it is 7.2% The youth labour force participation rate is around fifteen point below that of adults (38.1% compared to 53.5%).³⁹ The unemployment rate is three times the corresponding adult rate (10.5% and 3.8% respectively) and almost half of the youths are underutilized, stands at 48.6 per cent against 30.6 per cent among adults.⁴⁰
- There exists a significant urban-rural divide. 76% of individuals in the rural areas are impoverished compared to 34% in the urban areas.⁴¹ This disparity fuels migration to the cities and towns, which undermines agricultural output and intensifies pressure on urban essential services and

³⁶ World Bank, Gambia Economic Update Spring 2024 p ix
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099052124221540465/pdf/P5004821f1d6a90b81b7231d812cc67b395.pdf>

³⁷ World Food Programme Country Strategic Plan 2024-2028 World Bank Poverty Report, 2022)

³⁸ World Food Programme, The Gambia Country Strategic Plan (2024–2028) p 3

³⁹ Gambia Labour Force Survey (2022-2023) Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS)

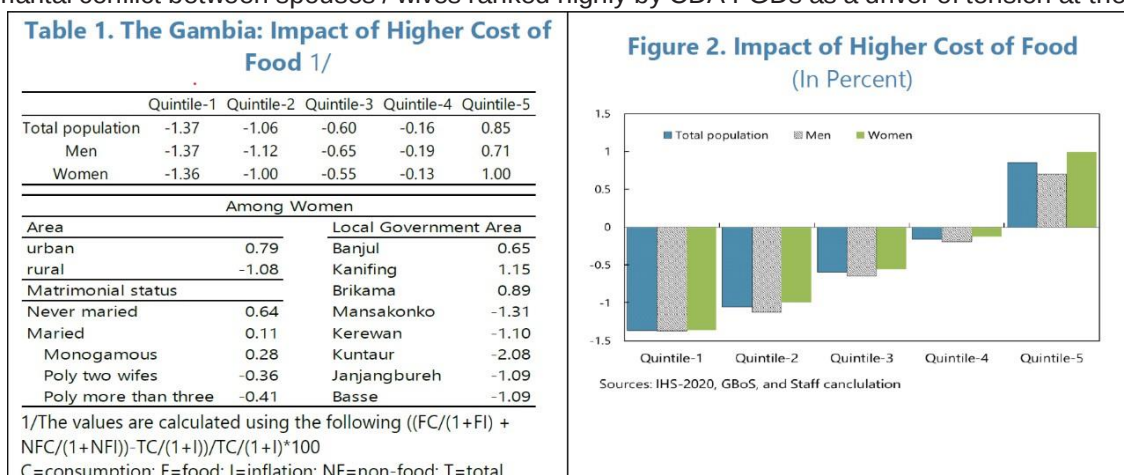
⁴⁰ Gambia Labour Force Survey (2022-2023) Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS)

⁴¹ World Food Programme, The Gambia Country Strategic Plan (2024–2028) p 3

infrastructure. Food insecurity is notably more prevalent in the rural areas (52%) than in the urban areas (21%)⁴²

- Food inflation was recorded at 24% in July 2023. This increase was mainly due to shocks in the global commodity market, local currency depreciation and persistent structural issues at the port of Banjul⁴³
- In December 2023, three out of ten households (29%) were food insecure. This represents a 3% increase from 2022. The prevalence of food insecurity is highest in Basse, Janjanbureh, and Kuntaur LGAs⁴⁴
- Female-headed households are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. While 19% of female headed households are experiencing moderate food insecurity, 37% of female headed households are severely food insecurity⁴⁵
- The country's strong extended family and community structures have begun to disintegrate under economic pressure of the cost of living.

Intra-marital conflict between spouses / wives ranked highly by CDA FGDs as a driver of tension at the



local level. As reported, this is linked to financial pressure within and between different branches of the family. A February 2024 study found among women living in the rural areas, and those living in poor remote municipalities, and women married in polygamous relation as most adversely

Table 1: Macroeconomic and Distributional Implications of Gender Gaps The Gambia

International Monetary Fund, February 2024, Page 5affected by the rapid increase in food inflation.”⁴⁶

- According to CDA FGDs, higher levels of gender-based violence were associated with a man's diminished capacity to provide for his family, challenging traditional masculine roles and leading to increased frustration
- Economic vulnerability experienced by women post-divorce or abandonment was emphasized, especially in women's district FGDs. Negative coping mechanisms included taking on multiple jobs and child labour. This situation of absence from home and unsupervised children was linked to a rise in criminal activities, drug use, and the necessity to involve children in forced sex work
- Women's solidarity networks are also facing challenges. In a Greater Banjul district, a conflict among women belonging to the "Osusu" Village Savings and Loan Association was attributed to favouritism. The economic needs of each member contributed to tensions among women,

⁴² World Food Programme The Gambia National Food Security Survey Report p 3

⁴³ World Food Programme The Gambia National Food Security Survey Report p 3

⁴⁴ World Food Programme The Gambia National Food Security Survey Report p 3

⁴⁵ World Food Programme The Gambia National Food Security Survey Report p 3

⁴⁶ International Monetary Fund, *Macroeconomic and Distributional Implications of Gender Gaps The Gambia*, February 2024, p 5

leading to frustration when expected payments were not received. The Osusu should be a network of female solidarity and empowerment. The competition which results from these tensions is undermining the positive space and support network women needed the most.

District-level focus groups reported an increase in forced sex work, including children, driven by economic hardship.

- Both male and female participants in district CDA FGDs highlighted forced sex work as a concern. It was observed in various forms: Women, lacking economic security, felt compelled to encourage their children to work as forced sex workers, sometimes without their husbands' consent but with their reluctant approval, causing tension beyond the vulnerability faced by the children
- Boys aged 16-17 are reportedly falsifying their ages on dating sites, claiming to be in their 20s. In The Gambia, it is common for boys to have separate living quarters from their parents' homes by the age of 16, enabling them to invite European women to their residences ⁴⁷

Serious and Organised Crime gangs are preying on the most economically vulnerable.

- “Many Gambians, lured by the promise of quick and substantial returns, took out loans, drained their savings, and sacrificed necessities such as school fees and monthly allowances.” ⁴⁸A student confessed to having invested her tuition fees in a scam group.⁴⁹ This online get-rich-quick scam led to arrests in August 2023 connected to AL Group and Wish.

Backway migration is driven by economic necessity and societal expectation. It is inherently risky, puts a financial strain on families and can result in tragic loss of life that impacts communities in the long term.

- Gambians have a higher per capita migration rate than any other African country.⁵⁰
- Migration – whether regular or irregular– significantly impacts The Gambia’s peace and stability as it results in a brain-drain of working age men and women. Many public sector workers, including in the health sector, are legally leaving the country, taking with them most needed expertise.
- Under-employment serves as the primary driver for irregular migration from The Gambia. GBOS indicates that 45.3% of youths aged 15-35 are not engaged in education, employment, or training (NEET).⁵¹ Youth labour force participation is notably lower than that of adults, with a 15-point difference (38.1% versus 53.5%). Additionally, youth unemployment rates are three times higher than those of adults due to skill mismatches or the lack thereof. Many young workers, particularly girls, are employed in low-quality and informal jobs. School dropout rates between ages 15 and 19 are high, especially in the rural areas, due to the perceived low returns on education. This lack of education often leads to inactivity, unemployment, social exclusion, and irregular migration among young people. Despite the ambitious vision of the new government for The Gambia, which includes planned structural reforms to stimulate the economy and labour market, irregular migration remains an appealing option due to limited opportunities within the country. ⁵² The underlying causes of unemployment are further examined in the Factor Assessment.

March 2024 figures from GoG suggest remittances to the Gambia top USD730million a year - more than Official Development Assistance. This figure does not take into account informal remittances. The multiplier effect is considerable, given it funds school fees, healthcare etc.

⁴⁷ UN Population Fund Gambia, *Shock Responsive and Gender - Focused Social Safety Nets Analytical Study*, July 2023, p 27

⁴⁸ [Online investment allegedly scams Gambians, disappears with millions - The Point](#)

⁴⁹ WANEP NEWS, August 2023 reporting

⁵⁰ [The Gambia Report Mapping - Altai.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#) p 6

⁵¹ Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS), *Labour Market Situation in The Gambia in 2023*, <https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads-file/484-the-labour-market-situation-in-the-gambia>

⁵² [The Gambia Report Mapping - Altai.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#) p 8

collar positions. Those unable to meet these expectations often turn to irregular migration as a means of gaining approval from their families.

- While social adulthood in The Gambia does not necessarily equate to marriage or the financial responsibility of supporting a family, backway migrants frequently propose to Gambian partners upon reaching Europe. Once established and capable of sending remittances, they feel empowered to support a spouse and thus choose to marry.
- Financial pressures from parents add to the burden, as family members may encourage their children to undertake the risky "backway" journey to Europe. This pressure stems from the desire to benefit from their children's success, for example, to replicate how peers are supporting their own parents and relatives by building homes, providing amenities like cars, and sending regular remittances to enhance their living standards.
- Financial sacrifice is also made by parents to raise the money to send children to Europe. Should migration "fail" the costs – whether raised through sale of land, sale of other assets or loans – fail to achieve their return on investment. Forced or voluntary return therefore exacerbates not only the financial vulnerability of the young person but also the extended family.
- Peer pressure, especially from those who have successfully reached their desired destination, intensifies the desire to migrate. Social media plays a significant role in influencing potential migrants to take the necessary steps to join their peers. Feedback from returning migrants in KILs revealed that the reality of living in Europe did not match the idealised image portrayed on social media.
- The toll of irregular migration, both on those who embark on the journey and those who remain behind, is substantial. A tragic incident in mid-December 2023 off the coast of Libya saw 61 migrants, including women and children from Nigeria, Gambia, and other African nations, perish in a shipwreck. Initially carrying 86 individuals, the vessel departed from Zwara, Libya. The central Mediterranean is one of the most perilous migration routes globally, witnessing over 2,250 fatalities in 2023. Libya and Tunisia are key starting points for these hazardous sea crossings to Europe. The number of migrants arriving in Italy by sea nearly doubled in 2023 compared to the previous year, with approximately 140,000 individuals arriving, 91 per cent of whom set off from Tunisia.

The year 2023/24 saw an increased number of Gambian migrants deported from Europe. Un/underemployed and angry, these young people are vulnerable to mobilisation by domestic and regional religious actors around political and religious grievances.

- Returning migrants' response to what they consider "sudden deportation" often after years of life in Europe is a trauma, as well as strong resentment. They report going from "zero to zero," i.e. from nothing in The Gambia back to nothing on their return. Their sense of motivation is lost – one KIL reporting "I wake up every morning and want to kill myself." Likewise, a sense of frustration and resentment at European governments, the European Union, and the government of the Gambia for "abandoning" them is considerable.
- While some deported migrants are returning with a criminal record, this is not the case for all. Returning migrants report being labelled uniformly by their communities as "criminals," increasing stigma and social exclusion. Some find that the remittances they sent home have been misused, leading to shock and isolation. These disenfranchised youth, feeling isolated and frustrated, become easy targets for mobilisation around various economic and political grievances.

KILs reported corruption not only causing economic vulnerability but also being driven by it.

- Low and delayed salaries particularly for government workers, were reported as driving people to extort corrupt payments. This was undermined by a societal / familia / community expectation that those in government office should use their power to enrich their families, i.e. to support them to address their economic vulnerability.

Potential manifestation: Spikes in cost of basic goods or ends to subsidies exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis and could lead to popular protests.

- As outlined in further detail in Issue 4, 2023 saw an increase in (authorised) protests around the cost of living. With increased pressure on citizens' day-to-day budget, the risk of frustration boiling over – potentially instrumentalised by political interests – is a concern.

Potential manifestation: ECOWAS free movement of goods and people seen as a risk, with early signs of xenophobia

- The Gambia experiences significant inward migration. This influx includes a notable presence of Sierra Leoneans and Nigerians. Within the ECOWAS union, movement without a visa is allowed among West African nations
- As of May 2024, The Gambia had 412 asylum seekers and 3891 refugees with the majority from Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo..⁵³
- Although peaceful coexistence has been the norm for years, the escalating levels of illicit activities, such as the Kush trade, linked to foreigners, raise concerns about growing xenophobia
- Excessive fishing activities by Senegalese, Chinese, and European vessels in Gambian coastal and riverine waters, particularly in URR and WCR, is further fuelling anti-foreigner sentiments

Climate change is exacerbating economic vulnerability

Rising sea and river levels, flooding

- Rising sea levels affect rice production and increase food insecurity. The intrusion of saltwater up the Gambia River due to rising sea levels, combined with prolonged dry spells reducing freshwater flow to flush out the salt, has made water in rice fields too salty. This has led to decreased yields and abandonment of agricultural land.⁵⁴ Women, who are primarily involved in rice farming, are disproportionately impacted. This gradual land degradation is also influencing migration patterns, with people seeking alternative opportunities due to the unusable land.⁵⁵
- Flash floods have become more frequent and severe, particularly affecting the most economically vulnerable. In August 2023, flash floods and windstorms in various regions of the country displaced many families and caused widespread damage to homes and properties. According to the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), as of August 21, 2023, a total of 17,609 people were affected nationwide, with 4,662 internally displaced. The URR has the highest number of affected individuals, with significant damage to rice fields in Kossemar Village due to heavy flash floods in October 2023, leaving farmers in a vulnerable situation. Many communities in this region heavily rely on rice cultivation for their survival.
- Refer to "Issue 5 Senegal" for insights on the potential impact of the upcoming Sambangalou Hydroelectric Dam and Power Station development on the salinity levels of the River Gambia.

Access to water

- KIIs emphasised that average temperatures in The Gambia have risen by 1.0 degrees Celsius since the 1960s, while rainfall in the rainy season (July, August, September) decreased at an average 8.8mm per month per decade over the same period.⁵⁶ As a result, access to water for drinking, caring for livestock and for farming is a growing problem for rural communities. Moreover, Gambians have experienced a step-change in rainfall totals since a severe drought in the 1970s, with some regions recording as much as a 30% reduction in rainfall totals. The impacts are wide ranging, and devastating.⁵⁷
- Shortage of water was raised repeatedly during district level FGDs. This is an increasing concern, and as seen in other NBR countries in the region, an area of contestation. Women in all four of the district level FGDs in the NBR raised limited access to water as a concern.

⁵³ Data supplied in May 2024 By Gambia Food and Nutrition Association

⁵⁴ "The Impacts of Saline-Water Intrusion on the Lives and Livelihoods of Gambian Rice- Growing Farmers." Journal of Ecology and Environmental Sciences. Volume 6, Issue 1, January-March 2018 - <https://www.rroij.com/open-access/the-impacts-of-salinewater-intrusion-on-the-lives-and-livelihoods-of-gambian-ricegrowingfarmers.php?aid=86662>

⁵⁵ People on the Move in a Changing Climate – Linking Policy, Evidence and Action. Geneva, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2022 - <https://publications.iom.int/books/people-move-changing-climate-linking-policy-evidence-and-action>

⁵⁶ Gambia, The - Climatology | Climate Change Knowledge Portal (worldbank.org)

⁵⁷ With temperatures rising and rainfall decreasing, "water is life" in The Gambia - UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)

- Water access was also attributed in KILs to the water table and the impact of urbanisation and other construction projects which “completely covered the ground with grey (i.e. concrete). Without the ability of water to drain away into the ground and the water table, will lead to issues with access to water as well as to flooding (see above)
- Indiscriminate disposal of waste is polluting underground water sources around forest parks. According to KILs, this has informed NAWEC’s decision to shut three boreholes, thus reducing potable water for the public.
- As outlined in Issue 2 – polarisation – has further exacerbate limiting of access to water points based on political affiliation.

Bushfires

- Bushfires were raised repeatedly during the FGDs. These are increasing infrequency due to climate change and lack of range management. They were also related to forest management, and the management of natural and home waste, which, when left in the sun, overheat and generate fires.

Sand mining

- Sand mining has been a longstanding issue. In October 2017, a Commission Inquiry inspected areas ravaged by sand mining under contracts signed by former President Jammeh. Local communities seized the opportunity to express their environmental concerns, as the sites remained unrehabilitated. The mining activities led to soil erosion, exacerbated by rising sea levels.
- Sand mining in coastal regions not only harms the environment but also results in tragic incidents where

Sand and black sand is mined in The Gambia – black sand has high concentrations of zircon, quartz and silica, which is classed as a critical mineral – all being sought after as part of the green energy transition.

individuals, often children, drown in water pools left post-extraction. This has sparked protests in coastal areas heavily reliant on tourism for their livelihoods. Furthermore, the destruction of agricultural land by sand mining firms has escalated tensions.

- In the first quarter of 2024, the Village Development Committee (VDC) of Kartong village in the Kombo South District, West Coast Region, publicly condemned what they deemed as illicit and irresponsible sand mining within their jurisdiction. During a protest at the mining site, situated 200 meters from the community, they voiced their disapproval. Initially focused on government and mining entities, the VDC has shifted its attention to local miners branded as “illegal.” The VDC highlighted that unlicensed miners were exploiting five sand mining sites at the village outskirts for personal gain, lacking proper technical and legal oversight.

Overfishing

- Large-scale fishing, including illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) practices, continues to deplete fish stocks in The Gambia's coastal waters. negatively impacting the livelihoods of rights holders and contribute towards tension between communities and fishmeal factories.⁵⁸ This diminishes the catches of artisanal fishermen, leading to inflated fish prices, rendering this crucial protein source unattainable for many, with negative repercussions on nutrition and food security. These impacts, coupled with pollution from coastal fishmeal factories supplied by foreign trawlers, have triggered heightened protests in coastal communities such as the case of Sanyang, where tension between the community and a fishmeal factory exploded in 2021 when a group of local youths burnt part of the factory and fishing equipment resulting in the arrest of at least 50 people, some arbitrarily.⁵⁹ Concerns regarding overfishing were echoed in discussions in the URR and WCR, particularly emphasising Senegalese and Chinese fishing vessels.
- In August 2023, Amnesty International initiated a petition entitled “Help us protect Gambian communities from the impact of overfishing,” asserting that “the actions of all fishing entities, including foreign industrial vessels and fishmeal factories, jeopardise the economic and social rights

⁵⁸ Amnesty International, Gambia. The human cost of overfishing: How the overuse of fisheries resources in Sanyang threatens human rights
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr27/6644/2023/en/>

⁵⁹ ibid

of the local communities in Sanyang, Gambia." ⁶⁰ Amnesty underscored that the economic and social rights of local residents — notably the rights to food and work — are jeopardised by foreign trawlers engaging in IUU fishing and by fishmeal and fish-oil factories processing locally caught fish for export, while polluting the region. The petition urges the Gambia government to fulfil its duty of safeguarding its citizens against human rights violations by all parties, including corporations. It calls for stringent monitoring of coastal waters against illegal fishing and the enactment of laws mandating companies to uphold human rights diligence in their operations and supply chains.

Applied analysis: So, what does this tell us?

- ❖ **Conclusion:** Economic imperatives and interests are the main driver of disputes, tension and instability in The Gambia.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Structural constraints at the macroeconomic level constrain The Gambia's ability to rapidly address economic vulnerability. These include a poor business enabling environment which in turn limits an effective education to an employment pathway for young people to be trained, find well paid, sustainable jobs.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** The impact of global dynamics, including the COVID-19 economic downturn, cost of food and fertilisers related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict were more keenly felt due to The Gambia's heavy reliance on imported food and other essential items.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Economic vulnerability is heightened by the intersection of gender, age and disability. This vulnerability is closely linked to social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Slow pace of reform of the business environment and land particularly undermines attempts to generate jobs and enhance economic livelihood opportunities sustainability.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Economic vulnerability and corruption, i.e. individual need for resources and societal expectation influence their position, which will generate rent seeking., both of which are inherently linked and enabling broader negative economic actors. (Issue 1: Economic imperatives). Corruption was also directly linked to the enabling environment for Serious and Organised Crime (Issue 5: Impact of bilateral relations with Senegal, Issue 6: Serious and Organised Crime).
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Changes in climate and increased environmental shocks
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Human security encompasses economic security, food security, health security environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. There are needs to increase investments in social safety nets to reduce vulnerability to climate change, and economic shocks.

And so? Factors driving these manifestations (Explored in B. Factor Analysis)

1. Economic Structural deficiencies at the macro-economic level.
2. Global dynamics including the COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
3. Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities.
4. Identity: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
5. Slow pace of reform, particularly around land tenure and real estate regulation.
6. Corruption.
7. Climate change including more regular, more severe natural disasters.
8. Transnational Serious and Organised Crime.

⁶⁰ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/help-us-protect-gambian-communities-from-the-impact-of-overfishing/>

Issue 2: Polarisation – political and religious – is undermining the unity of purpose necessary to deliver The Gambia’s democratic dispensation.

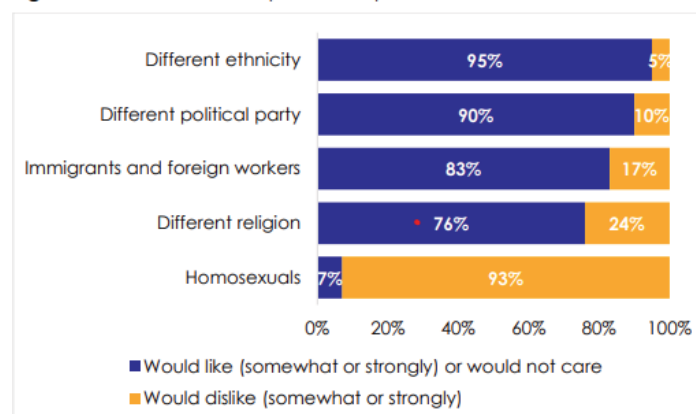
Current: Why and how are violence, tension and instability happening NOW?	Potential: Why and how COULD violence, tension and instability manifest in the NEXT YEAR?
• Political division undermining inter- and intra-community ties • 2021-2023 electoral cycle spike in hate speech along political and ethnic lines • Hate speech more broadly has increased • Intra-Islamic tension • Inter-religious tension • Female Genital Mutilation repeal Bill	Potential manifestation 2.1: Constitutional reform fraught with bureaucratic barriers, exacerbated by political and religious interests <i>could lead to civil unrest or increasing division at the community level</i> Potential manifestation 2.2: Mobilisation of anti-Western sentiment. This <i>could be</i> harnessed for civil unrest.

This section explores when, where and with whom polarisation manifests, or risks generating violence, tension and instability.

A 2022 Afrobarometer study found high levels of tolerance in Gambian society.

- At least nine out of 10 Gambians express tolerant attitudes towards people of different ethnicities (95%) and different political affiliations (90%), saying they would like it or would not care if they had these people as neighbours (Figure 6). More than three-quarters of Gambians indicate the same tolerance towards immigrants and foreign workers (83%) and people from a different religion (76%). But fewer than one in 10 (7%) say they wouldn’t mind living next door to someone in a same-sex relationship.”⁶¹

Figure 6: Social tolerance | Gambia | 2022



Respondents were asked: For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care?

However, in 2024 this tolerance appears under pressure

This section now analyses political and religious division and tension, each in turn.

A. Political division

Local political division affects the day-to-day life of the most vulnerable

- Political division ranked as the third most frequently cited district FGD issue affecting stability – behind economic vulnerability and family disputes (which it is important to note is often linked to differing political affiliations). It was reported almost equally among men and women
- Political division was reported as undermining inter-and intra-community ties. Some families no longer attend each other’s naming ceremonies or funerals; access to water points is prevented due to political affiliation; changes and divisions in political affiliation were reported as having contributed to intra-family rifts, including siblings ceasing communication

⁶¹ [AD766-Tolerance-for-differences-is-high-but-not-universal-in-the-Gambia-Afrobarometer-9feb24.pdf](#)

- It is impacting the willingness of relatives abroad to send remittances. As outlined above, this has a significant knock-on effect on economic resilience

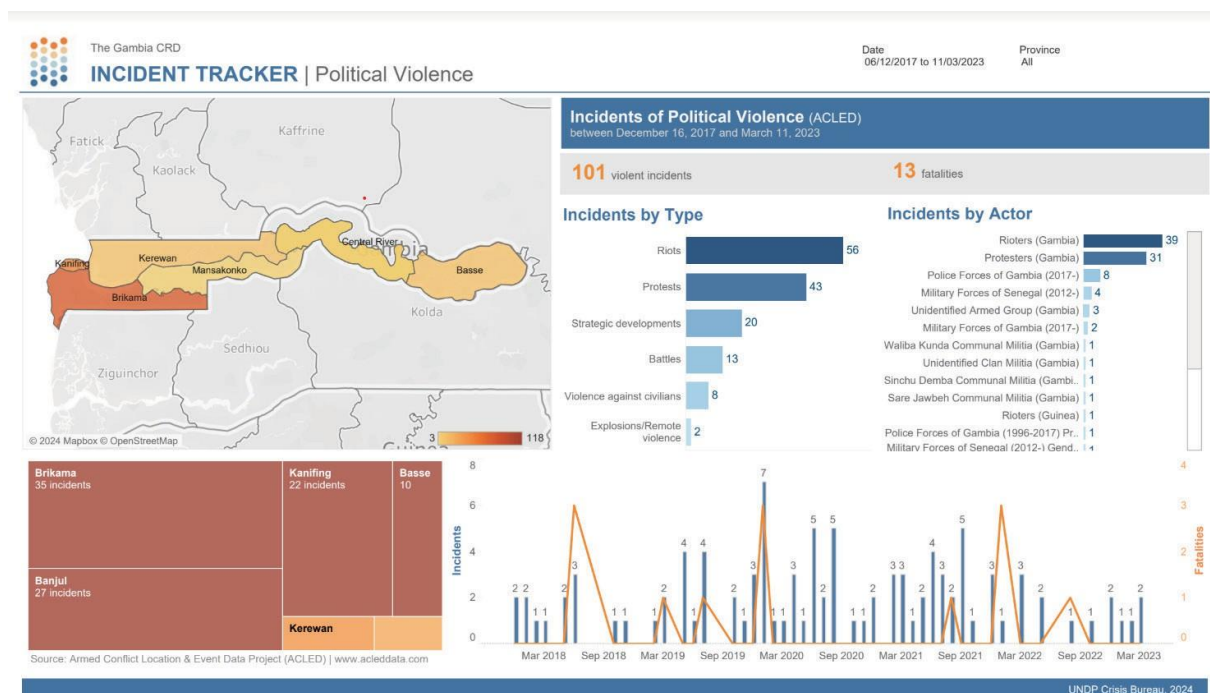
Political interest underpins tension between central and Local Government Authority (areas, which impact effective service delivery by duty bearers

- Political interests fuel tensions between central and local government authorities, hindering effective service delivery. Among the eight local councils, four are led by the NPP and four by the UDP. Despite this split, UDP-led councils represent 60% of the population and control the wealthiest councils like Banjul, Kanifing, Mansakonko, and Brikama. During Key KIs, it was repeatedly mentioned that "Decentralisation is mere lip service," with allegations of the central government using councils to expand its political dominance.

Since the 2019 CDA, 4 elections have been held, with limited election violence

- The 2021-2023 electoral cycle - Presidential election in December 2021, legislative elections in April 2022, ending with Local government elections and Mayoral / Area Council Chairperson elections in April and May 2023 - passed off largely peacefully with only minor isolated incidents that authorities quickly brought under control
- International and domestic observers judged all four elections to have been largely peaceful and credible. The Integrated Household Survey released by GBoS in December 2023 finds that 78 per cent of Gambians consider elections in the country to be "fair."⁶²

However, 2021-2023 political violence and hate speech along political and ethnic lines increased



- However, each has produced a spike in political violence (see graphic from UNDP Dashboard). These include the 3 years "jotna" (Enough) protests around the 2021 elections
- A trend towards polarisation along ethnic lines began under former President Yahya Jammeh, who portrayed the UDP – the main opposition to his rule – as an exclusively Mandinka party. During the 2016 presidential campaign, where he eventually suffered defeat, he made particularly hostile remarks about burying Mandinka "nine feet deep," receiving a reprimand from the UN Special

⁶² See The Government of The Gambia, *Integrated Household Survey*, Gambia Bureau of Statistics, December 2023, Volume 1, p. 72.

Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, who criticised President Jammeh's "public stigmatization, dehumanization, and threats against the Mandinka." ⁶³

- Since Yahya Jammeh went into exile in January 2017, The Gambia has entered a new media and political landscape, leading to more prevalent discussions about ethnicity and politics. Following the parliamentary elections in 2017 – the first after Jammeh's regime – certain communities briefly became divided along ethnic lines and witnessed post-election altercations. Simultaneously, newspaper articles and blog posts containing accusations of tribalism circulated widely, fuelling narratives from various perspectives. In 2019, a malicious WhatsApp voice message from a member of Jammeh's APRC party cautioning against a Mandinka takeover gained traction, resulting in the speaker's arrest for hate speech. These anti-UDP, and at times vehemently anti-Mandinka messages hinted at an envisioned "tribalist" future where a single ethnic group would govern and potentially lead the country into civil conflict.
- The trend outlined above aligns with a pattern identified by some researchers as "anticipatory tribalism," where certain groups, often delineated along ethnic lines, are suspected of harbouring hidden agendas to seize power and bestow privileges on specific ethnicities at the expense of others, who might even face expulsion from the nation. ⁶⁴
- Hate speech was also prevalent during the 2021-2023 electoral cycle.⁶⁵ to the extent that prior to the May 2023 Mayoral and Chairperson elections, the National Human Rights Commission voiced profound concerns regarding what it termed a "tense political environment," citing WhatsApp audio and text messages inciting violence, including physical attacks and threats against the lives and properties of public figures, political leaders, and government officials.⁶⁶
- The failure of political parties across the spectrum to address divisive matters was attributed by a KII with Gambian political parties and civil society to "political expediency" and The Gambia's "perpetual state of electioneering".

Hate speech more broadly has increased

- #IamToufah campaign. In October 2019, the TRRC public hearings on SGBV inspired more victims to speak out in public with some taking to the streets. Threats and attacks against them (the #IamToufah campaign) highlighted the gender dimension of hate speech in a society that continues to leave women behind
- The same rhetoric has been seen during the contentious FGM debates where female human rights advocates receive negative rhetoric both on and offline.

B. Religious tension

In 2024 the Gambia's culture of religious tolerance appears under threat.

Both the 2018 and 2019 CDAs emphasised that historically, interreligious relations in The Gambia have been generally positive, largely due to ongoing dialogue between the GSIC and the GCC. ⁶⁷ However, in 2024 inter- and intra-religious tensions are escalating. The subsequent section details incidents of this rise since 2019, contextualising the tensions.

- About 96% of Gambians identify as Sunni Muslims. Apart from a small fraction adhering to indigenous beliefs, the rest identify as Christians, predominantly Roman Catholic. Inter-faith

⁶³ More Fear Than Fair: Gambia's 2016 Presidential Election, Human Rights Watch (2016) - <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/11/02/more-fear-fair/gambias-2016-presidential-election>

⁶⁴ Hultin, Niklas & Tone Sommerfelt (2020) Anticipatory tribalism: Accusatory politics in the 'New Gambia', *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 58 (2): 257–279 - <https://www.prio.org/publications/12974>

⁶⁵ Examples of hate speech used during the 2023 local elections can be found here: <https://malagen.org/election-hub/dangerous-speech-alert-udp-supporter-makes-inciteful-comments-calls-for-first-lady-to-be-attacked-and-killed/>, <https://malagen.org/election-hub/hate-speech-alert-borrey-colley-calls-on-jolas-to-vote-for-bakary-badjie-attacks-talib/>, <https://malagen.org/factchecking/hate-speech-alert-talib-bensoua-is-a-rat-with-lebanese-blood/>.

⁶⁶ Prevailing Intense Political Situation in the Run-Up to The Mayoral and Chairpersonship Elections. Press Release by the National Human Rights Commission, 4 May 2023 - <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/f4b60d71-ea6c-11ed-965f-02a8a26af761>

⁶⁷ For a recent example, see: Muslim, Christian councils preach peace amid rising religious tension, *The Standard* newspaper, 10 May 2023 - <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/muslim-christian-councils-preach-peace-amid-rising-religious-tension>

marriages are common, often leading women to convert to their husbands' religion and raise their children accordingly.

- The constitution safeguards citizens' rights to practise any religion of their choice (Article 25), with provisions for "reasonable restrictions" to uphold national security, public order, decency, or morality. It prohibits religious discrimination, the establishment of a state religion by the National Assembly, and religiously affiliated political parties. Additionally, it allows for the establishment of Cadi (Sharia law) courts, each with judges trained in Islamic legal traditions across the country's seven regions. Cadi courts have jurisdiction over Muslim-related matters such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Citizens, including Muslims, have the option to utilise civil or Cadi courts.
- The issue of secularism in the new constitution is proving divisive. As part of the process of review of the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, a Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) was mandated to draft a new constitution. In the execution of its mandate, the CRC was required to consult with Gambians and other stakeholders to seek their opinions on what they aspire to see included in a new constitution for The Gambia. Countrywide discussions regarding the issue of secularism in the new constitution revealed underlying religious tensions, resulting in polarising language on social media and within the communities.

Intra-Islamic tension

- In June 2022, Gambian Islamic leaders convened a meeting where they denounced members of the Ahmadiyya Community in The Gambia as "non-Muslims," accusing them of distorting true Islamic beliefs. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at has a significant presence in the country, boasting around 50,000 followers.⁶⁸ Despite the community's contributions to education and healthcare, the GSIC (SIC) excludes Ahmadi Muslims due to their Quranic interpretation, leading to internal Islamic strains. A human rights advocate criticised the event as a "bigotry conference" and urged the authorities to act against the Imams for inciting violence and disrespecting others' religious sentiments. One Imam warned of "catastrophic consequences" if leaders were arrested
- A letter to President Barrow on 9 June 2022 from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community leader accused the Imams of spreading hate and false allegations against his community, even in educational settings.⁶⁹ He cited an incident from 21 February 2020 where an Imam allegedly advocated for the killing of Ahmadiyya community members. The leader warned the President of the potential conversion of threats into actions. In response, the Minister of Lands, Regional Government, and Religious Affairs emphasised the Ahmadi's right to practise freely and urged religious bodies to promote peace
- Intra-Islamic tensions spill over borders. Conflict erupted in May 2022 between Kerr Mot Ali in Senegal and a neighbouring village in Gambia's Upper Saloum district. The Gambian village, formerly home to a persecuted Islamic sect under Yahya Jammeh's rule, faced property destruction. Followers resettled in Senegal, establishing a village across the border, leading to disputes over land and property in The Gambia. The government's White Paper acknowledged past injustices against the sect, advocating for reconciliation and the establishment of a Peace Committee for peaceful coexistence
- In July 2021, a senior Islamic cleric threatened to kill another cleric for allegedly disparaging marabouts' work. President Barrow condemned the threat, vowing to combat extremist violence in Gambian society.
- The government's White Paper on the report of the TRRC found that directives issued by former President Yahya Jammeh infringed on the rights of the Ndigal sect of Kerr Mot Ali (para. 216) and that their removal from The Gambia amounted to deportation in violation of international human rights law (para. 224).⁷⁰ However, the government merely "noted" the TRRC's recommendation that members of the Ndigal sect should be returned to The Gambia in line with High Court rulings, arguing that "prior reconciliation and social cohesion activities are essential as a precursor to the

⁶⁸ This section draws from *Gambia 2022 International Religious Freedom Report*, US Department of State - <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/gambia/>

⁶⁹ Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Takes Their Case to Barrow, *Jollof News*, 14 June 2022 - <https://jollofnews.gm/2022/06/14/ahmadiyya-muslim-jamaat-takes-their-case-to-barrow/>

⁷⁰ Government White Paper on the Report of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission - <https://www.moj.gm/download-file/81d650ed-dc36-11ec-8f4f-025103a708b7>

comprehensive implementation of the Judgment” (para. 229). The government did, however, accept the TRRC’s recommendation that a “Peace Committee” should be established for Kerr Mot Ali whose mandate would be to “negotiate the resettlement of the exiled residents and the restoration of peace and religious co-existence in Kerr Mot Ali” (para 230).

Inter-religious tensions

In 2023, The Gambia witnessed a surge in inter-religious tensions:

- A group of young Muslims attacked Christian worshippers at a church in Tallinding, Kanifing Municipality, on 8 April 2023. The attack was triggered by the loud music playing during daily Ramadan prayers. The following day, a group of around 10 individuals, some reportedly intoxicated and carrying alcohol, assaulted a Christian church in Bakau. They pepper-sprayed a priest, vandalised a religious statue, and disrupted the Sunday Mass. In response to these incidents, President Barrow strongly denounced religious violence, affirming that his government would not tolerate the erosion of The Gambia’s culture of religious tolerance. He stated that “zealots, fanatics, or bandits posing as purists have no place in Gambian society.”
- The National Human Rights Commission raised concerns in May 2023 about the escalating religious tensions and intolerance in the country. They highlighted intra-faith divisions, threats against individuals, and the aforementioned attack on the church as stark reminders that religious tolerance should not be taken for granted. The NHRC called on the government to take immediate action to defuse intolerance, ensure the protection of all faiths’ rights, speak out against any form of religious intolerance from any group, and expedite the implementation of recommendations on religious freedoms outlined in the government’s White Paper on the TRRC report.
- Tensions have also risen between Muslims and Christians in The Gambia over the issue of Muslim students wearing veils in school. Seven female Muslim students took five Christian schools to court for mandating the removal of their veils in class. The students argue that this violates their fundamental human rights and subjects them to harassment. They sought a court order declaring the schools’ actions illegal and demanded compensation of GMD 20 million (approximately USD 336,000). The students also requested the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to ensure schools allow female students to wear veils. During the case’s commencement in early May 2023, hundreds of individuals, many in veils, gathered near the High Court in Banjul to show support for the students. The case is currently ongoing.

Female Genital Mutilation repeal Bill polarizing along religious, political, and tribal lines

- The issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) has become a contentious human rights and public health matter in The Gambia, leading to increased social tensions. The Women’s (Amendment) Act of 2015 includes sections (32A and 32B) that prohibit “female circumcision.” The law defines *female circumcision* to encompass acts ranging from “symbolic practices” to “female genital mutilation or cutting.” Those found engaging in female circumcision could face three years’ imprisonment, a fine of GMD 50,000 (about USD 750), or both. In cases where the act results in death, the penalty is life imprisonment. The law also penalizes anyone who “requests, incites, or promotes” female circumcision with three years’ imprisonment, a GMD 50,000 fine, or both. Additionally, individuals failing to report instances of female circumcision face a GMD 10,000 fine (around USD 150) without good cause.

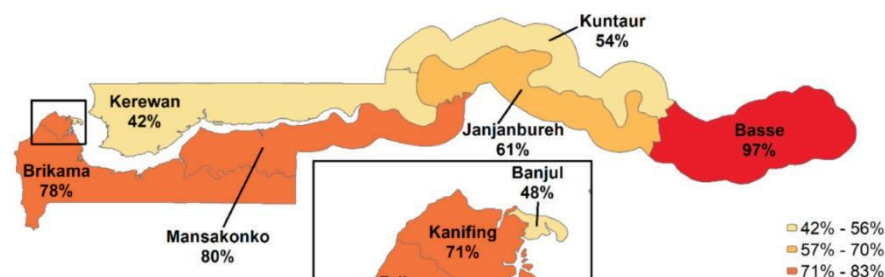


Figure XX: Female circumcision by Local Government Area

Percentage of women aged 15-49 who are circumcised

Source: The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-2020, p. 301 - <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR369/FR369.pdf>.

- Despite the ban in 2015, FGM remains prevalent in The Gambia. Seventy-three per cent of women aged 15-49 have undergone the practice, with its prevalence consistent across age groups, though slightly lower than in 2013 when it was at 75%. The prevalence of FGM is higher among Muslim women (74%) than Christian women (19%), with about 96% of Gambians identifying as Muslim. Civil society organisations advocating for human and women's rights are among those opposing the practice.
- The recent discourse on FGM in The Gambia was sparked by a court fining three women in the CRR in August 2023 for violating the 2015 law prohibiting FGM. This marked only the second prosecution under the law, despite the continued clandestine practice in the country. The fine payment by a prominent Islamic cleric, who also suggested repealing the 2015 law, stirred controversy within the community
- The Women's (Amendment) Bill, 2024 that seeks to repeal the Women's (Amendment) Act 2025 passed its first scrutiny by the National Assembly, and in March 2024, proceeded to further review

The political dimension

- In 2023, a private member's bill introduced to the National Assembly that seeks to repeal the existing ban on female circumcision, which the law defines to include female genital mutilation (FGM),⁷¹ survived its second reading on 18 March 2024 and was submitted to the Assembly Business Committee (ABC) for further scrutiny
- Perceived western interference in Gambian religious and cultural affairs was a prominent theme of the debate. One NAM conceded, for example, that he was concerned that "the West may sanction us financially" if the FGM ban is lifted, while another accused opponents of FGM of being sponsored by the West
- The Minority Leader and Member for Brikama North, **Mr. Alhagie Darboe** (UDP), argued that discussion around FGM should be the subject of a national dialogue and proposed that the bill be taken to the committee stage for further consultation. The Majority Leader and Member for Kantora, **Mr. Billay Tunkara** (NPP), supported the minority leader's suggestion and tabled a motion for the bill to be referred to the Assembly Business Committee for onward submission to the relevant committees for further scrutiny and consultation, and for the preparation of a report to be submitted to the National Assembly for its consideration. The motion passed by 42 votes to 4

At CDA 2024 District Focus Group Discussion FGM was raised by respondents. However, they were concerned less with taking sides and more with concern over the division which the issue was causing in society.

Religious and ethnic dimensions

- Some Islamic clerics and the GSIC have been outspoken in their support of lifting the ban on FGM. The Supreme Islamic Council on 25 September 2023 issued

a Fatwa calling on the government to reconsider the law banning female circumcision, declaring that "Allah has decreed female circumcision," and condemning "quarters and individuals who denounce the practice."

- Tribal practices on FGM differ among Gambia's ethnic groupings. Mandinka, Fula, Sarahulle ethnic groups practise FGM. "The Foundation for Research on Women's Health, Productivity and the Environment (BAFROW) reports that seven of The Gambia's nine ethnic groups practise FGM/C. Nearly all Mandinkas, Jolas and Hausas (together 52% of the population) practise Type II on girls between 10 years and 15 years of age. The Sarahulis (9% of the population) practice Type I on girls one week after birth. The Bambaras (1% of the population) practise Type III, which takes place when the girls are between 10 years and 15 years of age. The Fulas (18% of the population) engage in a practice analogous to Type III, that is described as "vaginal sealing" on girls anywhere between one week and 18 years of age.⁷²"
- There is also a marked urban – rural divide, with the rural areas more supportive of the practice.

⁷¹ Women's (Amendment Act) 2015. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a7c2ca18a02c7a46149331c/t/5aa0f4ede2c4830bd808329a/1520497906008/Women%27s+Act+Amendme nt+Act+2015.pdf>

⁷² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10117491/>

Human Rights dimension

- The current debate has however raised concerns on the protection of the rights of women and girls, the erosion of safeguards and weakening/enforcement of legal frameworks. FGM/C and other forms of violence against women and girls remain a pressing human rights concern for many
- The Gambia National Development Plan (2023 -2027) recognises the challenges of FGM/C and commits to prioritise protecting children from violence and abuse and protecting the rights of vulnerable and marginalised children. The National Human Rights Commission, the UN and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights have issued statements on the protection of the rights of women and girls against FGM and the obligation The Gambia has to human rights instruments it is signatory to, that protect the rights of women and girls.

Potential manifestation: The 1997 Constitution

. The Gambia's own constitution, a legacy of 22 years of dictatorship requires revision to reflect the needs and ambitions of Gambians in 2024. It is a commitment in the National Development Plan 2023-2027. However, navigating the reform process is fraught with bureaucratic barriers, exacerbated by political and religious incentives which, long under the surface, are now vocally challenging the nature of the Gambian state.

- The constitution is a nexus issue where political and religious interests meet. It is therefore a trigger for potential mobilisation of civil unrest, division within communities and therefore a risk to social cohesion.
- The Gambia's transition to democracy cannot be said to be complete if the 1997 Constitution continues to be the supreme law of the land. Amended numerous times by the former President Jammeh to enable anti-democratic practices, it was termed an "albatross around the Gambia's neck" during a 2024 CDA KII.
- The process for changing The Gambia's Constitution includes high thresholds of approval — 75 per cent support in the National Assembly followed by a referendum that must have at least a 50 percent voter turnout and 75 percent support.
- A new draft Constitution failed in the National Assembly in 2020, largely due to disagreement over whether presidential term limits proposed by the new constitution should be applied retroactively to cover President Barrow's first term. The 2020 failure elicited strong sentiment, including from civil society, who viewed the draft constitution as progressive due to provisions such as mandating a quota system for women's representation in the National Assembly.
- While President Barrow was re-elected in 2021, he controls only a slim majority in the National Assembly, which constrains his government's ability to make constitutional amendments."⁷³
- Nonetheless a new constitution is a National Development Plan 2023-2027 (NDP – Pillar 1 Governance reforms) commitment. Therefore in 2023 a fresh round of consultations on the draft constitution took place. The consultations included political and religious leaders, civil society and government. Government indicated its intention to hold a referendum on the new constitution by the end of 2024.
- While this progress is welcome, for the referendum to happen, the draft constitution would have needed to be re-introduced to the National Assembly in 2024 to allow sufficient time for gazetting, parliamentary debate, national awareness-raising on the contents, and the organisation of a referendum. In mid-2023 the government re-enlisted the support of International IDEA, supported by a group of Gambian and international Eminent Persons, to reboot the constitutional review process, using as a basis the draft rejected by the National Assembly in 2020. However, as of the CDA publication (May 2024), re-introduction to the National Assembly had not yet happened.
- With political parties, including UDP and PDOIS, insisting on the return of the original 2020 draft to the floor of the National Assembly, the issue of term limits will again be raised and with it the potential for increased political tension.
- According to the CDA, the KII with the GCC opposes the new constitution because of its proposed primacy of Sharia over secular concerns.⁷⁴

⁷³ World Bank / Government of the Gambia, *Turn Around Strategy Report FY2022*.

⁷⁴ Gambian Christian Council written submission accompanying 2024 CDA KII

- The role of the Inter-Party Committee will be considerable, including the facilitation of constructive dialogue and negotiation (See peace engines).

Potential manifestation 2.2: Mobilisation of anti-Western sentiment.

- As outlined above, the frustration and isolation of returning migrants, who feel let down by European Union and the Gambian state, can be instrumentalised by those with a political or religious agenda.
- Likewise, disenfranchised young people more broadly can serve as a ready constituency for those seeking numbers or protest around polarising political or religious issues. They serve as a ready constituency for violence / increased social tension as they were in the 3 Years Jotna protests.
- An increase in anti-Western sentiment aligns with KII reports of growing affinity - especially amongst Gambian youth with nations of the Sahel. The formation of the ASS, a pact established on 16 September 2023 between the military governments of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso was a defensive and cooperative effort in response to regional instability and external threats, underlining a commitment to “collective security”.⁷⁵ The AES also aspires to foster economic collaboration among its member states.⁷⁶ It is seen by some as representing “a counter-narrative to the shackles of colonial and Westphalian impositions, and a beacon of hope for Africa.”⁷⁷
- As seen in Mali in 2022 / 2023, anti-French and anti-MINUSMA protests mobilised significant anti-Western sentiment. The represented popular support for the exit of French bi-lateral military cooperation and the wind-up of the United Nations peacekeeping mission. Similar anti-French⁷⁸ and more recently anti-American protests⁷⁹ have been visible in Burkina Faso and Niger.
- The extent to which Gambian citizens’ affinity with AES and its military leadership is related only to its counter-colonial ideology rather than in support of military rule was not clear from KII and requires further analysis. If the former, it could represent a concern for those working on transitional justice.
- A pro-military alignment would be at odds with a 2022 poll which found that despite the legacy of the Jammeh era the Gambian population had trust in the armed forces, ranking them on second to religious leaders⁸⁰. However, a 2023 Afrobarometer scorecard also reported a clear support for civilian rule and rejection of the notion of military leadership.⁸¹

Applied analysis: So, what does this tell us?

- ❖ **Conclusion:** KIIs across the board worried for The Gambia’s current trajectory of polarisation, with issues next year which are fraught with risk. KIIs also highlighted the power of political and religious leaders to guide their members and followers. The direction of travel is very much in the hands of these leaders, who have it in their power to be peace engines
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Throughout the FGDs and KIIs, “dialogue” was offered as a solution – Political parties proposed the need for a political dialogue on FGM and the constitution. A National Platform (*Bantaba*) is required. In the long term, this “meeting place” will be a role of the Peace and Reconciliation Commission. However, the legal and institutional framework of the PRC is currently being developed.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** The success, or otherwise, of these dialogues, and associated follow-up actions could be the difference between these latent sources of tension being managed and eventually mitigated versus escalating into civil unrest or inter-community division.

And so? Factors driving these manifestations (Explored in B. Factor Analysis)

- a. Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities.
- b. Identity: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
- c. Pace of reform.
- d. Corruption.
- e. Lack of government transparency, accountability and communication

⁷⁵ [Alliance of Sahel States: Challenging Colonial Borders and UN Representation? - Kujenga Amani \(ssrc.org\)](#)

⁷⁶ [Decoding the Alliance of Sahel States: West Africa's Geopolitical Shift and Implications - African Researchers Magazine \(ISSN: 2714-2787\) - source for latest African research, science and scholarly news](#)

⁷⁷ [Alliance of Sahel States: Challenging Colonial Borders and UN Representation? - Kujenga Amani \(ssrc.org\)](#)

⁷⁸ [Au revoir, Sahel: Did 2023 crush France's influence in Africa? | Conflict News | Al Jazeera](#)

⁷⁹ [Niger Welcomes Russia, Protests U.S. Presence \(foreignpolicy.com\)](#)

⁸⁰ Afrobarometer: Donor briefing: Highlights of Afrobarometer Round 9 survey in the Gambia 26 April 2023

⁸¹ [SOR-Gambia-Afrobarometer-R9-ma-bh-30June2023a.pdf](#)

Issue 3: As in the 2019 CDA, land disputes remain a significant source of tension

Current: Why and how are violence, tension and instability happening NOW?	Potential: Why and how COULD violence, tension and instability manifest in NEXT YEAR?
• A lack of secure land tenure undermines citizens' ability to feel truly safe economically. They link directly to food security. • The Gambia lacks a land policy, cadastre or land registration. This makes addressing disputes challenging. This is compounded by parallel customary land law processes. • Land management is undermining public trust. It takes 5+ years on average to resolve cases; many remain open • Value has sky-rocketed driving speculation, increasing land grabbing and disputes • Lack of real estate regulation leads to agricultural land transformed into residential areas/ exploitation of landowners • Local Government Authorities dispute resolution capacity is low • Customary resolution role of Alkaaloo is being undermined by the pursuit of their own interests as is Alkaaloo - VDC contestation	• Land reform, including the validation and drafting of the much-needed land reform bill, and digitalisation of records may prove divisive. It will impact several vested interests within government, the private sector and the citizenry. It will affect customary land practices and structures; as such it will be both a legal and emotionally charged process.

This section explores when, where and with whom land disputes manifest, or risk generating violence, tension and instability.

In a country with a predominantly agriculturally - based economy, land ownership is directly connected with economic resilience. A lack of secure land tenure undermines citizens' ability to feel truly safe.

- The Gambia lacks a land policy. While this is a priority for the Government, the knock-on effects impact the daily life of almost every Gambian. This is because the accompanying regulation and systems of the land policy are not in place, even though it is a priority of the government.
- There is no national mapping of land parcels, no subsequent cadastre for land registration, and no regulations for real estate agents or market. As outlined in more detail below, the lack of regulation for real estate agents and investors – many of whom are non-Gambian - is a conflict driver. .

Gambians are also subject to complex land laws and bureaucratic processes which largely remains unresolved. . This undermines public trust in land governance and government.

- Any land leased within the area governed by the Land Regions Act must seek ministerial permission. The process of seeking that ministerial consent requires 80 steps as revealed by a recent performance audit of the Ministry of Lands. At each step the process must be approved – including local actors, payment of Gambia Revenue Authority taxes and then finally the approval of the ministry. The complexity of this process has spawned a whole new industry of “agents” who one can pay to facilitate the process. However, for many Gambians this is out of reach.
- Even for those with the money to pay the facilitation fees, the average length of a court case or legal process is five years. For many, they simple cannot fund over five years of legal process for their land registration or dispute amidst the uncertainty of it been resolved.

Since the 2019 CDA, land value has skyrocketed, driving speculation

- The price of land in Greater Banjul is reported by the Ministry of Lands (KII) as the highest in the country. This is in part due to rapid urbanisation, with high levels of internal migration from the rural

to the urban areas. This is why tension over land in the Greater Banjul Area is significant, triggered by three factors:

1. The operations of two land regimes is creating confusion in land governance
 2. Many claims of customary land ownership is posing significant strain on government / land courts
 3. Affecting government ability for urban planning, for example future infrastructure. With increased population, the need for new basic services is critical and links to Issue 4.
- Land grabbing has increased. For example, in the LRR land that has been used by an FGD respondent's family for the past sixty years, was recently claimed by the Alkaaloo. Most of the land conflicts are reported to the office of the Governor, who visit the disputed area and decide on the buffer of the land – a decision which led to a “sharp reaction” by the owner and ongoing tension.
 - Where the same land is sold multiple times to multiple buyers. Parents from the different families are reported as “borrowing” each other's lands without documentation, and following their demise, the succeeding generation are always embroiled in conflict over land ownership. In the LRR in 2023, there was a conflict relating to land having been sold to two different buyers.
 - Lack of record keeping and standardisation of land management processes at the customary level is exacerbating the issue of multiple sale of land by Alkaaloolu. Likewise, as many Alkaaloolu are illiterate, advancing reform of the land system in an accessible manner is challenging.

Lack of real estate regulation is leading to agricultural land being transformed into residential areas and exploitation of economic vulnerability of landowners

- While international investment in The Gambia is largely welcomed, concerns are raised over foreign real estate development. In 2022, the then Vice President, Badara Alieu Joof raised concerns over the increased sale of land to international real estate developers, and its impact on the most agrarian vulnerable population in The Gambia. The Vice President also argued that “If we commercialize these lands, where would our families and the future generations live?;especially when you give them to the foreign private estate developers who make millions, repatriate the money which amount to capital flight. Then we are denied land for our families. No, that is wrong.”⁸²
- Similar concerns were raised during the FGDs and KIIs in 2024. These highlighted how economically vulnerable families were selling land to real estate developers to mobilise funds. This reduced their own long-term economic and food-security. KIIs also highlighted the reduction in The Gambia's already limited food production capacity and its reliance on food imports. Reference was made linking Senegalese traders crossing the border to buy Gambian foodstuffs during the glut season and then selling them back at inflated prices during the lean season.
- Measures to prevent non-Gambians from owning significant portions of land are being circumvented. In principle, the Amendment of the State Lands Act of 1991 – Act number 10 of 2008 - brought measures which prevented non-Gambians from owning more than 2500 sq. m in any one community. The intent of this measure was to stop non-Gambians buying out Gambians. This also put limitations on beachfront land– a non-Gambian cannot obtain land within 1.5km of the high-water mark (as opposed to 800m for Gambians).
- However, a loophole in the system allows non-Gambians to establish a Gambian registered company within very little time thanks to the single window business registration system. Non-Gambians are therefore able to continue to buy land. This is a significant driver for tension and vulnerability in several ways:
 - The true value of land is not easily accessible and therefore sellers, particularly most vulnerable to not have a real idea of market value of their land. The Gambia lacks a transparent real estate market. Therefore, it is possible to underpay for land, particularly to those who need mobilising funds quickly
 - Under the 2008 Act Number 10, the determination of land within 800m of the high-water mark as Tourist Destination Areas saw the eviction of Gambians from their lands. While the Gambian Tourist Board was, according to that Act, obliged to settle the existing rights to that land. KIIs indicate that this did not occur. This had two knock on effects
 1. the continual contestation over land ownership and claims within the legal system and

⁸² [VP wants embargo on foreign estate development | Land Portal](#)

2. when Gambians who have been divested of this land see non-Gambians accessing it for beachside investments this raises tensions.

Capacity of Local Government Authorities to manage disputes is low, exacerbating frustration.

- The complexity of the issues above highlights the need for competent authorities, trained in dispute resolution. This capacity is lacking as are the incentives to address citizens' concerns. Resulting frustration is exacerbating the disputes. While the World Bank is supporting through their Giraffe Agriculture and WAKA projects, it is not a process that can be fast-tracked

The customary dispute resolution role played by Alkaaloolu is being undermined, by the pursuit of their own interests as is Alkaaloo - Village Development Committees contestation

- Land grabbing by Alkaaloolu – as reported above – is undermining their leadership role in village matters. It also undermines their role as mediators of land dispute
- The Alkaaloo is an advisory member of the VDC with no voting rights (according to the Local Government Act, 2002). However, they are the head of the village which makes it “difficult to ignore or treat this as an isolated case but rather as part of the broader VDC crisis”. According to a KII “The implications of which generally and across the board is it stifles, frustrate as well as complicates overall grassroot community development efforts, disrupts social ties and cohesions as well as divides communities thereby leading to disagreements in collectively holding public officers accountable to the public which in itself does not promote good governance, transparency, accountability as well as effective and efficient service delivery.”
- Tensions including land and other resource allocation which erupted between VDCs and Alkaaloolu as and between VDCs and their host communities include incidences escalated to magistrate courts e.g.: Bakindinki Mandinka, Jokadou Darsilameh and Kuntaur Fulakunda between the VDCs and groups over resource allocations; Kartong - over term limit and the refusal of the VDC members to step down and lastly the most recent one which resulted in the arrest of over a dozen youth of Manduar and their subsequent detention and bail, a case involving the Alkaaloo of the village alleged to have sold the community forest land. This case is still at the level of the courts and the protagonist are the Alkaaloo on one hand and the youth on the other hand.

Potential manifestation: Land reform, including the validation and drafting of the much need landed reform bill and digitalization of records may prove divisive. It will impact a number of vested interests within the government, the private sector and the citizenry. It will affect customary land practices and structures as such will be both a legal emotionally charged process.

- The customary significance of land within Gambian society and will make the reform of the dual system an emotive one
- The digitization of the current paper system will reduce corruption and expedite the processes. “However, there are those who according to a KII “benefit from the chaos” and use it to “increased level of discretion of individuals”

Applied analysis: So, what does this tell us?

- ❖ **Conclusion:** Land disputes are driven to factors fundamental to Gambian citizens – economic stability and personal identity, including familial and community ties.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** While the TAA has land milestones included, the pace of reform has been slow.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Exclusion from land ownership for women increases their economic vulnerability. This vulnerability is closely linked to social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Loopholes in business legislation allow international investors to own and develop parcels of land at the expense of Gambian land rights which land legislation seeks to protect.

And so? Factors driving these manifestations (Explored in B. Factor Analysis)

1. Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities.
2. Identity: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
3. Slow pace of reform, particularly around land tenure and real estate regulation.
4. Corruption.
5. Climate change, including more regular, more severe natural disasters.

Issue 4: The social contract is being undermined by the slow pace of reform and establishing state – citizens dialogue and accountability mechanisms

Current: Why and how are violence, tension and instability happening NOW?	Potential: Why and how COULD violence, tension and instability manifest in the NEXT YEAR?
• Gambia is making progress. But the message is not getting through • Trust in the state institutions has decreased dramatically since 2018. • While commissions of inquiry are welcome accountability tools, questions regarding their political motivations are being raised • Accountability for national resource remains high on the agenda • Freedom of expression/speech and of assembly remain contentious • Space for some civil society actors is reported as fluctuating • In May 2024 The Gambia's media freedom ranking dropped from 4th in Africa to 10th in the World Press Freedom Index. • Accountability by civil society for their financial resources was raised during stakeholder workshops.	• The forthcoming prosecution phase of the transitional justice process may present significant challenges since prosecutions, especially in relation to former President Jammeh and his most senior accomplices. There is also a risk of unmet expectations in the reparations process. Both <i>could</i> open old wounds and deepen political rifts. • Without a visible government response to the kush crisis, public trust could be undermined. Addressing the broader drug issue would also address an increased rate of drug-related crime, and the threat to the physical and mental health of Gambian youth

In this sections we explore when, where and with whom issues around voice and accountability already manifest in, or risks generating violence, tension and instability

Gambia is making progress. But the message is not getting through

- The Gambia government faces the dual challenge of meeting the costs of the past and the present at the same time. This is not clearly understood. The Jammeh regime left a civil service and basic service infrastructure severely weakened. It left a state responsible for paying millions of dollars in reparations to victims of the former regime. This at the same time as servicing public debt reported at 70 per cent of GDP in 2023⁸³ and attempting to enhance domestic resource mobilisation in a context of limited private sector investment.
- An honest national dialogue to manage expectations and mitigate tension was a recommendation in the 2018 and 2019 CDAs. Until the February 2024 National Dialogue, this conversation appears to have been lacking. While the National Dialogue with the theme - "Preserving the Nation, safeguarding the State and securing our resources" - was welcomed broadly by all political parties – not least as a means of de-escalating tensions between the President and UDP leadership, which reached new height in the second half of 2023 - participants noted the event was "a long time coming" and disappointment at the five-minute length of interventions at the State House event. A more structured and regular engagement, with accountable measures against which to report progress, is under discussion. It would form the basis of a platform from which to report to the nation and communicate progress.
- This aptly resonates with the challenges of the absence of an existing institutional channel through which citizens can participate in informed dialogue. Throughout the FGD and KIIs, "dialogue" was offered as a solution: Political parties proposed the need for a political dialogue on FGM and the constitution; The GSIC and the Gambia Christian Council recognised the need for inter-faith

⁸³ [1GMBEA2024001.pdf](#) p. 2

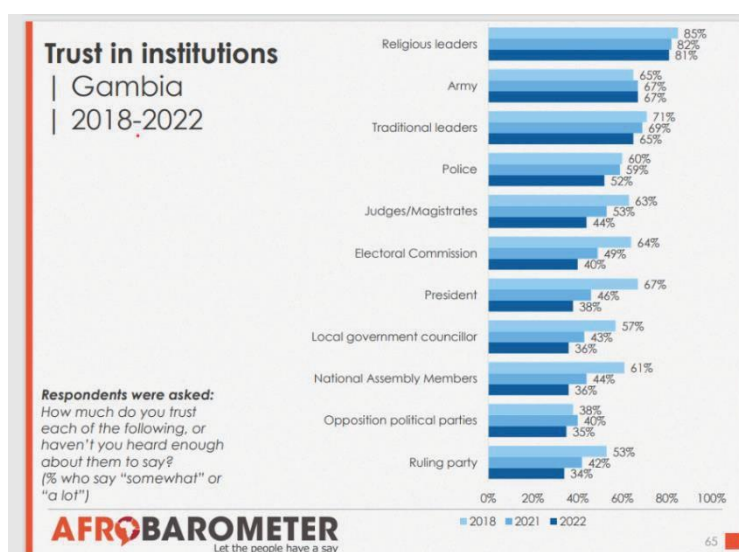
dialogue on the aforementioned issues among others. The success, or otherwise, of these dialogues, and associated follow-up actions could be the difference between these latent sources of tension being managed and eventually mitigated, versus escalating into civil unrest or inter-community division. The Peace and Reconciliation Commission - an institution to be established as part of the TRRC implementation plan – will be tasked to facilitate dialogue and mediate in the country's most difficult conflicts. At present, this function is lacking. This is a risk. The PRC will be critical not only to heal past wounds, but also to mitigating polarisation affecting the Gambian social cohesion today.

Clear communication of decisions is lacking and affecting an already fragile social contract.

- Decisions perceived as arbitrary and poorly communicated are fuelling anti-government sentiment. In November 2023, protests over destruction for the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) conference highway were in response to the government's exercise on illegal structures along the highway in the Greater Banjul and Brikama areas.⁸⁴ Shops along the highway and other illegal installations were destroyed. In November 2023 a total of 144 individuals were arrested by the police for non-compliance with the demolition exercise.⁸⁵ With a poverty rate of over 50 per cent, especially among women and youth who also dominate the informal sector, this continued demolition would affect their lives and livelihoods. During a CDA KII with a female food vendor affected by the demolitions, she reported that she was given no warning, no compensation, and as a widow has no income to support her seven children. Such incidences receive national attention and fuel frustration at government's decisions that are perceived as poorly communicated and impacting a population already vulnerable to the cost-of-living crisis.
- The CDA March 2024 KIIs reported that citizens do not understand why decisions are taken; why the cabinet is being reshuffled; what progress is being made on the TRRC and when and where commitments will be met.

Perceived failings of duty bearers are undermining the social contract. Trust in the state institutions has decreased dramatically since 2018.

- A 2022 citizen survey found that popular trust in key government officials has decreased drastically since 2018, including trust in the president, National Assembly members, and local government councillors. Among key public institutions, religious leaders, the army, traditional leaders, and the police are the most trusted.



While commissions of inquiry are welcome, accountability tools, questions regarding their political motivations are being raised

- Recent reversals in the findings of the Janneh Commission have dented confidence in government accountability mechanisms. The Janneh Commission investigated financial crimes committed during the tenure of former President Yahya Jammeh. Using powers granted to him by the Commission of Inquiry (Amendment) Act passed in December 2023, on 22 January 2024, President Barrow granted amnesty to several individuals whom the government had banned from holding public office in the wake of recommendations made by the Janneh Commission. This raised concern from civil society and the National Human Rights Commission.

⁸⁴ https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=713769206872746

⁸⁵ <https://foroyaa.net/police-arrest-144-in-demolition-exercise-in-km-brikama/>

- In February 2023, President Barrow established a Commission of Inquiry into the conduct of all Local Government Councils (LGCol). This is a welcome means for accountability, particularly for misappropriation and corruption in Local Government Councils. However, two issues were raised during the KIIs
 - 1. The perception that the cost of the LGCol outstrips the assets it is likely to recover.
 - 2. LGCol is uncovering widespread corruption in both NPP and UDP - controlled local councils alike. Early criticisms that the LGCol was an NPP political tool have proven to be misplaced. However, careful management and communication of the findings of these commissions will be required to avoid triggering local and national tension.

Accountability for national resources remains high on the agenda

- Resource allocation was one of the thematic working groups at the February 2024 National Dialogue - “Preserving the Nation, safeguarding the State and securing our resources”. This indicates the level of importance
- KIIs and the stakeholder workshops highlighted questions over the proliferation of institutions at a time of budget constraints. Questions were raised over the need for new commissions – for example the Access to Information Commission being a stand-alone institution, when its role could be integrated into the functioning of other departments. While the important role of the A2I or anti-corruption commissions was not disputed, the concerns were raised over the fact that existing departments did not have sufficient logistical (vehicles), administrative or human resources to deliver their functions.
- Accountability by the civil society and not only government is required. Given the significant investment made through CSOs, KIIs noted the need for these organisations to be financially transparent.
- Please see Factor Assessment for government progress in this area

Restrictions to freedom of expression/speech and of assembly remain in place

- As early as 2014, during the administration of Yahya Jammeh, the Gambia Press Union (GPU) brought an application before the Supreme Court of The Gambia arguing that the provisions of the Criminal Code relating, inter alia, to the offence of sedition were unconstitutional. The GPU believed that the rights of media practitioners to freedom of speech and of the press were violated by the existence of the law. The Supreme Court held that the provisions in the Criminal Code relating to sedition were indeed constitutional, except for seditious acts against the government; i.e., the Court recognised that criticism of the government as an institution should not constitute sedition.⁸⁶ Following the democratic transition, in February 2018 the ECOWAS Court of Justice called on the Gambia government to completely repeal or amend its laws on sedition, finding that The Gambia’s laws violated the rights of journalists.⁸⁷ In May of the same year, however, the Supreme Court of The Gambia contradicted the ECOWAS Court of Justice by upholding the country’s laws on sedition as they relate to seditious acts against the President and judicial processes / decisions.⁸⁸
- A controversial sedition trial against the Chairman of the Brikama Area Council, who is a member of the main opposition United Democratic Party (UDP), is currently ongoing in the country and is sparking significant political and social tension. On 7 September 2023, the trial attracted hundreds of UDP supporters who clashed with police, resulting in inflammatory and vengeful messages against the police on social media.
- In addition to the sedition law, laws restricting freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are still in force. Section 5 of the Public Order Act (1963) requires every person or group to obtain a permit or licence for a public procession or protest from the Inspector General of Police or Governor

⁸⁶ Gambia Press Union v. Attorney General, SC Civil Suit No. 1/2014 - <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/cases/gambia-press-union-v-attorney-general>

⁸⁷ “ECOWAS court rules Gambia violated rights of journalists,” Committee to Project Journalists, 14 February 2018 - <https://cpj.org/2018/02/ecowas-court-rules-gambia-violated-rights-of-journ>

⁸⁸ “Gambia declares criminal defamation unconstitutional, keeps some laws on sedition, false news,” Committee to Project Journalists, 10 May 2018 - <https://cpj.org/2018/05/gambia-declares-criminal-defamation-unconstitution>

of a region. A challenge to the constitutionality of this Section failed because the Supreme Court determined that the limitations are in line with Section 25 of the Constitution and international human rights standards.⁸⁹

- In its 2022 State of Human Rights report,⁹⁰ the National Human Rights Commission, *inter alia*, renewed its call for the amendment of Section 5 of the Public Order Act to ease the current restrictions on the freedom of assembly. Section 25 of the Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of association and assembly. The Gambia is also a party to several treaties that protect the right to assembly and association, including the right to protest. However, the right to freedom of association and assembly continues to be restricted in the country.
- In its White Paper on the TRRC Report, the government accepted the recommendation for the National Assembly to conduct a comprehensive review of the Public Order Act to bring it in line with international human rights instruments and customary standards. In its report, the NHRC recommends that the MOI should initiate an amendment of Section 5 of the Public Order Act requiring only notification to, and not permission from, the Inspector General of Police or Governor of a region before a public procession or protest may take place.
- Furthermore, The Gambia has accepted several recommendations by human rights mechanisms that speak to widening the democratic space and civil liberties. One such mechanism is the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of 2019. Many of these recommendations mirror the TRRC recommendations. Failure to implement these recommendations could lead to deepening mistrust and perception of a government unwilling to address past and or present violations.

However, in 2023 the government's position on peaceful protests softened in the face of anger over corruption

- The youth wing of the opposition UDP applied for and received permission to hold a peaceful protest against corruption on 10 March 2023, in a significant break from past practice where police would systematically deny such applications citing security concerns. The move indicates that the government's position on allowing peaceful assembly and protest may be softening. The march by the UDP youth wing passed peacefully and without incident and culminated to the delegation delivering a petition to the National Assembly demanding that it enact the Anti-Corruption Bill without further delay (the Bill, which has since been passed, had been before the Assembly for the previous three years). The UDP leader, Mr. Ousainou Darboe, observed that it was the first time in more than 27 years that the government had granted his party permission to protest, saying that it "could be a turning point in the country's political landscape."

Space for some civil society actors is reported as under pressure

- Since 2016, the growth of the civil society sector has been exponential, and pivotal to its growth and development. The diversification of organisations, too, has reflected the needs of the country – for example, a proliferation of NGOs working with and on transitional justice.
- However, in 2023 Article 19 noted a trend of Gambian authorities restricting free speech, suppressing political dissent, and shrinking civic space in the country. From 1 August to 15 October 2023, the Organisation recorded five instances of arrests involving journalists, political figures, and human rights activists, detained, it said, simply for expressing their opinions, whether on online platforms, traditional media, or public discourse.⁹¹
- TANGO expressed serious concerns about the current political climate in the country, which it said was not conducive to fostering peace and democracy. In October 2023, it voiced grave concern over what it perceived as a shrinking civic space and threats to fundamental freedoms such as expression, divergence of political views, and respect for the rule of law. Following political utterances in October 2023, TANGO expressed shock over the overt and covert threat to media houses, journalists, and activists. The group called on the government to swiftly implement the TRRC'S recommendations and related reforms.

⁸⁹ "Demand the repeal of repressive laws in Gambia," Amnesty International -

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/petition/demand-the-repeal-of-repressive-laws-in-gambia>

⁹⁰ <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/274e014e-d93a-11ed-965f-02a8a26af761>

⁹¹ [The Gambia: Crackdown on free speech must stop - ARTICLE 19](#)

In May 2024 The Gambia's media freedom ranking dropped from 4th in Africa to 10th in the World Press Freedom Index.

- In 2024 The Gambia ranked 10th in Africa, and 54th in the world in the Reporters Without Borders index, a decrease from 2023 where it ranked 5th in Africa, and 46th in the world. ⁹² "Draconian media laws introduced by the former regime, which are still in the law books," were cited as one of the reasons for the decline in ranking. ⁹³ In response, Minister Ismaila Ceesay noted the government's concern called a stakeholder engagement session to raise the issues identified, committing to work with the Gambia Press Union, the Gambia Media Council and all stakeholders. ⁹⁴

Potential manifestation: Slow implementation of the TRRC recommendations including on prosecutions and reparations.

Since the 2019 CDA, the completion of the TRRC's mandate, and launch of the Implementation Plan to the Government's White Paper on the Recommendations of the TRRC are major milestones in The Gambia's transition to democracy. Prosecutions are a critical peace engine, in that if handled carefully and adequately they will build trust between state and citizen and contribute to the process of national healing. However, the Implementation Plan highlights risks of unmet expectations and managing the complexities of the prosecution and reparations processes.

Other critical recommendations that speak to accountability, transparency, protection of civic space, and freedom of expression come from human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review. Many of these recommendations mirror the TRRC recommendations. Failure to implement these recommendations could lead to deepening mistrust and perception of a government failing to address past and/or present violations. This could lead to increased social tension.

Prosecutions

- The White Paper accepted all the TRRC's recommendations regarding the prosecution of those responsible for human rights abuses committed during the presidency of Yahya Jammeh, including Mr. Jammeh himself, his "Jungler" death squad, and other individuals named in the TRRC report. Crimes to be prosecuted include crimes against humanity, murder, enforced disappearance, rape, and torture. According to the TRRC report, deaths for which Mr. Jammeh may be held responsible include at least 19 incidents of illegal executions by the Junglers, the execution of 12 soldiers, the unlawful killing of a former Finance Minister, the killing of at least 17 road users by the presidential convoy, the killing of 15 students, the murder of journalist Deyda Hydara, the murder of 67 West African migrants, the random execution of 27 other people, 41 deaths caused by the Presidential Alternative Treatment Programme for AIDS, and 41 deaths caused by witch-hunting.
- The government is preparing to significantly advance the prosecutorial element of the transitional justice process over the coming years through the establishment of a Special Accountability Mechanism (SAM), which comprises a Special Prosecutor's Office, the Special Criminal Division of the High Court of The Gambia, and a Special Tribunal.
- The legal machinery to guarantee prosecutions is being put in place – the National Assembly passed a Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO) bill and Special Accountability Mechanism (SAM) bill during an extraordinary session on 22 April 2024. The Ministry of Justice is in the process of setting up the Special Prosecutor's Office that will be aided by a Special Investigative Unit comprising national and international investigators. In collaboration with ECOWAS, the government has also established a Joint Technical Committee working on developing the legal framework for a Special Accountability Mechanism Tribunal will be created within the Gambian court system to allow for prosecutions of international crimes that fall outside the jurisdiction of the Special Criminal Division of the High Court of The Gambia. This builds on past experiences, including in Senegal and Sierra Leone.
- The Special Tribunal will be in The Gambia but can hold sittings abroad to balance local ownership and victim participation, on the one hand, with security concerns and witness protection requirements, on the other. The government has said it would seek the extradition of accused persons who are currently residing abroad for the purpose of prosecution.

⁹² [Gov't Expresses Concern Over Gambia's Drop in Press Freedom Index – The Standard Newspaper | Gambia](#)

⁹³ [Gov't Expresses Concern Over Gambia's Drop in Press Freedom Index – The Standard Newspaper | Gambia](#)

⁹⁴ [Gov't Expresses Concern Over Gambia's Drop in Press Freedom Index – The Standard Newspaper | Gambia](#)

Where this is not possible, it would endeavour to prosecute accused persons in the countries where they reside.

- However, the forthcoming prosecution phase of the transitional justice process may present significant challenges to sustaining the peaceful nature of The Gambia's transition since prosecutions, especially in relation to the former President and his most senior accomplices, may open old wounds, deepen political rifts, and put pressure on social cohesion and national unity.
- Other prosecution efforts include cases prosecuted outside The Gambia, under the Universal Jurisdiction principle. An example is the conviction and sentencing to 20 years' imprisonment of former Minister Ousman Sonko by the Swiss Courts and the 2023 conviction of Bai L, a former Jungler who was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder together with crimes against humanity by the Celle Higher Regional Court in Germany. These verdicts are a positive trajectory in the fight against impunity and The Gambia has cooperated with the relevant authorities in the respective countries. Victims and their families welcome these verdicts but also lament the slow pace of prosecutions in the country and have expressed frustration. Victims have formed victims' associations to form a collective and united front to advocate for the full implementation of the TRRC recommendations
- As outlined in Issue 5: Senegal, the continued presence of ECOMIG is a source of tension. A clear communication from the government of the mission's role in supporting the prosecutions process will be key to allaying concerns of civil society and broader citizenry alike.

Reparations

- In 2019, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence⁹⁵ provided recommendations to the government that speak to reparations including, to "adopt a comprehensive reparations policy aimed at providing all categories of victims with effective and timely reparations, including compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, restitution and guarantees of non-recurrence, taking measures to ensure that the reparation programme is adopted in full consultation with victims, is fully compliant with international standards, and includes a gender and disabilities perspective; and provide, immediate medical and psychosocial assistance to survivors
- The Victims' Reparations Act 2023 established a fund for the provision of reparations, as well as an independent Reparations Commission to administer the fund and make determinations regarding new victims not identified by the TRRC. The Reparations Commission — which will have 7 members, 3 of them women — is established for an initial period of 5 years and may be extended once for an additional 5 years.
- The Reparations Fund is expected to be financed under Section 5. This will be made up by a combination of the sale of some of ex-President Jammeh's properties and specific budget allocations by the government, grants and donations from any lawful source. The TRRC recommended that total reparations in the sum of GMD 205.8 million (ca. USD 3 million) be divided according to need among the 1,009 victims it identified. Before it was dissolved at the end of its mandate, the TRRC oversaw the payment of GMD 37 million (ca. USD 551,000) in reparations to victims, leaving a balance of GMD 168.8 million (ca. USD 2.5 million) in outstanding reparations. This does not, however, include additional victims that the (yet-to-be established) Reparations Commission may still identify.
- However, the liquidation of those assets as a source of funds for reparations is proving divisive. In March 2024 the National Assembly Member for Fofii Kansala, Mr Almamy Gibba, expressed his intention to obtain power of attorney from former President Yahya Jammeh to pursue legal action against the government for alleged embezzlement. In response to a parliamentary inquiry by Mr Gibba regarding the government's disposal of the former President's assets, the Minister of Justice, Mr Dawda Jallow, provided a list that revealed, *inter alia*, that 44 of the former President's properties had been designated for sale. Mr Gibba deemed the information insufficient, asserted that Mr Jammeh's assets had been sold at undervalued rates, and accused members of the current administration of having colluded to wrongfully appropriate them.

Visibility of progress towards reconciliation

⁹⁵ A/HRC/45/45/Add.3

- The need for a collective understanding of “justice.” During a KII, a senior political leader emphasised the original TRRC strategy was “not just about prosecution but about justice”. They underlined the need for a collective definition which reflected that “total reconciliation is beyond crime and punishment but rehabilitating society and transforming minds.”
- Without this collective understanding of when justice begins and ends, there are risks to the reconciliation process. The risk of mob justice for perpetrators exiting jail on completion of their sentence was raised. The role of reconciliation and the soon-to-be-established Peace and Reconciliation Commission will be critical.
- While progress is being made in putting the legal architecture in place, KIIs emphasised the need for the post-TRRC process to be “visible to society as a whole.” Concerns that the government currently lacks a clear and regular communication channel were raised
- Whilst an Access to Information law was passed in 2021, mechanisms are required to ensure information on all reforms, including the transitional justice, process are adequately accessible to rights holders.

Potential manifestation: Without a visible government response to the kush crisis public trust could be undermined, the allows issue to escalate, driving crime, including murder. It could see communities take the law in their own hands. Finally, Kush will continue to take a terrible toll on the mental and physical health of Gambian youth, and stymie their potential.

- While as outlined in Criminality above, there is a panoply of drugs being used within Gambian society, kush is the substance most concerning to the population, and therefore against which they are judging the performance of security and justice actors.
- The use of social media and misinformation can quickly intensify public concern. Clear, consistent communication regarding the progress of “Operation Stop Kush” and regional collaboration to track, identify, and curb the influx of the drug into The Gambia will be crucial.

Applied analysis: So, what does this tell us?

- ❖ **Conclusion:** The TRRC process gave a common goal and a unifying purpose for The Gambia. While citizens’ concern for economic security and poor basic services remained, between 2017 and 2023 they accepted prioritisation of the TRRC for the “greater good” of the country. In 2024, with the process complete, this common goal and unity of purpose have disappeared. The reality of financing the costs of the past, present and future are now very real. Communication on what government can and cannot do and why has never been more important. This relates to the TRCC Implementation Plan progress as well as broader service delivery.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** District level FGDs highlighted sub-standard education and lack of enforcement of road laws, exacerbating road traffic accidents. Concerns also included limited or not relevant skills training for young people and the lack of mobility due to irregular transport options, which were also noted as expensive. These day-to-day realities of poor basic services – when visible improvement is lacking, and communication as to the delay – undermines public trust.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Media freedom – be it print or social media - is a critical tenet of democracy but also a driver of hate speech and misinformation which is increasing exponentially in The Gambia. Likewise, media responsibility for balanced, evidenced - based journalism is vital. Journalists are pivotal actors with the potential to fan the fires of hate and polarisation or build public trust.

And so? Factors driving these manifestations (Explored in B. Factor Analysis)

1. Economic Structural deficiencies leading to lack of social safety nets, challenging business enabling environment for job creation
2. Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities impacting how, when and where women, young people and Persons with Disabilities particularly receive support and accountability from government.
3. Identity: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
4. Slow pace of reform across all aspects of The Gambia’s reform agenda
5. Corruption.
6. Poor basic service provision, expectation management and Access to Information.
7. Climate change, including more regular, more severe natural disasters.

Manifestations of conflict and instability: Regional context

In 2024, the CDA took an innovative approach, i.e. a new and additional element not seen in the 2019 updated - **“Guiding Principle 2: Assess influences on the peace and stability from all angles.”** This principle takes a regional and global view. It reflects and responds to:

- An increase in the influence of regional and global actors on The Gambia.
- Conflict analysis global best practice, which assesses the transnational dimension of regional and global actors' interests and incentives in perpetuating some of the most intransient conflict.

Issue 5 (Regional): Bilateral relations with Senegal continue to impact The Gambia's security

Current: Why and how are violence, tension and instability happening NOW?	Potential: Why and how COULD violence, tension and instability manifest in NEXT YEAR?
• 2023 cross-border tension over Darsilameh-Tranquil elevated the work of the Senegalo-Gambian Joint Boundary Commission (S-GJBC). • The overspill from the Casamance conflict continues to impact the human security of Gambian communities. However, recent progress in negotiations between <i>Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance</i> (MFDC) and central government are welcome. • At the community level, the seasonal movement of cattle in search of pasture and water, especially across The Gambia's porous border with Senegal, is sparking conflict in communities and causing environmental degradation. accused of cattle rustling and deforestation.	Timing of ECOMIG's exit. ECOMIG retains an important role in the accompanying Security Sector Reform (SSR) and TRRC prosecutions. Unless the mandate of ECOMIG is communicated clearly, this may result in tensions. Sambangalou Hydroelectric Dam and Power Station development in Senegal highlights conflict sensitivity challenges of the green transition projects. While the project will deliver electricity to The Gambia and can be a vehicle for bilateral cooperation, it will also impact water levels in the River Gambia - exacerbating the salination of rice fields – a crop grown predominantly by women.

We now explore how security, defence, political and economic interests of Senegal and The Gambia interact, and where and when they result in tension or violence.

- On 24 March 2024, more than 54 per cent of Senegalese who turned out to vote—including about 15,000 Senegalese expatriates who voted in The Gambia—elected Mr. Bassirou Diomaye Faye as the new President of Senegal. This ended a political crisis during which the incumbent President, Macky Sall, had attempted to extend his time in office beyond his constitutionally mandated term; an attempt that was ultimately thwarted by the Constitutional Council and the Senegalese people. While constitutionality finally prevailed, the crisis that preceded the vote sent shockwaves throughout the region, the continent, and the world that weakened Senegal's reputation as a bastion of democracy in Africa.
- These shockwaves were perhaps most acutely felt in The Gambia, the smallest country on mainland Africa that is surrounded by Senegal on all sides except for its short Atlantic coastline to the west. Indeed once, it entered into a short-lived (1982-1989) confederation with its much larger neighbour. Gambians openly worried that election-related violence in Senegal could drive refugees across their border and disrupt The Gambia's relationship with its most important trading partner.⁹⁶ While the successful conclusion of the election in Senegal brought great relief in The Gambia, thoughts are now turning to potential implications for The Gambia of the new leadership in Senegal.

In the following section, **we assess the implications for The Gambia's peace and stability.**

One border, "one people"

- The Gambia and Senegal share a 765km border that is demarcated by lines of latitude and longitude, as well as by a buffer line drawn 10km from either shore of the River Gambia.
- This border remains "one of the starkest examples of colonial geographical bartering"⁹⁷ and acts as both a bridge and a barrier in the social, political, and economic relations between the two countries.
- The porous border separates people who nevertheless share long-standing social, cultural, and religious ties that act as a political glue in the relations between the two countries. Moreover,

⁹⁶ Senegal is the largest export market for Gambian goods, accounting for half of all Gambian exports. BTI Transformation Index, Gambia Country Report 2024 - <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/GMB>

⁹⁷ Khan, Mariama (2019), *The Gambia-Senegal Border: Issues in regional integration*. Routledge.

indigenous ideas of relatedness are reflected in the cross-border transport, trade and religious networks that straddle the two countries.

- However, relations between the two countries can be volatile, as they were during the tenure of former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh. In early 2016, for example, their shared border was closed for weeks because of a customs dispute that prevented Senegalese road transport from using the trans-Gambia highway linking the north of Senegal to the south, causing major economic disruptions. Tensions were also sparked by criticism of President Jammeh by Gambian dissidents in Senegal, whom former Senegalese President Macky Sall afforded more freedom of expression than his predecessor. Also, President Jammeh's perceived sympathy for the Senegalese separatist MFDC was a constant irritant in Dakar.⁹⁸
- While recurring conflicts over their shared border (especially between 2000 and 2016) strained interpersonal relations between the leaders of The Gambia and Senegal, they never degenerated into violent conflict, thanks—at least in part—to strong social, cultural, and religious cross-border ties. However, even though communities that live on The Gambia-Senegal border share such ties, research has shown that when economic interests are threatened, cultural principles of cooperation and kinship tend to be abandoned in favour of transactional behaviour and competitive attitudes, which could cause the border to become, as one researcher has put it, “a significant conflict generator in Gambia-Senegal relations and in relations among Gambian and Senegalese politicians.”⁹⁹
- At the community level, the seasonal movement of cattle in search of pasture and water, especially across The Gambia's porous border with Senegal, is sparking conflict in the communities and causing environmental degradation. Climate change is disrupting traditional rhythms of transhumance and breaking the synchronicity between the seasonal movement of herds, on the one hand, and planting and harvesting cycles, on the other, thereby increasing the likelihood of crop invasions by cattle and the conflicts between farmers and herders that can ensue. FGD in URR particularly highlighted this concern, including the increase in armed pastoralists, accused of cattle rustling and deforestation.

Border demarcation as a continuing source of bilateral tension

- The common border between The Gambia and Senegal was initially delimited and demarcated by the Anglo-Franco Commission from 1889 to 1929. “Over the years, some of these boundary markers have been uprooted or displaced by human activities, leading to a lack of clarity about the actual boundary between the two countries. This has exacerbated land disputes among neighbouring communities, competing for farmland or grazing land.”¹⁰⁰
- Since the establishment of the Joint Boundary Management Commission in 2011, through a protocol signed by the Heads of State of both countries, the Commission has held several meetings and engagements to address issues affecting the common border. Among these issues is the demarcation and densification of areas affected by unclear boundary lines.¹⁰¹
- So far, no area has been re-demarcated by the current Joint Commission. There was an attempt in 2013 to demarcate the Darsilemah-Touba Tranquil border in the West Coast Region, but the exercise was never completed due to misunderstandings regarding the tools used.¹⁰²
- Since then, the Gambian Commission has held intermittent meetings with the Senegalese Commission to discuss border issues whenever incidents occur, in particular border communities. In July 2023, the Joint Boundary Commission held a productive meeting in Banjul, where a roadmap was developed for the demarcation of the border. This roadmap outlines pre-demarcation activities that need to be undertaken, including regular meetings, sensitisation of border communities, technical training in GPS tools, demining affected areas, document research, verification of boundary lines, and study tours. Additionally, the roadmap addresses cross-border cooperation to

⁹⁸ Emmanuel, A.O. and Lenn M. (2019), “An Analysis of Latent Factors Influencing Gambia-Senegal Relations beyond Colonial Dichotomy.” *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, Vol. 75, pp. 59-69.

⁹⁹ The Gambia-Senegal Border: Issues in regional integration, op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ Gambia Boundary Management Commission, Chairperson (PS Ministry of Lands). Written response to CDA information request. June 2024.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

sustain peaceful coexistence and promote common socioeconomic development for the border communities.¹⁰³

- The Commission held a follow-up meeting from 30-31 May 2024, in Dakar on implementation status of the roadmap. During the meeting, both Commissions presented documentary research results, which will be analysed during the upcoming Joint Commission meeting scheduled for October 2024 in Banjul. Joint sensitisation activities are also planned for June-July 2024.¹⁰⁴
- There is no definitive timeframe for the actual demarcation of the border, as the Joint Commission needs to implement the aforementioned pre-demarcation activities, which are crucial for determining the border. Funding, capacity assistance, and support from partners will be essential to fully implement the roadmap.¹⁰⁵

Inter-presidential relations

- The current Gambian President, Adama Barrow, enjoyed a close relationship with former Senegalese President Macky Sall, which began when Mr Sall hosted Mr. Barrow's inauguration as Gambian President in January 2017 in Dakar. This was necessary as former Gambian President, Yahya Jammeh, was refusing to leave office in Banjul despite losing the presidential election to Mr. Barrow in December 2016. Once ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN had finally persuaded Mr. Jammeh to depart for Equatorial Guinea,¹⁰⁶ President Sall accompanied President Barrow back to The Gambia in triumph.
- There is every indication that President Barrow will endeavour to sustain good relations with Senegal through its new President. In congratulating President Faye on his election, President Barrow said he was optimistic that the cordial relationship between the two countries would be further strengthened under the new Senegalese president. President Barrow attended President Faye's 2 April inauguration in Dakar and, on his return to The Gambia, said that he expected Senegal's new president to maintain peace and further strengthen the relationship between The Gambia and Senegal, adding, "we are one family and one people, so I expect us to build on that and nothing less."¹⁰⁷
- President Faye also seems to have similar aspirations regarding maintaining good relations with The Gambia. He refers to The Gambia three times in his programme for government, in which he promises to
 1. strengthen collaboration within the Gambia River Basin Development Organisation, which encompasses The Gambia, Senegal, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau
 2. strengthen cooperation with neighbouring countries to create regional and sub-regional maritime links, including one between Dakar and Banjul
 3. strengthen cooperation with Atlantic coastal States—i.e., The Gambia, Mauritania, and Guinea-Bissau—including by pooling surveillance and intelligence resources.¹⁰⁸ Since taking office, President Faye has attempted to strike a balance between the need for change and stability. In his inauguration speech, he reiterated his intention to make "a systemic change," while underscoring Senegal's engagement for security, stability and integration in the region. In his first address to the nation on 3 April President Faye said that his role was to "gather, reassure, appease and reconcile."
- The Gambia was the second country President Faye visited after his inauguration, the first being Mauritania. During his 20 April visit, Faye expressed his willingness to surpass the achievements of his predecessor in strengthening bilateral relations with The Gambia. "What President Macky Sall has achieved in the relations between our two countries, I pledge to do even more," he said, adding, "Senegal will never deviate from its trajectory in solidifying its relations with The Gambia. I extend my hand to you [President Barrow] to strengthen you in your posture that entrenches peace and

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Joint Declaration by the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union and the United Nations on the Political Situation of the Islamic Republic of The Gambia -

https://unowas.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/gambia_joint_declaration.pdf

¹⁰⁷ "President Barrow extols Gambia-Senegal relations" - <https://standard.gm/president-barrow-extols-gambia-senegal-relations>

¹⁰⁸ <https://diomayepresident.org/programme/>

fraternity for our two countries. I know you will never leave this posture. And we, for our part, will do everything to further encourage you to work in this direction because for us, the borders and the flags do not matter. What matters to us is the way and manner [the] people of the two countries interact and cooperate.”

- Both presidents agreed to maintain the Senegalo-Gambian Presidential Council that has already met three times and that allows for regular, direct interactions between the two leaders.¹⁰⁹

ECOMIG and the issue of territorial integrity

- One of the most debated issues in relation to The Gambia’s future relations with Senegal concerns the question of the latter’s continued support for the ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG). Senegalese troops comprise about 80 per cent of the force, alongside troops from Nigeria and Ghana. ECOMIG has been in The Gambia since January 2017 when its military presence was instrumental in persuading former President Jammeh to accept the results of the election and depart for Equatorial Guinea. It has remained to provide an extra layer of security during the country’s transitional justice and security sector reform processes.
- The issue of territorial integrity was a priority at the March 2024 National Strategic Dialogue hosted by the President. It is a critical point of contestation as after ECOMIG’s prolonged presence, multiple polls have indicated that most Gambians are in favour of ending the mission and handing over the responsibility of the country’s security to the Gambian defence and security forces.¹¹⁰
- ECOWAS Heads of State and Government agreed on 4 December 2022 to extend ECOMIG’s mandate until the end of 2023. It also proposed ECOMIG to consider, within that period, a gradual downsizing of the mission and the commencement of the training and reorientation of The Gambia Defence and Security Forces “to enable them to play their constitutionally assigned roles in a democratic dispensation.”¹¹¹
- To adjust the predominance of Senegalese troops in ECOMIG, they also instructed the ECOWAS Commission to “ensure that the ECOMIG Force composition reflects a balanced regional outlook comprising troops from the ECOWAS Member States beyond the current countries participating in the mission.”¹¹² The 10 December 2023 meeting of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government further extended ECOMIG’s mandate until the end of 2024. No action has yet been taken, however, to either reduce the size of the force nor amend its composition, which comprises Senegalese, Ghanaian, and Nigerian contingents, with the Senegalese contingent comprising about 80 per cent of the force.
- ECOMIG’s most controversial deployment in The Gambia is in the Foñi region, which borders Senegal’s southern province of Casamance, and which is the stronghold of The Gambia’s former President Yahya Jammeh and his political party, the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation & Construction (APRC). Many people in Foñi perceive themselves to be discriminated against by the current government because of their allegiance to the former president and see ECOMIG operations in their region as further evidence of this.¹¹³ In late 2022, for example, four young men resident in Foñi were shot, three fatally, in the border area between The Gambia and Casamance, leading the 5 National Assembly members representing Foñi to petition President Barrow to remove ECOMIG

¹⁰⁹ Joint Communiqué of the 3rd Session of the Senegalo-Gambian Presidential Council - <https://www.mofa.gm/joint-communication-3rd-session-senegalo-gambian-presidential-council>

¹¹⁰ Gambians feel less safe but want ECOMIG to leave, Afrobarometer survey shows - https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/news_release-gambians_feel_less_safe_but_want_ecomig_to_leave-afrobarometer-v2-28may21f.pdf

¹¹¹ Final Communiqué, Sixty-Second Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government (4 December 2022).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ “Siding with the People” or “Occupying Force”? Local Perceptions of African Union and ECOWAS Interventions in The Gambia. Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), March 2023 - https://www.prif.org/fileadmin/user_upload/prif2303web_barrierefrei.pdf

from Foñi,¹¹⁴ and the National Human Rights Commission to call on the government to open an investigation into this and other similar incidents that have affected Foñi residents.¹¹⁵

- However, the situation did improve during 2023. In a sign that relations between the ECOMIG forces and residents of the Foñi region may be improving, some communities in Foñi, including several traditional leaders, joined in a medal parade in Kanilai (the former president's village) for an outgoing Senegalese Battalion in August 2023 to recognise its one-year service with ECOMIG in The Gambia. In a move that surprised many observers, the well-known Batiyaye music group, which is loyal to former President Jammeh, performed at the event. The ECOWAS Resident Representative expressed delight over the support shown for ECOMIG troops, which she said was a sign that The Gambia was in the process of healing and urged residents of Foñi not to see ECOMIG as an occupying force.
- The Commander of the outgoing Senegalese contingent said that, since taking command, he had taken it upon himself to build good relations with communities in Foñi, including by providing them with medical assistance. He added that Gambians should understand that ECOMIG was there to support the Gambian government and to maintain stability in the country during its security sector reform process. A few days after the departure ceremony, the APRC Deputy Spokesperson expressed support for maintaining ECOMIG's presence in Foñi, saying it was necessary for peace and stability in the region.
- ECOMIG has since continued its civil-military liaison activity. In March 2024, it donated food items to 20 communities in Foñi, prompting the Alkaaloo of Mandina village to praise ECOMIG for having developed "a strong cordial relationship with the people" and the Alkaaloo of Foni Kansala to urge his people to uphold peace and to gain a better understanding of the role of the ECOMIG troops, adding that they were there for a purpose and would depart when their work was done.

Gambian human security continues to be impacted by clashes between the MFDC and the Senegalese Armed Forces

- ECOMIG's deployment in Foñi also serves to monitor and counter the operations of the MFDC across the border in Senegal.
- Current data reports 3661 (1889 female, 1772 male) refugees from Senegal sheltering in The Gambia. This leads to tensions over land and other resources between host and refugee communities.¹¹⁶



- Gunfire incoming from Senegal forces has caused Gambian residents from the border villages to flee inland for safety. Student enrolment in Foñi for the academic year 2023/4 was affected, due to some parents having transferred their children to schools located farther from the border. For example, such was the intensity of one incident in Bwiam and Kanilai that on 1 January 2024 the National Security Adviser, the Chief of Defence Staff of The Gambia Armed Forces, and other senior security officials visited villages in Foni. The Minister of Defence, in early January 2024, stated that the Gambian government is committed to actively engaging with its Senegalese counterparts to prevent stray bullets from landing in Gambian territory.
- ECOMIG forces also suffer losses. Three Senegalese ECOMIG soldiers were killed in January 2022 as a result of armed clashes with MFDC fighters on Gambia's border with Casamance. The soldiers came under fire after they attempted to intercept a truck loaded with timber that had crossed from

¹¹⁴ "Petition to Demand the Immediate Removal of ECOMIG (Senegalese Troops) in the Foñis, West Coast Region" submitted to President Barrow by 5 National Assembly Members representing Foñi (4 December 2022).

¹¹⁵ NHRC Press Statement on the Shooting of 4 Gambians by Senegalese Forces - <https://www.gm-nhrc.org/download-file/202a4453-7bab-11ed-b2ac-022a5fa1767e>

¹¹⁶ May 2024 figures supplied by GAFNA

Casamance into The Gambia. The ECOMIG forces pursued the vehicle back across the border into Casamance where MFDC rebels ambushed them. According to the Senegalese army, the operation was conducted as part of a security action to combat the cross-border smuggling of timber. The MFDC captured 9 Senegalese ECOMIG soldiers, two of whom were killed during the ambush, and one later succumbed to his injuries. The MFDC later released the captured soldiers following intervention by ECOWAS, the Gambia government, and the Community of Saint' Egidio, a Rome-based Catholic NGO with experience of mediating with the MFDC.

- Following this incident, the government of Senegal actively engaged with the MFDC, both militarily and diplomatically, to end the conflict that has now entered its fifth decade. In a visit to Casamance in March 2023, Macky Sall called on members of the MFDC to lay down their arms and come to the negotiating table, saying he was ready to listen to their demands and work towards a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Sall's initiative followed up on an agreement signed between the government of Senegal and the southern factions of MFDC¹¹⁷ in August 2022 outlining the modalities for disarming the MFDC and reaffirming both parties' commitment to finding a peaceful solution. The President of Guinea Bissau and then Chairperson of ECOWAS, Umaro Sissoco Embaló, acted as guarantor of the deal.
- In May 2023, over 1,000 members of the MFDC Diakaye faction surrendered their arms during the signing of a peace deal with the government of Senegal in the village of Djignaky in Casamance, bringing some hope that the rebellion may finally be moving towards resolution. In the peace deal, both parties agreed to end the decades of suffering and to join forces in the restoration of the region in the interest of peace.
- The deal also promises birth certificates to people who were prevented from obtaining them due to instability, the peaceful return of refugees, the launch of development projects in the Casamance region, and the reintegration of MFDC combatants into society. However, the Diakaye faction is only one of several MFDC-affiliated armed groups in Casamance. All the factions would need to be included in a comprehensive peace agreement if the long-simmering conflict in Casamance is finally to be brought to an end.

Potential manifestation: Timing of ECOMIG's exit. ECOMIG retains an important role in accompanying Security Sector Reform (SSR) and TRRC prosecutions. Unless the mandate of ECOMIG is communicated clearly, this may result in tensions.

- The 10 December 2023 meeting of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government further extended ECOMIG's mandate until the end of 2024. The run-up to this renewal will be an issue to track.

Sambangalou Hydroelectric Dam and Power Station development in Senegal highlights conflict sensitivity challenges of the green transition project. While the project will deliver electricity to the Gambia and can be a vehicle for bilateral cooperation, it will also impact water levels in the River Gambia - exacerbating the salination of rice fields – a crop grown predominantly by women.

- This power station is a component of a multi-purpose project aimed at
 - a. providing electricity to the four countries of the Organisation for the Development of the Gambia River (OMVG), namely, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Gambia
 - b. supplying irrigation water to the farming communities in the region and
 - c. providing a source of drinking water to the residents of the area.
- While this is welcomed the necessary water flow management will impact the River Gambia. By altering the level of the river, this will draw in salt water from the sea, further up the river. KIIs noted concerns that this will impact already overly-salinated water – impacting women farmers' rice fields. The impact on wild animals and tourist sites was also raised. The knock-on impact on economic resilience was linked to concerns that these are conflict-insensitive climate programmes.

Applied analysis: So, what does this tell us?

¹¹⁷ The Provisional Committee of the Political and Fighting Wings of the MFDC.

- ❖ **Conclusion:** The CDA reader should track the emerging relationship between President Faye and President Barrow.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** The question of national sovereignty, be in related to border demarcation or the role of ECOMIG and the Gambian Armed Forces in national security, are highly sensitive and require clear communication to the population.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** As outlined in Issue 6 below, the impact of illicit economies, septically rosewood and cannabis continue to fund the MFDC as well as new criminal actors. Kush will be transiting Senegal to enter The Gambia. Bilateral and broader regional cooperation on defence and security has never been more critical.

And so? Factors driving these manifestations (Explored in B. Factor Analysis)

1. Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities impacting how, when and where women, young people and Persons With Disabilities particularly are impacted by violence
2. Identity: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation, including cross-border cultural ties
3. Slow pace of reform, including border demarcation
4. Corruption.
5. Climate change, including more regular, more severe natural disasters
6. Transnational threats, including SOC

Issue 6 (Regional): The impact of transnational Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) is being felt increasingly within The Gambia.

Current: Why and how are violence, tension and instability happening NOW?	Potential: Why and how COULD violence, tension and instability manifest NEXT YEAR?
• The Gambia remains a hub and transit point for drug trafficking. DLEAG reports are number of new entrants into the market. • Monopoly of the illicit rosewood trade by conflict actors appears to be waning. However, this is due to contestation over this lucrative illicit supply chain by an increasingly diverse range of actors • Fake medicines were a concern during the FGDs • There is a regional trade in which Gambian children are forced into labour in neighbouring West African countries, while Gambian women are often trafficked by air to the Middle East • There appears to be a lack of analysis on the supply chains for backway migration facilitation	SOC, violent extremism and their intersection. In June 2023, the Gambian Minister of Foreign Affairs disclosed to the Gambian media that he had learnt through conversations with returned migrants that Gambian migrants in Libya were being radicalised and recruited into jihadist movements.¹¹⁸ While at present evidence is anecdotal on VE, the evidence of SOC is compelling. Globally, the intertwining of transnational SOC and Violent Extremism recruitment, illicit economy supply chains and financing are proven and often leading to violence over control, for example, in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique. This trend could emerge in The Gambia.

This section assesses the threat of transnational Serious and Organised Crime. The impact of SOC actors on the Gambian context is considerable. It ranges from fueling an increase in crime to perpetuating and rewarding corruption, to exacerbating climate change through deforestation. In this section we now assess the illicit economies in drugs, human trafficking, backway migration “facilitation”, fake goods including medicines and environment degradation – hardwood exploitation.

Illicit economies: Drugs

- Given the transnational dimension of the drugs supply chain, it is helpful to repeat statistics from Factor 1: The Drug Law Enforcement Agency of The Gambia (DLEAG) reported that it arrested 633 people on drug-related charges during 2023. Out of these, 539 were Gambians, 34 were Sierra Leoneans, 33 were Senegalese, 9 were Nigerians, 7 were Bissau-Guineans, 4 were Guineans, 3 were British, and one each was from the DRC, Spain, Turkey, and the USA. This was a slight decrease from the 650 arrests made during the previous year, although there was a slight increase in the number of non-Gambians arrested. The drugs involved included heroin, clonazepam, methamphetamine, ecstasy, tramadol, and diazepam. Four per cent of those arrested were under the age of 18, 74 per cent were aged 18-35, and 22 percent were older than 35. DLEAG also reported that it seized 9 firearms during 2023.
- According to the 2023 Global Organised Crime Index, “The Gambia serves as a transit country for heroin *en route* to Europe and the United States. Weak coastal and border controls, coupled with corrupt individuals within the border control service, make the country an ideal transit point.”¹¹⁹
- The same report found The Gambia also plays a significant role in cocaine trafficking, connecting South America to European and African markets. Organised drug trafficking groups have established the country as a hub, using its maritime ports and airports to transport large quantities of cocaine. There has also been an increase in the domestic cocaine market, fueled, in part, by

¹¹⁸ “Gambians may have joined jihadist groups in Libya,” *The Standard* newspaper, 26 July 2023 - <https://standard.gm/gambians-may-have-joined-jihadist-groups-in-libya>

¹¹⁹ [ocindex_profile_gambia_2023.pdf](#) p 4

tourism of mainly European visitors. Drug traffickers transport cocaine and cannabis in canoes along rivers that connect to Senegal.”¹²⁰

- The regional trade in cocaine across West Africa is expanding sharply. The Organised Crime Index 2023 now cites cocaine as the most important market in terms of scope and scale across the region) – with the vast majority *en route* to Europe). Moreover, Banjul port’s significant connectivity renders it attractive to traffickers.¹²¹
- Finally, this same report found “The cannabis trade is significant, and cannabis is the most seized drug in the country. While most cannabis originates from the Casamance region in Senegal and Sierra Leone, it also grows naturally within The Gambia, making it easily accessible. The government opposes the decriminalization of cannabis and confiscates more than a metric ton of marijuana annually. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in cannabis production and informal sector sales as people sought income opportunities. Individuals of all ages, including children as young as nine, are involved in the cannabis trade and were arrested for possession.”¹²²

Minimum sentences are sending the wrong signal of The Gambia’s position on drug trafficking.

- A KII with a senior security official noted “verdicts or sentences contrary to the minimum standards or requirement of relative provisions on offenders sends the wrong signal.... (their) concern has been that “suspects are tried for the commissions of offences contravening the DCA 2003. Therefore, the provisions of the DCA regarding the sentencing of offenders should be the primary reference because the fines were critically reviewed against the offences. Otherwise, the outcome would be counterproductive, thereby resulting in the loss of public trust and confidence in the criminal justice system.”¹²³
- However, “a clear differentiation needs to be made between sentencing for complex versus low-level drug crime.” Regional SOC subject matter experts consulted for the CDA note “Lessons from global enforcement warn against high sentences for low level drug crime. These have been proven to magnify rather than mitigate harm. In the West Africa region, there are elements of a regional shift towards drug policies that introduce alternatives to incarceration for PWUD – e.g. Ghana’s drug law reform in 2020.”¹²⁴

Illicit economies: Natural resource exploitation

Monopoly of the illicit rosewood trade by conflict actors, including the MFDC, appears to be waning. However, this is due to contestation over this lucrative illicit supply chain by an increasingly diverse range of actors, driven by the demand for rosewood, particularly from the Asian markets.

- Banjul is the primary export point not only for timber logged in the Casamance, but also in Guinea-Bissau (including the Cacheu region)¹²⁵
- The Casamance forest area covers about 30,000 hectares and is known for its rich vegetation, biodiversity and expansive forests, including rare tree species, such as rosewood, which is particularly sought after by China’s rapidly developing wood industry.¹²⁶ The region was once Senegal’s breadbasket, but illegal logging is rapidly depleting its forests and exacerbating the ravages of climate change on a fragile ecosystem.¹²⁷ The NGO *Trial International* has estimated that, to date, the Casamance region may have lost up to a third of its forests (over 10,000 hectares) to illegal logging,¹²⁸ which is facilitated by corruption among both Senegalese and Gambian

¹²⁰ [ocindex_profile_gambia_2023.pdf](#) p 4

¹²¹ <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/west-africas-cocaine-corridor/>

¹²² [ocindex_profile_gambia_2023.pdf](#) p 4

¹²³ KII March 2024

¹²⁴ <https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/regulating-drugs-west-africa-ghana-drug-policy-reform>

¹²⁵ <https://globalinitiative.net/observatory/wea-obs/>

¹²⁶ Westwood: Dealing in conflict timber across The Gambia and Senegal. *Trial International*, 2020 – https://trialinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/press-kit-Westwood_EN.pdf

¹²⁷ The Silent Destruction of Senegal’s Last Forests. Institute for Security Studies, 2019 – <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/the-silent-destruction-of-senegals-last-forests>

¹²⁸ Westwood: Dealing in conflict timber across The Gambia and Senegal. op. cit.

authorities, who allow various actors to operate with impunity.¹²⁹ The problem is exacerbated by youth unemployment and by protracted conflict that has been unfolding in the Casamance region for more than four decades.

- In 2019, The Gambia was the third largest source of the highly-prized rosewood species used in China to make antique-style furniture and art.¹³⁰ Between 2014 and 2017, The Gambia exported nearly USD 163 million worth of rosewood to China.¹³¹ Yet the endangered rosewood species *Pterocarpus erinaceus*, native to West and Central Africa, has been nearly extinct in The Gambia since 2011. This suggests that most of this rosewood timber, known locally as *keno*, is illegally harvested in and smuggled from the neighbouring Casamance region of Senegal. Recent research by the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) found that The Gambia exported about 1.6 million rosewood trees between June 2012 and April 2020 and that most of these exports were in violation of the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species* (CITES), under which *Pterocarpus erinaceus* has been listed since 2017 and to which both The Gambia and Senegal are party.¹³²
- This illicit timber trade costs both governments dearly. Senegal pays a high price in terms of environmental degradation and increased vulnerability to climate change. The Gambia suffers significant losses in export revenue to government coffers—The Gambia reported USD 471 million less in timber exports than its trading partners declared as imports between 2010 and 2018.¹³³ There are also broader regional implications. Since it began in Africa over a decade ago, the insatiable hunt for rosewood species has now devastated most of the West African dry forests, affecting hundreds of thousands of lives, threatening livelihoods, increasing desertification, and contributing to climate change. The trafficking of rosewood in West Africa has become the largest in the world.¹³⁴ The political implications of the illicit timber trade are also significant, since it weakens the rule of law, fuels ethnic rivalries and armed conflict, and triggers diplomatic tensions between the two countries.
- Timber smugglers reportedly come from The Gambia and from across Senegal, basing themselves within forest communities and taking advantage of the lack of economic opportunities in order to lure people, especially young people, into participating in the illicit timber trade.¹³⁵
- Although The Gambia and Senegal have shown considerable political will to reduce trafficking in illicit timber, cross-border illegal logging and smuggling of timber continue. The Gambian President, Adama Barrow, imposed a re-export ban on rosewood in February 2017 and, in 2018, agreed to a joint enforcement initiative to combat its smuggling with the then President of Senegal, Macky Sall. Despite this, an EIA investigation revealed that re-exports of rosewood from The Gambia to Asian markets have increased since then. Between February 2017 and April 2020, China imported 329,351 tons of rosewood from The Gambia, which is more than during a comparable period in the era of former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh, under whose leadership rosewood smuggling was described as “a well-known matter of state.”¹³⁶
- The Swiss Federal Office of the Attorney General (SFOAG) in June 2022 sent the Gambian authorities a request for judicial assistance on a complaint filed with the SFOAG by the Swiss NGO Trial International against a Swiss businessman operating in The Gambia, Mr. Nicolae Bogdan Buzaianu. Mr Buzaianu was accused of having committed a war crime by pillaging Senegal’s forest cover. His *Westwood* company had obtained a monopoly on timber exports from The Gambia during the presidency of Yahya Jammeh. The request came shortly before the airing of a French-language documentary by the Swiss television channel RTS entitled “Looting of precious wood between

¹²⁹ The Gambia ranks 102nd out of 180 countries in Transparency International’s 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index with a score of 37/100, having gained 7 points since the ouster of former President Yahya Jammeh in 2017. Senegal ranks 67th with a score of 45/100.

¹³⁰ Rosewood Trafficking Worsens in The Gambia. *China Dialogue*, 2020 – <https://chinadialogue.net/en/nature/rosewood-trafficking-worsens-in-the-gambia>

¹³¹ Westwood: Dealing in conflict timber across The Gambia and Senegal. Op. cit.

¹³² Cashing in on Chaos: How traffickers, corrupt officials, and shipping lines in The Gambia have profited from Senegal’s conflict timber. Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), 2020 - <https://content.eia-global.org/assets/2020/06/EIA-Cashing-In-On-Chaos-HiRes.pdf>

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Rosewood Trafficking Worsens in The Gambia. Op. cit.

¹³⁶ Cashing in on Chaos, op. cit.

Senegal and Gambia.”¹³⁷ The 2019 Janneh Commission that investigated financial malfeasance during the presidency of former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh found that Westwood exported 15,106 shipping containers of rosewood from The Gambia between 2014 and 2017 netting USD 45.3m in revenue. President Jammeh’s company, Kanilai Family Farms, which holds a 50 percent stake in Westwood, received USD 7.8m in dividends. The government did not receive the 15 percent withholding tax on the dividends paid.¹³⁸

- The Secretariat of the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)—the body responsible for the protection of endangered plants and animals that is administered by UNEP—on 8 June 2022 announced the suspension, with immediate effect, of The Gambia’s licence to commercially trade in rosewood. CITES cited “exceptional circumstances generated by the documented pervasive trade” in rosewood in violation of the convention. The decision came after the Gambian authorities failed to submit evidence to show that rosewood exports from the country were legal and not detrimental to the environment.¹³⁹
- The Gambia had been under tight scrutiny from CITES following the publication in April 2022 of a report by *Malagen* entitled “Profiting from Rebellion: Inside ‘blood timber’ traffickers’ network in Gambia.”¹⁴⁰ The report alleged that a band of smugglers and traffickers get approval from the government of The Gambia, including the presidency, to illegally export timber, bribing their way through security and ports. But even before publication of the *Malagen* report, CITES had opened an “expedited compliance procedure” in March 2022 requesting The Gambia to verify that the rosewood exported from the country was harvested legally and without further detriment to the survival of an already endangered species. The Gambian authorities did not provide a response within the required 30 days.
- In response to the CITES suspension, on 1 July 2022 the Gambia government banned all timber exports and re-exports and permanently revoked all timber export licenses with immediate effect. Port authorities were instructed to refuse loading timber logs onto any vessel. Felling and import of rosewood were also banned and the government said that the Gambia Revenue Authority and the Gambia Ports Authority would conduct random searches of containers for export and that the owners of any containers found to contain timber logs would face “fullest penalties according to law.”
- However, according to a January 2024 Al Jazeera report, despite the 2022 ban, traffickers continue the illicit trade in precious timber from Casamance in Senegal via the Banjul port to Asian markets.¹⁴¹ Traffickers told Al Jazeera reporters that the process of transporting timber through Banjul’s port has become more difficult, but they are still able to export timber with the help of contacts within the port authorities and the police.

Illicit economies: Human trafficking and backway migration “facilitation”

A 2023 Global Initiative Against Global Organised Crime reported a decline in The Gambia’s human trafficking market. However, challenges remain.

- In 2023, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime noted a decrease in human trafficking activities in The Gambia.¹⁴² The Gambia government’s efforts to combat human trafficking have reduced the country’s susceptibility to this menace.
- Despite these efforts, human trafficking remains prevalent, with perpetrators employing increasingly sophisticated tactics. The nation serves as both a source and transit point for women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. The 2023 Global Crime Indices report highlights that while most victims are women and girls, boys are also being targeted and exploited in various

¹³⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdHqSkECd_E

¹³⁸ <https://www.moj.gm/downloads> (see paragraph 127 of the Government White Paper on the Janneh Commission report).

¹³⁹ See The Gambia PDA report from January 2022, Section 2.2, “Background on timber trafficking between Casamance and The Gambia.”

¹⁴⁰ <https://malagen.shorthandstories.com/profitting-from-rebellion/index.html>

¹⁴¹ ‘Conflict timber’: Gambian traffickers continue rosewood trade despite ban -

<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2024/1/23/conflict-timber-gambian-traffickers-continue-timber-trade-despite-ban>

¹⁴² Global Initiative Against Global Organised Crime (GI-TOC), Global Organised Crime Index: Gambia. 2023, p 6

sectors, such as sex trafficking, forced labour in street vending, and domestic servitude within the country.¹⁴³

- There is a regional trade in which Gambian children are forced into labour in neighbouring West African countries and Mauritania, while Gambian women are often trafficked by air to the Middle East, particularly in Lebanon and Kuwait, for purposes of forced labour/sexual exploitation¹⁴⁴.
- There appears to be a lack of analysis on the supply chains for backway migration facilitation. This was not easily accessible during the CDA analysis process and represents a knowledge gap. Only by understanding the actors and networks can a targeted approach be taken.

Illicit economies: Fake goods

- The trade in fake medicines was raised during both the KIIs and FGDs during CDA consultations. Lack of availability and poor access to medical products is a central driver of the illicit market. The second major driver for consumers is cost, as medical products across the spectrum are consistently cheaper through illicit channels.¹⁴⁵
- According to the KII with regional SOC experts, “the illicit pharmaceutical market stands head and shoulders above other counterfeit markets in terms of local harms”, as underscored by the OCWART 2023 report “Bad Pharma: Trafficking Illicit medical products in West Africa.”¹⁴⁶ Nationally, there have been a number of cases where the illicit medicines market has caused significant harm including the deaths linked to cough syrup in 2022.¹⁴⁷
- India and China are among the principal source countries for the illicit and licit medical products that find their way into West Africa. Most medical products are imported by sea through the main ports in Conakry (Guinea), Tema (Ghana), Lomé (Togo), Cotonou (Benin) and Apapa (Nigeria). Typically, illicit manufacturers within the subregion, Nigeria and Ghana are the major manufacturers of both licit and illicit medical products, whereas large-scale production is more limited to Francophone West Africa. Of the 172 pharmaceutical manufacturers based in ECOWAS countries, 120 are in Nigeria and 37 in Ghana. These official producers sit alongside a raft of illegal labs, some of which were recently dismantled in Niger and Guinea.¹⁴⁸
- This is part of a growing trade in counterfeit goods, particularly fake medicines and household electrical appliances. The products are primarily sold on the streets but are occasionally also found in supermarkets. Although there is some legislation addressing intellectual property crimes, competing political and social priorities and limited enforcement resources mean the issue has not received sufficient attention. The illicit trade in excise goods is considered negligible, with evidence suggesting tobacco products are being smuggled, albeit in limited volumes.¹⁴⁹

Illicit economies: Arms

- The illicit trade in precious timber is not the only dimension of the clandestine political economy of the borderlands between The Gambia and Senegal. Arms and drugs are also illicitly trafficked. Owing to the political crisis following the 2016 election, The Gambia has become more open to possible infiltration by illicit arms brokers, although no major incidents of this sort have yet been detected.¹⁵⁰ In Casamance, however, the MFDC has been steadily acquiring arms for use in its insurrection against the Senegalese government. Significant numbers of arms have been circulating in the southern Casamance towns of Medina Gounass and Diaoube, as well as in the more centrally located Touba.¹⁵¹

¹⁴³ Global Initiative Against Global Organised Crime (GI-TOC), Global Organised Crime Index: Gambia. 2023, p 6

¹⁴⁴ UN Population Fund Gambia, Shock Responsive and Gender Focused Social Safety Nets Analytical Study, July 2023, Page 6

¹⁴⁵ [Bad pharma: trafficking illicit medical products in West Africa \(globalinitiative.net\)](https://globalinitiative.net/press/bad-pharma-traffic-illicit-medical-products-in-west-africa/)

¹⁴⁶ Bad pharma Trafficking illicit medical products in West Africa

¹⁴⁷ [Gambian children's deaths due to contaminated cough syrups are a mutual responsibility - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://www.pmc.nih.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/08/16/gambian-childrens-deaths-due-to-contaminated-cough-syrups-are-a-mutual-responsibility)

¹⁴⁸ Bad pharma Trafficking illicit medical products in West Africa

¹⁴⁹ [Criminality in Gambia - The Organized Crime Index \(ocindex.net\)](https://ocindex.net/country/gambia)

¹⁵⁰ <https://ocindex.net/country/gambia>

¹⁵¹ <https://ocindex.net/country/senegal>

Illicit economies: Cyber

- There has been a steady increase, in recent years, of cyber-dependent crimes as a result of the absence of cybercrime legislation, inadequate detection mechanisms and the fact that the judiciary does not recognise e-evidence as admissible. There is limited information about the specific types of cyber-dependent offences and few convictions. However, arrests made in connection with these crimes indicate that hacking of banking institutions is the most common form.¹⁵²

Applied analysis: So, what does this tell us?

- ❖ **Conclusion:** The complexity and reach of illicit economy supply chains is increasing exponentially. The Gambia is not alone in this challenge. Regional and international cooperation is key.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Analysis of supply chains, for example backway migration is limited. Only by understanding actor networks will an effective response be possible. This also includes financing.
- ❖ **Conclusion:** Corruption was reported as a key enabler.

And so? Factors driving these manifestations (Explored in B. Factor Analysis)

1. Economic interests and resilience
2. Social norms and patterns of power, particularly related to women and children's trafficking
3. Slow pace of reform, including Security Sector Reform
4. Corruption.
5. Climate change, including more regular, more severe natural disasters
6. Transnational threats, including SOC

¹⁵² [ocindex_profile_gambia_2023.pdf](#)

Issue 7 (Regional): New policy decisions of the wider West Africa and Sahel region impact The Gambia's peace and security

Current: Why and how are violence, tension and instability happening NOW?	Potential: Why and how COULD violence, tension and instability manifest NEXT YEAR?
The lifting of Niger's Sahara migrant smuggling ban makes migration "safer" while at the same time enriching the SOC networks which facilitate it and enable this risky journey. While not confirmed publicly, the Government of Mali's refusal to allow Gambians to transit the country is related to the recruitment of Gambian nationals into armed groups in the NE of Mali. This could indicate recruitment into ISGS or JNIM	As outlined in Issue 2 above, the anti-Western, pan-African narrative and withdrawal of Sahel states are resonating with (some) Gambians according to KIIs.

In December 2023 Niger's Sahara migrant smuggling ban was overturned. This continues to be a double-edged sword

- The lifting of Niger's ban on people smuggling has been welcomed by many in Agadez, a Nigerien city on the edge of the Sahara - a once busy transit point for migrants heading towards North Africa and on to Europe. The law was introduced in 2015 - with the backing of the European Union - during a period of high levels of migration to Europe. At the time, the UN estimated at least 4,000 migrants travelled through Agadez every week without travel documents.¹⁵³
- However, rather than impacting only the illicit trade, the ban had two secondary effects which affected the human security of the local population:
 - People who cooked food for migrants were punished as were bus drivers.
 - One of the law's stated purposes was to ensure the safety of migrants and reduce the number of deaths in the desert. But locals in Agadez and migration specialists say it had unintended consequences. Smugglers and migrants were taking secondary, longer and riskier itineraries through the desert to cross borders and avoid police patrols.¹⁵⁴
- The lifting of the ban is a double-edged sword as while it generates the potentially positive local economic impacts outlined above, it also reduces barriers for SOC networks facilitating "backway" migration and thereby increases their economic strength.

The breakdown in relations between ECOWAS with Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Guinea places barriers to much-needed regional cooperation on transnational threats.

- In January 2024, Mali allegedly accused Gambians living in Mali of fighting for rebels in the North against the Malian government forces.¹⁵⁵ This accusation emerged when Gambians were refused entry into Mali – through which they were transiting to Ivory Coast for the Africa Cup of Nations. While it is not clear with which group these Gambians were accused of fighting, armed groups in the north of Mali include Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and rival Al-Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen, JNIM).¹⁵⁶
- This follows an earlier January 2024 case where Gambian returning migrants from Tunisia were denied access to Mali.¹⁵⁷ While the reason is unclear for this refusal, the migrants had travelled from Algeria, through Niger,¹⁵⁸ which would have brought them into the north of the country. If the above

¹⁵³ Sahara migrant smuggling: Double-edged sword of overturning Niger's ban - BBC News

¹⁵⁴ Sahara migrant smuggling: Double-edged sword of overturning Niger's ban - BBC News

¹⁵⁵ Mali denies Gambian soccer fans entry enroute I/Coast (thenewszenith.com)

¹⁵⁶ Mali: Mounting Islamist Armed Group Killings, Rape | Human Rights Watch (hrw.org)

¹⁵⁷ Gambian Deportees from Tunisia Denied Entry Into Mali – The Standard Newspaper | Gambia

¹⁵⁸ Gambian Deportees from Tunisia Denied Entry Into Mali – The Standard Newspaper | Gambia

report on concerns of radicalisation of Gambian migrants and their recruitment is true; this may explain why these migrants were also refused entry.

Applied analysis: So, what does this tell us?

- **Conclusion:** In June 2023, the Gambian Minister of Foreign Affairs disclosed to the Gambian media that he had learnt through conversations with returned migrants that Gambian migrants in Libya were being radicalised and recruited into jihadist movements.¹⁵⁹ The minister estimated that there were about 18,000 Gambians in Libya, either resident there or trying to transit Europe. The Gambia government, with support from the IOM, regularly repatriates stranded Gambian migrants from Libya and other countries in the region where jihadist movements are active,¹⁶⁰ which involves the risk of introducing radicalised elements into the country. While there is no evidence that radicalised cells exist in the country, preventive measures are needed to ensure that this does not transpire.¹⁶¹
- **Conclusion:** Ongoing bilateral relations with Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and other member states of the SAS should be enhanced, to improve information sharing.

And so? Factors driving these manifestations (Explored in B. Factor Analysis)

1. Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities impacting how, when and where women, young people and Persons With Disabilities particularly are impacted by violence
2. Identity: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
3. Slow pace of reform, including Security Sector Reform
4. Corruption.
5. Climate change, including more regular, more severe natural disasters
6. Transnational threats, including SOC

¹⁵⁹ “Gambians may have joined jihadist groups in Libya,” The Standard newspaper, 26 July 2023 - <https://standard.gm/gambians-may-have-joined-jihadist-groups-in-libya>

¹⁶⁰ For example, see “Gambia Says It Repatriated Nearly 300 Migrants in 2 Weeks,” Agence France Presse, 10 July 2023 - <https://www.voanews.com/a/gambia-says-repatriated-nearly-300-migrants-in-2-weeks-/7173961.html>

¹⁶¹ For some ideas of preventive actions that could be taken, see “Violent Extremism: Why. Should The Gambia Learn from Sahel Mistakes,” The Timbuktu Institute, February 2023 - <https://timbuktu-institute.org/index.php/toutes-l-actualites/item/655-violent-extremism-why-should-the-gambia-learn-from-sahel-mistakes>

B. Factor Assessment

In **A. Manifestations**, we asked “what,” “where” and “who” are involved in violence and instability and “how” it manifests in different forms. We asked, “so what does this mean?” and identified a set of root causes or “factors” which were driving this issue.

In the table (right), these sets of factors associated with individual issues are mapped and grouped into headline factors to facilitate analysis below in **B. Factor Assessment**.

Issue 1: Economic imperatives
Economic Structural deficiencies at the macro-economic level.
Global dynamics - COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities.
Identify: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
Slow pace of reform including land
Corruption.
Climate change including more regular, more severe natural disasters.
Transnational threats including SOC
Issue 2: Polarisation
Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities.
Identify: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
Slow pace of reform especially the constitution
Corruption
Lack of government transparency, accountability and communication

Issue 3: Land dispute
Economic interests and resilience
Identify: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities.
Slow pace of reform
Corruption.
Climate change including more regular, more severe natural disasters
Issue 4: Social contract
Economic Structural deficiencies
Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities
Identify: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation
Slow pace of reform
Corruption
Lack of government transparency, accountability and communication
Climate change including more regular, more severe natural disasters

Issue 5: Bi-lateral Senegal relations
Identify: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation including cross border cultural ties
Slow pace of reform including border demarcation
Corruption.
Climate change including more regular, more severe disasters
Transnational threats including SOC
Trend 6: Serious and Organised Crime
Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities
Economic interests and resilience
Slow pace of reform including Security Sector Reform
Corruption.
Climate change including more regular, more severe disasters
Transnational threats including SOC

Trend 7: Policy decisions of wider west Africa and Sahel Region	
Social norms and patterns of power in Gambian communities	
Identify: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation	
Slow pace of reform including Security Sector Reform	
Corruption.	
Climate change including more regular, more severe natural disasters	
Transnational threats including SOC	
Factor	Frequency
Factor 1: Economic structural issues and interests	4
Factor 2: Social norms and patterns of power affecting women, youth and PWD	7
Factor 3: Polarisation at the convergence of identity - ethnic, religious and / or political affiliation.	6
Factor 4: Land	2
Factor 5: Slow pace of reform	7
Factor 6: Corruption.	7
Factor 7: Lack of government transparency, accountability and communication	2
Factor 8: Climate change	6
Factor 9: Transnational threats	4

Summary

As the matrix above clearly articulates, there is no single factor – or conflict driver – that is generating the manifestations of instability that The Gambia is currently experiencing or could in the future. Additionally, what is also clear is that certain drivers, including exclusionary social norms, corruption and delayed reform dominate. The following section presents analysis and evidence of each factor in turn.

Factor 1	Structural economic barriers and economic incentives at the macro-economic level, including the enabling environment of poor business which in turn impacts on the provision of effective education to employment pathway for youth. These in turn are impacted by a slow COVID-19 recovery efforts and cost hikes in food and fertiliser linked to the Russia- Ukraine conflict.
Factor 2	Social norms and patterns of power , underpinning often negative impacts on the voice, choice and control of women, youth and Persons With Disabilities, and therefore their lived experience of violence.
Factor 3	Polarisation at the convergence of identity - ethnic, religious and / or political.
Factor 4	Land , including the complexity of the dual system – statutory and customary
Factor 5	Pace of reform , particularly land, the constitution, and the establishment of the PRC
Factor 6	Corruption
Factor 7	Lack of government transparency, accountability and communication encompassing basic services, expectation management and Access to Information
Factor 8	Climate and environmental degradation , including more regular, more severe natural disasters and environmental degradation
Factor 9	Transnational threats , including SOC and the influence of violent extremist organisations

Factor 1: Structural economic barriers and economic incentives

In this section, we assess the root causes which generate the “negative coping mechanisms” driving crime and instability. These include economic structural deficiencies, COVID-19, the Ukraine / Russia conflict and unemployment.

In 2024, The Gambia’s high-level economic outlook is positive.

- Economic activity is recovering robustly, supported by the agriculture, services, and construction sectors. In the medium term, growth is expected to be supported by strong remittance inflows, sustained recovery in the tourism sector, and new infrastructure projects.¹⁶²
- As a result of this confidence, in January 2024, the IMF Board approved a new 36-month Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement, with requested access of SDR 74.64 million (around US\$100 million).¹⁶³
- This was accompanied by a continuing government commitment to reform via “an ambitious structural reform agenda, including enhancing governance and improving the business environment to support private sector-led growth and poverty reduction. Adopting strong climate- related policies and tackling gender inequality would also support more resilient and inclusive growth.”¹⁶⁴

However, high public debt, structural deficiencies, and the economy’s exposure to shocks leave the poorest vulnerable, and slow to feel the benefits of growth.

¹⁶² [1GMBEA2024001.pdf](#) p. 6

¹⁶³ [1GMBEA2024001.pdf](#) p. 1

¹⁶⁴ [1GMBEA2024001.pdf](#) p. 2

- *The public debt was reported at 70 per cent of GDP in 2023.*¹⁶⁵ As outlined in Trend 4 above, balancing the cost of the TRCC and ongoing basic services are extremely challenging.
- *Low revenue collection hampers fiscal and debt sustainability.* Despite efforts made in recent years to strengthen tax policy reforms and tax administration, tax revenue remains low, averaging 10.4 per cent of the GDP in 2017–2022, which is inadequate to meet the country's development needs. The tax gap is estimated at 4–6 per cent of the GDP, driven by generous tax incentives and exemptions (World Bank 2020b).¹⁶⁶
- *Poor and inadequate infrastructure is a major barrier to private sector-led growth.* Only 62 per cent of Gambians had an electricity connection in 2020 (World Bank 2022a). Digital infrastructure remains underdeveloped due to several constraints, including low internet usage and the weak regulatory environment (World Bank 2020c). Moreover, financial inclusion is low, with only 29 per cent of Gambian adults having access to a transaction account and only 2 per cent using mobile money. The transport sector is also underperforming, especially in terms of infrastructure road quality (World Bank 2023b). The Port of Banjul, which accounts for over 90 per cent of The country's international trade, faces inefficiency and capacity limitations, resulting in a large volume of goods being transited through Dakar.¹⁶⁷
- *The poor business environment and slow progress in consolidating governance hamper private investment.* While The Gambia has made progress in improving the business environment, a major persistent issue is the lack of implementation of a robust competition policy framework. Strengthening the framework would include the development of antitrust laws, an independent and well-functioning enforcement agency, and independent regulatory bodies as well as judicial support. The country faces persistent challenges to adopt governance reforms, including limited administrative capacity, low digitisation, and weaknesses in the legal framework (IMF 2023). Challenges in advancing policy and institutional reforms are reflected in The Gambia's low score on the IMF's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA)¹⁶⁸, especially related to macroeconomic and public sector management.¹⁶⁹
- *Growth in output per worker and economic growth are dampened by limited capital accumulation and lack of gains in productivity.* Productivity growth has been consistently negative for the past decade and half, along with limited capital accumulation per worker. Despite the recent increase in investment, as reflected in its increased contribution to real GDP growth, capital accumulation per worker remains limited and has hardly increased.¹⁷⁰
- *Agricultural productivity declined during the last decades.* Major constraints facing the agriculture sector include lack of irrigation facilities and production machinery, limited access to credit, difficulties in procuring inputs and storing products, negative impact of climate change and variability, and increasing soil salinity. As a ratio of GDP, budget allocation to the sector was limited at 0.3 per cent in 2022, with almost zero spending on research and development (R&D). Increased public investment in R&D is key to supporting agricultural innovation, which in turn is needed to address the growing challenges facing the sector such as climate change and air pollution.¹⁷¹
- *The Gambia is lagging in human capital development.* The Gambia's Human Capital Index score was 0.42 in 2020. This highlights the impact of limited education and health provided to Gambians i.e. in adulthood, a Gambian child can expect to be only 42 per cent as productive compared with someone who enjoyed complete education and full health. In 2022, budget allocation to education and health amounted to 2.9 per cent and 2.1 percent of the GDP, respectively, with most spending being recurrent. The country's public spending on education and health is low compared to peers and is highly inefficient. The wage bill makes up three quarters of school-related education expenditure, despite very low teacher salaries. The execution of the non-salary education budget is mainly focused on expenses not related to learning outcomes. The Gambia's health expenditure is largely recurrent (97 per cent) and concentrated on goods and services. Budget allocations are

¹⁶⁵ [IGMBEA2024001.pdf](#) Page 2

¹⁶⁶ World Bank The Gambia Third Country Economic Update 2023 p. 15 [World Bank Document](#)

¹⁶⁷ World Bank The Gambia Third Country Economic Update 2023 p. 15 [World Bank Document](#)

¹⁶⁸ [Country Policy and Institutional Assessments \(CPIA\)](#) are annual assessments carried out by the World Bank and the African Development Bank to measure and rank the ability of countries to make effective use of aid¹⁶⁸. CPIA ratings are used by the Bank to calculate country performance ratings, and play an important role in determining the Bank's allocation of aid¹⁶⁹. The CPIA for Africa is an annual diagnostic tool for Sub-Saharan African countries eligible for financing from the International Development Association¹⁷⁰.

¹⁶⁹ World Bank The Gambia Third Country Economic Update 2023 p. 15 [World Bank Document](#)

¹⁷⁰ World Bank The Gambia Third Country Economic Update 2023 p. 16 [World Bank Document](#)

¹⁷¹ World Bank The Gambia Third Country Economic Update 2023 p. 16 [World Bank Document](#)

skewed toward tertiary and secondary education at the expense of primary healthcare, contributing to inefficiency in health service delivery.

These structural constraints combined with poor TVET, result in a poor education to employment pathway. Training institutions are not preparing youth with the right skills for the market. This leads to un-or under-employment.

- GBOS reports that 45.3% of youth aged 15-35 years are not in education, employment or training (NEET)¹⁷² The labour force participation rate for youth is around fifteen points below that of adults (38.1% compared to 53.5%). Further, the unemployment rate for youth is three times the corresponding adult rate (10.5% and 3.8%) respectively due to lack of skills, or a mismatch between the skills they possess and the demand on the labour market.¹⁷³
- TVET is provided by public and private institutions, catering for a relatively small segment of all youth. As of 2021, MoHERST reported that 3,800 learners were enrolled in TVET programmes around the country. Registered institutions that offer TVET programs generally fall into one of three categories:
 1. nontertiary institutions offering certificate and foundational programmes
 2. tertiary institutions offering diploma and advanced diploma programmes
 3. higher education institutions offering degree programmes.¹⁷⁴
- Various non-formal training initiatives and providers exist, but data on their nature and scope remain limited. Also, some registered TVET institutions provide formal, accredited training and non-formal training, with the latter more likely covering training of a relatively short duration and targeting less skilled beneficiaries. Informal apprenticeships also exist in the country. This complex landscape—different ministries, different types of TVET institutions, and different types of TVET programmes—makes it difficult to interpret and present TVET-related data (even ostensibly simple enrolment and financing data) and becomes all too evident in the various currently available reports and sources that cite conflicting data.¹⁷⁵
- While young people generally valued education, they expressed doubts about its quality. Poorly qualified teachers, limited numbers of teachers, poor teaching facilities and a lack of basic teaching tools such as computers were cited as challenges to quality education. Private or after-school classes are very common (with the same teachers, but for which payment is required). According to one young person, the “school system is flawed; that's why there are so many after-school classes. Sometimes there is no standardization. Sometimes what they teach you is totally different; different teachers will teach you contradicting stuff.” Most agreed that attending these extracurricular classes was key to doing well in school, as many of the areas covered in these sessions appeared in exams and tests, placing poorer students who cannot afford the fees at a significant disadvantage.¹⁷⁶

An over-reliance on low-productivity agriculture, which accounts for 75 per cent of household earnings and employs 70 per cent of the labour force, contributes to food insecurity and high poverty rates (MoFEA 2022).

- Agriculture contributes to roughly 25% of GDP and generates 30 to 40% of all foreign exchange export sales. It is the source of livelihood for 80% of the rural population. Nearly three-quarters of the poor and 91% of the extremely poor are farmers.¹⁷⁷
- Vulnerabilities are exacerbated by climate risks the country's Gambia's low-lying geography and proximity to the River Gambia. Combined with unplanned urban expansion and deforestation, this leaves the country vulnerable to fluvial, coastal, and rainfall flooding and coastal erosion.
- As outlined in Trend 1, the impact of 2023's floods were considerable.

¹⁷² Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), *Labour Market Situation in The Gambia* in 2023, <https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads-file/484-the-labour-market-situation-in-the-gambia>

¹⁷³ Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), *Labour Market Situation in The Gambia* in 2023, <https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads-file/484-the-labour-market-situation-in-the-gambia>

¹⁷⁴ World Bank [World Bank Document](#) *The Gambia Human Capital Review* June 2023, p. 26a

¹⁷⁵ World Bank [World Bank Document](#) *The Gambia Human Capital Review* June 2023, p. 26

¹⁷⁶ World Bank [World Bank Document](#) *The Gambia Human Capital Review* June 2023, p. 31

¹⁷⁷ World Bank Group, Country Partnership Framework for the period FY22-26 documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/450591652556583165/pdf/Gambia-Country-Partnership-Framework-for-the-Period-FY22-26.pdf

Growth is constrained by slow COVID recovery

- “The Gambia came through the pandemic more unscathed than many of its regional and similarly tourism-dependent peers” according to The World Bank 2022 Second Economic Update. “Even as number of tourists collapsed, the economy has been supported by a strong agricultural performance, international support measures, and record levels of official remittances which in turn have driven private sector investment.”¹⁷⁸
- However more than 9 in every 10 people reported a decrease in income between March and August 2020. Employees in the service sectors, especially in the tourism sector which employ a large share of women - lost their jobs.¹⁷⁹ The lockdown during the pandemic disproportionately affected women who are mostly employed in the informal sector. The rural population, who mainly live on agriculture, lost access to markets due to border closures and the ban of Luumoo (rural markets).¹⁸⁰
- The pandemic highlighted shortcomings in social protection data collection and systems which made it difficult to target support for the households that needed it most.
- In 2023, the weak growth in services was linked to a weaker-than-expected recovery in tourism, which, although the number of arrivals increased, was not sufficient to offset the weak growth in the other sub-sectors.¹⁸¹

There is a clear link between the Ukraine – Russia conflict and The Gambia’s inflation, high food and agricultural input costs

- Inflation remains at 18 per cent in October 2023, driven by factors, including global food and fuel prices.¹⁸²
- Food inflation was recorded at 24 percent in July 2023. This was mainly driven by shocks in the global commodity market, local currency depreciation and persistent structural issues at the port of Banjul.¹⁸³

The impact of the Ukraine – Russia conflict was directly referenced in the March 2024 CDA district-level Focus Group Discussions

- To mitigate the effects of the war in Ukraine, the government of The Gambia provided fuel, fertiliser, and food subsidies worth 2.2 per cent of the GDP in lost tax revenue. The increase in subsidies weighed on tax mobilisation, as The Gambia already has limited tax revenue, averaging a mere 10.4 per cent of the GDP in 2017–2022. Total public expenditure increased by 1.2 percentage points to 22.6 per cent of the GDP in 2022, driven primarily by spending on infrastructure projects. As a result, the fiscal deficit increased from 4.6 per cent in 2021 to 4.8 per cent of the GDP in 2022. The total debt stock remained relatively unchanged at 83.9 per cent of the GDP in 2022 (83.8 per cent in 2021), and The Gambia remains at a high risk of debt distress.
- Therefore, the fiscal deficit deteriorated in 2022 due to lower domestic revenue collection and increased spending. Amid the unfavourable context related to the war in Ukraine, total revenue only moderately increased from 16.8 per cent of the GDP in 2021 to 17.8 per cent in 2022, driven by an increase in grants, which over-compensated for the decline in domestic revenue.¹⁸⁴
- Long-term roles of global prices of commodities (food, oil and fertiliser), the exchange rate, and the domestic output gap are, according to the IMF, “decisive factors”. The short-run dynamics of inflation points to the roles of global food price and the second-round effects of changes in food prices and the output gap. Monetary policy has the potential to tame inflation in the short run provided the monetary policy rate is adjusted rapidly and boldly.¹⁸⁵
- IMF Figure 1 (below) evidences a potential link of domestic inflation with global food and fertiliser (phosphate) prices, currency depreciation, and the domestic output gap. The Gambia is a net importer of essential foods and energy. The weight of food items and non-alcoholic beverages in

¹⁷⁸ World Bank *The Gambia Second Country Economic Update 2022*

¹⁷⁹ International Monetary Fund, *Macroeconomic and Distributional Implications of Gender Gaps The Gambia*, 2024 [SIPEA2024006.pdf](#) p 4

¹⁸⁰ International Monetary Fund *Macroeconomic and Distributional Implications of Gender Gaps The Gambia*, 2024 [SIPEA2024006.pdf](#) p 4

¹⁸¹ World Bank *The Gambia Third Country Economic Update 2023* p 8

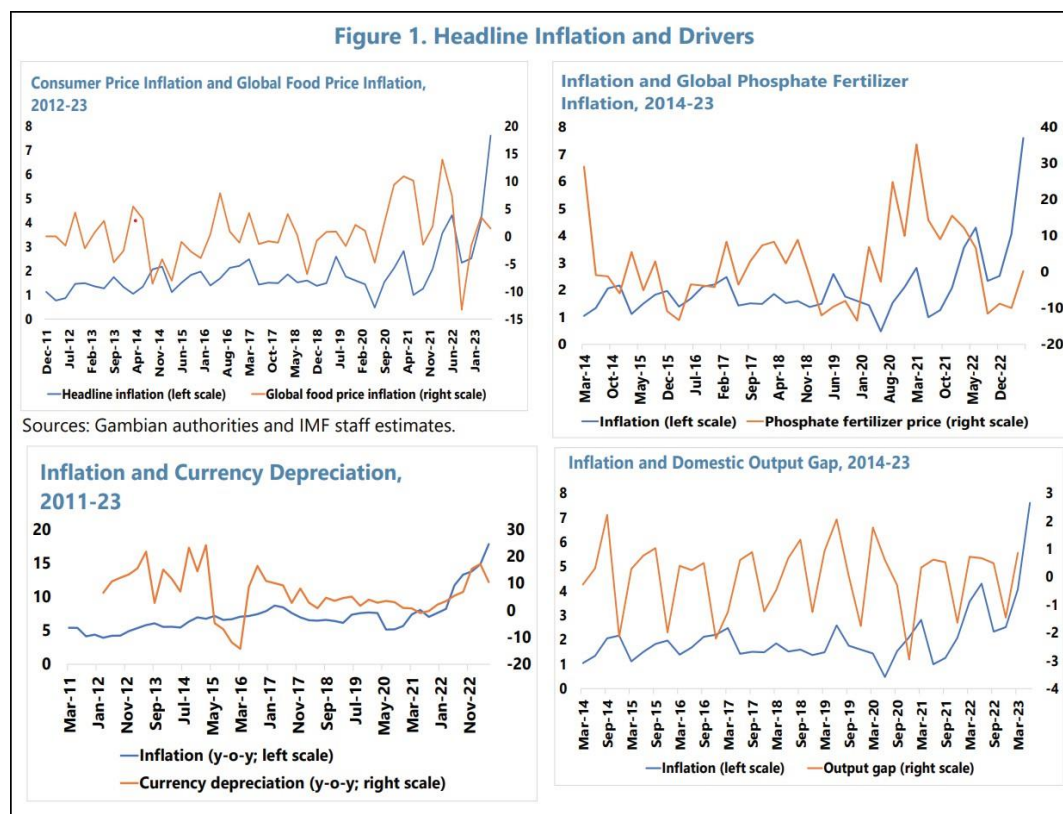
¹⁸² [1GMBEA2024001.pdf](#) Page 6

¹⁸³ [The Gambia country strategic plan \(2024–2028\) \(wfp.org\)](#) p 16

¹⁸⁴ World Bank *The Gambia Third Country Economic Update 2023* p 8

¹⁸⁵ International Monetary Fund *The Gambia, Domestic and External Drivers of Inflation*, December 2023, [SIPEA2024004.pdf](#) p 1

The Gambia's CPI basket is around 50 per cent, explaining the co-movement between global food inflation and headline inflation. Unlike international food prices, however, the transmission of movements in international energy prices into domestic prices is somewhat complex, as the prices of fuel products (and transport services) are highly administered in the country. Finally, there appears to be some co-movement between headline inflation and the domestic output gap, with the latter able to capture the impact of fiscal and monetary policies or remittances, a key determinant of private consumption and investment in The Gambia. ¹⁸⁶



Factor 2: Social norms and patterns of power

In this section we take a deep dive into how

1. gender,
2. age and
3. disability increase vulnerability and relation to violence and instability. **Given a deep dive, particularly on women, was included in neither the 2018 nor the 2019 CDA documents, we devote a focus to it in the 2024 updated.**

a) Gender norms

We begin with an overview of the gendered (patriarchal) norms (structural factors) which govern Gambian society. Given the TRRC was a critical milestone since the 2019 CDA, we assess the gendered experiences of the transitional justice process. We then examine the 2024 context, including how the legal framework, economic norms and patterns of power impact women's voice, choice and control across their social, political and economic lives.

Structural factors (root causes): Patriarchal norms are prevalent and determine patterns of power within society

¹⁸⁶ International Monetary Fund The Gambia, Domestic and External Drivers of Inflation, December 2023, [SIPEA2024004.pdf](#) Page 4

- Men are recognised as heads, in charge of decision-making at different levels, from the family to politics. Women occupy a lower position in the social structure.¹⁸⁷
- Family relationships are primarily regulated by customary and Sharia law. Men are expected to be breadwinners and are raised from boyhood to be the heads of the family. Polygamy is also a traditional norm. Women, on the other hand, are expected to care for the home and the children.¹⁸⁸
- Girls are socialized at an early age into their future prescribed gender roles as mothers by learning about domestic chores at home. On the other hand, boys are mainly prevented from performing activities defined as “feminine” that are considered only appropriate for girls and women. Such activities include cleaning dishes, washing laundry and cooking meals.¹⁸⁹
- Norms also filter into property inheritance and ownership. The inheritance system is governed by strict patriarchal norms which exclude women and increase their vulnerability. Under Sharia law, women are permitted to inherit at the rate of half what males inherit. Under customary law, the male head of the family represents the family’s interests to the outside world.¹⁹⁰ The family head allocates all family lands to male members of the family yet remains the custodian of the family’s territory. He will distribute lands to his younger brothers or, in their absence, to their sons. Upon the death of the family head, he is succeeded by the next oldest brother or, this lacking, by the elders of the sons within the extended family. The land of the next oldest brother or son is thus increased by the addition of land formerly held by the deceased’s family head. Even the house of the family head is taken over by the oldest brother or son. This situation continues until the demise of the last brother or the youngest son.¹⁹¹ In some rural areas, women may not own land though they are allowed to cultivate on it. Unfortunately, as earlier discussed, the legal framework does not empower women to overcome the restrictions of gender norms and customary law.¹⁹²
- Violence is also condoned based on gender norms. Chastity norms often form the basis for FGM. Social norms of marriageability, virginity, chastity, requiring certain rites are related to social acceptability.¹⁹³

➤ How gender identity impacted the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission

The legacy of SGBV, Witch Hunts and the Presidential Alternative Treatment Programme (PATP) continues to affect the vulnerability of affected women and their families. It increases incidences of violence and discrimination against them.

TRRC White Paper Theme 11: Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

- Widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) characterised Yahya Jammeh’s twenty-two -year rule. Sexual violence was often perpetrated either as the main objective of certain human rights violations or it was used as an instrument of repression, torture and punishment.
- Across the country, women were disproportionately affected by violations, including sexual violence, other forms of torture, cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, arbitrary arrests, detention and forced labour. Among the incidents examined by the Commission are
 1. the sexual violence and abuse of participants of scholarship pageants and “protocol girls”
 2. (ii) rape and sexualized torture by state security officials of male and female detainees
 3. (iii) violations committed as part of the of the witch hunt exercises
 4. (iv) sexual violence during “the Presidential Alternative Treatment Programme” (PATP). These violations were perpetrated mainly by security agents and former government officials. The Commission received credible evidence that Yahya Jammeh himself committed some of the most egregious violations against women and girls through a “sophisticated system” using state institutions and resources.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁷ UNFPA, *The Gambia Gender Analysis 2022* [final_national_gender_analysis_new.pdf \(unfpa.org\)](https://unfpa.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022/final-national-gender-analysis-new.pdf) p 19

¹⁸⁸ UNFPA, *The Gambia Gender Analysis 2022* [final_national_gender_analysis_new.pdf \(unfpa.org\)](https://unfpa.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022/final-national-gender-analysis-new.pdf) p 19

¹⁸⁹ UNFPA, *The Gambia Gender Analysis 2022* [final_national_gender_analysis_new.pdf \(unfpa.org\)](https://unfpa.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022/final-national-gender-analysis-new.pdf) p 19

¹⁹⁰ UNFPA, *The Gambia Gender Analysis 2022* [final_national_gender_analysis_new.pdf \(unfpa.org\)](https://unfpa.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022/final-national-gender-analysis-new.pdf) p19

¹⁹¹ WANEP, Assessment of land and natural resource related disputes in WCR, LRR, CRR and URR, 2019.

¹⁹² UNFPA, *The Gambia Gender Analysis 2022* [final_national_gender_analysis_new.pdf \(unfpa.org\)](https://unfpa.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022/final-national-gender-analysis-new.pdf) p 19

¹⁹³ UNFPA, *The Gambia Gender Analysis 2022* [final_national_gender_analysis_new.pdf \(unfpa.org\)](https://unfpa.org/sites/default/files/publications/2022/final-national-gender-analysis-new.pdf) p 19

¹⁹⁴ TRRC, White Paper, p. 82

- The culture of fear that existed under the Jammeh regime and the cultural and social norms in Gambia's patriarchal society suffocated the rights of women and girls to their detriment and silenced the crimes they were subjected to. Sexual violence was not reported due to the stigma and shame that accompanies disclosure and the pressure to place family honour at the center and above one's own suffering. Access to justice was absent in the repressive Jammeh regime for sexual violence committed by the head of state and senior government officials. These victims also did not have access to medical care or psychological support.¹⁹⁵

The TRRC's proceedings contributed to "breaking the silence and taboo around SGBV matters" however it highlighted the need for an ongoing effort

- The TRRC created conversations as most witnesses testified on the sexual torture they suffered, and the expert witnesses elaborated and emphasized SGBV in their testimonies. However unfortunately, some victims did not testify before the TRRC.¹⁹⁶
- The hearings revealed that there is the need to adequately and effectively address SGBV in the country which requires a transformative, multi-sectoral and holistic approach that combines continuous and focused public sensitisation campaigns, training and capacity-building of law enforcement. The White Paper emphasized "discussions about SGBV should be part of the broader conversations in our communities, schools, and homes.
- Arguably the "stigma and shame that accompanies disclosure and the pressure to place family honour at the center and above one's own suffering" still exists and limits women and girls' willing to report.

TRRC White Paper Theme 12: The President's Witch Hunts

- "Between 2008 and 2009 victims were unceremoniously identified as witches or wizards, forcefully detained by the "witch hunters" and security personnel, and removed from the security and privacy of their offices, homes and communities to unknown destinations." ¹⁹⁷ The witch-hunting exercise was conducted in West Coast Region (Fonis, Makumbaya, Galoya, Sintet and Jambur) and North Bank Region (Essau) and expanded to government institutions."
- The TRRC white paper reported its origins as follows: "Due to Former President Jammeh's strong belief in superstition and supernatural activities, the first witch-hunting exercise was conducted following the death of his aunt which he attributed to witchcraft. Some TRRC testimonies also revealed that the witch hunt exercise was politically motivated."¹⁹⁸

Intersectional impact of the Witch Hunting Exercise

- Women today, particularly older women, are still grossly impacted; most are still shunned and not allowed to engage in community activities, such as weddings or naming ceremonies, where women play a significant cultural role, whilst others report economic ostracization and the inability to sell their local produce. ¹⁹⁹
- Children of accused witches report being equally shunned in schools and public places. Within this context, enablers of these witch-hunt campaigns are still neighbours with some victims who continue to be stigmatised by the larger community. ²⁰⁰
- Likewise, children of those being prosecuted as enablers of the witch-hunt campaign, seeking to equally absolve their families of any wrongdoing. ²⁰¹

➤ What the TRRC taught us about meaningful inclusion of women and youth.

- TRRC's track record suggests an institutional cultural shift is required moving forward:

¹⁹⁵ TRRC, White Paper, p. 85

¹⁹⁶ TRRC, White Paper, p. 85

¹⁹⁷ TRRC, White Paper, Page 95

¹⁹⁸ TRRC, White Paper, Page 95

¹⁹⁹ UNDP / Ministry of Interior *Project Document, Infrastructure 4 Peace, 2022* p. 15

²⁰⁰ UNDP / Ministry of Interior *Project Document, Infrastructure 4 Peace, 2022* p. 15

²⁰¹ UNDP / Ministry of Interior *Project Document, Infrastructure 4 Peace, 2022* p. 15

- Several critical senior positions within the TRRC (Chairman, Executive Secretary, Lead Counsel, Head of Investigations etc.) were headed by men, a fact that was criticized by the October 2020 Manifesto by CSOs, which urged the government to appoint more women in decision-making positions related to transitional justice.
 - The TRRC disproportionately heard/had more male victims and witnesses (women represented less than 20% of the witnesses). For instance, while it devoted an entire three-week session on the conditions in the infamous Mile 2 prison, it only investigated crimes that were reported in the male wing and failed to examine conditions in the female wing, despite allegations of SGBV committed on female detainees. Moreover, despite child rights violations being referenced during the hearings, with children facing grave rights violations, the TRRC did not hear testimonies or include children.²⁰²
 - Although a Women's Affairs Unit was established within the TRRC, civil society criticized the failure to adequately focus on women's experience and highlighted shortcomings in that regard. These included CSOs International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), the Toufah Foundation (survivor-led organisation) and ANEKED
 - The TRRC admitted in a report that "most women lost confidence in ensuring meaningful participation in political processes as those who attempted were almost always harassed, and sometimes detained, tortured, and sexually violated. (...) this has led to setbacks for gender equality, women, and empowerment in the country."
- Despite this, the CSOs proactively engaged the TRRC and continue to do so with the government on the meaningful participation and leadership of women in the post-TRRC process, which has led to some successes such as the acceptance of all recommendations made by the CSO on SGBV by both the TRRC and the government in its White Paper

2024: How gendered norms impact women's voice, choice and control

We now examine the 2024 context including how the legal framework, economic norms and patterns of power impact women's voice, choice and control across their social, political and economic lives.

➤ Legal and human rights normative framework

- Under Pillar 6, the National Development Plan (empowerment, social inclusion and leaving no one behind), the government commits, *inter alia*, to empower Gambian women economically, socially, and politically; to enhance economic opportunities and all-round social and cultural development for the youth, and to strengthen the inclusion of, and care for, Persons with Disabilities.
- Under Theme 11, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Theme 12, The President's Witch Hunts, the TRRC Implementation Plan commits to a range of support to survivors of abuses perpetrated under the Jammeh regime.
- The 2023-27 Security Sector Reform strategy commits to "gender mainstreaming" and putting in place a "gender act". However, these commitments are placed under Priority Area 4: Reform Imperatives to Address Cross-Cutting Perennial Challenges. The use of the words "*Perennial Challenges*" and the need to "facilitate understanding and acceptance of the need to invest in the cause of gender advancement" demonstrates an honest acknowledgement of the current state of play in terms of women's inclusion in security – whether within institutions or as part of the community these institutions serve.²⁰³
- The government is signatory to human rights instruments that speak to the protection and empowerment of women, such as the CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol. Furthermore, in the 2019 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – the government accepts the recommendations aimed at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls for sustained socioeconomic development.

➤ Gendered economic norms

Women's levels of poverty vary across geographical locations and household characteristics

²⁰² UNICEF, *CDA written input June 2024*

²⁰³ Government of The Gambia, *Security Sector Reform Strategy 2023-2027*, 2023, p. 9

- Living in the rural areas is associated with higher levels of poverty for women. Women have higher levels of per capita consumption than men in the urban and lower levels in the rural areas, with individuals living in the urban areas consuming more than the rural areas.
- Lower levels of absolute, extreme and food poverty and higher levels of consumption are associated with being employed, higher levels of education, individuals being married or separated as compared to having never been married, and household heads being female, literate, or never been married.
- The persistent gender gaps also make women vulnerable to shocks and crises. The COVID-19 lockdown disproportionately affected women who are mostly employed in the informal sector. More than 9 in every 10 people reported a decrease in income between March and August 2020.
- Female-headed households are disproportionately affected by the high levels of food insecurity currently being experienced in The Gambia. Among the households experiencing moderate food insecurity, 19% are headed by females, and among those facing severe food insecurity, 37% are headed by females.²⁰⁴

Women's level in, and experience of, the workplace varies considerably to that of men

- The female labour force participation rate (LFPR) at 48.9 per cent, compared with 66.3 per cent for men, was the lowest compared to peer countries, excluding Senegal (2021 GII report).²⁰⁵
- A high level of informality often translates into low wages and poor working conditions. The 2022 Labour Force Survey (LFS) revealed that 8 out of every 10 working women work in the informal sector or are engaged in informal employment.²⁰⁶
- Despite the passage of the Women's Act, which formally prohibits discrimination in employment, women still face additional barriers to finding employment and are held back in particular by potential employers' fear of the (perceived) ubiquity of maternity leave²⁰⁷
- Women have less access to formal financial services than men, with only 2 per cent of women having bank accounts compared to 8 per cent of men (FinScope 2019)

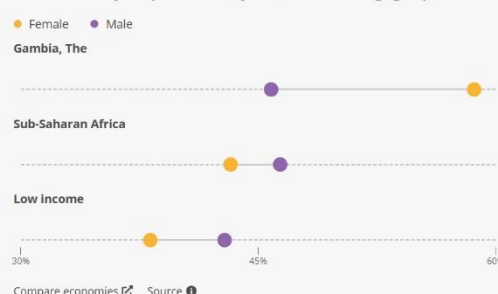
Despite excellent improvements in equality in primary school completion rate, women account for less than 3 per cent of enrolment in higher education and gender gaps persist in the number of years of schooling.²⁰⁸

- Education quality is among the lowest in the world driven by high teacher absenteeism (12-30 per cent) and "increasing enrolment to madrassas that may shift the focus on core competencies of english, maths and science (WB 2022)." ²⁰⁹ Encouragingly however the number of girls finishing secondary school in 2022 exceeded that of boys. (See figure).²¹⁰

58.6% of girls and 45.8% of boys complete lower secondary school in the Gambia as of 2022 data

The gap in lower secondary completion rate between boys and girls, 12.8, is larger than the gap of the Sub-Saharan Africa aggregate, 3.1. Lower secondary education completion rate measures how many children have completed the last grade of lower secondary education regardless of age completed.

Lower secondary completion rate, by sex (% of relevant age group)



➤ Gendered social norms impacting women's participation in government and local governance

²⁰⁴ World Food Programme *The Gambia National Food Security Survey Report* p. 3

²⁰⁵ International Monetary Fund, *Macroeconomic and Distributional Implications of Gender Gaps The Gambia*, February 2024, p. 4

²⁰⁶ International Monetary Fund, *Macroeconomic and Distributional Implications of Gender Gaps The Gambia*, February 2024, p. 4

²⁰⁷ World Bank [World Bank Document](#) *The Gambia Human Capital Review* June 2023, p. 3

²⁰⁸ International Monetary Fund, *Macroeconomic and Distributional Implications of Gender Gaps The Gambia*, February 2024, p. 4

²⁰⁹ International Monetary Fund, *Macroeconomic and Distributional Implications of Gender Gaps The Gambia*, February 2024, p. 4

²¹⁰ World Bank Gender Portal – Reviewed 15 April 2024.

The 2024 CDA consultations met with outstanding women permanent secretaries and deputy permanent secretaries. However, in general, women are excluded from political leadership

- Women did not do well in the 2021-2023 electoral cycle, despite constituting more than half of The Gambia's population and a full 57 per cent of its registered electorate. There were no female candidates in the December 2021 presidential election. In the April 2022 legislative elections, only 8 per cent of candidates were women, only 3 of the 19 women who stood were elected, and only one of those represented a political party, the other 2 being independent candidates. This is the same number of women who were elected in the legislative elections of 2017, indicating a certain stagnation when it comes to women's political empowerment in the country, which impedes their full participation in national reconciliation and peacebuilding processes.
- Women are under-represented not only

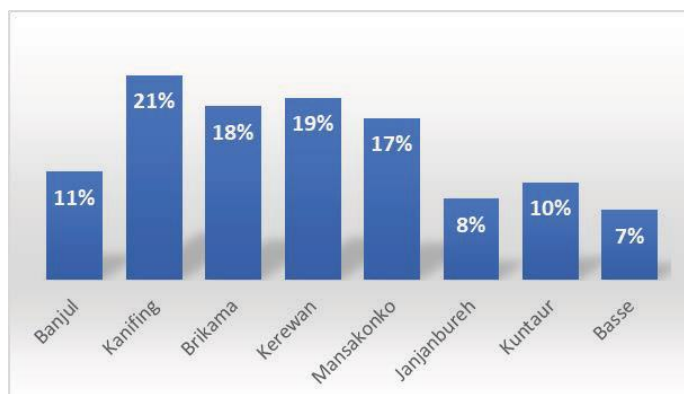


Figure: Women's representation on Local Councils in The Gambia

Data from Independent Electoral Commission.

at the level of the National Assembly, but at all echelons of elected office. In fact, the farther down one looks in the political hierarchy, the smaller is the proportion of women who hold office: Only 3 of the 22 ministers (13.6 per cent) in the current Cabinet are women, down from 21 per cent in the previous Cabinet. Only 5 women sit in the current 58-seat National Assembly (8.6 per cent), down from 10.3 per cent in the previous National Assembly and, prior to the April 2023 Local government elections, only 7 per cent of local councillors were women.

- Women face many impediments when considering running for public office. A consultation on the political empowerment of women convened by the UN Resident Coordinator in 2022 found that they include the following:
 - Existing gender roles disadvantage women:** Participants stressed the importance of re-examining and re-shaping the gender roles that Gambians themselves have created that impede women from presenting themselves for political office and that this process must begin in the home and in school. From a very early age, girls are told that boys are leaders, and this narrative and belief system continue into adulthood. Institutions and communities also reinforce this message. Participants stressed that it is time to change these narratives and to encourage girls to become leaders to dislodge these gender stereotypes.
 - Women are more engaged in politics than men, but mainly in supporting roles:** Participants pointed out that women represent a 57 per cent of the registered electorate in and so are more engaged in politics than men. But they play mostly supporting roles, e.g. as voters and party organisers and mobilisers. Often, when a woman and a man want to run for the same political party, the woman is asked to step aside to make room for the man. Many participants pointed out that this needs to change since women are now ready, willing, and able to take on more leadership roles.
 - There is no quota system enshrined in law:** Participants pointed to the results achieved in other countries in West Africa and farther afield that had introduced laws requiring a minimum proportion of women to be represented in elected office and lamented the fact that such laws did not yet exist in The Gambia, despite their inclusion in the draft constitution and despite recent attempts to pass a gender bill in the National Assembly. One participant pointed out that if such a quota system were enshrined in the Gambian law, a political party that presented too few female candidates would be rejected and the lesson would be learnt that the time for excluding women has passed.
 - Fear prevents women from running for office:** Fear prevents women from running for elected office — fear of acceptance by their husbands, their husbands' family, and their own

family, all of whom must be asked permission before running for office. Women also fear the opposition they will face from men and women in their communities with traditional views about gender roles, as well as men and women within their parties who do not wish them to succeed. The opposition faced by women running for office takes many forms, but two widely cited examples are character assassination and cyber bullying, often of a sexual nature and often accompanied by hate speech. Faced with such virulent opposition that can have a serious negative effect on their personal lives and self-esteem, many women — including those who are well-qualified and equipped to represent their communities — choose not to run for or accept public office.

- **Elections are expensive:** The high cost of running for public office deters women from presenting themselves as candidates.²¹¹ Political parties do not receive any support from the State. Candidates running for election also receive relatively little financial support from their respective parties and are expected to finance much of their campaigns using their own funds or financial support from family and friends. Independent candidates have no party structures at all to fall back on. The absence of campaign financing laws, coupled with the prevalence of vote-buying (direct and indirect), means that candidates must spend large amounts of their own money to have any chance of being elected. Since women in The Gambia tend to be relatively financially disadvantaged compared to men, most female aspiring candidates are not able to raise the capital required to run a successful campaign. Participants pointed out that the economic empowerment of women is key to their political empowerment.
- **The right women are not always chosen to run:** The few women who political parties choose to run for office are often not the most active in their communities, which decreases their chances of being elected. Participants stressed the importance of empowering the most active women in their communities to present themselves as candidates to increase the proportion of female candidates who are elected. Asking women to vote for women just because they are women is not the solution. Women, like men, will vote for the person they think will best represent them and their community. The solution is in empowering women to do just that.
- **There are not enough role models:** While the country does have a small number of exceptional female politician role models — including a former vice president, current and former female members of Cabinet and the National Assembly, and female mayors and local Councilors — their relative scarcity limits the inspiration that young women receive to consider following in their footsteps. Nevertheless, participants stressed that the mentorship role that established female politicians is critical to encouraging and equipping aspiring young women to run for public office.
- **There is some room for optimism,** when it comes to women's political participation in The Gambia. In the April 2023 Local government elections, the proportion of female Local Councilors more than doubled from 7 to 15 per cent, thanks in part to intensified advocacy on the issue and the launch in early 2023 of a new PBF-funded project on women's political empowerment.²¹² Eighteen of the 58 women who ran for Local Council seats (31 per cent) were elected, representing 4 political parties and one independent candidate. Half of the country's 8 local government areas now have a representation of women on local councils that is above the national average of 15 per cent, while half fall below the national average, indicating where future efforts to promote women's political empowerment should be concentrated.
- According to the latest Afrobarometer data,²¹³ about three-quarters (74%) of Gambians say women should have the same chance as men of being elected to public office. But while more than three-quarters (78%) think a woman's family will gain standing in the community if she runs for office,

²¹¹ The Cost of Parliamentary Politics in The Gambia. Westminster Foundation for Democracy. October 2020 - www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Cost-of-Parliamentary-Politics-in-The-Gambia221020.pdf

²¹² Strengthening women's political participation and leadership through reformed legislation, community-level leadership, and political parties' engagement in The Gambia (UNFPA-UNICEF- UNDP, 2022-2024, USD 2 million).

²¹³ AD663: Gender equality in the Gambia: Citizens demand greater government efforts. Afrobarometer

- <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad663-gender-equality-in-the-gambia-citizens-demand-greater-government-efforts/>

60% consider it likely that she will be criticized or harassed by others in the community, and 40% think she will likely face problems with her family.

- The disadvantaging of women in the political sphere reflects broader societal trends. The same Afrobarometer data also show that women trail men not only in political leadership, but also in educational attainment, asset ownership, and financial autonomy. In the Gambia, women are less likely than men to have secondary or post-secondary education (40% vs. 49%) and more likely than men to have no formal schooling (48% vs. 43%). Women trail men significantly in ownership of key assets, including a mobile phone (85% vs. 95%), a bank account (24% vs. 43%), a motor vehicle (7% vs. 33%), and a computer (10% vs. 22%). Similarly, women are less likely than men to say they make household financial decisions (44% vs. 61%). Encouragingly, however, seven out of 10 Gambians (71%) say the government should do more to promote equal rights and opportunities for women

b) Disability

People With Disabilities feel violence and social tension more acutely

- The Gambia has ratified the Convention on the rights of Persons With Disabilities (CRPD) and passed a Disabilities Act. Despite this, living with a disability changes the experience of violence / social tension in The Gambia according to the KII with the Gambia Federation of the Disabled. “Persons With Disabilities are socially excluded and stigmatized. They feel that the government, authorities, Individuals who did so thought they are not important beings who are not worth to exist. This further discourages some of them to even appear in public because of the inferiority complex inflicted on them when discriminated against.”²¹⁴
- This reportedly forces many to “get to the street to beg in order to feed themselves and families. This in turn can lead to aggression” by some Persons With Disabilities who become violent.
- Nonetheless, the exclusion that Persons With Disabilities face on a day-to-day basis makes them more effective advocates for, and negotiators of, peace and conflict prevention. This is because “given they continue to be excluded this energizes them to come out and speak in workshops, radio stations, community outreaches, television stations and even one-to-one discussions in order to bring all on dialogue to consider, including in decision-making processes, programming, policymaking and planning which are relevant strategies for sustainable development.”²¹⁵
- “Nothing about us without us” is the mantra of Persons With Disabilities. “All People with Disabilities hate to see is exclusion or discrimination which force them to speak with vigor.”²¹⁶

➤ Intersection of gender / disability generates even greater exclusion

- On paper, The Gambia is one of the few African countries that have specific protections for women with disabilities. In this regard, the Women Act 2015 provides special protection for women with disabilities. The government is required to take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of women with disabilities and take specific measures to commensurate with their physical, economic and social needs to facilitate their access to be employment, professional and vocational training as well as their participation in decision-making. It also ensures the right of women with disabilities to freedom from violence, including sexual abuse, disability-based discrimination and the rights to be treated with dignity
- However, broader societal prejudice and stigmatisation against persons with disabilities are rife and often rooted in misinformation, tradition and cultural norms. Society tends to attribute disability to consequence of witchcraft, spiritual misfortune, curses because of having committed sins in the past or due to sins committed by their family members and ancestors.²¹⁷
- The intersection of these prejudices against People With Disabilities and being female makes women with disability face even more inequalities than other women and other persons with disabilities, based on both their gender and their disability. Women with disabilities are more susceptible to abuse and sexual harassment. They are doubly excluded from decision-making processes, including on governance, peace and security.

²¹⁴ CDA KII April and May 2024 Gambia Federation of the Disabled

²¹⁵ CDA KII April and May 2024 Gambia Federation of the Disabled

²¹⁶ CDA KII April and May 2024 Gambia Federation of the Disabled

²¹⁷ UNFPA, National Gender Analysis, The Gambia 2022 [final_national_gender_analysis_new.pdf \(unfpa.org\)](#)

- Despite the progressive legal framework, people with disabilities continue to face many obstacles to inclusion, acceptance and participation. The continued lack of inclusion is reflected in a lack of representation in government, lack of inclusive education, lack of accessibility and other infrastructure, stigmatisation, limited access to educational and other opportunities, and lack of social protection mechanisms, among other barriers.

c) Youth-related social norms patterns of power

➤ Economic norms

- Young people aged 15-24 years make up 63 per cent of the population.²¹⁸ From these figures, female and male youth represent 52.8 percent and 47.2 per cent respectively. GBOS reports that 45.3% of youth aged 15-35 years are not in education, employment or training (NEET).²¹⁹ The labour force participation rate for the youth is around fifteen points below that of adults (38.1% compared to 53.5%).
- The Youth largely depend on informal income-generating activities for subsistence. Most young people who are in the labour force are either self-employed or engaged in informal apprenticeships or petty trades. The youth define a good job as one that earns enough income to take care of their family and community, and a stable salary is the most important attribute of a good job. Skilled technical jobs such as mechanics, carpenters, builders, and tailors are recognised as offering more income and reliability than office jobs. In the absence of labour market intermediation services, youth rely on networks to find a job, particularly in the rural areas, where informal apprenticeship schemes rely largely on familial or social networks for recruitment.²²⁰
- The unemployment rate for the youth is three times the corresponding adult rate (10.5% and 3.8%) respectively due to lack of skills, or a mismatch between the skills they possess and the demand in the labour market. The lack of opportunities for education and employment among the youth is concurrent with the reported surge in crime rates in the country.
- As analysed in more detail above under Trend 1, this leads to inward and outward migration, including through the “back way”.
- The centrality of economic resilience was emphasised at the October 2023 UN Youth Consultations. The recommendations from the event, designed to inform the development of the new National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security highlighted:²²¹

Access to quality and affordable education

- Enhancing access to quality and affordable education that is relevant to the labour market will strengthen the socioeconomic advantage of young people to become vibrant in advancing peace and security in The Gambia. When education is transformed, young people become empowered with the skills and knowledge that will help them identify innovative solutions that ensure their protection and participation in developmental drives for sustainable peace and development.

Invest in youth economic empowerment opportunities

- Ensuring substantial investment in employment and employability for young people is important as this contributes to their socioeconomic advancement, thus reducing violence due to the lack of employment

➤ Social norms: Exclusion from decision-making processes

The TRRC set the stage for positive youth involvement in the country’s future. However, this has petered out.

²¹⁸ Hilger, Anne; Ng, Odysia Sophie Si Jia; Wu, Nuoya.

Gambia, The - Human Capital Review (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099060323104516935/P17795009951e301c097950c1a72d67e094>

²¹⁹ Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS), Labour Market Situation in The Gambia in 2023,

<https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads-file/484-the-labour-market-situation-in-the-gambia>

²²⁰ World Bank [World Bank Document](#) The Gambia Human Capital Review June 2023, Page 3

²²¹ United Nations National Youth Consultations – 11 and 12th October 2023 Report

- The TRRC was commended for its inclusion of young people as decision-makers, with 2 of its commissioners being under the age of 35 at the time, as well as the Deputy Executive Secretary and the majority of the TRRC's technical staff.²²²
- However, the youth continue to be generally excluded from meaningful involvement, or leadership during political processes and broader 'society-changing' processes. Young people under the age of 25 represent 65% of the population, yet those persons under the age of 35 elected to serve in the National Assembly constitute less than 20%, whilst young people are completely unrepresented in the superior courts or Cabinet.²²³

There remains systematic absence of meaningful communication and interface between young people and decision-making adults

- Whilst several political parties have formed youth political wings, and the Youth Branch of the Inter-Party Committee continues to strive for greater dialogue between party executives and its young demographic, there remains a systematic absence of meaningful communication and interface between young people and decision-making adults, and more severely, low implementation of national policies that speak on minimum youth representation in decision-making positions²²⁴.

“When we young people attend meetings whether at the household or village level, the elderly will not allow us to speak on the premises that we are still young, and it is only elders who can speak at such gatherings. They will tell you that when you grow up and the time comes for you to participate in village decision-making, you will understand why we exclude you in taking part in the decision-making process at a younger age.”

(Participant from Focus Group 2023 Discussion on the National Action Plan for youth, peace and security)

When they are included in the political process, they

are well aware it is for the benefit of the adult politician and not themselves

- As one KII with a national youth-led organisation remarked “politicians rely on the youth for their strength and engine; if they are not managed well, the youth tend to turn violent, engage in confrontation, and become victims.”

There is a need to diversify Youth Peace and Security programming both in terms of participants and in terms of always funding the “usual suspects.”²²⁵

- October 2023 UN Youth Consultations reported the need for targeted support from partners to engage diverse young people in YPS work. Recommendations included:
 - Increase support for young people in the informal sector and other marginalised groups of society through non formal activities and engagements.
 - Supporting access to funding grassroots organisations will contribute towards the inclusion of more young people who do not have access to funding opportunities and are doing incredible work for peace and security in their respective communities.

Intergenerational dynamics

Young people feel sidelined and excluded from discussions and decision-making processes at household, community, regional and national levels, even for issues that directly affect them.

The findings of the UNDP's 2023 inter-generational dialogues point to some of the sources of this tension. In the following table we set out the opinion of the older versus younger people on the same issues:

²²² UNDP / Ministry of Interior *Project Document, Infrastructure 4 Peace*, 2022 p. 15

²²³ UNDP / Ministry of Interior *Project Document, Infrastructure 4 Peace*, 2022 p. 15

²²⁴ UNDP / Ministry of Interior *Project Document, Infrastructure 4 Peace*, 2022 p. 15

²²⁵ United Nations National Youth Consultations – 11 and 12th October 2023 Report

The older generation feel that this is their time to be at the forefront of change. Under the 22-year autocratic rule of the former president, democracy was undermined, and citizens had few opportunities to actively participate in governance and decision-making processes. Under this new government, the older generation feel that they finally have the freedom and space to be change makers. They feel that this is their time, and that younger people need to patiently wait for their turn.	Young people feel that the older generation do not acknowledge the role of young people in peace and development They feel the elders do not acknowledge the efforts of young people towards the development of their communities.²²⁶
The older generation feel that young people have lost respect for the elderly and for traditional and cultural practices. The older generation expressed particular concern over the departure from traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms like joking relationships and highlighted the need for the youth to embrace such traditional means of dealing with conflict because they have proven to be very effective in the past.	Young people feel that their dignity is not respected by the elderly. When a young person falls into what is perceived to be a moral problem, they are publicly shamed and discriminated against. Parents warn their children against associating with such individuals.
The older generation see the youth as irresponsible and reckless due to an increase in drug and substance abuse leading to bad behaviour and violence. They also acknowledge the role of parents in introducing the young ones to such habits. Parents send their children to buy these substances for them and often smoke in their presence.	Young people are frustrated by elders' preconceived negative generalisations These focus particularly on preconceived notions that young people are troublemakers: • Leading to a heavy-handed police response, e.g. resorting to tear gas and batons during social uprisings involving the young people. This incites them into further violence. • Leading to young people are always blamed whenever a crime or act of violence is committed within the community.
The older generation feel that young people should be more innovative about jobs and employment. Rather than being preoccupied with moving to the urban areas to seek office jobs, young people should have an open and creative mindset to seek out opportunities in their communities.	Young people (especially young men) are under pressure family to acquire wealth and take care of younger siblings and other relatives. Parents compare their children to other people's children who are apparently more successful. This places pressure on the youth and leads to desperation. They become willing to do almost anything to live up to their families' expectations . Pressure from families also pushes many young people towards irregular migration. Families go as far as borrowing money and selling all their property to support their children to travel through the "backway".
Both younger and older people have expressed the need for more intergenerational sessions and conversations that help both sides understand each other's role in peace and development.	

²²⁶ Focus Group Discussion on the NAP for youth, peace and security

Would be particularly, helpful to share success stories of young people doing great work in their communities and beyond, as a way of dispelling the notion that all young people are irresponsible troublemakers.

Opportunities for co-leadership on peace initiatives could provide an avenue for older people to mentor the younger ones, while experiencing firsthand the enthusiasm and innovation that young people offer.

Factor 3: Polarisation at convergence of identity: Ethnicity, religion and political affiliation

Ethnicity

- According to the latest census data, the largest groups are the Mandinka (34%), Fula (30%), Wolof (11%), Jola (9%) and Sarahulleh (8%), with the Serere, Manjago, Bambara, and other smaller ethnic groups making up about 8% of the population between them.²²⁷ **Of note, 25 May to 24 June 2024 The Gambia conducted a national census. The CDA reader is therefore encouraged to access these up-to-date figures once available, given the dated nature of the statistics on ethnicity available at the time of writing.**
- Around the capital, Banjul, and in major urban areas in Kanifing Municipality and the West Coast Region, most families are ethnically mixed, and children mostly grow up speaking Mandinka or Wolof. The dynamic is slightly different in the rural areas, where many villages are constituted along ethno-linguistic lines. While The country is known for the harmony of relations between its diverse ethnic groups, as well as for effective traditional practices that help to maintain it — most notably “joking relationships” between ethnic groups²²⁸ — inter-ethnic relations have been known to degenerate during electoral periods. (See Trend 2 above)

The 2021 Government of the Gambia Turnaround Strategy noted a fragility risk as a “worrying trend of increased ethno-religious identity claims in Gambian politics and ethno-religious polarization, opening up a potentially new avenue for the expression of grievances”²²⁹

- The significance of this fragility risk has increased. Based on the increase in ethnically-based hate speech, particularly in the context of elections and a potential polarisation over FGM based on ethnic identity there is a potential upward trajectory in ethnic-related tension.

Since the 2019 CDA updated, the launch of the TRRC White Paper has progressed commitments towards tackling inter-ethnic tension.

- Finding 171 noted that “The government accepts the recommendations of the Commission and confirms that hate speech, including making derogatory remarks against any ethnic group, is included in the draft Criminal Code.”²³⁰
- While a specific operationalisation of this finding based on ethnicity does not feature in the TRRC 2023-27 implementation plan, a broader commitment to “6.4.2 Development of legislation on hate speech, (176) is in place” under 6.4. Social cohesion is strengthened throughout the country.²³¹

²²⁷ Gambia Bureau of Statistics, 2013 *Population and Housing Census, Spatial Distribution*, Table 3.1.1.1, p. 12 - <https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads/8-census-2013>

²²⁸ For an in-depth analysis of joking relationships in The Gambia, see Davidheiser, Mark (2006) “*Joking for Peace: Social Organisation, Tradition, and Change in Gambian Conflict Management*,” *Cahiers d’études africaines*, Vol. 46, No. 184 - <https://journals.openedition.org/etudesafriques/15409>, as well as Badjie, Gibriel and Ratri Buda Nugrahanti (2021) “The Concept of Joking Relationship in Gambian Public Relations Practice,” *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, Volume 191, pp. 390-398 - <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/aicobpa-20/125961278>

²²⁹ Government of the Gambia, *The Gambia Turnaround Strategy*, 2021, p. 71

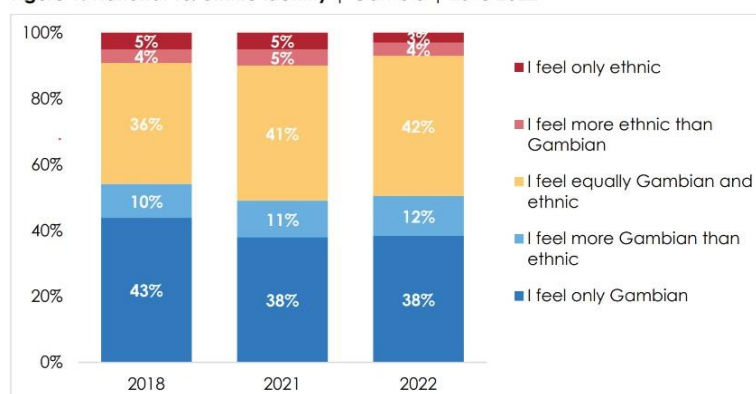
²³⁰ Government of the Gambia, *TRRC White Paper*, 2023, p. 47

²³¹ Government of the Gambia, *TRRC White Paper Implementation Plan 2023-2027*, 2023, THEME 6: ATTACK ON POLITICAL OPPONENTS

A significant majority of Gambians felt a strong national identity which is either stronger than or equally strong as their ethnic identity.²³²

- The 2024 social barometer report revealed that between 2018 and 2022, strong nationalist feelings decreased (from 43% to 38%) while the feeling of belonging equally to national and ethnic origins has increased (from 36% to 42%). Identification as “only Gambian” varies widely by region: While more than half of the residents in Kanifing (53%) and Kerewan (52%) say they feel “only Gambian,” the same is true of only about one in four respondents in Brikama (25%) and Janjangbureh (23%) regions (Figure 2). The poorest respondents are more likely to identify as “only Gambian” (45% vs. 32% of those experiencing no lived poverty), as are those with post-secondary education (46%) compared to their less-educated counterparts (28%-35%).

Figure 1: National vs. ethnic identity | Gambia | 2018-2022

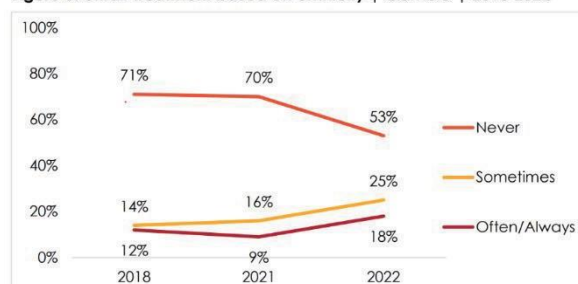


Respondents were asked: Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a Gambian and being a [member of respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?

However, the proportion of Gambians who say the government treats members of their ethnic group unfairly has increased significantly over the past four years (Figure 3).

Almost one in five (18%) say this happens “often” or “always,” up from 12% in 2018, while the proportion of citizens who say it occurs “sometimes” has increased from 14% to 25%.

Figure 3: Unfair treatment based on ethnicity | Gambia | 2018-2022



Respondents were asked: How often, if ever, are [members of the respondent's ethnic group] treated unfairly by the government?

Even though most respondents (53%) reported that the government “never” discriminates against members of their ethnic group, this has decreased over time comparing it to 71% in 2018.²³³

Religion

Given the complexity of the issues relating to religious tension outlined in Manifestations above, the context and factors driving **these were included within the same analysis.**

Political affiliation

- In politics plays a significant role as a root cause of polarisation in society. The historical background of the country is marked by over two decades of authoritarian rule, human rights abuses, and political instability. The legacy of political repression under the Jammeh regime has left a lasting impact on the country's political landscape, which has created deep-rooted divisions based on political affiliations and loyalties. Citizens who have been subjected to human rights abuses and suppression are more likely to be distrustful of the government and engage in opposition activities, further causing polarisation.
- Another key factor contributing to polarisation is ethnic fragmentation. The Gambia is home to multiple ethnic groups, each with its own interests and grievances. As such, politicians often exploit these ethnic differences to mobilise support, leading to heightened tensions among different ethnic communities. Related to this is the prevalent socio-economic disparities which further creates

²³² [AD766-Tolerance-for-differences-is-high-but-not-universal-in-the-Gambia-Afrobarometer-9feb24.pdf](#) p. 3

²³³ [AD766-Tolerance-for-differences-is-high-but-not-universal-in-the-Gambia-Afrobarometer-9feb24.pdf](#) p. 4

resentment among marginalised groups, leading them to align with certain political factions that promise change or empowerment.

- Polarisation in and of itself is the bedrock of a pluralistic democracy that accommodate a spectrum of divergent views, dissenting voices, and enables freedom of speech intended at contributing to meaningful social/societal change. However, assessing at what point polarisation may lead to conflict is a critical reflection to unpack.
- There is a complex interaction between polarisation and conflict. In essence it implies a sharpening of ideological positions of opposing groups that may cause emotional and social distance. It is crucial to keep the democratic spaces open to plurality, divergent viewpoints, logical positions and reasonable dialogue, particularly in cases where there is a perceived or actual sense of marginalisation due to intersecting identities. It becomes a problem when opposing groups see each other not as democratic opponents but as enemies.

In the context of The Gambia this polarisation becomes a problem when there is a convergence of social, ethnic, cultural and political fault lines.

- A cursory look at the political landscape shows a potential weakening of an overarching, unifying national identity as evidenced by the finding of the Afrobarometer report that reveals a decrease in the primarily national self-identification from 43% to 38% between 2018 and 2022. Prior to that a more pronounced national identity emerged, particularly around the time of The Gambia's transition from an authoritarian regime to a democratic dispensation.
- This weakening of a unifying national identity on the one hand results in trust deficit and weakening of social contract and on the other hand creates a gap that various interest groups such as politicians, religious leaders, and community influentials exploit by polarising groups they hold influence over, to further specific interests at the cost of a broader national/public interest. Public responses to the recent Cabinet reshuffle, presidential pardons, anti-FGM bill repeal among others have crystallised the polarisation and sharpening of ideological positions where the bulk of the people stand at the far ends of the spectrum with a diminishing centre.
- The weakening of a unified identity, increasing trust deficit and weakening of the social contract in convergence with the perceived (or actual) politicisation of civil service, politically motivated decisions are driving political polarisation. This is often linked to corruption and lack of accountability. The politicisation of civil service could be seen as an attempt or strategy to ensure control over the bureaucracy. Politically the neutrality of the civil service ensures safeguarding broader public interest; in the absence of that the broader public good is at the risk of being compromised.
- Moreover, weakness of institutional frameworks further exacerbates political tensions. Lack of strong democratic institutions, transparent governance mechanisms a slow-paced adjudication, etc., create fertile ground for manipulation and abuse of power by those in authority.
- Finally, the role of media in shaping public opinion and disseminating information cannot be overlooked. Biased reporting, misinformation, and propaganda through various media channels can further polarise society by reinforcing the existing narratives and deepening divisions.

Factor 4: Land as root cause of conflict

While cognisant that this report is a re-fresh of the 2018 and 2019 CDAs, where detailed analysis of land governance can be found, given the importance of land-related disputes to the country's stability it is nonetheless helpful to recap the basics of land tenure. In this section. We first outline the main sources of disputes over land and the resolution mechanisms which exist. We then explore how and why land is a driver for conflict and dispute.

The basics: Land tenure in the Gambia²³⁴

- Land tenure in The Gambia is based on a dual system – statutory and customary. The statutory system governs the freehold and leasehold titles both of which are based on English law, while the customary tenure evolved from the traditions and practices of the indigenous communities.

²³⁴ WANEP, Assessment of land and natural resource related disputes in WCR, LRR, CRR and URR, 2019. The following two sections draw extensively on this document.

- The customary laws state that where an original piece of land is cleared by a Kaabiloo (a collection of families) the ownership of land is vested in the head of the Kaabiloo. This is the base of the customary land tenure system as it has evolved over time. Customary land tenure exists mainly in the rural areas. According to this system the village head has the right to allocate land their area. Note here the role of the Alkaaloo in allocation and therefore mitigation of disputes. Challenges in the capacity and impartiality of Alkalos and other local leadership as an emerging trigger for conflict will be expanded on below.
- The formal land tenure system on the other hand comprises leaseholds and freehold tenures. In leasehold land tenure, the ownership rights are granted by the State for a term, generally 99 years. The right is only legalised through registration of the property leading to the production of a formal title deed or lease document, which is subsequently registered at the Attorney General's Chambers. Freehold land tenure gives no time limit to the ownership of land. The owner of a freehold property can do whatever they feel over their property as long as in doing so, they do not interfere with the right of third parties. Freehold properties are very few and are mainly found in Banjul, a few parts of Bakau and Janjangbureh the first colonial capital of the country).
- Customary land covers most of the land, estimated at 5,084 km² and such lands are administered under district authorities and local chiefs in the regions. It is estimated that freehold land covers 537.7 km², constituting about 10% of the total land area of the country. Freehold areas include urban residential areas, also in the regions (designated state land), acquired public land, as well as forest parks, wildlife parks, nature reserves, and the Tourism Development Area (TDA). Note the ownership here of TDAs – their importance as an emerging trigger for conflict will be expanded on below.
- Legally, in the Gambia all land is public land. This includes all state land (Banjul and Kanifing Municipality) and designated state land (Kombo North, Kombo South and Kombo Central) that is not yet recorded or registered to third parties; forests, wildlife parks, and reserves; land held by public institutions (including SSHFC, GT Board (i.e. TDA), GPA, AMRC, Geology Department); and all customary lands not yet registered or recorded to communities, as these are vested in the District Authority to be held by them for the benefit of the communities.

How and why land tenure causes disputes

- Village founding families as entities can, and do, exclude all non-family members from its home, its inner and outer fields, and its fallow and rice lands. Any encroachment into an area of land of one family by non-family members can lead to disputes between the two families: Upon the founding of a village by any number of families, land is first allocated for homes with due regard to leaving an open space for streets, mosques, sacred areas, the cemetery, and the *Bantaba*. In this respect, every extended family owns its own home by mutual understanding and consent from the founding settlers of the village. Behind every family home there are inner fields for growing early millet and maize, as well as vegetables. Outer fields are cultivated in crops such as groundnuts (peanuts) and late millet and sorghum, which are also owned by the families. The outer fields are often used for livestock grazing during the rainy season. Since fallow lands are family lands left uncultivated, there are latent rights to what might otherwise seem to be unused land. Encroachment is a key source of disputes.
- Founding families in the host village will refuse to grant land to late settlers or immigrants, or villages, either for settlement or farming. For those new to the village, there are two means by which they can access land
 1. Choose one of the original families as their host to obtain land to settle and farm. The host family may either give a portion of its own family land on the new settler or request compound and agricultural land from other founding families. If the founding families are convinced that the new entrants intend to remain in the village, their gift of land is regarded as conferring permanent ownership to the new arrivals, who will then exercise the same rights of landownership.
 2. Founder villagers can become “host”. This means that the host grants approval to the guest for settling either on its fallow lands or on lands adjacent to its fallow. As years go by, the guest village may continue to cultivate the lands. If residents of the guest village leave, their lands revert to the granting, landowning families of the host. Conflict arises when
 - (a) families in the host village refuse to grant land to the guest village for either settlement or farming.

(b) hosts reclaim land given to settlers with the excuse that they need it back to expand their cultivable land or home steads. This situation can serve as grounds for land disputes between two families from the two villages.

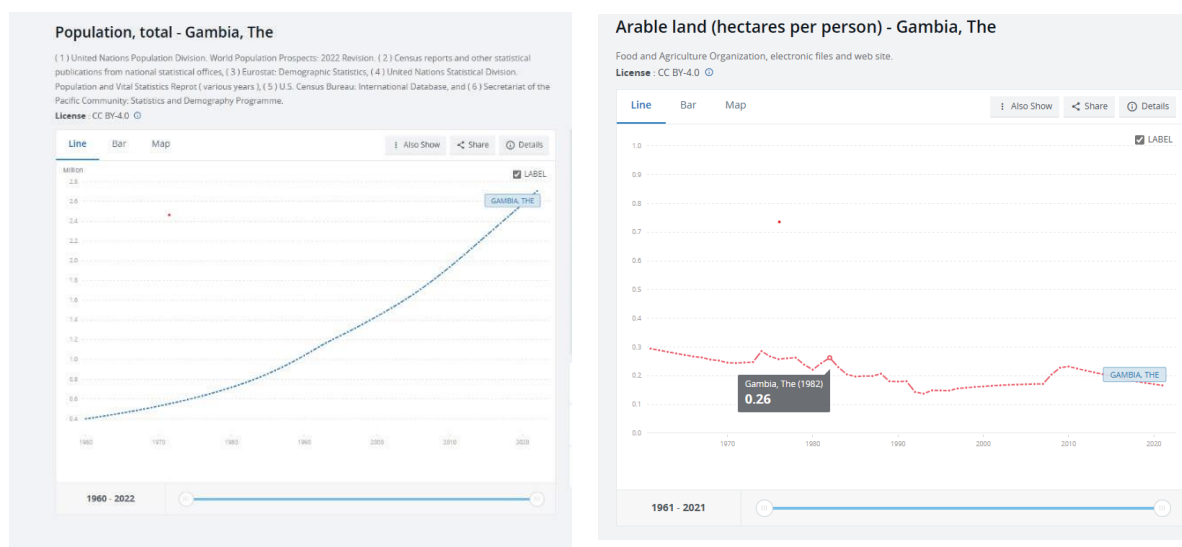
- While the system of inheritance is so respected and venerated that land disputes within the same family are rare, as the family increases in number or male members, half-brothers sometimes dispute over certain pieces of land used by their deceased father. If the appeals of the family head to a compromise and reconcile fail, maternal uncles are asked to intervene and settle the difference. Such land will become the land of the compromising brother and his offspring forever. In cases where the uncle (s) attempt to regain that piece of bestowed land, tension, conflicts, and disputes arise.

Resolution practices

- *Customary law:* At the local community level, the main characteristic of the dispute resolution process is that compromise and reconciliation should occur at the informal level before the case reaches a formal court. Land disputes are no exception to this customary norm. If a land dispute erupts between members of the same family, the family head, as custodian of the family land, settles it without going beyond the family. If he fails to resolve the dispute, the uncles (i.e. the brothers of the disputants' mothers and other close kinship relatives) will appeal to the contesting half-brothers to strike a compromise and reconcile. If this also fails (or cannot take place for a particular reason), the matter can be brought to the "kabiiloo" for arbitration on the issue. If the dispute still rages on, the disputants can bring the argument to the attention of the Alkaaloo, the Imam, and other Kaabiiloos, as well as other influential local opinion leaders.
- *Gender-specific customary resolution mechanisms:* In cases where the disputed land is used for rice cultivation, the women cultivators may wish to keep their affairs apart from the business of the men. In these circumstances, the dispute is referred to the *Ngansimba* (i.e. head of the female community) for advice and reconciliation. In a typical village, no woman turns down the considered advice of the *Ngansimba* regardless of her social status. Disputes generally concern disagreements over the boundary of the rice fields during tilling or over the heaping of weeds on another previous rice land.
- *Formal land dispute resolution mechanisms:* If the customary land dispute resolution mechanisms are exhausted or bypassed by one of the claimants, the matter then appears before the District Tribunal. In the event that the claimant is dissatisfied with the decision of the District Tribunal or the District Chief senses a conflict of interest should he preside over the case, he might recuse himself from the case and call for the constitution of a Group Tribunal whereby the Chief of the District concerned invites a number of other district chiefs in the region to deliberate over the case. The tribunal reviews the case and makes a binding legal decision. The legal decision is conveyed to the Regional Governor with recommendations on the execution of the legal decision, in their capacity as the Chairperson of the Regional Planning Authority which has advisory and mediation responsibilities over land dispute cases in the regions concerned. However, if one of the claimants is dissatisfied with the decision of the District or Group Tribunals, the case may be appealed to higher authorities (such as the Office of the Regional Governor) or the Regional Magistrates' Court or even the High Court.

Drivers for land in the 2024 context

A reduction in available land per capita due to high population growth, land speculation, and increasing urbanisation was identified by the 2021 World Bank Risk and Resilience Assessment. With less land per head available and the value of land increasingly exponentially generating land disputes are increasing.



Lack of land policy continues to stymie progress, but this is government priority

- An inadequate legal framework and lack of institutional capacities to provide security of land tenure, including no legal framework to regulate the real estate industry. The legal framework has not changed significantly since 1991 besides regulations in 1994/1995 and a new Land Commission Act in 2007, which is not really implemented. Looking at the changing context and megatrends such as urbanisation, climate change, and digitalisation, this legal framework is inadequate.
- A lack of a land policy to provide strategic direction for reforming outdated land laws. The Gambia never had a single land policy document. All countries in the region that have successfully reformed land law and land administration systems have based this on land policies. The government however approved a land policy roadmap in 2023 and recruited an international land policy consultant who will work with a national land policy coordinator to help the Ministry of Lands to coordinate consultations for developing the policy.
- A lack of digitalisation of processes exacerbates the slow nature of bureaucracy and increases opportunity for corruption.

More than 20 years on from the 1991 State Lands Act, the continued claims are overwhelming the government and courts

- Knock-on effects of the 1991 State Land Act continue. When passed the Act created a provision for government to designate any area under government control. Any landowner in that area had to remove from customary application to state application. While there was supposed to be a transition period when customary owners could make claim of land to government for a title, the evidence that the transitional period was really applied appears to be lacking. This results in the continued launch of claims and court cases, including by the grandchildren of the original landowners who have little connection to the land, e.g. are not currently using it.
- As noted in Manifestations, the increase in land price is driving a surge in claims along customary lines and overwhelming the courts further.
- The district level is the front line of land dispute resolution. However, capacity gaps in land administration events at the national level are felt here most acutely: Capacity issues are one of the main challenges of land administration in this leading to conflicts between people village heads, district heads, families, local government administration and the central government. This is felt acutely at the district level where conflict resolution is left in the hands of the district tribunals, which act as mediators. These tribunals are composed of elders, usually men, in charge of administering customary and Islamic law. As established by the Law Reform Commission, district chiefs oversee matters related to investigating adjudication procedures for land disputes within the rural

communities. With the customary land tenure system predominating across the country, the recognition of non-documentary forms of evidence, such as the testimonies of other community members, in the formal court system is high. Such evidence can be used to obtain full recognition of claims to property when other forms of evidence are not available (*ibid*). In issues related to land, district tribunals oversee disputes over boundaries, inheritance, and compensation.²³⁵

Factor 5: Pace of reform

TRRC White Paper legislative reform agenda

- The government's TRRC White Paper sets out an ambitious legislative reform agenda encompassing the revision of the existing laws and the drafting of new ones. Priority is given to strengthening the Law Reform Commission to ensure that it has the resources it needs to revise any laws that may not be in compliance with democratic society, good governance, and the rule of law. However, the Law Reform Commission has been largely inactive for more than a decade and will need significant revitalisation to be able to carry out its mandate.²³⁶
- The government has made some good progress on legal reform, however. The National Assembly passed a Prevention of Torture Bill in March 2023 and a Victims' Reparations Bill in November 2023. Other priority legal reforms set out in the TRRC White Paper include revisions of the Prisons Act, the Criminal Code, the Criminal Offences Bill, the Criminal Procedures Bill, the Public Order Act, the National Intelligence Agency Act, and the Motor Traffic Act (the latter in connection with death and injury caused by former President Jammeh; motorcades). Other key legislative reforms are required, for example, the Public Order Act and law on Sedition. Furthermore, ratification of key instruments is necessary, including the Convention on Enforced Disappearances.
- Reform of the civil service is also falling behind. This was raised in the KII as a fundamental challenge in modernising service delivery.
- As detailed above, land reform is lagging behind. This has considerable knock-on effects.

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Given SSR effects, all aspects of peace and stability a deep dive is required.

- The TRRC White Paper sets out an ambitious Security Sector Reform agenda, with commitments to restructure the army and establish a National Security Office, as well as a Vetting Agency that would help remove from public office people who were responsible for abuses under the previous regime. Capacity building of the security sector is foreseen on issues, including human rights, crowd control, the importance of journalism and freedom of expression, dealing with cases of SGBV, and the illegality of enforced and involuntary disappearances.
- Alongside transitional justice and constitutional reform, SSR was the third main priority identified by the government of President Adama Barrow after it came to power in 2017.²³⁷ The government considered SSR a priority because of the way security-sector institutions had been instrumentalised by the Jammeh regime to crack down on dissent and maintain the former President's grip on power. The UN and other partners have supported the government to elaborate essential policy frameworks within which SSR could advance, including a National Security Policy (2019),²³⁸ a National Security Strategy (2020),²³⁹ and an SSR Strategy (2020).²⁴⁰
- The Gambia's SSR Strategy, which has been updated to cover the period 2023-2027, advocates a radical shift from traditional, regime/state-centric security to human security and to "cultivate an

²³⁵ IFAD Women's Land Rights in The Gambia [Socio-legal-review-Gambia.pdf \(cifor-icraf.org\)](https://www.cifor-icraf.org/publications/2019/01/24/women-land-rights-in-the-gambia)

²³⁶ Chief Justice talks tough on law reforms - <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/headlines/chief-justice-talks-tough-on-law-reforms> (15 March 2023)

²³⁷ For a comprehensive overview of the context of and challenges facing SSR in The Gambia, see Security Sector Reform in The Gambia: What is at stake?, Institute for Security Studies, 2020 - <https://issafrica.org/research/west-africa-report/security-sector-reform-in-the-gambia-what-is-at-stake>

²³⁸ National Security Policy of The Gambia - https://www.securegambia.com/files/ugd/6d8b8b_44957b35556c48d98dd0c48ac8c434c2.pdf

²³⁹ The National Security Strategy is not publicly available. For an overview of its development process, see National Security Strategy Development: Gambia Case Study, Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2020 - <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/NSSD-WORKING-DRAFT-GAMBIA-EN.pdf>

²⁴⁰ Overview of the SSR Strategy of The Gambia - https://www.securegambia.com/files/ugd/6d8b8b_4b5c1d2e632749a991ad8015e8998b2f.pdf

effective, robust, professional, apolitical, accountable, transparent and responsive sector in line with international best practices.”²⁴¹

The Strategy has 5 priority areas:

- Restore public trust and confidence by addressing post-authoritarian legacies
 - Develop an overarching security governance framework
 - Reform, empower and strengthen civilian management and oversight bodies
 - Address cross-cutting perennial challenges
 - Address specific institutional reform activities
- However, two factors combined to prevent significant advances being made to implement the SSR Strategy since it was elaborated in 2020, thus exposing the country's erstwhile peaceful transition to an increased risk of disruption are the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and, the electoral cycle that ran from December 2021 to April 2023, which made it politically difficult for the president to push through needed reforms, especially regarding the “rightsizing” of security sector institutions.
 - This reform is central to making the security sector fit for purpose. During the KIIs the following were raised as challenges currently:
 - An over-focus on activity on preventing / addressing irregular migration at the expense of the prisons, fire and rescue, and the armed forces was reported. Some argued this was to meet the agenda of donor investors. With the new SSR strategy, this balance of attention across MDAs is underway.
 - The concern over budget and technical support favouring certain sectors was linked to concerns over the lack of barracks for Gambian military were raised as were stagnant salaries, limited logistical capability and under-resourced veteran support were raised in more than one CDA KII. While commitment to national integrity and the role of GAF was deep, economic necessity and lack of professional development are leading to an increasing number of experienced soldiers leaving the force.
 - Poor prison services were also highlighted as underserved as a reform priority. First, as with the Fire and Rescue Service, the slow pace of reform manifests in out-of-date policy frameworks. The current prisons act is not in tandem with present realities – there are many new sorts of crimes in the country - compared to the “traditional” crimes such as theft and cattle rustling. The “new” crimes include very harmful drug cases such as increased levels of murder, trafficking of cocaine and Kush, and armed robbery. The KIIs noted that the Gambia is in the new dispensation and as such the rights of the people should be respected when under the custody of the prisons in accordance with international best practices. There is a need for a new prison act to cater for the emerging issues relating to respect for the rule of law, democracy and human rights, Although the process is ongoing and now at the level of the justice ministry, it should be expedited. Second, poor prison architecture is evident by the frequent prisoner escapes as well as overcrowding. As with GAF, concerns over mobility of prison officers were also raised in terms of getting to work, as well as inmates in terms of safe transport to hearings. Finally, the KIIs reported poor criminal rehabilitation strategies. This was demonstrated by an increase in the number of recurrences of crimes by the same released inmates, with some of them becoming hardened criminals. This was reported because of them not having the required skills set that they can benefit from once they are back into society. As such, there is a need for new strategies to increase and improve the rehabilitation of inmates.
 - Nevertheless, several advances on SSR have been made since the beginning of the transition. The Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) has identified five, namely
 1. the replacement of military leadership following the departure of Yahya Jammeh,
 2. the engagement of SSR experts from the AU, ECOWAS, the UN, and other partners to support the government,
 3. the elaboration of a national security and SSR policy framework,
 4. the provision of training to security sector institutions, including on human rights,

²⁴¹ Gambia SSR Strategy (2023-2027), p. 1.

5. the strengthening of civilian oversight, especially by the National Assembly, civil society, and the media.²⁴²
 - To these could be added the progress that has been made, notably with the support of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), in closing some of the legislative gaps governing the security sector through the elaboration of draft Acts governing the police, the army and the intelligence services, as well in strengthening oversight of the security sector by state and non-state actors such as the National NHRC, the National Assembly, the Ombudsman, the media, and civil society.²⁴³ In addition, with support from the AU, a draft Legal Coordination Framework on the SSR has been elaborated, and the gender aspect of the SSR has also received attention, including in the form of in-depth studies of the role of women in the security sector.²⁴⁴
 - A joint UN-ECOWAS-AU SSR technical assessment mission in July 2022 evaluated the government's willingness to advance the SSR agenda, assess its capacity to do so, and identify support needs that could be met by the UN and international partners. The mission noted "a strong expression of political will" to advance and SRR²⁴⁵ but also detected a "fragmented and diverse understanding by stakeholders at all levels" about what this would entail.²⁴⁶ The mission recommended, *inter alia*, that the UN and other partners should invest in supporting the implementation of the SSR strategy, including through inclusive dialogue with and capacity building of the SSR Steering Committee, the Office of National Security, National Assembly Members, the NHRC, civil society, and the academia.
 - The government's foiling of a coup plot in December 2022 allegedly involving members of the navy, army, military police, and state guards has further underlined the importance of making meaningful progress on the SSR, especially in the context of a wave of unconstitutional changes of government across West Africa. At the end of a lengthy trial before the High Court, a single alleged ringleader of the coup plot was sentenced in late 2023 to life imprisonment, while other suspects were acquitted, indicating that support for the plot was not widespread and allaying some of the fears the episode had raised. However, given the worrying regional situation and the lack of adequate progress on restructuring the security forces, the risk of further coup plots being hatched should not be discounted.
 - President Barrow launched first ever Defence Policy in August 2023, describing it as a historic milestone and a key objective of SSR. The president said that the goal of the Defence Policy was to "transform The Gambia Armed Forces into a highly professional, well-trained, and disciplined unit that is responsive to the needs of the country, through the effective and efficient delivery of security services under democratic oversight and conditions." The Defence Policy is based on what it calls an "unbreakable special relationship" with Senegal and aims to ensure the defence of The Gambia's territory and interests against a "new threat spectrum," including the "spillover of terrorist and insurgency activities internally and across the wider West Africa and Sahel sub-region."²⁴⁷ The policy also aims to enhance the country's soft power through security and defence diplomacy.
 - Notwithstanding the advances that have been made, there is ample scope—and an urgent need—for more significant strides to be made in implementing The Gambia's SSR strategy in order to sustain the peaceful nature of the country's transition, especially in the prevailing regional context in which military coups and coup attempts have become more frequent.

²⁴² Security Sector Reform in The Gambia – The historical roots of current challenges, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2022 - <https://blog.prif.org/2022/11/09/security-sector-reform-in-the-gambia-the-historic-roots-of-current-challenges>.

²⁴³ Supporting Security Sector Governance in The Gambia. Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) - https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/imce/SSAD/SSAD_Factsheet_Gambia_EN.pdf

²⁴⁴ See, for example, Gender and the Security Sector: A survey of the security services of The Gambia, DCAF, 2020 - <https://www.dcaf.ch/gender-and-security-sector-survey-security-services-gambia>, which was followed up by Scoping Study on Gender Equality in The Gambia Immigration Department (GID), DCAF, 2023 - <https://www.dcaf.ch/scoping-study-gender-equality-gambia-immigration-department>

²⁴⁵ The President, who received the mission, said his support for SSR was "one hundred percent." The mission also sparked the re-convening of the high-level SSR Steering Committee, chaired by the Minister of Justice and attended by the Ministers of Defence and of the Interior, which had not met in 3 years.

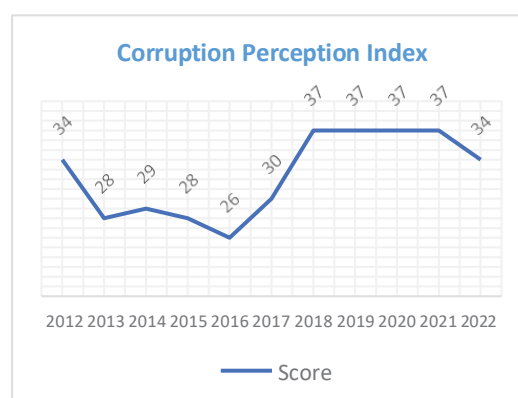
²⁴⁶ Report of the UN-ECOWAS-AU Joint Technical Assessment Mission on SSR to The Gambia, 12-15 July 2022.

²⁴⁷ The Gambia National Defence Policy, 2023, p. x.

Factor 6: Corruption

The Gambia's 2022 score of 34 is the same as it was in 2012, which underscores the persistent challenges the country is facing in combating corruption.

- The Corruption Perception Index (CPI),²⁴⁸ in which a lower score indicates higher perceptions of corruption, shows an overall rise in the perception of corruption in The Gambia from 2012 to 2016, when President Jammeh lost the election to President Adama Barrow. A noteworthy reduction in perceptions of corruption is observed from 2016 until 2018, followed by 3 years of stagnation where perceptions of corruption remain unchanged. A worrying deterioration happened in 2022 when perceptions of corruption again started to tick upwards. The Gambia's 2022 score of 34 is the same as it was in 2012, which underscores the persistent challenges the country is facing in combating corruption.
- This was backed up by CDA 2024 KII and FGD concerns over corruption. Political party KIIs highlighted corruption at all levels of government. Particular concerns were raised relating to alleged issues with *“due processes not followed in public tendering; national wealth not evenly distributed; high rate of nepotism in employing people; senior government officials are travelling using state funds without bringing anything tangible; inflow of drugs because officials are bribed; national audit reported cases of corruption and fraud and nothing comes out of it.”* Corruption was also raised by district-level FGDs as an issue driving national level instability.
- An important piece of unfinished business from transition are effective laws and institutions to combat corruption. The 2018-2021 NDP foresaw the establishment of an Anti-Corruption Commission, but this has not materialised. An Anti-Corruption Bill, which would establish such a commission, was introduced to the National Assembly in 2019 but languished until finally being passed in December 2023. The Gambia's new NDP 2023-2027 re-commits to establishing an Anti-Corruption Commission.
- The lack of substantive progress on anti-corruption up until the passing of the Anti-Corruption Bill caused perceptions of corruption to stagnate between 2018 and 2021 and to worsen in 2022, according to Transparency International's latest *Corruption Perceptions Index* (CPI).²⁴⁹ The Gambia currently scores only 34/100 on the CPI and is ranked 110th out of the 180 countries measured by the index. According to the 2022 CPI, almost a third of Gambians (32%) thought corruption had increased during the previous 12 months and more than a fifth (21%) of public service users said they had paid a bribe during the same period.
- Going forward, priority actions on anti-corruption include sharing the findings of the first round of the Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM) of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) — Chapter III on criminalisation and law enforcement and Chapter IV on international cooperation — completing the second round of the IRM with strong participation by civil society,²⁵⁰ operationalising the newly enacted Anti-Corruption Bill that was submitted to the National Assembly in 2019, operationalising whistle-blower protections, and establishing an Anti-Corruption Commission and an Anti-Corruption Court.



²⁴⁸ <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2022/index/gmb>

²⁴⁹ www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2021/index/gmb

²⁵⁰ For comprehensive recommendations on actions the government of The Gambia could take in this area, see “Civil Society Report on the Implementation of Chapter II (Prevention) & Chapter V (Asset Recovery) of the

United Nations Convention Against Corruption in The Gambia.” Public-Private Integrity, 2022 - <https://uncaccoalition.org/new-civil-society-report-on-the-gambia-gaps-in-the-legislative-framework-hamper-uncac-implementation-and-enforcement/>

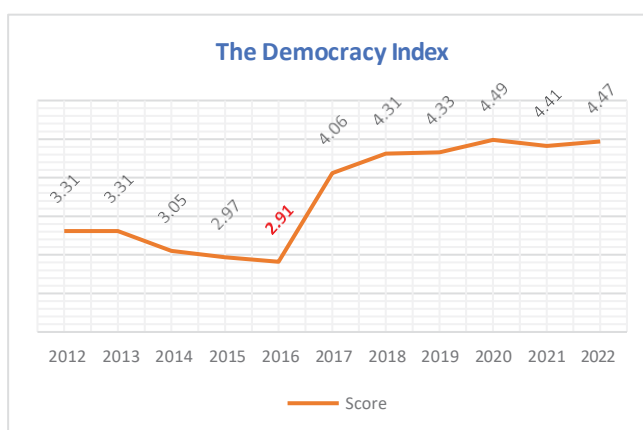
- Behaviour change as well as legislative reform are critical to addressing corruption. As outlined in Part II KIIIs raised societal expectations that those working in positions of power to use their role to finance support for their community. Lack of prosecutions of corruption cases, and perceived lack of a political will to address the issue was also noted. Collective responsibility and the need for civic education were stressed as critical to the societal level attitudinal change required to root out corruption.

Factor 7: Government transparency, accountability and communication

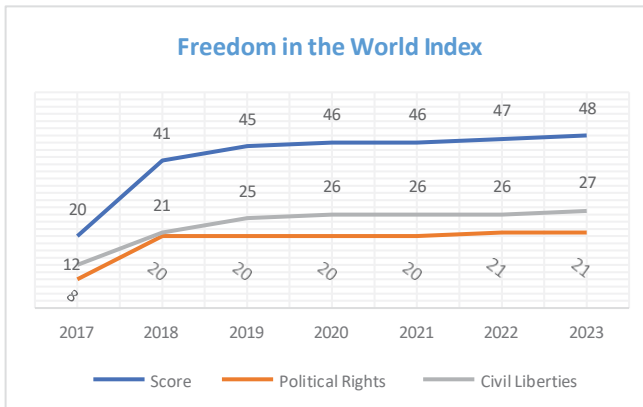
This section addresses expectation management, communication and Access to Information.

State of play

- The Democracy Index²⁵¹ encompasses a variety of factors, including the electoral process, pluralism, civil liberties, government functionality, political participation, and political culture. The index shows a steady decline in democracy from 2012 to 2016 during the final years of the Jammeh regime. However, a positive shift is observed between 2017 and 2022, with the score rising to 4.47. The improved performance coincides with the democratic transition, signalling a strong recovery in democracy in the country.



- The Freedom in the World Index²⁵² indicates a steady improvement in the state of freedom in The Gambia from 2017 to 2023. The Gambia's overall freedom score increased from 20/100 in 2017 to 48/100 in 2023. Similarly, the scores for political rights and civil liberties have also shown significant improvement, with political rights scores improving from 8 in 2017 to 21 in 2023 and civil liberties score improving from 12 in 2017 to 27 in 2023. A notable achievement was in 2018 when the country's status on the index shifted from 'Not Free' to 'Partly Free'.



Poor quality delivery of public services drives frustration and damages the social contract

- District level FGDs highlighted substandard education and lack of enforcement of road laws, exacerbating road traffic accidents. Concerns also included limited or not relevant skills training for youth people and the lack of mobility due to irregular transport options, which were also noted as expensive.
- The FGDs raised poor-quality healthcare, lack of availability or poor quality of drugs. These were linked to many issues, including the tragic case of poor-quality drugs and lack of government enforcement was the 2022 cough syrup scandal, when nearly 70 children lost their lives. ²⁵³ Imported to The Gambia from an Indian blacklisted in their own country, laboratory analysis of the

²⁵¹ https://www.eiu.com/n/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Democracy-Index-2022_FV2.pdf?li_fat_id=f1fbad7e-a282-4b9e-9f8f-6a6d5a9fe6b8

²⁵² <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>

²⁵³ [Cough-syrup scandal: How did it end up in The Gambia? - BBC News](#)

syrups "confirms that they contain unacceptable amounts of diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol as contaminants." (See Serious and Organised Crime for further analysis on medicines).

- Regular power outages are likewise increasing tension: These include the impact on small businesses to be able to store and sell products as well as on medical centres, including incubators in a maternity ward were raised during the KIIIs.
- Frustration at the March / April 2024 breakdown of the Banjul-Barra ferry crossing point was raised during the KIIIs. It is the most frequently used river crossing route in the country - being the only route that connects Banjul and Barra. It is the only route that the people from both ends use to conduct their daily socio-economic activities. It is a deep-sea distance measuring 7.1km, which requires quality, reliable and safe ferries to transport lives and property to both banks. The ferry suffered regular mechanical breakdowns. The lack of ferry crossings allegedly contributed to the loss of two mothers in labour, who were unable to reach the hospital to which they were referred; impacted students' ability to reach school and likewise affected workers reaching their office. It was also reported it impact Gambia – Senegal – Gambia travel, given a lack of ferry requires a 200km additional route to circumvent the crossing. On 12 April the Kanilai ferry suffered a sudden mechanical failure and left passengers stranded at sea. Some passengers spent the night on board the ferry which was at the risk of sinking. An official protest permit requested by a youth coalition of the Niumi Hands, the National Youth Parliament - The Gambia and Gambia Participates in April 2024. It was denied on the "pretext of security concern ahead of the OIC Summit in Banjul." ²⁵⁴

A2I is critical for transparency and accountability

- An important area in which progress has been delayed is access to information. An ATI law was passed in 2021 that, once fully implemented, should empower citizens to obtain information from public institutions.²⁵⁵ The law provides for the right to access public records and information held by public authorities or by individual and legal persons providing services for them. The law creates an obligation for proactive public disclosure and also puts in place a procedure to file access to information requests, the time limit for public institutions to respond, the grounds for denial, and how to appeal against a request being denied. The law should play a major role in increasing the transparency and accountability of power holders and allowing more inclusive participation in the democratic process.
- For the law to be effective, however, appropriate mechanisms and processes must be established to ensure the implementation and full realisation of the rights it provides. One such mechanism is an Information Commission, which is yet to be established. Extensive civic education will also be needed to ensure that citizens are aware of the law and know how to use it. At the Open Government Partnership (OGP) summit in Estonia in September 2023, the government of The Gambia committed to meeting the OGP eligibility requirements, which provides a further incentive to continue to make progress on access to information.²⁵⁶

Monitoring the TRCC White Paper

- The government has designated the NHRC as the body responsible for independently monitoring the government's implementation of the TRCC White Paper. The NHRC has established an inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Committee comprising representatives of the government, civil society, and the UN to assist it in this task and is developing a publicly accessible online dashboard to track the government's progress on implementation in near real time.
- In accordance with the independent monitoring mandate bestowed on it by the government, the NHRC is required to report annually to the National Assembly on the status of implementation of the White Paper. The NHRC presented its first status report to the National Assembly in June 2023 in which it noted that, of the 263 TRCC recommendations accepted by the government in varying degrees in its White Paper, 6 had been fully implemented, 165 were undergoing implementation,

²⁵⁴ [STATEMENT ON THE PLANNED 'SESS NEN' PROTEST SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 21 2024.pdf](#)

²⁵⁵ The 2021 Access to Information Bill can be accessed at https://www.rti-rating.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Gambia.ATI_Jul21.passed-by-assembly.pdf

²⁵⁶ The Open Government Partnership is "an Organisation of reformers inside and outside of government working to transform how government serves its citizens." It includes 75 countries and 104 local governments – representing more than two billion people – and thousands of civil society Organisations. The Gambia is not yet a member. For more, see <https://www.opengovpartnership.org>.

and work on implementing 91 recommendations had not yet begun. The report notes that, since the release of the White Paper on 25 May 2022, the government had taken positive steps towards its implementation but that the delayed release of the Implementation Plan had contributed to the slow pace of implementation, together with challenges related to limited financial and human resources.

- The government has indicated its intention to regularly convene a “Partners’ Platform” through which it could coordinate international support to implement the TRRC recommendations. The government, through the Minister of Justice, has also been active in engaging with the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to raise awareness of, and mobilise resources for, the implementation of the TRRC White Paper.²⁵⁷

Open Government

- The Gambia has promoted ambitious reforms and has expressed interest in the Open Government principles by indicating its willingness to join the OGP and is working towards meeting the OGP’s eligibility requirements.
- The aim of this is to enhance better and more effective ways of engaging citizens, promote greater openness and participation of citizens (i.e. robust feedback and grievances mechanism), improve service delivery, and improve efficiency and transparency in the management of resources, which are key requirements to fulfil as a member of the open government partnership.

Progress is being made on Public financial management and accountability.

- On 12 and 13 January 2023, the Public Finance Management Bill was validated. As at May 2024, the bill is currently at Cabinet, and when enacted into law will increase efficiency and effectiveness in budget preparation and formulation. It is also expected to create avenues for public consultations during budget preparation which will increase accountability and transparency in the management of public funds. It will provide for the Minister of Finance in each financial year, the mandate to prepare and submit to the National Assembly a mid-year fiscal policy review which will include an analysis of the total revenue, expenditure, and financing performance for a period of up to the first six months of the financial year; if necessary, a presentation of a revised budget for the unexpired term of the financial year, and the implication of the revised budget for the medium-term fiscal and expenditure framework; and where necessary, plans for submitting a proposed supplementary budget for approval by the National Assembly; and an overview of the implementation of the annual budget and budgets of Ministries, Departments and Agencies.
- The Citizens’ Budget is an annual opportunity for public scrutiny. Each year, the MoFEA prepares and submits the National Budget in accordance with the relevant Public Financial Management laws to the National Assembly for debate and approval. The approved budget is long, complex and can be difficult to understand. As result, the Citizens’ Budget is prepared to present the annual Government Budget in simple and easily understood language to all citizens. In doing so, MoFEA intends to:
 1. *Promote transparency:* Citizens’ budgets provide a clear and easily understandable breakdown of government spending, which helps promote transparency and accountability.
 2. *Increase citizen engagement:* By presenting budget information in a format that is accessible to the public, citizens’ budgets can help increase citizens’ engagement in the budget process.
 3. *Improve decision-making:* Citizens’ budgets can help inform and educate citizens about the trade-offs involved in budget decisions.
 4. *Support advocacy and public debate:* Citizens’ budgets can be used as a tool for advocacy and public debate.
- The Directorate of Budget at the MOFEA publishes a Citizens’ Budget, Enacted Budget and In-Year Expenditure Reports on the Ministry website for public consumption to enhance public finance governance and transparency.

Accountability and transparency should extend to civil society and not only government

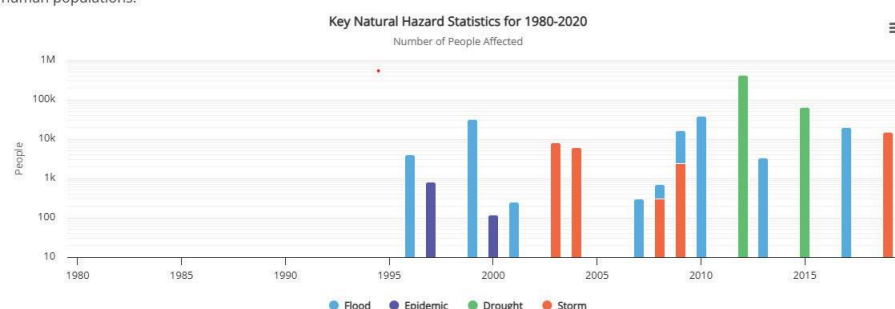
²⁵⁷ The Minister of Justice of The Gambia interacted with the Peacebuilding Commission on 23 April 2018, 15 June 2020, 23 November 2020, 27 October 2021, 18 October 2022, and 28 April 2023.

- KIIIs welcomed greater government transparency but also emphasised the responsibility and significant funding which was placed on national civil society. Increased accountability and financial transparency by these agencies were also encouraged.

Factor 8: Climate and environmental degradation

Climate hazards include torrential rainfall, storms (and flooding), drought, cold spells, intra-seasonal-drought, heat waves, sea-level rise, and unseasonal rains. Related hazards include limited ability to predict the incidence of some hazards and the concomitance of multiple and mutually reinforcing hazards. The most significant weather/climate-related hazards are river flooding, coastal flooding, and water scarcity.²⁵⁸

The charts provide overview of the most frequent natural disaster in a given country and understand the impacts of those disasters on human populations.



Environmental degradation is both driven by and exacerbating economic vulnerability.

- Deforestation and charcoal production were reported in district level FGDs as economic coping mechanisms.
- This is resulting in a loss of biodiversity according to 2024 KIIs with environmental expert agencies. Mangroves are being deforested resulting in a loss of spawning habitats for fish. Loss of forest cover and resulting environment degradation and increased impact of low rainfall.

Private sector investments exacerbating environmental degradation

- The private sector in the Gambia has been reported to exacerbate economic vulnerability through practices such as land grabbing and the exploitation of the natural resources. For instance, large-scale agricultural investments often result to land grabbing, displacing local communities and depriving them of their livelihoods. Additionally, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, such as deforestation, sand mining (Faraba Banta and Sanyang) and over-fishing, further exacerbates environmental degradation and economic vulnerability. This is due to illegal unregulated and unreported Lack of Regulation: Weak regulatory frameworks allow private sector entities to engage in exploitative practices with impunity.²⁵⁹
- The CDA Stakeholder Consultation in April 2024 held a specific working group on the private sector as peace actors. It reported “unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, such as deforestation sand mining (Faraba Banta and Sanyang) and over-fishing, further exacerbates environmental degradation and economic vulnerability. This is due to IUU (illegal unregulated and unreported) Lack of Regulation: Weak regulatory frameworks allow private sector entities to engage in exploitative practices with impunity.”

Environmental impact of illicit economies

- It is important to reiterate the information above: The illicit timber trade costs both governments dearly. Senegal pays a high price in terms of environmental degradation and increased vulnerability to climate change. Since it began in Africa over a decade ago, the insatiable hunt for rosewood

²⁵⁸ [Gambia, The - Vulnerability | Climate Change Knowledge Portal \(worldbank.org\)](#)

²⁵⁹ Group 1 CDA Multi-Stakeholder Consultation Workshop April 2024

species has now devastated most of the West African dry forests, affecting hundreds of thousands of lives, threatening livelihoods, increasing desertification, and contributing to climate change. The trafficking of rosewood in West Africa has become the largest in the world.²⁶⁰ The political implications of the illicit timber trade are also significant, since it weakens the rule of law, fuels ethnic rivalries and armed conflict, and triggers diplomatic tensions between the two countries.

Factor 9: Transnational threats

The root causes of SOC Crime was addressed under Issues 5 and 6 and Factors 1 and 6.

Religious extremism

- The new Defence Policy, launched in August 2023, aims, inter alia, to ensure the defence of The Gambia's territory and interests against a "new threat spectrum," including the "spillover of terrorist and insurgency activities internally and across the wider West Africa and Sahel sub-region."²⁶¹ While religious extremism of the sort being experienced in other parts of West Africa and the Sahel has not yet manifested itself in The Gambia, warning signs exist.
- KIIs across government and civil society' raised the issue of "governance" within faith communities. This included the licensing of places of worship and the management of incoming faith leaders to the country. At present this is not in place.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ The Gambia National Defence Policy, 2023, p. x (10 in Roman numerals)

C. Peace engines

Peace engines are actors and factors that might have the capacity to mitigate or manage tensions and may help promote peace and stability.

The 2019 CDA reported CSOs, National Reforms, Commissions & Committees, Religious and Traditional Leaders and the Media Sector as the key peace engines. The importance of these remains in 2024. In this section we assess the current context, including new peace engines which have emerged, or which were not explored in detail in 2019.

Finding 1	The Gambian people are the country's strongest peace engine.
Finding 2	A decline in social networks and contestation between customary peace mechanisms undermines effectiveness. Yet these are as important as ever .
Finding 3	Since the 2019 CDA The Gambia has put in place a strong enabling environment for peace. This includes legalisation, institutions and 2024's CDA .
Finding 4	Delivery of the Implementation Plan to the government's White Paper on the Recommendations of the TRRC is a critical peace engine.
Finding 5	At present, the loudest voices – hate speech, polarized views – are the ones grabbing the headlines. A “national conversation” where dialogue and discussion on a vision for The Gambia remains a goal and a powerful peace engine which should be balanced with an evidenced-based media.
Finding 6	During CDA KIIIs the GSIC and the Gambian Christian Council both expressed willingness to continue inter-faith dialogue and efforts .
Finding 7	Political leadership is best placed to tackle polarisation and political hate speech. They can lead by example through positive messaging among their constituencies with the support of the inter-party committee at all levels..
Finding 8	“Un-learning dictatorship” and understanding what it means to live in a democracy is work in progress. This includes the rebuilding of trust between the state and civil society – and their role as a watchdog of the government .

Finding 1: The Gambian people are the country's strongest peace engine.

The size of the country's geography and its close-knit societies were highlighted across the FGDs and KIIIs as a source of resilience.

- “Everyone knows everyone. I take great comfort in it. You can't hide.”²⁶² This contributes to a sense of collective responsibility. Inter-marriage between Muslims and Christians was also highlighted as key to social networks and religious tolerance in the KIIIs.
- Gambian human capital and talent were highlighted as a source of resilience. The drive and commitment of Gambians to democracy and delivering on the “Never Again” commitment was emphasised.
- This talent is being reinforced by many returning diaspora, people bringing expertise to government and the private sector. This is bringing knowledge and experience of “what works” in the national security architecture, particularly. There is an interest of the US diaspora in investing in The Gambia which could be tapped into further and enabled by effective business enabling environment reform.

Youth as champions for change

- Gambian young people are actively and innovatively engaged within all arenas of life – through acts of community service, in civil society organisations and within state institutions, businesses and religious associations – to advocate for the needs of, and promote, peace and resilience within their communities. Young people play integral roles in organising and mobilising their peers to address different forms of conflict, to reduce violence and promote a culture of peace.

²⁶² KII March 2024

- Young people can play an influential role within their communities “ranging from advocacy campaigns on issues that affect them and society in general, mobilising themselves for community interventions and serving as mentors for each other. The advocacy campaign they lead will include discussions on youth entrepreneurship and skills training, youth irregular migration, agricultural development, environmental protection, youth civic engagement and the maintenance of peace and security to name a few. These are done through community dialogues and the use of various media.”²⁶³
- The Gambia National Youth Council is a public agency established by an Act the National Assembly in 2000. The agency is actively operating in all the 7 administrative regions and 53 districts of the Gambia with over 172 registered national and community-based youth civil society organisations. Its main function is coordinating all youth programmes and advising the Government on all matters affecting young people among others. The creation of the Council is also aimed at enhancing the participation of young people in national development efforts thus recognising the fact that young people have the innate potential, which needs to be tapped. The council consists of seven Regional Youth Committees in the seven administrative regions of the country. They are elected for a two-year mandate by the young people in each region. Each committee is composed of the elected regional persons, including the chairperson, vice and a treasurer. The other members of the committee are the elected chairpersons from each district within the region. They meet on a quarterly basis to discuss issues of young people within the region and support the council secretariat and other partners to implement youth-related interventions within the region.
- Other organisations, including Peace Ambassadors, The Gambia Red Cross society, ACTIVISTA, Gambia Participates, Peace Network, Peace Hub The Gambia and just to name but a few also deliver youth lead peacebuilding programming.
- Above all, “young people are keen on participating in decision-making processes at grassroots, regional and national levels. It is crucial to maximise young people’s potential to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes and to co-lead initiatives. Young people also recommended the need to have more young people engage in conversations around YPS to ensure ownership of the process both at the grassroots and the national level”.²⁶⁴

Women as leaders for peace and stability

- Women’s role in the social network was underlined. Kanyillengo and Bajeni Goh Be were highlighted specifically:
 - *Kanyillengo* is a traditional women’s group comprising women who have never had a child. They normally lead on entertainment, education and sensitisation of communities. They are very common and are used by many agencies to communicate and sensitise communities. They have not been affected by politics and are very effective peace engines especially to communicate peace messages.
 - Bajeni Goh/Tundou Mbinki, “Aunties of the neighbourhood” are influential women leaders (most former and current members of the National Women Council) who assumed the role of advisers to young women and often provide counselling services on marital issues, settling disputes in among married couples, raise awareness on SGBV prevention and response and serve as traditional birth companions. etc. They are not widespread but exist almost in all the districts of the Gambia. According to a WANEP senior advisers they are “borrowed from Senegal where they are very prominent. They have also not been affected by politics. CDA FGDs revealed concerns that while the Bajeni Goh Be have an important role, they have started to charge their services. This limits access to them as a source of mediation.”
- Gambian women have an important role in preventing violence or risky behaviour. According to the working group on women and girls at the April 2024 CDA multi-stakeholder consultation event - which brought together government, civil society and international partners - women served as

²⁶³ KII follow up National Youth Council May 2024

²⁶⁴ United Nations National Youth Consultations – 11 and 12 October 2023 Report

good community mediators recognising their triple role (productive, reproductive and community) better position them to participate in preventing violence and risky behaviour.

- They are equally involved in case management. Recently the women of Kombo Darsilami and Tranquleh (Senegal) came together to establish a cross-border women's association in preventing conflict between the two communities is a clear manifestation.

Collective responsibility for peace was highlighted across FGDs and KIIs. However, concerns were raised regarding reduced community ownership in the upbringing of children

- A “move away from “community ownership in upbringing”²⁶⁵ was linked in FGDs and KIIs to the increase in youth-perpetrated crime particularly kush use.
- There is a debate as to why this is the case. Whereas in the past, communities would have taken an active role in guiding and mentoring, now elders report being chastised by parents if they discipline another's child. According to the UNDP intergenerational consultations in 2023, there is a divergence of views of corporal punishment and the rights of the child. As one women's participant said “contrary to most views that child rights limit upbringing, child rights help in sustaining peace. She said disciplining someone does not necessarily mean beating. Instead, it has to do with proper guidance, caution and correction. She highlighted that we must as well come together to safeguard the rights of children if we truly desire a peaceful society.”²⁶⁶

Concern was also raised that community decision-making through dialogue was decreasing

- The *bantabaa* serves as common ground where several important subject matters are discussed. It serves as a formal place for elders to meet, relax as well as discuss community issues from traditional and socio-cultural point of view. It also hosts community development activities, including meeting points for communities and extension agents, as well as being a very useful point for dissemination of information .
- CDA KIIs, including with political party leadership, flagged concerns that communities were no longer taking the time to gather at the *bantaba*. “It used to be a convenient platform for resolving community problems, which is gradually diminishing”. ”.

Finding 2: A decline in “griots” local networks and contestation between customary peace mechanisms undermines effectiveness. Yet these are more important than ever.

The TRRC White Paper reported a “decline of social networks in rural Gambia as a challenge to promoting national reconciliation and social cohesion.”²⁶⁷ This finding was echoed in the 2024 CDA FGDs across six regions.

- Rural communities which were previously bound together by shared values and identities and a sense of belonging have to a greater extent been broken down into separate units. Consequently, building relationships in such spaces will be a daunting task but not insurmountable.²⁶⁸

However, the Commission also found that positive traditional practices can promote reconciliation and peace. This was also emphasised across the 2024 FGDs.

Joking relationships

- Joking relationships play an important role in averting conflict and maintaining peace and can promote reconciliation.²⁶⁹
- They follow four distinct pattern of joking affiliations. These patterns include lineage (internal affinity), ethnic group, region and traditional profession (external affinity). The external affinity is the most important as it relates to defining the nature and outcome for long-term relationships where parties accept to be vulnerable to each other with some level of sacrifice. The internal affinity is the

²⁶⁵ UNDP REPORT ON THE INTER-GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE ON PEACE IS THE WAY, November 2023

²⁶⁶ UNDP REPORT ON THE INTER-GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE ON PEACE IS THE WAY, November 2023

²⁶⁷ TRRC White Paper 2023 p. 154

²⁶⁸ TRRC White Paper 2023 p. 154

²⁶⁹ TRRC White Paper 2023 p. 154

family which is quite normal to have close membership ties as always addressed as “blood is thicker than water.”²⁷⁰

- It is important to emphasise that the word joking belies the sacred cultural nature of these relationships, which are deeply rooted in Gambian culture. Many conflicts have been resolved without resorting to courts.²⁷¹
- The power of joking relationships emerged during the TRRC public hearings and in the banter, that went on between commissioners, staff, legal team, witnesses and perpetrators. This mechanism is understood by Gambians and is an important tool that can be used in reconciliation initiatives.²⁷²
- Joking relationships exist among families, communities and regions meaning they transcend beyond individual families. For example, “two villages in West Coast Region (Gunjur and Sukata) use joking relationships to resolve all quarrels between them. These links also help in enhancing inter-marriages, settling marriage problems and helping to support each other in times of need, e.g. hungry seasons.”²⁷³
- Inter-generational passing of these responsibilities is key to sustainability: Joking relationships can be passed down to the younger generation from the older generation. This is already part of the educational curriculum (Social and Environmental Studies), a subject taught in the Gambian school system. However, there is a need to promote this subject which is compulsory in schools to help the younger generation understand and appreciate the importance of joking relationships as peace engine.²⁷⁴

Peace actor	What <i>should</i> their role in the peace architecture be?	Are they actually doing this? If not, what is undermining their role?
Kaabiiloo heads	Kaabiiloo heads are the heads of the different clans who are the kingmakers of the VDCs. Their role in peace architecture includes ensuring their representatives in the VDC are accountable to their kaabiiloos. This contributes to lowering tensions, promotes greater stability as well as transparency and accountability.	They are not doing this, and combinations of factors are impeding them, such as limited understanding of the VDC concept among kaabiiloo heads and the VDC, political interference by other actors, including the alkaaloolu, districts authorities, etc.
Alkaaloo	The alkaaloo is the head of the village. This line of authority is through inheritance and succession based on seniority. It is the lowest level of administrative authority, which is equally answerable to the District Chief who is equally answerable to the Governor. The alkaaloolu are part of the administrative cadre; being the lowest of the cadre as such they are supposed to be apolitical. Part of their functions includes custodians of customary land, facilitate collections of annual rates and taxes of councils in their respective communities, as well as preside over community matters such as resolving conflicts in	Every village in the Gambia is headed by an alkaaloo and their role in village administration is still relevant as it serves as a link between the village-level administration and the district authority. While they are supposed to be neutral, they are mostly drawn into supporting the ruling government which, to some extent, is a source of conflict between them and their communities.

²⁷⁰ Gibriel Badjie*, Ratri Buda Nugrahanti *The Concept of Joking Relationships in Gambian Public Relations Practice*, School of Business and Public Administration, University of The Gambia, 2020, p. 394

²⁷¹ WANEP Early Warning Monitor, April 2024

²⁷² TRRC *White Paper* 2023 p. 154

²⁷³ KII WANEP senior adviser

²⁷⁴ WANEP Early Warning monitor, April 2024

	consultation with the council of elders within the community.	
VDC	Section 92. of the Local Government Act 2002 states that “(1) There shall be established a Village Development Committee for each village or cluster of villages, as the Council shall determine.” And their roles and responsibilities include as stated “98. (1) A Village Development Committee shall be responsible for all development planning at village level and shall serve as the local entry point for all development assistance to the village.”	Although VDCs are established across the length and breadth of the country, there are serious challenges which include inadequate understanding of their roles and responsibilities and political polarisation. Hence conflicts within and between VDCs and alkaaloolu and even between VDCs and the communities they serve are widespread.
Council of elders	Council of elders is an auxiliary structure found at village level established as a traditional structure that supports the alkaaloolu in terms of decision, making and overall administrative support system. The alkaaloo often consults them on matters connected with traditional and administrative matters.	In most communities these structures still exist and are very pivotal in the local administration. They are the equivalent of the district council that equally supports the district chiefs in the adjudication of cases on traditional lines

Sport 4 Development has a proven ability to bring people together and reach across divides and is undoubtedly a powerful tool for reconciliation. However, S4P programmes must be based a long-term evidence - based programme strategy.

- This includes designing interventions based on a local political economy analysis and conflict analysis of the community in which it is working and providing ongoing conflict-mediation sources within the community. If this evidence base is not prepared, programmes risk failing to address the underlying drivers for conflict / social tension.
- It can also risk being “one-off” and while raising interest on the day, it loses momentum if not accompanied by ongoing mediation and dialogue.

Finding 3: Since the 2019 CDA, The Gambia has put in place a strong enabling policy environment for peace

The prevention strategy enshrined in the government’s TRRC White Paper is further reinforced by the Gambia’s new National Development Plan (NDP) 2023-2027, which undertakes to implement the provisions of the TRRC White Paper and “establish a Gambia-specific Infrastructure for Peace (I4P) with a Peace & Reconciliation Commission at its centre.”

The Gambia’s green, recovery-focused YIRIWAA National Development Plan 2023-2027 (NDP) — which aims to consolidate gains in democratic governance, accelerate green economic and social transformation and build resilience to shocks and crisis —provides important insights into the government’s priorities for addressing key peacebuilding challenges, including:

- Under Pillar 1 (governance reforms), The government commits, *inter alia*, to adopt a new Constitution; to bring laws into line with human rights standards; to enhance the governance and management of civil society organisations; to conduct regular, transparent, inclusive, free, and fair elections; to enact reforms to ensure the rule of law, respect for human rights and equitable access to justice; and to reform the security sector with adequately capacitated security institutions.
- Under Pillar 5 (agriculture, environment, natural resources, and climate change) The government commits, *inter alia*, to sustainably manage fishery resources; to engage in climate change

adaptation for fisheries habitat protection; to strengthen capacity for fisheries management and development; and to improve artisanal value addition.

- Under Pillar 6 (empowerment, social inclusion and leaving no one behind), the government commits, *inter alia*, to empower Gambian women economically, socially, and politically; to enhance economic opportunities and all-round social and cultural development for youth, and to strengthen the inclusion of, and care for, Persons With Disabilities.

The 2024-2028 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework agreed between the United Nations and the government of the Gambia outlines how the UN will support the government to achieve the objectives set forth in its NDP, including those of relevance to the sustaining peace agenda,

The Cooperation Framework has 3 strategic priorities:

1. Green, resilient, and inclusive livelihoods
2. Human development, social inclusion, and people-centred governance
3. Innovative and integrated development financing and strategic partnerships

Strategic priority 2 is of particular relevance to sustaining peace since it focuses on supporting the government in such areas as constitutional and legal reform; anti-corruption; governance and access to justice; implementation of the TRRC recommendations; the political empowerment of women, young people, and Persons With Disabilities; electoral reform; citizen engagement; and SSR.

The Gambia's Infrastructure for Peace (I4P)

In 2023, the Gambia already benefited from significant national capacities for conflict prevention that already exists, including within government, civil society, and the private sector. These included:

- The National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordinating Centre (NCCRM), established under an ECOWAS umbrella in January 2023, embedded in the Office of the Vice President. The NCCRM is designed to monitor and coordinate early warning and response units across government institutions on issues relating to human security and advises the government on appropriate responses.
- The Alternative Dispute Resolution Secretariat (ADRS), which operates under the purview of the Ministry of Justice is responsible for providing an alternative means of resolving disputes between parties in conformity with international rule on arbitration, conciliation, and mediation as an alternative to the adversarial adjudicatory system before the conventional courts.
- The Senegalo-Gambian Permanent Secretariat, including its Joint Boundary Commission, supports the timely resolution of disputes between the two neighbouring countries, including border disputes, which remains an issue on the Gambia's border with Senegal's southern Casamance region.
- The West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), which has a well-established presence in the Gambia spearheading civil society prevention and peacebuilding efforts, alongside the Association of NGOs (TANGO), the largest federation of civil society organisations in the country.
- The Joint Steering Committee (JSC) of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in The Gambia launched in August 2023 provides the platform for national stakeholders to participate in decisions regarding the investment of PBF resources in the country. The JSC is co-chaired by the Secretary-General of the government and the UN Resident Coordinator and comprises members from the government, the UN, development partners, and civil society.

However, in 2023, the government acknowledged the absence of an institutional platform for consensus building, including the lack of coherence, was limiting its peacebuilding effectiveness particularly in:

- Mediating and facilitating dialogue among parties in conflict
- Building local conflict-management structures, skills and capacity
- Leveraging internal and external support, funding and expertise

- Identifying and disseminating best practices in conflict management especially between and among the communities across the seven regions of the country and with - coordinating agency at the national and regional levels
- Strengthening community institutions, civil society and state-building

Approved in 2023 by the Ministry of Interior and managed currently under the auspices of the same ministry's Peacebuilding Unit, the Infrastructure for Peace (I4P) aims to:

- ✓ Strengthen and coordinate the formal and informal channels for dialogue on a range of issues that interconnect with the structural causes of conflict at the community and national levels
- ✓ Reflect and leverage operational mechanisms for conflict prevention and peace policies that exist already in the country.
- ✓ Develop and strengthen the existing platforms for community - conflict EWS for conflict prevention efforts
- ✓ In so doing, enhance the operational linkages between the early warning pillars and response platforms at the national and local levels.
- ✓ Establish stakeholder roles and responsibilities to achieve the above outcomes"²⁷⁵

I4P's constituent institutions

- Peace & Reconciliation Commission (PRC). The PRC will be pivotal in The Gambia's I4P. It will be key to building local conflict-management structures, skills and capacity. It is envisaged that the PRC would be gender-balanced and composed of 5-7 eminent persons held in high esteem by the Gambian people and with the skills needed to facilitate dialogue processes and mediation efforts across the country's most difficult conflicts. It is also envisaged that the PRC would be supported by a secretariat and that it would have decentralised structures in the regions. The PRC will oversee the elaboration of a National Reconciliation Strategy that would ensure coherence among national capacities for conflict prevention outlined above. Currently, a bill is being drafted through an inclusive, consultative process to develop the legal and institutional framework for the establishment of a PRC which is a key recommendation outlined in the TRRC report.
- Ministry of Interior: Through support from the UN PBF I4P Project, the government has established a Peacebuilding Unit within the Ministry of Interior which will serve as a for-runner before the establishment of the PRC that will be responsible for the coordination of conflict prevention and peacebuilding interventions in the country. This unit works with an I4P Technical Working Group comprising government ministries, the UN, and civil society to guide the design and establishment of an I4P. The Ministry of Interior will also be key to the management of bilateral and multilateral relationships for the organic functioning of the PRC and facilitate conducive policy environment that enhances funding opportunities towards the sustainability of the PRC. It will liaise and cooperate with other ministries or departments as well as security agencies to ensure their support towards the success and impact of the PRC where necessary.

This CDA was considered as a peace engine during consultations and validation.

- Conflict analysis can risk being launched and sitting on a shelf gathering dust. However, the Gambia's 2018 and 2019 CDAs bucked this trend by being widely used to this day.
- Commitment to reviewing and applying the findings and recommendations takes time and investment but ultimately underpins the Gambia's commitment to a transition to democracy, and "Never Again."
- The 2024 CDA is a call to action for a renewed cross-government, international community and civil society effort on conflict sensitivity and do no harm.

The broader policy and institutional framework is also an enabling factor

The creation of the Office of National Security (ONS) is enhancing the link between state and citizens. Its communication and outreach plans are designed to build confidence and trust.

- The Gambia's SSR Strategy, which has been updated to cover the period 2023-2027, advocates for a radical shift from traditional, regime/state-centric security to human security and to "cultivate

²⁷⁵ Government of the Gambia: *Standard Operating Procedures for Infrastructure 4 Peace*, August 2021, p. 1

an effective, robust, professional, apolitical, accountable, transparent and responsive sector in line with international best practices.”²⁷⁶

- The Strategy has 5 priority areas, including “Restore public trust and confidence by addressing post-authoritarian legacies.”²⁷⁷ This includes a communication strategy “for public sensitization and awareness to enable the implementation of the SSR, engage partners and beneficiaries to ensure effective coordination, information sharing and timely implementation and reporting. This will consist of a continuum of information that is connected and consistent to demonstrate government transparency for all audiences, put individuals before processes or rules; respond quickly to change, embrace change and look for ways to innovate, set clear goals and written ways to provide information and make information easy to find.”²⁷⁸ This includes the public availability of a key national security policy and the ongoing use of civilian oversight mechanisms.

The National Human Rights Commission is a pivotal peace engine and early warning monitor

- As reflected throughout this analysis, the role of the NHRC as a check and balance is a critical peace engine. This is not least as the government has designated NHRC as the body responsible for independently monitoring the government’s implementation of the TRRC White Paper. It also tracks trends including hate speech and other indicators and warnings of a deteriorating context. As such it has a vital early warning and intervention function.
- The NHRC is a permanent and independent institution established by an Act of the National Assembly in 2017 to protect and promote human rights in the Gambia. Within its broad mandate to promote and protect human rights, the Commission serves the general public by:²⁷⁹
 - monitoring, receiving, investigating, and considering complaints of human rights violations; recommending appropriate remedial action to the government; seeking appropriate redress on behalf of victims
 - nurturing a culture of respect for human rights through public education and awareness creation
 - supporting the government in formulating appropriate policies and laws to guarantee human rights.

The NHRC of The Gambia has the prerogative to:

- receive and hear complaints from the public on human rights violations
- recommend appropriate remedial actions to the government and seek appropriate remedial actions on behalf of victims
- reserves the right to investigate suspected cases of human rights violations and to report to the government and all relevant institutions on any such investigations
- summon any person, official or authority to appear before it.

Finding 4: Delivery of the Implementation Plan to the Government’s White Paper on the Recommendations of the TRRC is a critical peace engine

While Section, A Conflict and Instability Analysis, highlighted the risks of incomplete implementation of the TRRC Implementation Plan, the plan is also a peace engine. It is a roadmap to ensuring that the TRRC’s findings are translated into concrete actions that benefit victims, their families and contribute to a more just and inclusive society.

- The TRRC process and the government’s response have been an important milestone in the Gambia’s transition towards a more just and inclusive society. The government’s commitment to

²⁷⁶ *Gambia SSR Strategy (2023-2027)*, p. 1.

²⁷⁷ *Gambia SSR Strategy (2023-2027)*, p. 1.

²⁷⁸ Press release: Media Briefing on Security Sector Reform Process in The Gambia, February 16 2023

²⁷⁹ [About NHRC - NHRC \(gm-nhrc.org\)](https://gm-nhrc.org)

implementing the majority of the TRRC's recommendations represents a significant step towards promoting accountability, reconciliation, and healing in the country. The TRRC's work has also contributed to the development of a more robust human rights regime and has set a precedent for other countries in the region and beyond to follow.

- In the 2023 Afrobarometer poll, more than half (55%) said the government has demonstrated commitment to the implementation of the TRRC recommendations. More than three quarters (76%) said Gambians should reconcile since the TRRC has completed its work. This popular support for the notion of “reconciliation” is important.
- It is also an opportunity for the government to address a number of the conflict factors identified above, and demonstrate the value of the social contract in three key ways:
 1. Institutional Reform: The implementation of the TRRC recommendations presents an opportunity for institutional reform that could help build resilience against further dictatorships and human rights violations in the Gambia. The TRRC report identified a range of institutional failures and weaknesses that allowed human rights violations to occur, including a lack of independence and transparency in the judiciary and security forces, and a culture of impunity that enabled perpetrators to go unpunished. By implementing the TRRC recommendations, the country can address these institutional challenges and create stronger, more accountable institutions that are better equipped to resist future abuses of power. This could include reforms to the judiciary and security forces, strengthening of civil society, and greater transparency and accountability in government. Such institutional reforms would not only help prevent future human rights violations but also contribute to the wider democratic and developmental goals of the country.
 2. Increased Awareness: The TRRC process has increased public awareness about human rights violations and reinforced the demand for justice, accountability and reparations, which will increase public support for implementation.
 3. Reconciliation and Healing: The implementation of the TRRC recommendations may promote reconciliation and healing, which could have positive social and economic effects.

Finding 5: At present, the loudest voices – hate speech, polarized views – are the ones grabbing the headlines. A “national conversation” where dialogue and discussion on a vision for the Gambia remains a goal and a powerful peace which should be balanced with an evidenced based media.

- “Dialogue across the board with all the stakeholders.”
was presented as a way forward for the divisive issue of the FGM repeal bill. At the April 2024 CDA multi-stakeholder consultation event which brought together government, civil society and international partners, a working group on polarisation was asked “the issue of FGM was reported by many FGDs as one which is dividing communities – and whether or not they support the repeal, they are worried about the division the issue is causing. What does the group think can mitigation

***“We don’t talk; We shout.
Everyone thinks: My view must
have supremacy over yours. What
is needed is a national
conversation as to where we are
and
where we want to go.”***

CDA KII March 2024

strategies to address this fragmentation?” The answer from the group was “Dialogue across the board with all the stakeholders.”

- Media freedom – be it print or social media is a critical tenet of democracy but also a driver of hate speech and misinformation which is increasing exponentially in the Gambia.
- Journalists are pivotal peace actors with the potential to fan the fires of hate and polarisation or build public trust. Media responsibility for balanced, evidenced-based journalism has never been more important.
- The media has a pivotal role in the success of the TRRC implementation. According to a KII the media needs to understand its role as a critical partner in the success of the prosecutions, reparations and reconciliation actions following the TRRC. The media can be a useful tool but can also endanger the transitional justice process.

Finding 6: During the CDA KIIs the Gambia Supreme Islamic Council and the Gambia Christian Council both expressed willingness to continue inter-faith dialogue and efforts.

- The 2018 and 2019 CDAs both highlighted the important role of faith leaders as mediators and leaders of their communities. For example, from the early 1990s to 2010-2011, the GCC Inter-Church/ Inter-Faith Sub-Committee, in collaboration with the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) was a vibrant peace engine. It organised regional dialogue seminars for various inter-church groups and Christian-Muslim groups throughout the country. The local resource persons came from the qualified leadership in Christian-Muslim relations and some externally invited specialists. At the end of every session, attempts were made to bring divergent parties into reconciliation.²⁸⁰ The character and structure of the sessions included:
 - Subjects of study covered the universal faith, doctrines and feasts in Islam and the universal faith, doctrines and feasts in Christianity.
 - Contemporary issues facing Christian-Muslim relations
 - Relations within the regional locality and in the Gambia as a whole were introduced by resource persons for discussions.²⁸¹
- During the KIIs both the GSIC and the GCC indicated their willingness to work together as peace engines. There was a direct request for UN Peacebuilding Fund support that will bring the two councils closer for the interest of peace in the Gambia. This included the idea of dialogue and inter-faith livelihood programmes in deprived areas.

Finding 7: Political leadership is best placed to tackle polarisation and political hate speech. They can lead by example through positive messaging among their constituencies and inter-party committee working.

While political affiliation will determine whether the CDA reader is in agreement, President Barrow was reported in the 2024 CDA KIIs as a peace engine.

- This was echoed on 10 January 2024 when he received the 2024 African Prize for Peace in recognition of his efforts for promoting peace. Mr. Barrow in his acceptance speech at the African Conference for Peace acknowledged the resilience and commitment of the Gambian people.
- Reiterating his government's commitment to peace, security and justice, he noted the establishment of the TRRC, implementation of its recommendations, SSR and the formation of the NHRC.

Political partnership leadership will be key in tackling hate speech and shepherding the new constitution through a peaceful approval process

- During the KIIs with the five political parties represented in the National Assembly, a consistent message on the role of political leaders to sensitise their members came through. This was particularly in relation to constituents' understanding of the constitutional reform process; that the constitutional reform process should not become divisive or lead to civil unrest.

The Gambia stands out as one of the few countries in West Africa to have a functioning political dialogue platform in the form of an IPC. It is a proven peace engine

²⁸⁰ CDA 2024 KII written inputs Gambia Christian Council.

²⁸¹ CDA 2024 KII written inputs Gambia Christian Council.

- The IPC was established in 2005 during the tenure of former President Yahya Jammeh but became much more active in 2017 after President Barrow's election ushered in a new democratic dispensation. The dispensation saw an increase in the number of officially registered political parties from 9 in 2017, when the IPC updated its MoU, to 19 in 2024.²⁸²
- The IPC is composed of two representatives of each political party and is co-chaired by a representative of the ruling coalition and a representative of the opposition that are elected for five-year, non-renewable terms. The IPC has established women's and youth branches and has decentralised structures at the

Today, the IPC, in its own words, "stands as a platform for dialogue and cooperation, to ensure consensus building among political parties on contested political and electoral issues, and to promote national reconciliation and nation building."
(<https://iec.gm/political-parties/registered-parties>)

regional level that allows it to have a national reach. The IPC MoU includes a code of conduct that, *inter alia*, commits parties to abstain from inflammatory language and from resorting to violence and intimidation, and to accept the outcome of "transparent and credible" elections.

- The IPC played a critical role addressing and mitigating the use of inflammatory language and hate speech in the run-up to the 2021 presidential election (See below on coalition working)
- The IPC is also engaged in increasing the number of women in elected office. The Gambia has one of the poorest records in the world in this regard, with only 14 per cent of ministers, 9 per cent of parliamentarians, and 15 per cent of councillors being women, although women make up a full 57 per cent of the registered electorate. The IPC is working on developing an 'Inclusion Policy' that would encourage parties to allocate more positions of power to women, especially on candidate selection committees and other important party decision-making platforms. The IPC is also supporting implementation of a PBF-funded project on "Women's Political Empowerment," which helped to more than double the percentage of women elected to local councils in 2023 (from 7 to 15 per cent).
- The relative effectiveness of the IPC has attracted attention from the wider region. In February 2023, for example, the Political Parties' Regulation Commission of Sierra Leone conducted a 10-day study tour to the Gambia to learn firsthand how it operates and what it has been able to achieve, to help strengthen Sierra Leone's own political dialogue platform.²⁸³
- The National Political Dialogue that President Barrow initiated in March 2024 also provides an opportunity to further strengthen the role the IPC plays as a peace engine in the country. With 16 March having been designated as "National Dialogue Day" and with annual meetings between the President and leaders of all political parties foreseen, as well as broader dialogue platforms that will include civil society, the IPC is well positioned to consolidate its role as a key facilitator of political dialogue in the country.
- Although the IPC has received significant support from the UN, especially through PBF-funded projects, it needs continuous support, accompaniment, and capacity building since it does not receive support from the government and the resources that political parties can provide are limited. The IPC has proven itself to be an important peace engine in the country. For it to remain so, however, it will need to be put on a more sustainable financial foundation.

A coalition of Gambian state and civil society actors has proven effective against polarisation

- The IEC played a critical role in developing and negotiation the "Peace Pact" during the highly contested 2021 elections. However, it was not working alone to tackle polarisation and hate speech.
- By the end of July 2021, hate speech had expanded from the ethnic to the religious sphere when a senior Islamic cleric, in a WhatsApp audio message, threatened to kill a fellow cleric for having allegedly ridiculed the work of Muslim teachers. The death threat elicited a public response from President Adama Barrow, who said that his government would "not condone any person or persons seizing advantage of our new democracy to promote extremist violence in Gambian society."

²⁸² <https://iec.gm/political-parties/registered-parties>

²⁸³ For details of the result of the study tour, see "Report on Delegation Visit to The Gambia by the Sierra-Leone Political Parties' Regulation Commission" - <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/REPORT%20ON%20SIERRA-LEONE%20DELEGATION%20VISIT%20TO%20THE%20GAMBIA%5B16%5D.pdf>

- Together with these partners, the UN organised a high-level “National Stakeholders’ Forum on Peaceful and Credible Elections in The Gambia” on 26 October 2021, over a month before the presidential election, with a strong focus on preventing hate speech and promoting constructive political dialogue. The Forum brought together national stakeholders — including leaders of political parties, the IEC, NHRC, and the CSO Coalition on Elections — and high-level international observers — including the UNOWAS SRSG for West Africa and the Sahel, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, and the Secretary to the African Union Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights — to jointly express a common commitment to holding peaceful, free and fair presidential elections free from hate speech.
- During the Forum, leaders of political parties signed a “Peace Pledge” developed by the IPC that committed them to the highest standards of electioneering, to abstaining from hate speech, and to reprimanding any members of their party who might engage in it. The Peace Pledge built on the foundations provided by the constitution, the Electoral Act, the IPC’s *Code of Conduct*, and the IEC’s *Code on Election Campaign Ethics* and placed special emphasis on abstaining from incendiary language and hate speech before, during and after the presidential election.
- Follow-up activities reinforced the strong anti-hate speech message of the National Stakeholders’ Forum. With support from the UNDP, the activated its regional structures to disseminate and discuss the Peace Pledge at community gatherings in all the regions. Once presidential candidates were formally nominated by parties and validated by the IEC, IPC ensured that all presidential candidates signed the Peace Pledge. With support from OHCHR, the Gambia Press Union partnered with the NHRC to organise training sessions for print, broadcast, and online journalists on how to recognise and address hate speech while protecting freedom of expression. Finally, with support from UNESCO, the Gambia Press Union established the first-ever fact-checking platform in the country to identify and call out false information being circulated on traditional and social media. The UN’s efforts to prevent and mitigate hate speech before, during and after the 2021 presidential election contributed to achieving some important results:
 - ✓ The National Stakeholders’ Forum and its Peace Pledge received significant attention across print, broadcast, and online media that, together with the post-Forum sensitisation activities by the IPC and other civil society organisations, served to raise awareness among the general population regarding the dangers of hate speech and the need to avoid it.
 - ✓ Political leaders stood by their Peace Pledge. None of the presidential candidates or leaders of political parties were reported as having engaged in hate speech following the National Stakeholders’ Forum.
 - ✓ When a self-identified UDP supporter, disgruntled that his party’s candidate had lost, called in a WhatsApp audio message for other UDP supporters to “burn down” the country and turn it into a “new Rwanda,” the UDP leader immediately denounced the message and called on its author to leave the party.
 - ✓ When inflammatory language or hate speech was used by others, including political advisers or rank-and-file party members, media reports flagged it as being hate speech and included commentary from respected actors, including the NHRC, condemning it.
 - ✓ The online fact-checking platform launched prior to the election was active during the presidential campaign and afterwards identifying and debunking fake news circulating on traditional and social media. This helped to curb the circulation of misinformation and contributed to a more fact-based political discourse.

Finding 8: “Un-learning dictatorship” and understanding what it means to live in a democracy is work in progress. This includes a vibrant civil society.

- The process of behaviour change – from living under dictatorship for 22 years, to an open society where there is freedom of speech is a peace engine. This includes individuals’ behaviour, collective understanding that being in “opposition” does not mean you cannot work together, as well as having a vibrant **civil society whose role is to hold government to account**. This is work in progress.
- High-level KIIs highlighted that at present Gambians are “pushing the limits of democracy” and “freedom does not mean we can do whatever we want.” There is a lack of understanding of the role of citizens in a country where laws and systems safeguard community cohesion.

- Youth's understanding of rights and responsibilities was flagged as an issue in the consultations for the upcoming National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security. The 2023 inter-generational consultations found "Young people do not fully understand their rights and responsibilities as enshrined in some vital national documents hence curtailing their full and active participation in local and national development."
- At the April 2024 CDA multi-stakeholder consultation event which brought together government, civil society and international partners, a working group on polarisation was asked "*Several Klls have told us that Gambians are working on "un-learning the years of dictatorship" and learning how to be citizens – including using the democratic space. This is how they explain hate speech and other misuse of social media. Does the group agree? If so, why? If not, why?*". The response from the group was, "The group agreed on the finding in relation to the above question. The reason mentioned by the group is the frequent threats and abuse of political platforms by political leaders and government's failure to regulate and hold people accountable for violating the rights of others."
- Moreover, as outlined above, the range of upcoming political reform processes are potential trigger points for tension. The role of civic education has never been more important.

The National Council for Civic Education remains a critical actor

- Civic education in the Gambia is a "process through which the citizenry acquires knowledge, skills and values that are needed for effective democratic citizenship". The NCCE's work to formulate, implement and oversee programmes aimed at inculcating in the citizens of the Gambia awareness of their civic and fundamental rights, duties and responsibilities is pivotal particularly in the context of the constitutional reform process, and spikes in hate speech .²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ [About Us – National Council For Civic Education \(ncce.gm\)](https://www.ncce.gm/about-us)

Part 3: Response Mapping

Funding partners

- **Development partners such as the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the United States, the European Union, United Kingdom, Germany, Türkiye, Spain, and France are active** in supporting processes in the Gambia as part of the Development Partners' Group (DPG). The DPG is the primary mechanism for coordinating donor support in the Gambia. It is co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and, on a rotational basis, another development partner (currently the United States Ambassador). The DPG meets regularly, about once every two months, as well as in ad-hoc extraordinary sessions as needed, to exchange information, interact with invited senior government officials, and coordinate action on the Gambia's main development challenges.
- **The "Partners Platform" has been put in place.** Co-chaired by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice this is a group of development partners with representation from diplomatic missions, donors and the United Nations. The objectives of the Partnership Platform are information sharing, fostering dialogue, coordination of support to the process and enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of development support for the Implementation Plan to the White Paper on the Recommendations of the TRRC. It will also support the government in the exercise of its leading role in mobilising funding and human resources, and at the same time support the coordination of financial, technical and other support from partners to enhance efficiency and avoid duplication.
- **PBF support is featured at the level of the DPG and some of its members** (e.g., EU, France, Germany, USA, UK) are members of the PBF Joint Steering Committee. DPG members continue to be engaged in PBF consultations and processes to help reduce duplications of interventions, especially during the recent re-eligibility consultations.
- **The PBF portfolio now has a stand-alone Joint Steering Committee** established in 2023. It was recognised that the PBF interventions have significantly grown and needed a committee for effective decision-making.

Characteristics of the Gambia's security and peacebuilding funding landscape

1. **Large-scale, policy-orientated programmes.** The Gambia's ambitious reform agenda deeply entrenched economic structural deficiencies and challenges in basic service delivery require significant budget and technical support at the heart of government. This is being received from international financial institutions (IFIs), including the IMF and World Bank to support a range of macro and governance related reform. This support is complemented by that of the European Union and US government among others. While the funding allocated is long-term, support focuses on central institutions. It does not necessarily target the local issues felt by citizens consulted during the FGDs. As outlined above, while progress is being made at the national level, the trickle-down, visible effect on Gambians is not always felt.
2. **Bilateral security-related investment, including hardware and technical skills development.** These cooperation with the government of Turkey amongst others, with the Gambian military.
3. **Transnational threats, including upstream migration.** This has been a particular focus of the European Union, with regard to support to the security sector as well as support to returning migrants. This includes a focus on youth employment.
4. **Regionally, donors are investing in action to prevent a contagion of violent extremist narrative and operations from the Sahel reaching the "Littoral States."** For example, the USAID / OTI - funded Littoral Regional Initiative seeks to address the "threat of a spillover of activities of violent extremist organisations into West Africa's coastal states. The Littorals Regional Initiative (LRI) is supporting local counterparts in northern Ghana, Togo and Benin, Ivory Coast and Guinea to make them more resilient against the possibility of extremist influences.²⁸⁵ Thankfully as yet the Gambia does not present the same indicators of VE presence as in the case of, for example, northern Ghana. However, this means
 - a. donors are not prioritising the Gambia in terms of preventative action

²⁸⁵ creativeassociatesinternational.com/projects/political-transitions-projects/west-africa-the-littorals-regional-initiative-lri/

b. are not necessarily prioritising action on the issues which could be instrumentalised by these actors
e.g. unemployment, exclusion from the political process.

5. **A significant gap lies in the sustained support for grassroots and community-level initiatives**, where the impact of conflict is often most deeply felt. These projects, ranging from local peace-building efforts to community development programmes, may not always align with the large-scale, more policy-oriented priorities of conventional donors.
6. **Grant support is often short term and inconsistent**. Peacebuilding and reconciliation require trust building and behaviour change. This requires long-term support. The short-term nature of grants, with often very prescriptive scope of work forces local agencies to respond to the needs of the donor rather than be guided by the needs of the community.
7. **The UNDP's 2023 Youth consultations for the national action plan identified a trend in "elite capture"** where the same Banjul-based NGOs received funding, with little funding available to start up "challenger" NGOs or initiatives at the district level.

So, what does this mean for the UN Peacebuilding Fund?

- **To address the most prevalent factors driving crime and instability requires structural change** - addressing lack of jobs or land disputes for example. Systemic challenges require funding and longevity of a scale such as the newly announced World Bank's Board \$92.71 million financing for the five-year Gambia Resilience, Inclusion, Skills, and Equity Project (The Gambia RISE Project).²⁸⁶ The UN RC and the World Bank should build on its Turnaround Allocation and CDA funding partnerships to deliver impactful programming which addresses conflict drivers through system level challenges. Likewise, the PBF can bring its expertise to support the World Bank's own in-house FCAS capability to deliver in a conflict-sensitive manner.
- **The PBF is designed to be smaller scale, catalytic and nimble**, with the ability to work from the centre to the grassroots level. It should continue to do so, particularly coordinating and support cross UN system support to decentralised peacebuilding initiatives.

Please see Annex 2 for a donor mapping of interventions for peace and stability.

²⁸⁶ [World Bank Provides \\$92.71 Million Through The Gambia RISE Project to Enhance Economic and Educational Outcomes](#)

Part 4: Recommendations

Recommendation	Rationale	Specific recommendations
Recommendation 1: The security and peace architecture must continue to use the CDA proactively - to assess the factors driving conflict and adapt policy and programming accordingly	Conflict analysis can risk being launched and sitting on a shelf gathering dust. However, the Gambia's 2018 and 2019 CDAs bucked this trend by being widely used to this day. Commitment to reviewing and applying the findings and recommendations takes time and investment but ultimately underpins the Gambia's commitment to a transition to democracy, and "Never Again." This 2024 Conflict and Development Analysis is a call to action for a renewed cross-government, international community and civil society effort on conflict sensitivity and do no harm.	Recommendation: All government ministries should undertake a conflict - sensitivity audit. The would assess the extent to which policies and programmes currently being designed or delivered are in line with the findings of the CDA. This would also include the extent to which they are contributing towards addressing the conflict factors identified and whether their processes risk doing harm. An assessment of how the ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) feed early warning mechanisms should also be included. This would inform the design and delivery of a capacity-building package to support the MDAs Recommendation: UN / World Bank programme teams should undertake a similar review and align with MDA findings. Subsequently they should update their project conflict and risk tracking matrices, and where needed programme activities, to reflect the findings of the CDA. These conflict and risk tracking matrices should be updated on a quarterly basis and where indicators demonstrate programming may be generating negative impacts, the team should consider how and in what way related activities can be modified, or whether they should be stopped.
Recommendation 2: UN RC and the World Bank should build on its Turn Around Allocation and CDA funding partnerships to deliver impactful programming which addresses conflict drivers through system level challenges.	To address the most prevalent factors driving crime and instability requires structural change - addressing lack of jobs or land disputes for example. Systemic challenges require funding and longevity of a scale such as the newly announced World Bank's Board \$92.71 million financing for the five-year Gambia Resilience, Inclusion, Skills, and Equity Project (The Gambia RISE Project).²⁸⁷ The PBF is designed to be smaller scale, catalytic and nimble.	Recommendation: The CDA partnership has allowed the World Bank and UN RC (PBF funding) to work to their respective technical strengths. This should continue, through for example a. scoping of bespoke packages of support for deported migrants under the RISE programme or b. (ii) as proposed in recommendations on land - PBF funds the Ministry of Lands to kick start its real estate regulation activity – something which the World Bank land support is not yet able to finance. By targeting activity which specifically understands and addresses the root causes of the conflict driver, the

²⁸⁷ [World Bank Provides \\$92.71 Million Through The Gambia RISE Project to Enhance Economic and Educational Outcomes](#)

		World Bank's investment will be more effective, and the UN RC (PBF) multiplier effect for its funding will increase.
Recommendation 3: Address economic vulnerability through a human security approach	Negative coping mechanisms resulting from economic vulnerability are the main factors driving crime and instability. Increased household vulnerability has caused diseases, malnutrition, domestic violence, and street begging	Recommendation: Human security encompasses economic security, food security, health security environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. There are needs to increase investments in social safety nets to reduce vulnerability to climate change, economic shocks and protection of human rights
Recommendation 4: Early warning is only as effective as the response which occurs. Government and civil society must effectively communicate community level reporting to the centre and the centre respond	Both the Office of National Security Adviser and the National Centre for National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordinating Centre (NCCRM) are relatively new institutions. There is an opportunity to proactively integrate planning and reporting mechanisms from the start. This will increase effectiveness and vertical accountability from central to decentralised levels. Moreover, other institutions with capability to track indicators and warnings of unrest / potential tension should be integrated.	Recommendation: Early warning is only as effective as the response which occurs. Government should prioritise the design of a fit-for-purpose reporting mechanism through which NCCRM can inform decision-making by the NSC. Recommendation: Likewise, community level early warning monitors – particularly women – are critical actors to track and report increased incidences of hate speech, radical ideology or drug peddling. Government should invest time in building capacity to receive, analyse and identify trends which allow government to place the right resources in the right place. The mechanisms to receive this information at the national level in a timely manner and agree and operational response are key. Recommendation: The capacity of civil society to advocate with and hold the government accountable for the commitments made in the SSR strategy, particularly local-level security should be enhanced. Donor investment and government buy in to listen, hear and respond to these accountability mechanisms should be provided. Recommendation: The early warning capacity of the NHRC should be capitalise upon, i.e. its ability to track trends in increased polarisation / hate speech serving as a barometer for when preventative action should be brought to bear (See peace engine on coalition working)
Recommendation 5: Government must communicate clearly	The reality of financing costs of the past, present and future are now very real. Communication on	Recommendation: Government should design and deliver a new Strategic Communications Strategy. This would be a strategic and public communication plan that provides regular high-level authority messaging

and regularly through a range of media platforms and outreach channels.	what government can and cannot do and why has never been more important. The TRRC process gave a common goal and a unifying purpose for the Gambia. While citizens' concern for economic security and poor basic services remained, between 2017-2023 they accepted prioritisation of the TRRC for the "greater good" of the country. In 2024, with the process complete, this common goal and unity of purpose has disappeared.	to inform the public about reforms and progress. Ideally, this should be done in a coordinated way among institutions, to avoid mixed messaging, and in ways that demonstrate coherence and representative voices from relevant institutions, who can weigh in on specific steps and timelines of reforms. All such communications should be delivered through carefully considered channels or sources, which must be informed by evidence through consultation processes to identify citizens' media consumption behaviour (especially social media), as well as translated into various languages, so as to reach across regions, ages, and ethno-linguistic backgrounds. Recommendation: Government should institutionalise the National Strategic Dialogue process kick-started in February 2024. This will provide a quarterly forum to meet with political parties, in a public setting. It should agree on milestones for success across technical areas and report regularly and transparently on progress. Recommendation: Government should increase and enhance investments in Open Government as per the TAA milestones in place. This includes transparency of resource allocation and budget management.
Recommendation 6: Coordinated and rapid action to establish fit for purpose dialogue are required. These are needed for a place not only to heal past wounds but also mitigate the polarisation affecting social cohesion today.	Throughout the FGDs and KILs, "dialogue" was offered as a solution – Political parties proposed the need for a political dialogue on FGM and the constitution. The Supreme Islamic Council and the Gambia Christian Council both recognised the need for inter-faith dialogue on the aforementioned issues among others. A National Platform (<i>Bantabaa</i>) is required. In the long term, this "meeting place" will be a role of the PRC. However, the legal and institutional framework of the PRC is currently being Developed, which will set the stage for the establishment of the PRC. The success, or otherwise, of these dialogues, and associated follow-up actions could be the	Recommendation: The drafting and enactment of the PRC Bill should be expedited. April 2024's extraordinary session which passed the Special Accountability Mechanism (SAM) has demonstrated a precedent for expediting legislation in support of the TRRC Implementation Plan. Preparatory Technical Assistance to support the PRC's establishment including the scoping of decentralised structures should be done in parallel. Recommendation: In the meantime, the Government should consider increasing its work with trusted non-state actors to convene dialogue to address polarising issues. While the work of the MoI is critical towards the establishment of the Infrastructure for Peace, the partisan nature of politics creates challenges for its role as a national mediator. Recommendation: In the absence of the PRC, an inter-faith dialogue space should be established. The Government could consider the role of the NHRC, Civil Society and

	difference between these being latent sources of tension being managed and eventually mitigated, versus escalating into civil unrest or inter-community division.	customary leaders, including the council of chiefs as facilitators. Recommendation: Broader programming should be scoped. This could include inter-faith livelihood programmes in deprived areas. Recommendation: At the local level, customary practices, including joking relationships and women leaders - Kanyillengo and Bajeni Goh Be – should be called on to reignite local mediation capacity and strengthen the ongoing efforts of strengthening insider mediators in the Gambia. Likewise, youth ambassadors and other peacebuilding networks should be leveraged for sustained continual dialogue and mediation. rather than one off showpiece events.
Recommendation 7: Those with the power to shape the narrative must hold each other to account	Klls across the board worried for the Gambia's current trajectory of polarisation, with issues in the coming year which are fraught with risk. The Klls also highlighted the power of political and religious leaders to guide their members and followers. The direction of travel is very much in the hands of these leaders, who have it in their power to be peace engines. Media freedom – be it print or social media is a critical tenet of democracy but also a driver of hate speech and misinformation which is increasing exponentially in the Gambia. Likewise, media responsibility for balanced, evidence-based journalism is vital. Journalists are pivotal actors with the potential to fan the fires of hate speech and polarisation or build public trust.	Recommendation: The IPC should intensify its efforts, particularly in preventative action around hate speech. Coalitions with civil society partners to broaden impact should be prioritised. Recommendation: The IPC's role in mitigating and managing the potential conflict is positive: This could include the identification of key contentious sections within the draft constitution bill; facilitation of constructive dialogue and negotiation among stakeholders; and securing commitments from stakeholders to support the passage of the draft constitution bill. Recommendation: Political party leadership should be provided with training in conflict-sensitive voter education techniques to support their outreach to members on a future referendum. Recommendation: Support to the Gambia Media Council and Gambia Press Union on credible, balanced media should be increased. This could include the introduction of a journalist accreditation system.
Recommendation 8: Targeted support to enhance Persons With Disabilities, women and youth engagement with	To tackle the social norms which exclude women, youth and People With Disabilities from society, behavioural change is required. This is at the individual, institutional (state) and community level.	Recommendation: Empower Persons With Disabilities in delivering on their mantra "Nothing about us without us." This could include support to leadership and communications training; advocacy for inclusion on national and local governance and development platforms; and inclusion in national budget oversight and other accountability mechanisms.

and in peacebuilding / early warning

Recommendation: Advocate for full implementation of the Gambia Women's Act 2015 provisions for special protection for women with disabilities. The government is required to take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of women with disabilities and take specific measures to commensurate with their physical, economic and social needs.

Recommendation: Ensure that the development of the national land policy continually considers and includes mechanisms to address the structural and cultural limitations women face to owning land particularly inheritance.

Recommendation: Continue to build the evidence base and advocate for a quota system for women in political parties

Recommendation: Capacitate men and young boys as the advocate for women. This is critical to addressing the social barriers to women running for office as well as the physical security and hate speech-related challenges.

Recommendation: Build the capacity of women in public speaking and decision-making. Also build women to women networks of support to overcome the destructive combination of "lack of confidence" and "jealousy among the womenfolk."²⁸⁸

Recommendation: Target drug law enforcement and health responses, including the spike in the use of kush. A baseline survey on the state of drugs and substance abuse in the country should be considered. This would have a particular focus on women, youth and children's uptake and cover the broad range of drug and alcohol interactions.

Recommendation: Heightened focus on youth and digital literacy should be prioritised. This includes understanding how to fact check, what is fake news and how to assess reports critically before forwarding and spreading misinformation across their networks.

Recommendation: Scale up the intergenerational dialogues begun by the UNDP in 2023. Scope options for how to institutionalise this practice

²⁸⁸ CDA Multi-Stakeholder engagement event, April 2024, Women and Girls thematic round table

		within communities rather than have it funded by donor partners. This can and should be linked to insider mediator programming, e.g. pairing senior and junior mediators in intergenerational teams or other joint initiatives. Recommendation: Strengthen the IPC's Youth branch (or similar agency based on detailed delivery partner mapping). The IPC youth branch should be a driving force behind youth led and youth centred initiatives such as the upcoming constitutional reform process. This could have several activity strands including : a. support to political parties on real, rather than “transactional” youth engagement including strengthening the IPC youth wings, and inter-party dialogue at youth level b. support the leadership of political parties to enhance their digital literacy and communication style with young people c. IEC to engage the IPC youth branch to lead engagement on what democracy means in 2024. Recommendation: Women and youth and organisations should be integrated into national early warning mechanisms , including the NCCRM. In the past the National Youth Council had provided local level early warning services , which are reported to the centre level... Given the multiple and potential roles of women and youth's as agents of change, perpetrators of violence or survivors of violence – it is vital they are brought into the early warning system rather than excluded from it. Recommendation: Women and youth should work at the intersection of issues which are driving violence and tension. 2023 consultations on Youth Peace and Security highlighted intersectionality of YPS and other themes, e.g. climate action. This theme extends to the youth's ability to influence on issues such as drug abuse and reducing the pull of backway migration.
Recommendation 9: Land reform and dispute resolution	Indeed, land is a structural driver perpetuated by deep-rooted interests maintain the <i>status quo</i> . Indeed, the land sector is slow to see	Recommendation: Support to land reform and regulation in all aspects should be prioritised

capabilities are underfunded. It must be prioritised politically, technically and financially.	change and hard to quantify that change when it comes. However, it is a critical issue which impacts Gambian economic, social and cultural resilience. As one KII said <i>“Land is everything.”</i>	Recommendation: UN PBF should focus support on areas where its funds can be catalytic, i.e. address urgent issues or to provide seed funding and pilots new initiatives. For example, support towards expediting the real estate regulation should include drafting of the land reform Bill and, and a scoping study on land/real estate regulation should be done in parallel. Recommendation: Duplication and poor management of land under customary law is exponentially increasing the number of land-related court cases. Technical support to standardize the land management processes at the customary level should continue in parallel with drafting the land reform Bill.
Recommendation 10: Implementation of TRRC recommendations should be holistic	Progress on prosecution and repartitions are pivotal to the Gambia's peaceful transition. As such their successful and conflict - sensitive implementation should be supported by all means possible. Reconciliation should receive equal attention. It impacts the Gambia's social fabric, and citizens' collective resilience to polarising narratives. When considering the enabling environment for successful reconciliation, Government should not only “look back” to the Jammeh era but must also “look ahead” to addressing the issues which are affecting social cohesion today. These day-to-day issues, which affect the very existence of the population, are those which will undermine the “head space” for reconciliation and the maintenance of the Gambia's rich social networks.	Recommendation: When designing reconciliation programmes, conflict analysis which overlays historic abuses of the Jammeh era with 2024 issues should inform hyper-localised understanding and approaches. Recommendation: Learning from trauma healing approaches applied to inter-and intra-communities in northern Kenya and Somalia may be helpful. Recommendation: Government should take heed of other recommendations such as those from the human rights mechanisms that contribute towards the implementation of the TRRC recommendations and contribute to peace.
Recommendation 11: Improve migration management by mitigating the risks of irregular migration and promote alternatives	Migration management can have an impact on peace and development. Policies and programmes should be designed to strengthen migration governance to minimise the risks and foster positive impact.	Recommendation: Regular migration contributes significantly to the Gambia's economy and its citizens' economic resilience. Bilateral cooperation should continue to be prioritised to facilitate the safe and orderly migration of Gambians. Recommendation: At present it appears there is a lack of insight on the Serious and Organised Crime supply chains which facilitate irregular migration – limiting the effectiveness of government responses. Government should consider

through regular pathways		working with regional expert partners to understand this issue and based on evidence work with neighbours. Anecdotal evidence of vulnerability to recruitment into extremist organisations should also be tested. Recommendation: Support services for the re-integration of returning migrants should be scaled up and better designated through a referral pathway
Recommendation 12 (Regional): Responses to The Gambia's increasingly complex drugs market should blend law enforcement and health education.	While in the short-term state and civil society responses must focus on kush – as a critical issue of concern to citizens – in the short to medium term they should respond to youth experimentation with a wide range of deadly drug and alcohol cocktails. Combined law enforcement and health responses can learn from Mauritius. In 2013 it experienced a rapid increase in the access to, and use of, NPS. Synthetic cannabinoids arrived in the region between 2011 and 2013 in the form of a synthetic drug known as <i>Chimique</i>. While not identical to kush it is believed that both are synthetic cannabinoids, easily shipped and very cheap to purchase.²⁸⁹ The public health impact on Mauritius continues to be severe.	Recommendation: The Gambia can learn from the experience of African neighbours like Mauritius when it comes to addressing kush. A combination of law enforcement and health education is required. It is this health impact which is making <i>chimique</i> less socially acceptable. This provides a potential direction for The Gambia in terms of health education and youth peer awareness raising alongside law-enforcement capabilities. Recommendation: Gambian authorities should engage quickly and broadly with regional neighbours to agree areas of cooperation, including border control and testing of substances to understand drug composition. This will better target responses of public health sectors. Recommendation: For health education on kush's impact to be successful, the education must be delivered by “credible voices”. If it has not been done so already, government should consider mobilising trusted peace youth networks including the Red Cross and National Youth Council to deliver peer to peer education.
Recommendation 13. Continue to support the Joint Boundary Commission	Lack of clarity over the Gambia – Senegal border is exacerbating national level tension as well as local land disputes among neighbouring communities, competing for farmland or grazing land. It is also generating “confusion” exploited by those who register for basic services on both sides of the border.	Recommendation: Continue to support the delivery of the joint roadmap towards land demarcation with funding and capacity assistance.

²⁸⁹ [GI TOC-Changing-Tides-The-evolving-illicit-drug-trade-in-the-western-Indian-Ocean.pdf \(globalinitiative.net\)](#)

Recommendation 14: ECOMIG’s civil-military engagement goes beyond Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) and develops into a more integrated response	The 2022 loss of life of ECOMIG soldiers in clashes with MFDC fighters appeared as they attempted to intercept a truck loaded with timber that had crossed from Casamance into the Gambia. This highlighted their role in tackling Serious and Organised Crime, and their presence in a remote and underserved region. The FGD highlighted concerns over cross border illicit trade, including cattle rustling and drugs, there is clearly a potential for greater community engagement in the region to improve ECOMIG’s HUMIT, i.e. understanding of local conflict / security dynamics and in so doing improve the effectiveness of its operations.	Recommendation: While it is important to build community relations, the provision of food and health services could be viewed as transactional. Lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq stabilisation civil-military efforts have demonstrated that such Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) do not generate real acceptance. To generate genuine change in the balance of power and thus, trust between ECOMIG and the population, dialogue on local community issues and trends should be considered. This two-way dialogue would allow citizens to see the role ECOMIG plays in their own security. This approach could then be built to train Gambian Armed Forces as part of the transition plan.
---	---	---

Annex A: Conflict sensitivity and risk mapping for CDA process

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Safeguarding i) Taking part in consultations could increase security risks or risks of stigma / exclusion. ii) Unacceptable behaviour of CDA delivery team iii) Security of CDA team during consultations	i) 2019 CDA process found women's participation decreased during mixed gender FGDs. ii) Risk of safeguarding incidents perpetrated by team iii) Security risk including SGBV of staff.	i) Gendered FGDs will ensure the safe space for full participation of women. Female enumerators will be used for women's FGDs if possible. Given tensions between young and older generations, youth only groups will also be trialed, while not missing opportunity for intergenerational thinking. ii) All staff deployed on the programme were vetted and received safeguarding and ethics training as part of their onboarding. A safeguarding focal point was appointed from WANEP. iii) A detailed security plan was prepared with tailored plans for higher risk locations, including the border with Casamance. WANEP deployed staff from the local area, with local networks, language and cultural understanding.
Groups feel excluded	Failure to carry out an inclusive exercise could fuel perception that GoG is marginalising particular segments of the population	Careful balance of ethnicity and geography will ensure one group is not seen as favoured over another. Focus will be given to areas where these coalesce and could generate a trigger include Foni area, understood to be home to Jola communities. Consultations will be held with a broad range of actors including opposition leaders and civil society.
CDA process serves as a trigger for a structural or proximate driver	Neither structural nor proximate factors necessarily generate conflict in and of themselves. A "trigger" is required. The CDA be this trigger if poor communication of its intent or timeframes limits citizens' ability to participate; If the voices of different segments are not heard or if the conclusions of the consultations are considered not reflective of the discussion which was actually held, i.e. manipulated.	Careful communications will be always used, including WANEP's enumerators visiting a location to gather perceptions on conflict factors and peace engines. As in 2018/19, a "group dynamics" model was used. This involved collecting responses from a group, rather than individuals. A de-briefing session by WANEP then read back and agreed understanding of the issue discussion and actions agreed. This triangulation ensured consensus and avoided elite capture.
Elite capture or interests affect participation	Interests of leadership in a divisive issue / local conflict driver (i) risks parties to the conflict refusing to take part in consultations (ii) generates perception of partiality	Careful communications will be always used, including of WANEP's enumerators visiting a location to gather perceptions on conflict factors and peace engines. WANEP will use its deep local knowledge of local tensions to understand the key actors involved, ensure communication on the CDA process and tailor consultations in a location where there is known to be alignment of leaderships' interests.

Annex B: Donor mapping of peace and security programming

UN Peacebuilding Fund supported programming

o	Projects Title	GOV partner/Signatory	Official start and end date (MPTFO Gateway)		Geographical focus (see coordinates under)	Amount approved	Implementing Agencies/ CSO	PBF Focus Areas summarizing the focus of the project
			start date	end date				
1	Support the capacity of the Government and national stakeholders to establish credible transitional justice processes and mechanism that promote reconciliation and sustainable peace in the Gambia	SG (OP)	26-May-17	30-Jun-21	Nationwide	\$4,699,999	UNDP-4,249,999 OHCHR-450,000	Rule of Law, National reconciliation, Strengthening of essential national state capacity (Transitional Justice and Human Rights)
2	Strategic advice and support to the security sector reform and governance in the Gambia	SG (OP)	26-May-17	30-Apr-20	Banjul, The Gambia	\$1,400,000	UNDP-1400,000	SSR

3	Support to establish a strategic Policy Planning and Management Unit in the Office of the Vice President	SG (OP)	24-Jan-18	31-Jul-20	Banjul, The Gambia	\$500,000	UNDP-500,000	Strengthening of essential national state capacity
4	Addressing Conflict over Land and Natural Resources (LNR) In the Gambia	M. of Land	11-Dec-18	31-Dec-20	Nationwide (with more activities targeted at CRR, LRR and URR)	\$1,300,000	FAO -1,100,000 UNDP- 200,000	Conflict prevention/management, Strengthening of Conflict Resolution Mechanisms
5	Increased Women and Youth participation in decision- making processes and as agents of community conflict prevention	VP/SG (OP)	11-Dec-18	31-Dec-20	GBA, WCR, URR	\$1,300,000	UNFPA-930,000 UNICEF-370,000	Conflict prevention/management, Democratic Governance
6	Strengthening sustainable and holistic reintegration of returnees in the Gambia	SG (OP)	17-Dec-18	17-Mar-22	Nationwide	\$2,300,000	IOM1,200,000 UNFPA-550,000 ITC-550,000	Employment, strengthening of essential national state capacity
7	Climate Conflict: Strengthening community coping mechanisms against risks of climate induced conflicts and to minimise gender related vulnerabilities and tensions in The Gambia	M. of Environment	2 January 2020	31-Mar-22	CRR, URR, NBR	\$1,700,000	WFP-750,000 UNFPA-450,000 ITC-500,000	Conflict prevention/management (Climate Security)

8	Strengthening Inclusive Citizen Engagement for More Accountable Governance in the Gambia.	SG (OP)	10 January 2020	09-Jul-22	KMC, URR, LRR, CRR	\$1,649,997	UNDP-1,199,996 UNICEF-450,000	Democratic Governance
9	Strengthening Community Access to Justice, Community Policing and Effective SGBV Response	MO JUSTICE	10-Mar-20	9-March-2022	GBA, URR, NBR (Within and outside the Greater Banjul Area)	\$1,649,988	UNDP-905,081 UNICEF-294,972 UNFPA-449,935	Rule of law
10	Young women and men as stakeholders in ensuring peaceful democratic processes and advocates for the prevention of violence and hate speech	SG (OP)	23-Nov-20	18-Nov-22	Nation Wide (with more focus on CRR, URR, NBR, WCR)	\$2,160,500	UNFPA-1,000,000 UNDP-810,500 UNESCO-350,000	Democratic Governance
11	Support to the implementation and monitoring of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) recommendations in The Gambia	MO JUSTICE	02-Dec-21	01-May-24	Nationwide	\$3,494,150	UNDP-3,044,150 OHCHR-450,000	Rule of law
12	Supporting cross-border cooperation for increased community resilience and social cohesion in the Gambia and Senegal (Gambia)	SG (OP)	14-Dec-21	14-Dec-23	Cross border (WCR,LRR, CRR)	\$2,400,000	FAO-1,000,000 IOM-1,400,000	Conflict prevention/management
13	Promoting peace and social cohesion through the provision of mental health services and psychosocial well-being of SGBV survivors	M OF GENDER	13-Jan-22	12-Jul-23	Nationwide	\$1,497,379	UNFPA- 697,379 UNDP-800,000	Equitable access to social services

14	Strengthening the National Infrastructure for Peace to Promote Social Cohesion in the Gambia	MO INTERIOR	19-Dec-22	19-Dec-25	GBA, NBR, WCR, CRR, URR	\$2,500,000	UNDP-1,075,000 ITC-750,000 UNESCO-675,000	Conflict prevention/management
15	Strengthening women's political participation and leadership through reformed legislation, community-level leadership, and political parties' engagement in the Gambia	M OF GENDER	12-Dec-22	12-Dec-24	National (LRR, URR, CRR)	\$2,000,000	UNFPA-1,000,000 UNICEF-300,000 UNDP-700,000	Democratic Governance
16	Support to a PBF Secretariat in the Gambia to enhance coordination and peacebuilding impact	SG (DSPD)	12-Dec-22	12-Jan-27	Nationwide	\$1,513,065	UNDP: \$ 1,271,956.08 OHCHR: \$ 241,108.45	Governance of peacebuilding resources (including PBF Secretariats)
17	Empowering Gambian youth to voice their demands to duty bearers on issues of governance, reconciliation, and prevention	MO JUSTICE	17-02-2023	17-02-2025	BJL, CRR, WCR, LRR, NBR, URR	\$500,000	ICTJ (CSO)- 500, 000	National reconciliation
18	Strengthening Civil Society Organisations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through implementation of the Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and the TRRC White Paper Recommendations	M. of Gender	25-04-2023	23-04-2026		\$2,500,000	UNFPA (UN GWG)	Conflict prevention/management
	Empowering Communities in The Gambia to prevent, mitigate and resolve land related conflicts exacerbated by climate change	MOA	01-Jan-24	– Dec 2026	LRR, NBR, CRR	\$3,000,000	FAO: \$ 1,400,000 WFP: \$ 950,000 IOM: \$ 650,000	Conflict prevention/management (Climate Security)
	"Empowering Marginalized Young People for Inclusion in Civic Space and Local Infrastructures for Peace" \$1.5M – Jan 2024- Dec 2025	MOYS	01-Jan-24	Dec 2025	Nationwide	\$1,500,000	ActionAid (CSO)1.5m	Conflict prevention/management

\$39,565,078

Broader donor community-supported programming

Project Title	Duration	Theme/issue/ sector (related to peacebuilding needs)	Donor	Budget in USD/ duration (year to year)	Interventions supported
EU-UNDP GREAT initiative - The Gambia's Responsive and Accountable Democratic Transition	2023-2027	TJHR, Rule of Law, Good Governance	EU	9,000,000 EUR	The Constitution and legislation, transitional justice Recommendations, rule of law, human rights mechanisms, and local governance structures and services
EU-support for the consolidation of democratic dispensation in the Gambia (EU-CODE)	2023-2026	TJHR, Rule of Law, Good Gov	EU	1,200,000 EUR	The National Assembly matters, NHRC, Gambia Press Union and media
Support to the Gambian SSR process for improved Security, Migration, and Border Management (Phase II)	2021- 2024	SSR Migration and Border Mgt, RoL	EU	2,000,000 EUR	The Gambia Police Force, security institutions accountability mechanisms, migration management/ border management
EU-UNDP Global partnership on Insider Mediation for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding	2023-2026	Conflict Prevention and Peace building	EU	\$ 258,000	Coordination and capacity strengthening of Insider Mediators to guide the effective implementation of facilitated dialogue and mediation efforts with particular attention to women and youths.
Police Programme Africa – Joint German-EU Support to the Gambia Police Force (Phase II)	2019-2022	SSR, RoL	EU	4,000,000 EUR	infrastructure of targeted police stations outside Greater Banjul Area and capacity of personnel
CSO Watchdog – STAR	2021-2024	CSO capacity, Good gov	EU	400,000 EUR	The capacity enhancement of CSO/NGO on research and evidence-based reporting on NDP, Advocacy to Duty bearers for peacebuilding, gender mainstreaming, climate change, environment, and natural resources management
Support to the Gambian SSR Process (Phase I)	2018-2020	SSR	EU	1,600,000 EUR	The police strategic and operational decisions, accountable security institutions in the Gambia
Support to the governance and effectiveness of the security sector in The Gambia: Support to the Gambia Police Force (Phase I)	2019-2020	SSR	EU	2,000,000 EUR	Selected model regional or district police stations are upgraded or rehabilitated according to minimum standards of best practices. And personnel trained in relevant fields to be able to run the stations according to professional police standards.

Project Title	Duration	Theme/issue/ sector (related to peacebuilding needs)	Donor	Budget in USD/ duration (year to year)	Interventions supported
EU Technical assistance		SSR TJ	EU	2,400,000 EUR	Expert in the areas of SSR, White Paper, business, statistics, PFM
Improving Access to Justice in the Gambia	2023-2025	Rule of Law, TJHR	US State Department/I NL	\$ 1,050,000	Capacity building for justice sector actors, increase understanding of rights and access to justice for victims of crimes in The Gambia
Türkiye-The Gambia Military Cooperation: UN Peacekeeping Military Training for 250 GAF personnel, in Isparta, Türkiye	3 Oct 2021- 25 Dec 2021	Security Sector Capacity Building	Turkish Ministry of National Defence	\$ 1,700,000	250 personnel of the Gambia Armed Forces were trained in Türkiye to contribute to UN Peacekeeping Missions.
Türkiye-The Gambia Military Cooperation: UN Peacekeeping Military Training for 250 GAF personnel, in Isparta, Türkiye	26 Dec 2021- 3 Apr 2022	Security Sector Capacity Building	Turkish Ministry of National Defence	\$ 1,700,000	250 personnel of the Gambia Armed Forces were trained in Türkiye to contribute to UN Peacekeeping Missions.
Türkiye- The Gambia Military Cooperation: <i>Military Consultancy</i>	5 Jan 2018- 2024	Security Sector Capacity Building	Turkish Ministry of National Defence		One Colonel from the Turkish Armed Forces supports the Gambia Armed Forces through military consultancy.
Increasing the Capacity of the Gambia Police: <i>International Events and Summits' Security Training</i>	19 Sept 2021- 24 Sep 2021	Security Sector Capacity Building	Turkish National Police		The Gambia Police Force demonstrates increased capacity to host international events and summits
Increasing the capacity of the Gambia Police Force: <i>VIP Person Protection Training</i>	26 Sept 2021- 7 Oct 2021	Security Sector Capacity Building	Turkish National Police		The Gambia Police Force demonstrates increased capacity to host high-level meetings and events
Increasing the capacity of the Gambia Police Force: <i>Election Security Training</i>	4 Oct 2021- 8 Oct 2021	Rule of Law	Turkish National Police		The Gambia Police Force demonstrates increased capacity to secure free and fair elections
Increasing the capacity of the Gambia Police Force: <i>Anti-smuggling and organised crime training</i>	25 Oct 2021- 29 Oct 2021	Security Sector Capacity Building	Turkish National Police		The Gambia Police Force demonstrates increased capacity to combat anti-smuggling and organised crime
Increasing the capacity of The Gambia Police Force: <i>Ignition Mechanism Training in Explosive Devices</i>	22 Nov 2021- 26 Nov 2021	Security Sector Capacity Building	Turkish National Police		The Gambia Police Force demonstrates increased capacity to combat anti-smuggling and organised crime

Project Title	Duration	Theme/issue/ sector (related to peacebuilding needs)	Donor	Budget in USD/ duration (year to year)	Interventions supported
Increasing the capacity of The Gambia Police Force: <i>Summit Security Training</i>	6 Sep 2021- 17 Sep 2021	Security Sector Capacity Building	Turkish National Police		The Gambia Police Force demonstrates increased capacity to host international events and summits (OIC)
Gambia Fiscal Management Development Project (FMDP)	28 Jul 2020- 30 Jun 2024	fiscal and HR management accountability	World Bank / International Development Association	\$ 20,000,000	Improved fiscal management systems as well as oversight capacity for specified public resources
Gambia Public Administration Modernization Project (PAMP)	30 Sep 2024- 30 Jun 2028	fiscal and HR management accountability	World Bank / International Development Association	\$ 40,000,000	Improved Efficiency and Transparency in the Management of Fiscal and Human Resources as well as Citizen Engagement in Selected Service Delivery Sectors.
Harmonizing and improving statistics in West and Central Africa series of Project 1	1 Jan 2024- 31 Dec 2029	Harmonizing statistics	World Bank / International Development Association	\$30,000	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
Inclusive Growth Promotion Institutional Support Project (IGPISP) - ADF Loan	30 Mar 2017- 30 Jun 2024	Inclusive Growth	ADF loan- 1.58M ADF Grant- 2.08M	\$3,660,000	Inclusive Growth
Debt Management and Domestic Revenue Institutional Support Project - TSF Grant	17Dec 2021- 31 Dec 2023	Debt Management and Domestic Revenue	TSF-Grant- 1M	\$1,000,000	Debt Management and Domestic Revenue

Annex C: Stakeholders: Key Information Interview or multi-stakeholder workshops

	Institution	Type
1	Vice President of the Republic of the Gambia	Govt
2	National Security Advisor	Govt
3	Ministry of Interior	Govt
4	Ministry of Public Service	Govt
5	Ministry of Defence	Govt
6	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Govt
7	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs	Govt
8	Ministry of Lands, Regional. Government & Religious Affairs	Govt
9	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education	Govt
10	Ministry of Justice	Govt
11	Ministry of Youth and Sports	Govt
12	Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources	Govt
14	Ministry of Local Government and Lands	Govt
15	Solicitor General	Govt
16	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency	Govt
17	Gambia Prisons Department	Govt
18	Gambia Police Force	Govt
19	Fire & Rescue Service	Govt
20	Special Adviser on TJ, Ministry of Justice	Govt
21	National Human Rights Commission	Govt
22	Gambia Immigration Department (GID)	Govt
23	Department of Community Development	Govt
24	Independent Electoral Commission	Govt
25	Kanifing Municipal Council	Govt
26	Mansakonko Area Council. Chairman	Govt
28	National Council for Civic Education	Govt

29	National Early Warning and Response Mechanism Coordinating Centre	Govt
31	Ombudsman	Govt
32	Action Aid	Civil Society
33	Activista	Civil Society
34	ADRS	Civil Society
35	African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights	Civil Society
36	Alternative Dispute Resources Secretariat (ADRS)	Civil Society
37	Beakanyang	Civil Society
38	Child Fund The Gambia	Civil Society
39	EFANET	Civil Society
40	FAWEGAM	Civil Society
41	Female Lawyers' Association (FLAG)	Civil Society
42	Future in Our Hands	Civil Society
43	Gambia Association for Local Government	Civil Society
44	Gambia Federation of the Disabled	Civil Society
45	Gambia Food and Nutrition Association	Civil Society
46	Gambia Media Council	Civil Society
47	GSIC	Civil Society
48	Gambia Christian Council	Civil Society
49	GAMCOTRAP	Civil Society
50	GAMNAS	Faith leader
51	GFD	Civil Society
52	GI-TOC	Civil Society
53	GPF	Civil Society
54	IEC	Civil Society
55	Institute for Security Studies West Africa	Civil Society
56	Mutopola	Civil Society
57	National Elections Response Group	Civil Society
58	National Youth Parliament	Civil Society
59	National Youth Council	Civil Society

60	Peace Hubs	Civil Society
61	Peace Network	Civil Society
62	TANGO	Civil Society
63	Team Gomm Sabopa	Civil Society
64	The Point	Civil Society
65	TOSTAN	Civil Society
66	University of the Gambia	Civil Society
67	WANEP	Civil Society
68	WAVE	Civil Society
69	Party Leader, NPP	Political
70	Party Leader, GDC	Political
71	Party Leader, PDOIS	Political
72	Party Leader, UDP	Political
73	Speaker of the National Assembly	Political
74	British High Commission	IC
75	ECOWAS	IC
76	European Union	IC
77	Nigerian Embassy	IC
78	United States Embassy	IC
79	International Organisation of Migration	IC
80	UNICEF	IC
81	United National Office on Drugs and Crime	IC
82	United Nations Capital Development Fund	IC
83	United Nations Development Programme	IC
84	United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation	IC
85	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel	IC
86	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights	IC
87	United Nations Population Fund	IC
88	World Bank	IC
89	World Food Programme	IC