



2021 COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS.

An analysis of The Gambia's progress toward the SDGs.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01** Executive summary.
- 03** Introduction.
- 04** The Gambia's development context.
- 08** The Gambia's progress toward the SDGs.
- 22** The Gambia's most left behind groups of people.
- 25** Multidimensional risks to The Gambia achieving the SDGs.
- 29** Challenges and opportunities for achieving the SDGs.

Executive Summary.

The Gambia is on track to achieve only two SDGs.

Achieving two SDGs will only help a few people, while most Gambians will still not have basic things like water and food.

The SDGs must be rescued for every Gambian to have a better life.

The eight things the Gambian government must invest in to rescue the SDGs.

01 **The government must invest in SDG data because the country faces difficulty in meeting SDGs due to lack of data, which impedes the ability to set priorities and track progress.**

02 **The government needs to make it cheaper for people living outside of The Gambia to send money back to their families.**
Even though the Gambia gets a lot of money from Gambians living in other countries, it's costly. It costs twice as much to send money to The Gambia than any other place in the world. If it were cheaper to send money to The Gambia, more money would flow into the country and help the economy grow.

03 **In addition, the government must provide more women with access to reproductive health services and invest in good education and healthcare to manage urbanisation and population growth.**

04 **Furthermore, the government must continue making democratic reforms to give citizens a voice in their country's development and ensure that public officials are held accountable for their actions, preventing The Gambia from repeating past mistakes.**

05 Equally important, the Gambian government needs to provide an environment conducive for private sector growth by investing in reliable electricity supply and increasing access to credit.

As the country's private sector grows, more jobs will be generated, lowering unemployment, poverty, and irregular migration.

06 Similarly, The Gambian government and its development partners must immediately invest in climate change resilience and sustainable food systems because climate change and environmental degradation are the country's most significant long-term development risks.

Climate change is causing more floods, droughts, and windstorms, making it harder for people to grow food and increasing forced displacement and poverty.

07 The government must prioritise leaving no one behind and ensuring that every Gambian benefits from development by focusing on improving the living conditions of the country's most disadvantaged citizens.

08 Likewise, The Gambia must protect its children and empower its women if it wants to achieve sustainable growth.

Women and children, who make up 77 per cent of the population in The Gambia, fare the worst when it comes to SDGs. They are the poorest, hungriest, most malnourished, and least educated group.

Chapter 1: Introducing the Common Country Analysis (CCA) report.

What is the CCA?

The 2021 UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) is a report that outlines what The Gambia can do to speed up its slow progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is a report about how the country can stop more people from becoming poor by rescuing the SDGs.

Who can use the CCA?

The CCA is for anyone who wants to know about Gambia's development, including policymakers, policy analysts, lecturers, and students.

For example, the CCA allows the UN to learn more about what the country has done and what it needs so that the help the UN gives The Gambia is what the country needs.

How did we compile the CCA?

Besides desk research, the CCA report methodology included stakeholder consultations and focus group discussions.

How did we deal with data challenges?

We tried to use official statistics, but this was impossible.

Like many developing countries, The Gambia lacks sufficient data to track each SDG indicator. The 2020 VNR report shows the government has data on 78 of the 231 SDG indicators. There is no data to track SDGs 10 and 12. Similarly, there is only 25 per cent of data to track SDGs 1 and 8, just 8 per cent of data to follow SDGs 11 and 15 and only 22 per cent of data to track SDGs 16 and 14.

When government statistics were unavailable, we used information from several sources.

To compare The Gambia to other countries, we looked at data from the World Bank. To see how The Gambia's monetary and fiscal policies have changed over time, we looked at data from the IMF. And to understand what people in The Gambia think about development and democracy, we looked at survey data from Afrobarometer.

Where appropriate, we used statistics from local NGOs such as the Gambian NGO Mbama Care Foundation and international NGOs like the Borgen project.

We gathered information by holding focus group discussions when no one else had the information.

Chapter 2: The Gambia's development context.

A democracy with a troubled governance history that has led to long-term socio-economic problems.

This chapter talks about why many people live in poverty in The Gambia.

Background: Country facts.

The Gambia is a small country surrounded by Senegal, except for an 80-kilometre-long coast along the Atlantic Ocean.

Ten per cent of the country's 10,679 square kilometres is water. In addition, The Gambia has an exclusive fishing zone of 200 nautical miles.

The Gambia's population is growing quickly. According to the last census in 2013, there were 1.9 million people in The Gambia. The United Nations estimates that 2.6 million people now live in the country. Most people (51%) are female.

The country has a young population; nearly half its people (49 per cent) are under 18. Despite its tiny size, The Gambia has one of Africa's fastest population growth rates (3.1 per cent), which will see the population double by 2035, according to the 2020 World Population Prospects.

The Gambia has been a member of the UN since September 21, 1965. It also belongs to the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). A former British colony, the country is also a member of the Commonwealth.

The Gambia's current development problems are because of poor governance in the last past.

Twenty-two years of poor political leadership under Yahya Jammeh hurt economic growth.

Corruption festered under Yahya Jammeh's dictatorship.

As a result, the government did not invest enough money in education. The lack of investment in education is why most people in The Gambia can expect to spend just two years in school. It is also why six out of every 10 Gambians have not completed primary school.

Without enough skilled people, the Gambian economy went downhill, and the number of unemployed young people rose. As the country's population grew from 1.1 million in 1994 to 2.2 million in 2017, the number of young people without jobs rose.

In the end, many Gambian youths were unhappy with how the country was run, so they decided to leave illegally. By 2014, Gambia entered the list of the top 10 countries of irregular migrants to Europe in 2014. [1] [2] [3]

The Gambian government has unrelentingly championed democracy since 2017.

- Between 2017 and 2022, a truth, reconciliation, and reparations commission (TRRC) examined past human rights violations, sanctioned human rights violators, and advised the government on safeguarding human rights in The Gambia.
- In 2017, the government established a human rights commission to protect the rights of Gambians.
- In 2018, the government adopted a new national security policy and plan and passed an access to information Act.

The Gambia actively takes part in international efforts to safeguard human rights.

The government has ratified several international and continental treaties to show its commitment to human rights.

However, these treaties will only become law in The Gambia when parliament incorporates or domesticates them into Gambian law, which has not happened for several treaties, including the international conventions preventing forced disappearances and torture.

[1] <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Working-Paper-12-The-Gambia.pdf>, accessed 19 September 2022.

[2] <https://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/no-one-leaves-home-unless-home-mouth-shark>, accessed 22 July 2020.

[3] Many Gambians have died trying to get to Europe using backways. According to the IOM, between 2000 and 2014, 31,597 Gambians died while trying to migrate irregularly, leaving their families without breadwinners

The Gambia is learning how to protect human rights from other countries. [4]

All 193 UN member states have evaluated the country's human rights record three times, in 2010, 2014, and 2019.

Even though the government is open to peer review, the 2019 National Human Rights Commission report says the country has several outstanding human rights reports to international treaty bodies

The Gambia is also making strides in improving its human rights record since 2017.

For example, in 2021, the country reported, for the first in 18 years, how it is implementing the African Charter on Human Rights. This is a significant step forward for the country, and it promises to improve the lives of its citizens.

Moreover, in 2018, the Gambian government accepted almost all (93%) of the suggestions made by UN member states to improve its human rights record. In contrast, in 2013, the Jammeh regime only accepted half of the proposals UN member states gave it.

Good governance is now a key feature of The Gambia[5].

The Gambia is on course to become a thriving democracy, with high citizen satisfaction and trust in democratic institutions.

Most Gambians think their country is a democracy where they can speak their minds and vote for the political leaders they want. [6]

Religious leaders are the most trusted group in the country. [7]

The Gambia has a thriving democracy, where citizens participate in community meetings to deliberate on pressing issues.

[4] Universal Periodic Review

[5] All statistics quoted in this paragraph are from the 2021 The Gambia Afrobarometer survey results.

[6] Ninety-one per cent of Gambians surveyed in the 2021 Gambia Afrobarometer survey said they believe their country is a democracy, 70 per cent said they are free to express their opinions, and 87 per cent of Gambians feel they are free to vote for any political candidate.

[7] According to the 2021 The Gambia Afrobarometer survey, 50 per cent approve of the president's performance, 46 per cent approve parliament's performance and 77 per cent trust religious leaders.

The Gambian economy needs to grow much faster than its population.

The population in The Gambia has grown faster than the economy in the last 22 years, trapping the country in a vicious cycle.

Rapid population growth rates have meant the government could not provide quality essential basic services for everyone, leading to low educational attainment and poor health care services, resulting in low labour productivity.

Public health shocks have been the Gambia's major economic challenge since 2015. The lockdowns and travel bans in response to the Ebola virus epidemic and the global Covid-19 pandemic have smothered the tourism-dependent economy.

Life is hard for the average Gambian.

The Gambia's economy is small and undiversified. Basic services account for 53 per cent of GDP. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries account for 21 per cent of GDP, while industry accounts for 18 per cent.

Most Gambian children begin their lives vulnerable. Most Gambian children do not have birth certificates, which means they are not officially recognised as being born. [8] This makes it harder for them to go to school. It also makes it easier for people to abuse or hurt them by making them work or get married when they are still children. These children are prone to child marriage, child labour, violence, abuse, and exploitation since they lack legal documentation of their existence and the ability to establish their age.

The average Gambian's standard of living is poor. According to the 2019 demographic health survey (DHS), only three per cent of Gambians have health insurance. Most households still do not own modern household goods. According to the 2019 demographic health survey, only 44 per cent of Gambian homes have refrigerators, and 62 per cent have radios. The 2021 Afrobarometer survey also shows that only 17 per cent of homes own a computer, laptop, or tablet, and 60 per cent of Gambians have never used the internet.

[8] According to the 2019 DHS, 53 per cent of Gambian children under the age of five do not have a birth certificate.

Chapter 3: The Gambia's progress toward the SDGs.

This chapter shows The Gambia's slow progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The Gambia lacks sufficient data to track SDG progress effectively.

The Gambia must urgently build capacity to monitor all SDG targets and indicators. According to the 2020 VNR report, The Gambia has data on just one-third of the total SDG indicators, 78 out of the 230 SDG indicators. The country has no data to measure SDGs 10 and 12, only 8% of the data to measure SDGs 11 and 15, and less than a third of the data to measure SDGs 8, 1, 14 and 16 (See Table 2 below).

SDG	Total number of indicators	Progress	Number of indicators with data in The Gambia	Percent of available SDG indicators in The Gambia	5Ps
SDG10	14	No data	0	0%	Prosperity
SDG12	12	No data	0	0%	Planet
SDG11	13	Not enough data	1	8%	Planet
SDG15	13	Not enough data	1	8%	Planet
SDG16	23	On course	5	22%	Peace
SDG14	9	Significant challenges	2	22%	Planet
SDG1	12	Moderate progress, challenges remain	3	25%	People
SDG8	16	Significant challenges	4	25%	Prosperity
SDG13	6	Significant challenges	2	33%	Planet
SDG9	12	Significant challenges	4	33%	Prosperity
SDG17	20	Significant challenges	8	40%	Partnerships
SDG2	14	Significant challenges	7	50%	People
SDG3	28	Significant challenges	14	50%	People
SDG5	11	Moderate progress, challenges remain	7	64%	People
SDG6	11	Significant challenges	8	73%	People
SDG4	12	Moderate progress, challenges remain	9	75%	People
SDG7	4	Significant challenges	3	75%	Prosperity

Table 2: Available SDG Indicators in The Gambia according to the 2020 VNR Report.

The Gambia is on track to attain just two SDGs.

According to the 2021 Sustainable Development Report, The Gambia will only meet two SDGs (SDG13 and 16). The report says the country has made minimal progress toward four SDGs (SDGs 1, 4, and 15), and there has been no progress toward SDGs 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11.



People



Overall, the country has made some progress in **SDG1, SDG4, and SDG5**. On the other hand, progress in **SDG2, SDG3 and SDG6** has stalled.



SDG 1: End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere

The country is making slow and uneven progress in reducing poverty.

According to the 2015 integrated household survey, 48.6 per cent of Gambians live in poverty. Poverty is predominantly a rural problem; the rural poverty rate is more than twice as high as the urban rate (31.6 per cent). Not only is poverty twice as high in the rural areas, but it also increased by 5.3 per cent between 2010 and 2015, while urban poverty declined 1.8 per cent over the same period.

The global multidimensional poverty index (MPI) shows that a huge proportion of Gambians, 42 per cent, are multidimensionally poor. Most of these people live on less than \$2 a day. They have less than five years of schooling, do not have health insurance, and live in homes without running water or electricity. The index also reveals that multidimensional poverty is more common in rural areas (45 per cent) than in urban areas (18 per cent).



SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

Food security remains elusive in The Gambia.

According to a World Food Program (WFP) report in The Gambia, seven out of every ten households in the country do not have enough food because of COVID-19, high food prices, windstorms, or rainstorms. [9]

Shocks because of climate change and pandemics like Ebola and COVID-19 have driven food insecurity and malnutrition. The WFP report also shows that households in The Gambia are vulnerable to shocks. Covid-19, high food prices, windstorms, and floods were the main reasons families could not feed themselves in 2020 and 2021. Rural households were the most affected because 70 per cent of rural people experienced at least two of the shocks, compared to 40 per cent of urban people.

[9] The 2021 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA). The report investigates how many people don't have enough food, why they don't have enough food and what might happen if they do not have enough food.

The report also makes some disturbing revelations about the state of child nutrition in The Gambia. Nineteen per cent of children in the country are malnourished. Malnutrition makes children weak, and they get sick more often. When they get sick, they do not receive the proper nutrition. If they do not receive the proper nutrient, they will not be as intelligent as they could be as adults.



SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

The government has made progress in ensuring healthy lives and improving the well-being of Gambians, and this success has been evident in three areas:

1. The number of children who die from diseases like pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis has decreased by 80 per cent since the government started giving children a vaccine that protects them from getting pneumococcal infections. [10]
2. Access to antenatal care improved. According to the 2020 Demographic Health Survey, 98 per cent of women who gave birth received antenatal care from qualified clinicians. As a result, the proportion of children born in health facilities increased from 63 per cent in 2019 to 84 per cent in 2021.
3. The Gambia is leading global malaria elimination research. Scientists in the country are trying to change the DNA of mosquitoes so they cannot spread diseases anymore. [12]

The government's efforts to improve health and well-being have stalled in at least four areas:

1. Maternal mortality rates are too high. With 289 out of every 100,000 women that give birth dying from pregnancy-related causes, the country's maternal mortality rate is over four times the SDG target of fewer than seventy deaths per 100,000 births. [13]
2. Infant and child mortality has been increasing. The mortality rate for children under five is double the SDG target, at 56 deaths per 1,000 live births, while the mortality rate for new-born babies is 4 per cent higher, at 29 deaths per 1,000 live births.
3. The government must prioritise fighting HIV/AIDS. Twenty-eight thousand (28,236) people live with HIV, of whom only 12,100 know their status, and less than one-third get antiretroviral medication. Like global trends, more women (54 per cent) than men (46 per cent) have HIV.

[10] According to the Borgen Project, the death rate for all ages fell from fifteen per 1,000 in 1998 to eight per 1,000 in 2017.

[11] <https://genome.cshlp.org/content/30/10/1533.full>, accessed 23 March 2020.

[12] <https://genome.cshlp.org/content/30/10/1533.full>, accessed 23 March 2020.

[13] Retrieved on 28 September 2021 from: Maternal Mortality in The Gambia – Mbama Care Foundation

Furthermore, the 2018 Integrated Biological, Behavioural Surveillance Study (IBBS) found that HIV prevalence among female sex workers fell from 15.9 per cent in 2011 to 11 per cent in 2018.

During the same period, the HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men (MSM) nearly quadrupled from 9.8 per cent to 35.5 per cent.

Fourth, The Gambia needs quality and accessible healthcare for everyone to continue seeing healthy progress as a nation.



SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Despite progress in guaranteeing quality education for all, The Gambia is unlikely to meet most SDG 4 targets.

The government has made a lot of progress toward SDG4 by building more schools, hiring more teachers, and increasing the number of girls in schools.

The country has many more schools and teachers than it had in 2010. [14] More schools and teachers have also allowed 74 per cent [15] of primary-school-aged children to go to school. More children in primary schools have led to a rise in the per cent of children finishing primary school from 75 per cent in 2015 to 89 per cent in 2019.

More children finishing primary school has contributed to an increase in literacy rates from 52 per cent in 2015 to 56 per cent in 2019 and a 10 per cent increase in the number of girls attending secondary schools, going from 40 per cent to 50 per cent.

However, achieving SDG4 in The Gambia is challenging because of declining upper basic education completion rates and the intersection of socio-economic class, gender, and location inequality.

[14] The Ministry of Education says that between 2010 and 2020, the number of schools for lower basic education grew by 75%, while the number of schools for upper basic education and senior secondary schools grew by 100%. At the same time, the number of teachers in lower basic education schools rose three times, while those in upper basic education and secondary schools rose four times as many.

[15] According to the 2020 DHS, 74 per cent of children attend primary school.

1. **Upper basic education completion rates decreased from 60 per cent to 56 per cent between 2016 and 2019.**
2. **Quality education is expensive and poor families cannot afford it.** Only 68% of poor children finish primary school, while 91% of rich children do. Only 29% of poor children finish upper basic education, while 64% of rich children do.
3. **Third, endemic gender inequalities make it difficult for everyone to have a quality education.** Although national literacy rates increased by 4 per cent, only 47 per cent of women are literate, compared to 67 per cent of men. Men are more likely than women to receive an education. According to the 2020 DHS, on average, men attend school longer (seven years) than women (six years). As a result, 39 per cent of women have never attended school, compared to just 35 per cent of men (2020 DHS).
4. **People living in rural areas do not have equal access to quality education as their urban counterparts in The Gambia.** The 2020 DHS shows that 11 per cent more children in urban areas (80 per cent) go to primary school than children in rural areas (71 per cent). As a result, men in urban areas spend eight years in school, while their counterparts in rural areas only spend three.



SDG 5: Advance gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The Gambia's accomplishments toward gender equality are insufficient for the country to meet SDG5.

The Gambian government has committed to ensuring that men and women are treated equally, including ratifying the "international bill of women's rights" (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol on women's rights - the African Union's instrument for protecting women's rights across Africa.

The country's Women's Act of 2012 protects the rights of women. These rights include the right to health, protection against discrimination, and marital consent. The Women's Act also guarantees that girls who marry or have children can remain in school.

In addition, the government outlawed female genital mutilation (FGM) in 2015. Furthermore, the 2013 Sexual Offences Act protects victims of sexual offences, and the 2013 Domestic Abuse Act protects survivors of domestic violence.

Antenatal care has improved, allowing all women who give birth to receive antenatal care from a skilled person.

However, at least five factors are hampering gender equality in The Gambia.

- 1. According to the UNDP Human Development Report (HDR), The Gambia is the fourteenth least gender-equal country globally.** The 2020 HDR shows that the proportion of women with secondary education (31.5 per cent) in The Gambia is 12.5 per cent less than men (44 per cent). In addition, more (18 per cent more) men are available to work than women (labour force participation rate). The HDR also estimates that women earn 36 per cent less than men (GNI per capita).
- 2. Many women are still denied access to reproductive health care services.** According to the 2020 DHS, the demand for contraception increased from 34 per cent in 2013 to 43 per cent in 2019. Yet just 19 per cent of women use contraception.
- 3. Patriarchal beliefs and attitudes make it harder for The Gambia to reach its goal of equal rights for men and women.** For example, three-quarters of women have had their genitals cut even though it is against the law. Also, nearly twice as many women as men think it is okay for a husband to beat his wife. [1]
- 4. The legislative framework promoting women needs reform.** There is no law against sexual harassment at work, and no law says everyone should get the same pay for the same work. Also, sons and daughters don't have the same rights to their parents' assets, and male and female surviving spouses don't have the same rights to their spouses' assets.
- 5. The proportion of women in positions of authority and influence is declining.** Only 18 per cent of all managers in The Gambia are female. Women make up only 9 per cent of the national assembly, while the proportion of female cabinet members has fallen from 21 per cent to 14 per cent since 2021.



SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainability of water and sanitation for all.

More Gambians have access to safe water and toilets than ever before. The However, the progress is not enough for The Gambia to achieve SDG6.

Unfortunately, the people who need help the most are often the ones who get left behind, emphasising. Therefore, everyone needs to work together to close the gap and ensure that everyone has access to clean water and improved sanitation. Only then can we hope to achieve SDG6.

[16] The Gambia 2018 MICS survey, <https://www.unicef.org/gambia/reports/gambia-multiple-indicator-cluster-survey-2018>, accessed 19 September 2022. Three-quarters of women have undergone female genital mutilation. Ninety-two per cent of Gambian women know that FGM is illegal.

The country has made considerable progress in providing safe drinking water to all citizens.

According to the 2020 DHS, 95 per cent of Gambians now have access to better water sources, up from 86 per cent in 2010.

Similarly, **more Gambians have better and safer toilets.** According to the 2020 Demographic Health Survey (DHS), 72 per cent of the population now has improved toilet facilities, a ten per cent improvement from what it was in 2013.

Unfortunately, many people in The Gambia don't have clean water or good toilets.

People who live in cities have a much better chance of getting clean water to drink and having a toilet than people who live in villages. Most people in cities have clean water piped into their homes. Most people in villages have to walk a long way to get water and have to use outhouses that are not very clean.

Whereas 61 per cent of city dwellers have piped water, only 12 per cent of rural dwellers have. Similarly, while 80 per cent of city dwellers have improved toilet facilities, only 44 per cent of rural residents do.

Similarly, the rich and poor access to improved sanitation varies by 16 per cent. All (97 per cent) of the wealthy have improved drinking water, compared to 80 per cent of the poor. The same applies to improved sanitation access. While 83 per cent of the wealthy have improved sanitation, only 32 per cent of the poor have improved sanitation.

Prosperity



Overall, progress toward SDGs 7, 8, 9, and 11 has stalled. Furthermore, there is no data to track progress toward SDG10.



SDG 7: : Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy.

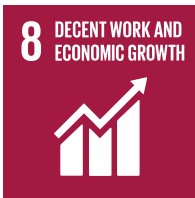
Despite advances in electricity access, The Gambia will not attain SDG7.

The Gambia has made noteworthy progress in ensuring that all citizens have access to energy. According to the World Bank, access to electricity has increased by 33 per cent since 2010.

The problem in The Gambia is that the power goes out often. Blackouts are a big problem in The Gambia. In fact, businesses here lose up to 12% of their profits due to power outages. That's twice as much as businesses in other African countries. This is a huge problem for companies and costs them a lot of money. [17]

Equitable access to energy remains elusive in The Gambia because of at least two reasons:

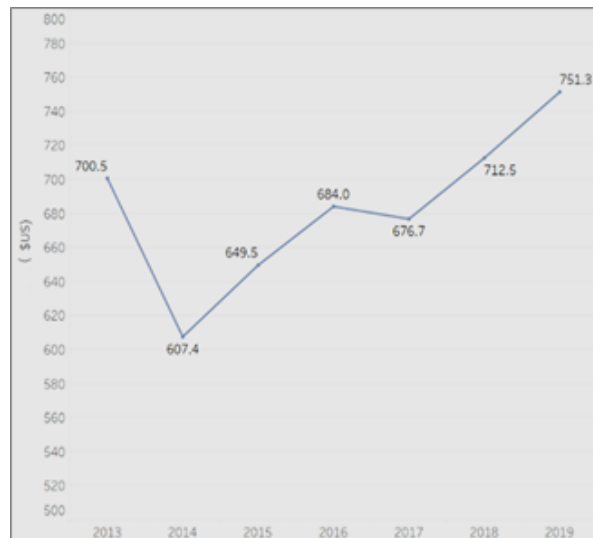
- 1.The U.S. Department of Commerce says that the Gambia has one of the most expensive electricity prices in the world. [18] As a result, most of the poor do not have electricity.
- 2.Over three-quarters of urban dwellers have access to electricity, a stark contrast to the rural population, where only 27 per cent have access.



SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

The Gambia's economic growth over the past decade has been disappointing. .

According to the World Bank, the Gambia's per capita gross domestic product decreased from \$860 in 2010 to \$732 in 2018. Average GDP per capita growth fell 29 per cent from 2010 to 2014 but rose 10 per cent between 2014 and 2018. According to the IMF, the economy of pre-Covid Gambia was expanding. The GDP increased by 6.2 per cent in 2019 because of a peaceful political transition.



The Gambian economy is transforming. Crops have historically been the second-largest sector, accounting for a fifth of GDP at its peak in 2010. Things have been changing since 2005, and by 2017, the crop sector's GDP contribution had fallen to 9 per cent, pushing it from second to third place. Simultaneously, the construction industry jumped from sixth to second largest in the economy, as its share of the GDP more than doubled between 2010 and 2017.

[17] World Bank Development Indicators database. Electricity shortage is the second-most severe concern for enterprises in The Gambia.

[18] <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/gambia-energy>. Accessed 20 May 2022.

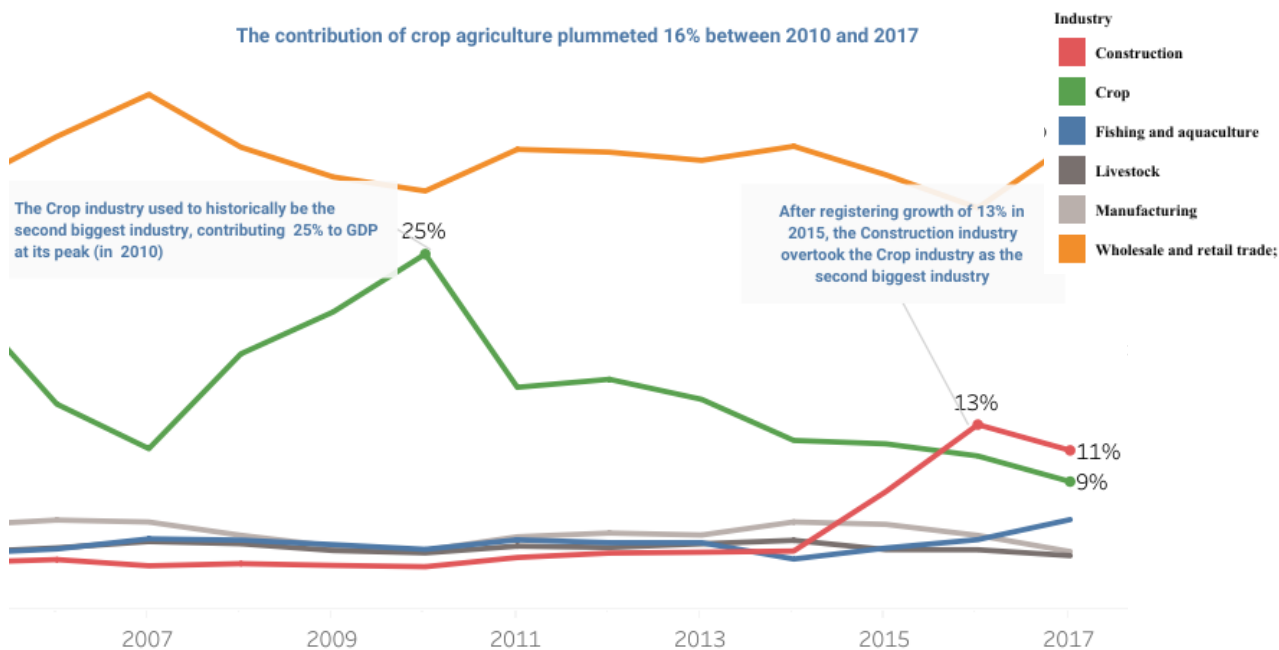


Figure 6: Changes in the composition of the Gambian economy (2005 to 2017).

Youth unemployment is a key driver of irregular migration in The Gambia. According to the 2018 Gambia Labour Force Survey (LFS), 56 per cent of Gambian youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are not enrolled in any job, education, or training (NEET). These young people are most at risk of using irregular migration routes.

Sixty-three per cent of Gambians who leave the country do so using irregular means, with the majority (59 per cent) citing a lack of jobs as their reason. The Gambia's unemployment rate increased from 29.8 per cent in 2012 to 35.2 per cent in 2018, with rural dwellers experiencing higher unemployment (76.6 per cent) than urban households (23.4 per cent). Similarly, youth unemployment has increased by over 6 per cent, from 35.3 per cent in 2012 to 41.5 per cent in 2018.



SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialisation, and foster innovation.

The Gambia has a long way to go before meeting SDG 9.

The proportion of rural residents living close to a paved road is the only SDG 9 indicator where The Gambia is doing well. According to the 2019 Afrobarometer survey, 46 per cent of rural Gambians live within 5 km of a paved road; this is more than double the 24 per cent average of the 34 African countries surveyed.

The Gambia doesn't make many things, so there aren't many manufacturing jobs in the country. The sector only makes up 4 per cent of GDP, which is less than the average of 11 per cent for all of Africa.

Access to credit is the primary obstacle for small and medium-sized businesses. The 2018 Gambia Enterprise survey classifies 92 per cent of all Gambian businesses as small or medium-sized (64 per cent small-scale and 28 per cent medium-scale). While nearly all small businesses (92 per cent) have a bank account, only one in ten small businesses in the Gambia has a bank loan. This is far lower than the African average of 24 per cent. In addition, three times (6 per cent) as many small businesses are bank-financed in Africa, compared to The Gambia (2 per cent).

Cell phone coverage and use are growing in The Gambia. Based on the 2019 Gambia Afrobarometer survey, nearly all Gambians (95 per cent) live in areas with cell phone network service. The survey also estimated that most Gambians own over one cell phone, with 85 per cent of Gambians using their cell phone daily.

According to the 2019 Afrobarometer survey, only 29 per cent of Gambians use the internet daily. This is low compared to other countries in Africa and the world. In rural areas, only 10 per cent of people use the internet daily. In addition, 74 per cent of Gambians have never used the internet.



SDG 10: Reduce Inequality Within and Among Countries.

According to the 2020 VNR report and the 2021 Sustainable Development Report, there is insufficient data to monitor progress toward SDG 10 in The Gambia.

Only two of the fourteen SDG10 indicators are available. They are:

1. Whether the country has a migration policy, and
2. How high the cost of sending money to the country is.

According to the migration national voluntary review, The Gambia has been implementing a national migration policy that is mindful of the importance of migration and provides a national framework for a progressive migration management system since 2020.

The Gambia needs to lower the cost of sending money to The Gambia because it is one of the most expensive places to send money. Sending money to The Gambia can cost 13% of the total amount.

Planet

There is not much information about how well The Gambia is doing to keep the planet from getting worse, so it is hard to judge how well it is doing.



According to the 2020 Gambia VNR report, The Gambia monitors only 14 per cent of planet indicators. There is no data to monitor SDG 12, and just 8% of SDG 11 and SDG 15 indicators have data.



SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

Progress towards achieving SDG 11 has stalled.

The country's capacity to deal with disasters has not increased. As a result, frequent natural disasters are affecting more people. According to the NDMA, the number of persons affected by natural disasters in The Gambia tripled between 2016 and 2019. The result is that the number of people directly affected by a disaster increased over thirteen times, from fewer than one person (0.1) per 100,000 in 2016 to 13 people per 100,000 in 2019.

People living in slums are most susceptible. According to the World Bank development indicators, 27 per cent of Gambia's urban population live in slums.



SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

According to The Gambia VNR and the 2021 Sustainable Development Report, there is no data to monitor this SDG in The Gambia.



SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change.

According to the 2021 Sustainable Development Report, The Gambia is on track to achieve SDG 13. The Gambia is one of many countries that has set ambitious plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

The Gambia is a signatory to the international agreement to protect wetlands (the Ramsar Convention).

Climate change, overfishing, and illegal fishing are reducing fish stocks at an unsustainable rate, threatening fishing- an essential source of income for many Gambians.

The Gambia Ministry of Fisheries thinks that the maximum sustainable yield (the most fish that can be caught every year) for fish that live and eat away from the bottom of the sea or lake (pelagic species) is between 50,000MT and 60,000MT.

The estimated maximum sustainable yearly capture for fish living and feeding at or near the bottom of lakes and oceans (demersal species) is lower, ranging from 8,000MT to 9,000MT.



SDG 15: Protect, restore, and promote the use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

There is insufficient data to monitor progress on SDG 15 in The Gambia. According to the 2020 VNR report, Gambia has information on just one of the thirteen SDG 15 indicators, which makes it hard to assess the country's progress in SDG 15.

Despite the lack of data, **The Gambia may not achieve SDG 15 targets** because, although the country has protected forest areas, The Gambia is one of the most significant sources of illegally traded, nearly extinct rosewood tree species.

Peace



SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The Gambia can achieve SDG 16.

The country is ranked 50th globally (8th in Africa) in the 2022 global press freedom ranking.

If the Gambia is to meet SDG 16, **it must invest more in improving the lives of children.** Many Gambian children face exclusion from society since their births are not registered. According to the 2019 demographic and health survey, just 59% of births are officially registered in The Gambia, down from 72% in 2013. [1]

The government must also improve budget execution, fight corruption, and enforce human rights to achieve SDG 16. Two SDG 16 indicators show this. First, the ministry of finance reports that slightly over half (54 per cent) of the budget is spent on what was initially approved. Second, there is a perception that corruption is high in the country, ranking it 102 out of 180 in the global corruption perception index.

Partnerships



SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

Progress towards SDG 17 has stalled despite resilient diaspora transfers because of the COVID-19 pandemic and high debt levels.

The COVID-19 virus has stopped the Gambian economy from getting better. Before the COVID-19 virus, the Gambian economy was doing well and its GDP was growing by 6% annually. The IMF estimates that the credit to businesses practically ceased because of the pandemic, and the economy shrank by 0.2% in 2020, forcing the government to spend more money to respond to the pandemic.

The steady flow of private remittances during the pandemic shows the country's reliance on remittances.

In 2019, Gambians living abroad sent over seven times more money to The Gambia than foreign investors invested in the country - making remittances the primary source of income for 26 per cent of families in The Gambia. [20]

According to the IMF, personal remittances inflows peaked at US\$400 million in 2020 or 22 per cent of GDP in 2020. The IMF projects remittances will decrease to 17 per cent

[19] Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Labour estimates that 23% of working people in The Gambia are children. In addition, most Gambian children are hit by their caregivers. According to the 2020 VNR report, 89% of Gambian children aged under 15 years are being hit by their caregivers.

[20] <https://remitscope.org/africa/gambia>

of GDP in 2022 before increasing slightly to 18 per cent of GDP in 2026. [21]

Despite robust remittance inflows and sound fiscal and monetary management of the economy, a weak revenue base and high debt levels undermine sustainable development in The Gambia.

The government is expecting to earn \$482 million in 2022. This is a lot of money, but it's less than the \$2.7 billion that the world bank says is the average amount African countries earn in a year. [22]

IMF estimates that government revenue, including grants, accounts for 26 per cent of GDP. The revenues comprise tax revenue and grants, which account for 11 per cent each, and non-tax revenue (4 per cent). Gambia's tax revenue as a percentage of GDP is lower than the World Bank estimated African average of 17 per cent.

The country's primary source of grant funding changes yearly. It includes the African Development Bank, World Bank, European Union, China, Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), the World Bank, and the Global Fund. The ministry of finance reported that the AfDB and China accounted for 61 per cent of grant funding to The Gambia in 2019. In 2020, the EU, China and the World Bank accounted for 55 per cent of grant funders, while in 2021, the World Bank, EU, and China account for 49 per cent of grant funders.

While overseas development aid has grown over 70 per cent from 2016, The Gambia accounts for less than 1 per cent of total ODA to Africa.

The World Bank and the IMF deem The Gambia's debt sustainable. The Gambia's public debt has declined from 83 per cent of GDP in 2019 to 77 per cent in 2022. The IMF and World Bank expect it to shrink to 53 per cent of GDP by 2026. Four out of every ten dollars of public debt in The Gambia is money that The Gambia owes to other countries (external debt). Treasury notes account for almost all domestic debt and 30 per cent of public debt.

[21] <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2021/12/10/The-Gambia-Article-IV-Consultation-Third-Review-under-the-Extended-Credit-Facility-510911>.

[22] World Bank Development Indicators.

Chapter 4: The Gambia's most left behind groups of people.

This chapter identifies the country's poorest and most vulnerable groups in The Gambia.

Women

The Gambia is one of the least gender-equal countries in the world, and women trail behind in most of the 78 SDG indicators available in The Gambia.

There are many examples of why women are the most left behind. According to the 2019 DHS, more women (39%) than men (35%) have no formal education, resulting in fewer women (47%) being literate than males (67 per cent). Furthermore, the 2022 CFSVA states that female-headed households are more food insecure in the country. In addition, the Gambia Labour Force Survey shows that more men (275,939) than women (155,229) have jobs.

According to the United Nations Development Programme, women in the Gambia earn less money than men for the same work, 38 cents for every \$1 that men make. In addition, women make up 69% of Gambians who do not have jobs, while men make up 65% of Gambians who don't have jobs are men. That means that more women do not have jobs than men. Gambian women are also less likely to have land, money, or technology and are more vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Children

Children in The Gambia are the second most disadvantaged members of society. According to the 2018 MICS survey, 23 per cent of Gambian children live in the poorest households. They rarely have access to healthcare or education and are often malnourished. According to the World Bank, 40% of children in the country do not get the education and health care they need.[23]

Some people take advantage of religious beliefs to abuse children. An example is when children go to live with a Marabout who teaches them the Koran. When the children live with the Marabout, they sometimes live in poor conditions and run away. When the children run away, the police sometimes arrest them and put the children in jail with adults because there is no place to keep the children. This puts children in danger.

[23] The Gambia ranks 130th out of 157 countries on the 2018 Human Capital Index of the World Bank.

Violence, corporal punishment, female genital mutilation, and child labour are too common for children in The Gambia. According to the 2019 DHS, 89 per cent of children under 15 years have experienced violence. In addition, 46 per cent of girls under 14 years have undergone FGM. Furthermore, child labour is prevalent among male children, with the 2018 Gambia LFS estimating that 75% of male children under the age of 15 in the country work.

Youth

About 60 per cent of Gambia's impoverished are under the age of 20, making youth another group that has been left behind in The Gambia.

The Gambia won't meet the SDGs if youth unemployment stays high. The youth unemployment rate is too high. Most youth (57%) are neither employed nor in school, and 67% of urban youth have given up looking for a job.[24] In addition, nearly all (99%) of the country's youth do not save or borrow, leaving them vulnerable to shocks.

The Gambia will also not meet the SDGs unless more youth have access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services.

Migrants

Another group left behind in The Gambia is people who have tried to migrate illegally. According to the 2018 Gambia Labour Force Survey, most Gambians (63 per cent) migrate irregularly in search of a better life. They are often unemployed (55 per cent) or have low-paying jobs (25 per cent).

Most irregular migrants are male. According to the 2018 Gambia Labour Force Survey, 99 per cent of irregular migrants leaving the country were men because most male youth (56 per cent) were unemployed and not in school.

People living with HIV/AIDS

People living with HIV face stigmatisation and discrimination. Access to HIV/AIDS services is significantly low for people living with HIV especially those are also migrants, sex workers, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender people, truck drivers, and prisoners because of stigmatisation.

[24] 2018 Gambia Labour Survey

People with disabilities

People with disabilities are often left out of things like policymaking and planning because of two reasons. First, the government has not collected data on disabled people in over 25 years, which makes it challenging to understand the needs of this population and how best to support them. Second, disabled people are left behind is because of certain cultural practices and beliefs stigmatising the disabled.

People who are gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTQI).

In The Gambia, people who are gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTQI) have a hard time. They are not treated equally by the law. They can be arrested and put in prison for being gay. The law says they can be punished for up to 14 years. That's a long time. They can't get married or access essential health care or legal aid.

The elderly

Routinely, older people are excluded and marginalised in The Gambia during discussions, plans, and implementations of development—resulting in suffering, especially for those living in rural areas.

Chapter 5: Multidimensional risks to The Gambia achieving the SDGs.

This chapter examines the risks to Gambia's achievement of the 2030 Agenda using the eleven of the twelve risk dimensions of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG).

Multidimensional risks that the country is least capable of coping with.

The first category is five multidimensional risks that the country is least capable of managing:

(1) environment and climate risks, (2) economic stability risks, (3) public health, (4) displacement and migration, and (5) infrastructure and access to social services (See Table XX below).

Risk area	Top two multidimensional risks
Environment and climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land-based conflict, partly because of natural disasters and rapid population growth. • Increase in extreme weather such as floods, windstorms, or droughts
Economic stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in informal settlements because of rapid urbanisation • Insufficient production and distribution of electricity • Poor project identification, planning and implementation
Public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate healthcare facilities • Insufficient healthcare workers
Displacement and migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising youth unemployment • Lack of strategy to integrate returnees
Infrastructure and social services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient production and distribution of electricity • Poor child labour protection mechanisms

Environment and climate change risks.

Climate change and environmental degradation have increased the frequency and severity of natural disasters and conflict between people over land.

Gambians know that the country's two biggest long-term development risks are climate change and environmental degradation. According to the 2021 Afrobarometer survey, most Gambians (67 per cent) feel climate change has worsened their lives. In addition, Gambians who participated in the UN@75 global dialogues said they think the biggest risks to the country's long-term sustainable development are climate change and environmental degradation.

Economic stability risks.

The greatest threat to The Gambia's economic stability is rapid urbanisation caused by food insecurity and high numbers of unemployed youth. Making the situation worse, limited access to energy, intermittent power supply, and poor infrastructure are causing low GDP growth and threatening to increase poverty.

Reflecting the prominence of risks to the country's economic stability, one out of every 5 (20 per cent) Gambians who responded to the 2021 Gambia Afrobarometer survey listed the management of the economy as the most important problem facing the country. Unfortunately, Gambians do not think the government can improve the economy.[27]

Displacement and migration risks.

Gambian participants in UN@75 global dialogues ranked migration and displacement as the second most significant threat to long-term sustainable development.

More and more unemployed Gambians are risking their lives by irregularly migrating to Europe in search of a better life. [28] If youth do not have jobs, they will continue to risk their lives by leaving the country illegally. Unfortunately, most Gambians do not think the government can do this.[29]

Frequent natural disasters and armed conflict in the Casamance region of Senegal are increasing the number of displaced people.

Public health risks.

The Gambia has a fragile healthcare system without enough doctors, nurses, equipment, and medicine to treat people.

The situation is so bad that 75% of Gambians in the 2021 Afrobarometer survey said the government was doing a bad job improving health services.

Infrastructure and access to social services risks.

The main infrastructure risk is an insufficient and irregular supply of electricity, while the biggest access to social services risk is insufficient access to sexual reproductive health services and inadequate children's and women's rights protection services.

[[27] According to the 2021 Gambia Afrobarometer survey, 71 per cent of Gambians believe the government is not doing a good job running the economy. Also, 77 per cent do not believe the government can improve the lives of the poor, and 93 per cent think it can't lower prices.

[28] According to the 2021 Afrobarometer survey, 81 per cent of Gambians believe that people who leave the country have a better life than people who stay in The Gambia.

[29] 80 per cent of Gambians polled in the 2021 Afrobarometer survey s said government had failed to create jobs.

Multidimensional risks that the country can deal with.

The second category is multidimensional risks that the country can manage with less outside help than the first five risks: (1) social cohesion and equality, (2) democratic space risks, (3) justice and the rule of law risks, (4) internal security risks, (5) political stability risks, and (6) food security, agriculture, and land risks. Table XX below summarises the top two multidimensional risks for each of the six risk areas.

Risk area	Top 2 multidimensional risks
Social cohesion, equality, and non-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rising youth unemployment• Rising informal settlements because of rapid urbanisation
Democratic space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weak and poorly resourced state institutions• Slow pace of policy and constitutional reform
Justice and the rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow pace of Security Sector Reform• Inability to implement TRRC recommendations
Internal Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow pace of Security Sector Reform• Inability to implement TRRC recommendations
Political stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Underrepresentation of youth and women in political decision making• Weak state institutions meant to uphold rights, such as the Ombudsperson's office, the national human rights commission, etc.
Food security, agriculture, and land	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate change• Gender inequality and slow women empowerment• Overreliance on imported food

Social cohesion, equality, and non-discrimination.

There are two issues in The Gambia that are important for the people in The Gambia to overcome. One of these issues is that women are not treated equally to men. According to the IMF, The Gambia cannot achieve its inclusive and sustainable growth goals without strong policies to support women.[30] The other issue is hate speech.

Democratic space

The following are the three major threats to democracy in The Gambia:

1. Weak government institutions.
2. The slow pace of policy and legislative reform.
3. Gender inequality.

Weak institutions mean that not everyone will be treated equally by the law. In fact, the 2021 Afrobarometer survey shows that 40% of Gambians do not think the law is selectively applied.

Justice, the rule of law and internal security

Failing to implement security sector reforms and the TRRC recommendations are the two biggest

[30] IMF Gambia country report - December 2021.

risks to justice, the rule of law and internal security. [31]

The Gambia's most significant threat to justice and the rule of law is not implementing security sector reform because it will leave the country vulnerable to military coups.

Food security, agriculture, and land

Food insecurity and climate change pose the agriculture, land, and food security threat.

In the last ten years, the agriculture sector's share of the GDP has been going down. This means that farming and raising animals make up a smaller part of the country's economy, making people more dependent on imported food. This, in turn, has made food more expensive because it must be imported.

Climate change has made things worse for people living in the Sahel because it has made the land and water saltier, the land and water are hotter than they used to be, and extreme weather is more common.

The covid-19 pandemic has made these threats even more severe.

[31] The 2021 Afrobarometer survey shows that 73 per cent of Gambians want to see the perpetrators of crimes during the Jammeh regime tried in court.

Chapter 6: Challenges and opportunities for achieving the SDGs.

This chapter identifies what government must do to rescue the SDGs and ensure every Gambian a decent standard of living.

The Gambia must invest in SDG data.

The lack of SDG data is The Gambia's biggest development challenge. Trying to achieve the SDGs without data to monitor your progress is equivalent to driving without knowing where you are going or how to get there.

Development partners need to help build the state's ability to do regular surveys that collect all SDG data so that The Gambian government can confidently measure its progress toward the SDGs.

The Gambia must reduce remittance costs because the diaspora is the country's most reliable source of development finance.

Just like plants need water to grow, economic development needs money, and diaspora remittances are a much-needed funding source for investment and growth. Gambians who live abroad bring in a lot of money for their country. They send more than ten times as much money into the country as foreign investors and would benefit from innovative ways that reduce the cost of sending money to the country because it means their families will receive more money.

The Gambia must grow its population sustainably.

The country's population has grown four times faster than the global average, increasing from 1,228,862 in 2000 to 2,255,608 in 2019 and is projected to reach 4,981,357 by 2050. Migration from rural to urban areas is the most apparent consequence of rapid population growth.

The Gambia has the fourteenth highest urbanisation rate in Africa, resulting in at least five problems:

1. The spread of slums.
2. Land shortage, which has exacerbated land-based conflicts.
3. People settling in flood plains, making them susceptible to flooding.
4. People are cutting down trees and encroaching on mangrove swamps, aggravating environmental degradation.
5. People settling on agricultural land.

The government must remove obstacles preventing women from accessing reproductive health services because global research shows that the most effective strategy to control population increase is to provide women with the knowledge that enables them to plan when they wish to have a child.

The Gambia must deepen democracy for prosperity.

Greater democracy will lead to transformative, accountable, and inclusive governance.

To help deepen democracy, the government (with the help of development partners) must:

1. Implement the TRRC recommendations.
2. Protect the rights of the most left behind people in the country.
3. Continue reforming the security sector, and
4. Implement relevant policy, institutional and legislative reforms that will improve the current good governance gains it has made so far.

Growing The Gambia's private sector will solve many of the country's problems.

Growing the private sector needs the government to invest in four critical areas, (1) quality education, (2) quality public health, (3) more electricity and (4) increased access to credit.

If the government spends more money on education and health, more people will be educated and healthy. At the same time, if the government spends more money on electricity and credit, then more businesses will be able to open. More businesses mean more jobs. The more jobs there are, the fewer people will be unemployed.

The Gambia must immediately invest in climate change resilience and sustainable food systems.

Climate change is making it more difficult for Gambians to grow food. This is due to more floods and droughts, as well as more windstorms, increasing forced displacement, poverty, and other problems.

The government must prioritise leaving no one behind.

The government must focus on improving the lives of the most vulnerable Gambians.[32]

[31] The eight groups are identified in Chapter 4: Leaving no-one behind and are women and girls, children, youth, migrants, people living with HIV, people with disabilities, LGBTQI community and the elderly.

The Gambia must protect its children and empower its women to grow sustainably.

The Gambian government should put protecting children and giving women more power at the top of its list of priorities.

Women and children are the poorest, hungriest, and least educated people in The Gambia. In fact, women and children fare the worst across all the SDGs. As a result, as many as 2 million people, including 1.3 million children and 668,000 adult women, risk being left behind unless the government implements policies to protect and empower them.



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