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# CONFLICT AND DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS THE GAMBIA

UPDATED - June 2019

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## List of Acronyms

ADRS	Alternative Dispute Resolution Secretariat
APRC	Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction
AFPRC	Armed Forces Provisional Ruling Council
AU	African Union
CDA	Conflict and Development Analysis
CDS	Chief of Defense Staff
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CRR	Central River Region
ECOMIG	ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EUTF	EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
FLAG	Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia
GAP	Gambia Action Party
GAF	Gambia Armed Forces
GBA	Greater Banjul Area
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCC	Gambia Christian Council
GCCI	Gambian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GDC	Gambia Democratic Congress
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GID	Gambia Immigration Department
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GMC	Gambia Moral Congress
GPDP	Gambia Peoples Democratic Party
GPF	Gambia Police Force
GPU	Gambia Press Union
GRTS	Gambia Radio and Television Services
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Inter-Party Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
KM	Kanifing Municipality
LGA	Local Government Area
LRR	Lower River Region
NAM	National Assembly Members
NAWEC	National Water and Electricity Company
NBR	North Bank Region
NCCE	National Council for Civic Education

NCP	National Convention Party
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRP	National Reconciliation Party
NYC	National Youth Council
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PDOIS	Peoples Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism
PIU	Police Intervention Units
PPP	Peoples Progressive Party
PT	Project Management Team
RT	Regional Research Team/s
SIC	Gambia Supreme Islamic Council
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TANGO	The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations
TDA	Tourism Development Area
TRRC	Truth, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission
UDP	United Democratic Party
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPPA	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drug Control
UNOWAS	United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
URR	Upper River Region
US	United States of America
VDC	Village Development Committee
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WCR	West Coast Region
WDC	Ward Development Committee
YEP	Youth Empowerment Project

## Executive Summary

In January 2017, a historic change of government in The Gambia was ushered in via the ballot. The “New Gambia”, under the leadership of President Adama Barrow and a coalition-led government, along with the assistance of many international development partners, including the United Nations, and with the support of Civil Society and other actors, have since made progress toward restoring democratic governance and respect for the rule of law. Advancing with initiatives under the National Development Plan 2017-2021 (NDP), reforming many of Gambia’s key institutions and sectors, and re-establishing the rights and freedoms of Gambian citizens, are amongst many positive steps forward.

The transitional period, however, has not all been easy-going. A legacy of human rights violations, institutional dysfunction, and influential tactics used to prop up former and now exiled President Jammeh’s power, continue to sow division, fear, and politicization, often promulgated along ethnic lines. This established and normalized many dysfunctional patterns of governance and social relations, exploiting and endangering Gambia’s otherwise long-standing and reputable traditions of inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony, and solidarity. Such divisions continue to shape relationships and have intensified the tensions identified between the period in which the 2018 CDA (Conflict and Development Analysis), and the 2019 CDA *update* were conducted. Therein, a surge of old and unresolved questions (e.g. land disputes), coupled with the fast-paced burdens of new ones (e.g. influx of migrant returnees), finds many institutions unprepared, or simply outdated with respect to the policies, infrastructure, or instruments necessary to tackle the myriad obstacles, leaving instead a shaky sense of trust and confidence that characterize the state-society relationship.

As this report identifies, key challenges surround the manifestation of good democratic governance and social cohesion, including a responsive, accountable state and an informed, responsible citizenry. This calls upon a series of structural, attitudinal, behavioral, and relational issues to be addressed by *all* actors, in both the public and private sectors. Transforming the legacy and reach of the former autocratic regime also requires acute attention in all corners, as effective approaches to transforming *old*, and preventing damage from *emerging* conflict dynamics of transition, point to the need for strong communication, relationship-building, and dialogue across sectoral lines.

### **Conflict and Development Analysis**

The purpose of the Conflict Development Analysis *update* was to *revisit* and *refresh* 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. In this way, actors from all sectors could better *align* intervention efforts and programming. The basis of *evidence* presented in this text was one that emerged on the basis of a participatory, inclusive, national-ownership-driven approach, undergirding all aspects of research design, data-sourcing, *and* analysis.

Carried out under the auspices of a Project Management Team, led by the Government of the Gambia through the Office of the President and Ministry of Interior, together with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding-The Gambia (WANEP), support for the effort was provided by committed individuals from Gambian institutions, with support provided by the United Nations through the Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme for Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. Emphasis in process design was given to the intersectionality of gender, age, and conflict, encouraging greater accuracy in the accounting of representative experiences, specific to the way that dynamics are shaping

the experiences of men, women, and young people *differently* in The Gambia today.

Methodologically speaking, the efforts of the Project Management Team (PT) and Regional Research Teams (RT) incorporated both primary qualitative and quantitative data, drawn from activities that included 22 Key Informant Interviews (Kiis), 14 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and collaborative analysis workshops, which brought together diverse sectors of Gambian society, ranging from school children to the President’s top-level advisors, who would engage in generating data, as well as in conducting systems-analysis exercises. A total of 264 individuals participated in the 2019 *update* process, with a total of 178-male, and 86 female participants, an approximately 2:1 ratio.

### Conflict Drivers & Peace Engines

In line with a participatory, inclusive, national ownership-driven approach to the *update*, the **key conflict drivers** evidence areas that hold the existing potential, if left unaddressed, to expediently push The Gambia and its people toward conflict, instability and violence. Similarly, the **key engines for peace** represent actors, factors, and dynamics identified as possessing the greatest existing potential to reinforce movement toward increasing stability, social cohesion, and creation of conditions that can enable a more just and peaceful coexistence in Gambia’s transition.

### Conflict Drivers

In view of conflict drivers, Gambians were predominantly outspoken about the growing frustration with issues of **accountability and leadership**.

As an identified driver of conflict, this is fostered by rising indicators of corruption and practices defined by perceived or actual discrimination, more widely identified amongst stakeholders in 2019 than in 2018. *Nepotism* was also a word more casually used in conversations, while *corrupt behaviors* and perceptions thereof, have seemingly reinforced the way that Gambians currently assess national leadership and governance across levels, whereby **diminished confidence and trust** are afforded to authorities who are often accused of focusing first on *personal* gains, rather than on making decisions that elevate the public interest. This was particularly acute, for example, with regard to licensing for extractive industries, and resulting outcry over environmental and related economic damage, that, in some cases, have been linked to violence.

<b>Key Drivers of Conflict &amp; Instability</b>	
i	<b>Accountability and Political Leadership in Transition</b>
ii	<b>Land Governance, Land Disputes, and Resolution Practices</b>
iii	<b>Status of National Reforms and Commissions</b>
iv	<b>Social Cohesion, Social Behavior, and the Role of Civil Society</b>
v	<b>Gambia’s Young Population</b>
vi	<b>Vulnerabilities of Climate and the Natural Environment</b>

**Ethnic tensions and ‘ethno-politics’ are also on the rise**, featuring more concretely in the perception and lived experiences of Gambians, linked to lived experiences of micro-aggressions to frustrations that institutions and leaders fail to provide **transparency and clear criteria in promotions, hiring, and firing**. Meanwhile, continuing rhetoric used by political party advocates, supporters, and opinion-shapers, employ divisive devices to promote supporter solidarity. Such claims have been levied at top levels, with many calling out what they feel are conspicuous decision-making and motivations of President Barrow in undertaking hiring, firing, or ‘shuffling’ of his Cabinet, some

of which seem gravely misaligned with commitments and promises he once made to the public. In addition, the resulting **insecurity of tenure** and angst amongst position-holders, as well as the 2016 Coalition and constituencies, has had ripple effects on general institutional function and development.

In this, **poor or lack of communication** amongst leaders, between authorities and the public, and between Gambian institutions, a persistent pattern since 2018, also adds to the challenge, ultimately **undermining public trust** and perceptions about governance in the “New Gambia”, rather than reinforcing positive outlooks. Overlap in institutional functions affecting **resource allocation and spending** (duplications) impact the quality of public service delivery, including in emergency response systems (e.g. the Fire Brigade). Of note are examples such as the **relatively top-down, non-consultative decision-making** by authorities and institutions, which have raised concern about authoritarian tendencies, while stirring tensions and strong public reactions, such as in the recent Biker vs. Baker food-insecurity related dispute resolution process, as well as the 75% tax hike imposed on Banjul Breweries’ alcoholic beverages. Such things may point to a need for more appropriate *mediative* capacities, including communication, as well as those in conflict sensitivity, within the realm of transitional governance.

Similar practices feature largely in the driver of **governance, disputes and resolution practices over land**, which suffer from the absence of a national policy or unifying framework, one that also accounts for overlapping and interwoven customary, religious, and statutory systems of stewardship and conflict resolution. The **lack of data and mapping for land demarcation** and communal ownership boundaries, make upkeep with rapid urban development a daunting task, and one that must be addressed for preventing future instances of violence. The surge in land value and real estate speculation, as well as **unscrupulous practices of buying, selling, and land-use** (which includes breaking with traditions of land-borrowing practices as families re-claim once-borrowed lands for profit making), implicates a series of **inter-family and community disputes, in addition to the nefarious and in some cases unlicensed practices by commercial enterprise on land and at sea** linked in some cases to environmental degradation, public indignation, protest, and violence.

With respect to **National Reforms and Commissions**, whether focused on accountability of contemporary issues (e.g. Police abuses or killings), or authoritarian legacies (e.g. the Janneh Commission or TRRC), the slow or interrupted pace at which results have trickled in or yet failed to **deliver justice** for claimants, generate their own outgrowths of **frustration and exacerbate conflict** dynamics, calling into question, in some cases, whether public authorities are genuinely interested and/or prepared to uphold unbiased, due process in the New Gambia. Meanwhile, progress itself (or the pace thereof, such as in SSR) has been reported to **hamper national development progress**, while support provided for key reform actors such as the TRRC, may not be enabling enough to proactively address issues of **clarity around reparation or outgrowths of trauma within society**, both of which may have great sway over stability. Facilitated by the flow of social media messaging, the **proactive management of information** to properly inform and educate, as well as dispel rumors, is key.

In complement to the institutional issues, the role of civil society, as well as civic responsibilities and attitudes held, and held forth upon *by* ordinary citizens, implicate ongoing challenges in reconstituting healthy state-society relations, as well as good governance and democratic practices after 22 years of authoritarian rule. The transition period has evidenced relative **vulnerabilities in the civil society sector**, including in organizations or individuals who hold particular thematic expertise or specialization (e.g. CSOs focused on Security), to serve in watchdog or **advocacy roles where the**



**public sector may be falling short.** Similarly, attitudes and education around civic roles and responsibilities linked to lack of familiarity with expectations as Gambia grapples with new ideals associated with *democratic* function, exacerbates tensions. This is particularly relevant for young people and activists involved in organizing around issues of public concern, whether environmental or political, which are sources of hot spot interactions amongst citizens and between citizens and state security agents such as the police.

**Antagonisms between young people and state security agents** are also present, the former of which demonstrate tendencies and attitudes that (falsely) equate democracy with ‘anything goes’. These suggest the need for more sophisticated sensitization and internalization of **legal expectations and civic responsibilities** by all institutions with all citizens, most formidably with regard to the utilization of proper channels, institutions, and legal avenues available for regulating and enabling stronger state-society relations through activities such as expressing grievances; particularly, in instances that involve civic organizing and protest, or the exercise of citizen demands to hold authorities accountable. Similarly, clarity about the legal expectations, responsibilities and permissible practices of security institutions and actors must be directed at citizens as well, not just internal resetting of norms through reforms *within* security institutions. Recommendations to this effect had been made in the 2018 CDA report.

In line with ambiguities and outgrowths of new-found freedoms of expression also arise the dangers of **identity- and ethno-politics**, which, in addition to consistency of reports around **Gender-Based Violence**, continues to rear its head in more problem-generating ways. In the case of the latter, women who participated in the 2019 update activities were amongst the more expressive in citing the normalcy and continuation of physical violence or intimidating behaviors they experience at the hands of men and partners, which in some cases, limited mobility or participation in work or civic and political life. This follows patterns noted in the 2018 CDA update as well. The persistence of concerns regarding growing ethno-political practices, meanwhile, has led some to describe the ‘**weaponizing of identity**’ and related outgrowths in political, as well as social circles, as becoming more pronounced in 2019 than they have ever been.

**Gambia’s young population** is perhaps one that finds itself most at-risk, heavily exposed to patterns and harms linked to such influences around identity and cooptation by leaders for political ends, only further undermined by joblessness and unemployment. The latter, estimated around 45% for youth in the 15-35 age range by 2018 labor statistics<sup>1</sup>, is a significant push factor in out-migration. Meanwhile, the socio-economic burdens faced by individuals, families, communities and institutions under the expectations of receiving voluntary and involuntary ‘**migrant returnees**’ who continue to trickle in under **new arrangements** between Gambia and other actors such as the EU, subject young people to numerous **social risks and vulnerabilities**. Well-intended and commendable efforts by government and civil society organizations to proactively support and equip any young Gambian with **useful skills and opportunities** for employment, whether or not they come from the population of returnees, remain **underfunded and narrow in their scope and reach**. Various structural impediments in the labor market and educational system, as well as other social forces, which include the potential growth of more **radical religious ideologies** amongst young people, continue to shape the experience of youth and shaping expectations around adulthood in The Gambia.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) [The Gambia] 2018. The Gambia Labour Force Survey 2018, Banjul, The Gambia: GBoS. Available online: <https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads-file/the-gambia-labour-force-survey-glfs-2018> [accessed 29 June 2019]

Perhaps the most **transversal, or intersecting conflict driver** identified in 2019 was that of **vulnerabilities related to climate and Gambia’s natural environment**. Threats abound on multiple fronts, affecting both short and long-term food security and social cohesion, as climate effects have impacted on growing seasons, compromising livelihoods, human security, and promoted economic hardship, rendering rural areas more vulnerable, and adding to further densification and intensifying life in urban spaces. The lack of oversight and regulation on extractive industries on land and at sea have led to protest and diminishing confidence by the public in their institutions, which in turn find themselves in a compromised position, at once severely under-resourced, while subject to ongoing national reform processes.

**Key Peace Engines**

Factors and dynamics influencing conflict and instability are balanced by, and sometimes subject to, transformation through the work of Gambia’s *peace engines*; these are the existing institutions, actors, and factors whose interaction propose promise and potential, not only to counter the aforementioned conflict drivers, but also reinforce the reputable social cohesion and stability that Gambians have long known and enjoyed.

In this regard, **civil society organizations**, as well as **the promise of national reforms and commissions** also feature largely as peace engines. In the case of the former, CSOs have been active in driving and facilitating new norms and accountability, including around key issues like transitional justice and civic education. Often well connected to communities and key constituencies, CSOs can continue delivering on existing **needs for sensitization around civic rights and responsibilities**, human rights, and education/training, particularly for young people, on their own, or in coordination with government and international partners. Challenges remain, however, around questions about overlapping agendas, and resource distribution, as well as **critical capacities and activities around dialogue, communication, and leadership** in the sector.

The advance of Security Sector Reform (SSR), the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), and other bodies like the National Human Rights Commission and the Constitutional Review Commission, play instrumental roles in reforming, reconciling, and reframing Gambia’s past, present and future. If at times slow, necessary steps are being pursued, to the credit of all sectors and the commitment of leaders and the stewards of these processes to hold forth on their mandates. This has **set new bars and models, to which new expectations and norms can develop, and to which other institutions can aspire**.

The Inter-Party Committee (IPC), for example, which helps coordinate relationships and serve as a dialogue forum amongst Gambia’s political parties, is a key agent for constructive change management in this regard, as it continues to be proactive in matters of conflict and dialogue, while abiding by its mandate. Similar contributions from the newly established platform of the Inter-Party Youth Committee, for example, also hold promise in their convening of forums to

<b><u>Key Drivers of Peace &amp; Stability</u></b>	
<b>i.</b>	<b>Civil Society Organizations</b>
<b>ii.</b>	<b>National Reforms, Commissions &amp; Committees</b>
<b>iii.</b>	<b>Religious &amp; Traditional Leaders</b>
<b>iv.</b>	<b>The Media Sector</b>

engage young people in **non-partisan debate and dialogue around issues of political violence prevention, tolerance, and peaceful party cohesion.**

**Religion and the role of religious and traditional leaders**, evidenced again in 2019 as a key peace engine, incorporates the Islamic and Christian communities, whose leaders also feature as the most highly-trusted group of leaders amongst Gambia's political and social institutions. Much like the civil society sector, efforts to improve both intra- and inter-faith communication, organizing, agenda development and capacity-building, can go a long way to shore up the aforementioned challenges to social cohesion that these leaders and institutions address and can be counted on to manage, on a regular basis.

Finally, much like key national reforms, **the media sector** offers a double-edged sword as both a source of conflict, as well as a **key driver for peace and prevention**. The accountability required for accurately presenting information and engaging in both **ethical, as well as conflict-sensitive journalism**, is being practiced at least by some mainstream media actors, and increasingly, more systematically promoted. However, this remains so predominantly in the arena of traditional print journalism, rather than on yet unregulated social media and some digital platforms, with no organized public debate or consensus building on such avenues and uses in sight. Although incipient, ongoing efforts to professionally and ethnically enhance the media sector promise a timely and critical buttress for balancing the surge of hate speech and divisive rhetoric that the sector and its professionals can build upon to constructively address and/or delimit destructive messaging. Leadership and practitioners in the arena can also play a critical role in using media channels wisely, holding forth on opportunities to **reach broad sectors of society in all languages to promote good information, ethical and conflict sensitive reporting**, through the **mediums known to reach different age groups of the most**, thereby delivering on their potential to be contributors **to sustained peace** in The Gambia.

# Conflict and Development Analysis - The Gambia

## Final Report, June 2019

### Introduction

In January 2017, a historic change of government in The Gambia was ushered in via the ballot. The “New Gambia”, under the leadership of President Adama Barrow and a coalition-led government, along with the assistance of many international development partners, including the United Nations, and with the support of Civil Society and other actors, have made progress toward restoring democratic governance and respect for the rule of law. Advancing with initiatives under the National Development Plan 2018-2021 (NDP), reforming many of Gambia’s key institutions, and re-establishing the rights and freedoms of Gambian citizens, are amongst many positive steps forward.

The transitional period, however, has not all been easy-going. Now-exiled, former President Yahya Jammeh left behind a legacy of human rights violations, institutional dysfunction, and a looted national treasury. Tactics used to prop up Jammeh’s power included those of sowing division, fear, and politicization, often promulgated along ethnic lines, and establishing dysfunctional models of governance and social relations, exploiting and endangering Gambia’s long-standing tradition of inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony and solidarity. Such divisions have continued to shape relationships through the transitional period, proliferating antagonistic sentiment and attitudes, and affecting the development of social and political institutions, from electoral politics to traditional systems, in both rural and rapidly urbanizing spaces.

The re-establishment of norms, expectations, and delicate enforcement responsibilities of government leaders and institutions *beyond* the legacy of authoritarian rule remains under acute scrutiny. Two decades of repressive rule have shaped a legacy wherein executive power reached deeply into institutions, suppressed public expression, and long-embedded a culture of fear across public and private spaces. A lack of trust and confidence defines the relationship between state and society, even as the National Assembly, courts, and Coalition-led government have taken proactive steps to shape and advance reforms, and follow the rule of law. Meanwhile, new found freedoms of expression, whether in civic protest, print journalism, or online, challenge long-standing authoritarian norms and expectations about public behavior, the detangling of which has thrust Gambians into new debates over how public and virtual spaces should or should not be managed, used, or exploited. These issues posit ongoing difficulties as Gambians navigate and negotiate their own unique democratic experience.

The commitments made by President Adama Barrow and the members of the Coalition government, nevertheless, have signaled intentions to uphold, respect and protect fundamental freedoms and rights enshrined in the nation’s laws and constitution, including freedom of expression and the press, in addition to the right to be free from discrimination and provision of equal access to justice for all. Efforts to do so, however, are not always seen as straightforward, and perceptions of nefarious actions abound. Of particular relevance is the influence of foreign and domestic investment, particularly when examining how and in what ways the ecosystem of investment and social relations generate tensions

and augment local conflicts, including those currently witnessed in Gambia's ongoing challenges with land grabbing, real estate development, and national resource management, which include mitigating various forms of environmental pollution, as well as resolving land disputes over property holdings and ownership claims. Such things are currently dealt with in a complex framework and system that relies upon both customary practices and statutory laws, often fed into by long-standing politicized practices exercised by public authorities, with behaviors evidencing corruption or favoritism, registered at both national and local levels.

As this report identifies, the manifestation of democratic governance and social cohesion, including a responsive, accountable state and an informed, responsible citizenry, call upon a series of structural, attitudinal, behavioral, and relational issues to be addressed. Such progress, including that of national development plans, are cited as being adversely affected in various ways, subjected to jeopardy by a number of issues, including reported turmoil amongst key political figures who have been tasked with delivering on Coalition-led promises for reforms. A relatively tenuous Civil Society sector and array of institutions grappling with rapid pace of change and the surge of citizen expression, expectations, and demands, presents a scenario in which transforming the legacy and reach of the former autocratic regime requires attention to emerging conflict dynamics, the need for strong communication, and dialogue across sectoral lines.

#### *Pursuing Clarity of Peace and Conflict Dynamics in Gambia's Transitional Context*

In this transitional environment, the purpose of the 2019 CDA *update* was to *revisit* and *refresh* the conflict drivers<sup>2</sup> and peace engines identified in the 2018 CDA process, *refining* the understanding of dynamics and concerns shaping the 2019 context vis-à-vis forces that are driving peace and conflict experiences today. Revising an orientation to the country's most urgent peacebuilding priorities means better *aligning* tomorrow's intervention efforts and programming with the realities of today. The ultimate aim is to enable clarity for any and all concerned actors, holding up for inspection some of the key dynamics that shape relative stability, and instability in the context of Gambia's transition. In doing so, the CDA update allows all sectors the opportunity to more closely and critically examine the relationships and interactions between actors and factors identified as influential in pursuing peace.

The CDA's claims, meanwhile, are simple: The basis of evidence that emerged from the study's participatory, inclusive, national-ownership driven approach to research design, data sourcing, and analysis, illuminate, on the one hand, *the most urgent and pressing 'key' conflict drivers which, if left unaddressed, have the most potential to expediently push the Gambia and its people toward conflict, instability and violence.* Similarly, the **key engines for peace** are those identified and assessed to be the coalescing of known actors, factors, and dynamics associated with possessing *the greatest potential to reinforce movement toward stability, social cohesion, and creation of conditions that can enable a more just and peaceful coexistence through Gambia's transition.*

The 2019 CDA *update* was carried out under the auspices of a Project Management Team, led by the Government of the Gambia through the Office of the President and Ministry of Interior, together with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding-The Gambia (WANEP), a Banjul-based civil society organization with a national network. Support for the effort was provided by the United Nations

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<sup>2</sup> *Conflict drivers* is used to describe dynamic processes that contribute to the ignition or exacerbation of destructive conflict as a result of structural and/or proximate factors. Conflict drivers usually manifest themselves in violence or directly contribute to the emergence of violent conflict. *Peace engines*, on the other hand, reflects those elements and/or processes that exist within a society that mitigate the emergence and proliferation of violent conflict, and/or strengthen foundations for peace. Peace engines draw upon and reinforce the innate resilience of a society in view of conflict drivers.

through the Joint UNDP-DPPA Programme for Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. An international and national consultant were brought on board to support the Project Management Team's efforts to deliver results through participatory and inclusive means. The approach was informed by the UN Conflict and Development Analysis (CDA) manual,<sup>3</sup> which offers an agency-neutral approach to research and analysis, drawing upon systems analysis tools that enable insights at the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus. This text documents the 2019 findings and resulting recommendations, providing an orientation to the context, actors, and significant dynamics that characterize conflict drivers and peace engines at work today in The Gambia.

#### *Structure of the 2019 Update Report*

The layout of this report begins with an overview of the **methodology**, outlining the orientation to the design and activities undertaken in the research and analysis process. This section further guides the reader in terms of the systems-orientation to analysis taken by the CDA, in addition to some of the key questions that were used to orient the process, as well as some important limitations of the CDA *update*. This section thus outlines what the reader can expect to ascertain from this text, corresponding to what the Project Management Team and all research participants set out to achieve.

Following the methodology, the report's **context and stakeholder update** illuminates the relevant political, social, and economic circumstances, conditions, and issues that frame or in some cases give rise to the dynamics of both conflict and peace unfolding today. Interwoven with a discussion of new and relevant actors on the scene, this section explores defining characteristics of the 2019 context, setting the stage for the main findings of the CDA, and readers are encouraged to read this in conjunction with the 2018 CDA's Context and Stakeholder Analysis. The 2019 CDA's analytical results then walk readers first through the main **Conflict Drivers** and later, **Peace Engines**, exploring how the relationship amongst key factors and key actors that unleash dynamics to enable *stabilizing* and/or *destabilizing* forces, elucidating the interplay amongst the most relevant structural, behavioral and triggering issues, as evidenced during the study. Empirical and anecdotal examples are embedded throughout this section, aiding the reader to contextualize the nature of influence or impact made by these forces. Finally, a set of **recommendations** is provided, which have emerged through the process of cross-examining the analysis with known and existing *responses* being undertaken to address conflict drivers or peace engines. In this way, the recommendations were developed as a rejoinder to the 2019 update's basis of *evidence*, rather than by any one actor or institution.

#### *Methodology*

The CDA-inspired methodology pursued an inclusive and participatory design in view of three main objectives: *Co-design* of the process (i.e. identify stakeholder/research participants and data-generation activities); *Fieldwork research activities* involving diverse teams comprised of Gambian researchers, and; *Collaboratively processing, refining, and analyzing data* through participatory opportunities, drawing on the diverse inputs from Gambian and non-Gambian actors of different gender, generation, professional station, and regional representation. The approach followed the Project Management Team's efforts and lessons learned during the previous year's (2018) CDA research and analysis experience. Research activities were carried out between late April and June of 2019.

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<sup>3</sup> UNDP (2016) "Conducting a Conflict and Development Analysis". United Nations Development Program: CDA Manual. Accessible online: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/conducting-a-conflict-and-development-analysis.html>

This process began with a desk review of qualitative and quantitative materials, unfolding into the main data generation activities, which in sum included some 22 Key Informant Interviews (Kiis), 14 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), in addition to three collective analysis workshops involving diverse audiences. Participants hailed from all sectors of Gambian society, ranging from school children to the President’s top-level advisors, in addition to major international actors and development partners. A total of 264 individuals participated in the 2019 *update* process, incorporating a total of 178-male, and 86 female participants, at approximately a 2:1 ratio. On the whole, emphasis in the CDA process design was given to the intersectionality of gender, age, and conflict, encouraging greater accuracy in the accounting of representative experiences, specific to the way that dynamics are shaping the experiences of men, women, and young people *differently* in The Gambia today. Herein, a conflict sensitive approach was also taken by the PT, in addition to applying the optics of gender and generation (i.e. differentiated roles and experiences of both women and men, as well as the experience of Gambians of all ages) to inform the full process from the design, planning and implementation of research activities, to the generation of analytical inputs.

Research activities were prepared for, and carried out by field research teams comprised of the Project Management Team, and select “Regional Team” researchers, selected by the Project Management Team to participate in the process in part for their geographic availability (all of whom participated in the 2018 CDA process, as well). All members actively participated in preparations as well as regular debriefing and data-processing sessions, in addition to systematized data transfer practices between teams and the consultant team, who provided multi-faceted support during this research phase. The benefit of generating its own primary, predominantly *qualitative* data, in addition to using secondary data sources, makes the CDA unique, in that its approach to the data analysis process was designed through the use of inclusive, participatory and transparent activities, while designed was based on Project Management team consensus. This approach delivers findings and recommendations rendered on the basis of evidence that emerged from this *pluralistic* base, rather than from any singular-institutional source or perspective.

By *privileging the plural*, the Project Management Team’s commitment enabled a more integrated perspective on key issues and dynamics that are understood and experienced slightly differently by distinct actors. Although more time- and resource-consuming in its research and analysis process, the intention was to produce results that will remain more widely credible, with the data generation and analysis process inherently *Gambian*, rather than imposed by any *external* actor or institution, as conflict analysis processes too often are. Importantly, the process sets a high bar, encouraging all institutions to move away from generating conflict analysis ‘findings’ limited to ‘expert’ perspectives alone, tapping instead into the lived experiences of Gambians, thus attempting to avoid significant blind-spots about conflict or possibilities to undergird more informed peacebuilding.

As noted, the methodology incorporated both internal and public engagement workshops, enabling inclusive and participatory analytical exercises, with the aim of synthesizing, refining, and deepening the understanding of conflict drivers and peace engines. The main public events included a “public engagement data review”, which convened high-level leaders from diverse sectors representing government, commerce, and civil society, who further reviewed, discussed, and refined preliminary findings; a “response assessment” workshop, convening government and non-governmental actors, including technical experts from government and civil society, to review and discuss preliminary findings, as well as identify and discuss the array of ongoing ‘*responses*’ currently being carried out to address any of the surfacing dynamics, and; a “regional review” workshop, which convened representatives from the WANEP’s early warning network who gathered from across the Gambia



(including WCR, LRR, NBR, CRR, and URR, Banjul and Kanifing municipalities), dedicated to engaging with and further refining results through regional optics.

#### *Methodological Limitations*

Limitations to this study were significant, both in terms of human and financial resources, particularly in view of a minimum standard for enabling a truly ‘participatory and inclusive’ project design. Real constraints on data collection and processing, which was carried out within just a few weeks’ time, meant that the Project Management Team opted to delimit the *overall* geographic reach of primary data sourcing to activities convened within the Greater Banjul Area, and select districts within the West Coast Region. Importantly, the PT’s design consciously incorporated stakeholders who were keenly familiar with regional issues, perspectives, and constituencies, who were also convened in various activities, so as to maximize the project’s reach despite known resource and time constraints.

In addition, the majority of activities were carried out during a timeframe that overlapped with the holy month of Ramadan in The Gambia. This proved to levy some constraints on participation in focus group discussions and key informant interviews, a number of which had to be re-arranged or re-scheduled at later times as the project made progress. The relatively condensed time frame in which main data gathering and analytical exercises took place also put an additional burden of ‘validating’ the findings with broader audiences. It is critical to remember, however, that despite such limitations, one of the purposes of the public engagement workshops was to convene actors from government and civil society who were unlikely to hold similar perspectives on any given political or related issue. In this sense, the positive response and inherent validation on display through the quality of discussions of key data and findings presented by the Project Management Team, not only helped to somewhat triangulate data, but also to reaffirm accuracy and credibility of the patterns identified by the research teams. The decision to conduct further validation and ultimately, dissemination of the final report findings, remains the prerogative and intention of the Project Management Team.

#### *Interpreting the CDA Update Process and Findings*

The CDA seeks to put its finger on the pulse of The Gambia’s most pressing and urgent dynamics of conflict and forces working to build and sustain peace. As an “*update*”, ***the 2019 findings should be read in conjunction with the 2018 CDA***. The purpose of refining and aligning knowledge in 2019, however, did not attempt to systematically revisit each of the 2018 conflict drivers or peace engines, as this would have significantly limited the project scope, and potentially eliminated the opportunity to see new or emerging issues relevant to the current context. Rather, at the outset of the 2019 update process, the drivers and peace engines identified in the 2018 study were presumed to remain *valid* and *urgent*, a presumption that would be reinforced by the 2019 evidence. Even so, alignment requires fine-tuning, specific to how critical dynamics have since evolved. An example of this would be the tensions identified in 2018 about whether elected officials would get some of the key reform processes and commissions off the ground in the first place. In 2019, while tension remains around *some* reforms (e.g. Civil Service Reform) which have yet to move forward, new dynamics emerge linked to reform progress and evolution (e.g. in the case of justice reform).

It is important to remember that while this report makes references and inferences about key issues facing the Gambia, whether in terms of actors’ behaviors, such as those related to key national reforms, or in terms of the broader challenges (internal or externally sourced) that were identified as influential to conflict dynamics (e.g. food in/security, or, ECOMIG’s mission), the CDA *did not* set out to assess, evaluate, or analyze any *one* specific issue, program, activity, institution, or actor, for the purposes of rendering judgment about its effectiveness, progress, or value, *per se*. Rather, its aim was to illuminate



the ways in which *any and all issues or actors* were deemed relevant, pressing, or bearing attention's urgency, as they shaped the context in relation to other urgent and pressing issues or actors, resulting in either stabilizing or destabilizing dynamics. The CDA update thus examines the state of play at the nexus of these interactions, rather than an evaluation as such, aiming to provide a more precise depiction of the *system*, while more accurately describing the ways in which the *confluence* and *interaction* of forces (linking structural, proximate, or triggering dynamics identified by stakeholders as relevant during the analysis process) pose more or less concern in view of national development and stability.

In this way, the CDA not only asked what factors and actors are seen as most relevant and influential in peace and conflict dynamics, but also, how do they operate to generate the stabilizing or destabilizing forces experienced by Gambian citizens, institutions, and external partners or observers, today? Illuminating key dynamics renders the broader and often intangible or 'hard to see' system more *legible*. In doing so, it aims to support the possibilities for further analysis and/or action on behalf of actors from Gambian Government, Civil Society, or the International Development arena, who can then more appropriately assess where and how their efforts to address those issues might positively affect the system.

Similarly, the 2019 update also inquired into what types of *responses* had, since 2018, been planned or carried out, thus aligning its own recommendations with the 2018 and 2019 findings. During the research and collaborative analysis process, many voices provided insights and even astute suggestions or personal recommendations about what particularly actors, foreign or domestic, should or shouldn't be doing to address, approach, or resolve a particular issue or concern. While some offered commendable insights, they are not the basis of the 'recommendations' provided at the end of this report. Rather, the recommendations seen below are constructed by virtue of cross-referencing the identified conflict drivers and peace engines with the array of existing responses – a depiction that will inevitably reveal untouched or less visible areas for which support can be useful and fostered. The interpretation of recommendations or actions taken to address them is to be made by each institution or actor, Gambian or foreign, in view of providing constructive forms of interventions in the system. In doing so, a minimal imperative would call upon all such actors to account for a Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitive approach in their programming, as well as an overall strategic orientation to peacebuilding, when designing any stage of intervention.

Finally, the Project Management Team (again, comprised of members from the Office of the President, the Ministry of the Interior, WANEP, and supporting partner, the United Nations) modeled a commitment to collaborative research, objectivity through its methodological transparency, and affirmation of ethical research and analysis practices, in line with national and international standards. It furthermore modeled the type of *humility* needed to be informed and learn from the challenges and sometimes even evidence that bears out critiques of *their own institutions*, which in many cases emergent through the process. Learning from the basis of *evidence* with the intent to improve, rather than to blame or to judge, affirms a commitment that principles that enable a more accurate understanding about deleterious dynamics that have the potential to affect *all* Gambians, regardless of agency, station, or political affiliation.

## Context & Stakeholder Updates 2019

### Overview

The contextual and stakeholder update helps set the stage for identifying the *meaning* and *potential* for both stability and instability revealed by the conflict drivers and peace engines that follow. The ensuing sections, recommended to be read in conjunction with the 2018 CDA, offer a glimpse into some of the defining characteristics undergirding key forces of peace and conflict today.

Nearly two years following the departure of former President Yahya Jammeh, the situation continues to be marked by similar indicators of tensions and conflict as those identified in 2018. The Gambia's institutions and Coalition-led government are being significantly tested as the transitional agenda of constitutional, legal, security sector, electoral and administrative reforms, continues to unfold. The antagonism that grows with public outcry and demands, occurring amidst numerous ongoing processes of institutional and social reforms aiming to redress accountability and abuses, seem to grow stronger, as citizens feel authorities are often unwilling to put Gambia first. Notably, with respect to peacebuilding goals, deficits in financial and human resources, and in investments made to fortify underpinnings for dialogue and democratic norms (i.e. through efforts like civic education) continue to shape everyday life, defining the challenges to peaceful coexistence.

### The Economic Arena

In an economy that faces the burdensome realities of heavy foreign debt-servicing, and a government predominantly reliant on the tax-base for revenue, the various financial and economic difficulties facing The Gambia, are many. The country's rich natural resources, for example, which help in part to attract and sustain a robust foreign tourism industry, also face threat from degradation, by both climate and the onslaught of extractive industry operations on land and at sea. The realities of a public institutional infrastructure in transition, yet unprepared to vigorously and lawfully regulate, monitor, and in some cases, enforce the expectations enshrined in the law, must make tough choices about the future, as short-term gains may give way to long-term losses.

Major donor pledges made in Brussels in May 2018, widely hailed as a public victory, are seen by the public as only trickling in, with the majority of the USD\$1.7 billion being yet seen to bear fruit, particularly as a portion of this is based on loans, not all of which would be taken. The wide celebration and touting of this accomplishment by authorities contrasts sharply with the diminishing hope that Gambians' have to see important investments in public services and infrastructure, some of which sees serious repercussions on the social fabric and declining levels of confidence in the government. Despite campaign promises, unemployment also remains high. There is a fundamental problem perceived in government expenditures, which burst the budget and led to November 2018 uproar and demonstration in front of the National Assembly against the Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

Following the 2018 donor conference, raised expectations contrasted to visible results, unleashing the uproar over certain State House expenditures such as individual travels that eventually forced the government to place a travel ban on official trips. The executive, for instance, fell under scrutiny to take more frugal actions, including avoiding the type of chartered flights to international events that were so glaring evident in the eye of the public. Meanwhile, where citizens hoped that ongoing programs in 2019 should have already been impacting lives, livelihoods and rural communities have largely remained stagnant, as some claim, not far beyond the status quo at independence, more than 52 years ago. Broadly characterized as an agricultural society, Gambians also remain vulnerable to

internal and external risks, including those of climate change and environmental shocks that have immediate effects on quality of life and sustainability of livelihoods. Heavily reliant on imports and vulnerable to global market fluctuations, the country's infrastructure and institutions struggle to deliver public services to both urban and rural populations, totaling just under two million people, in addition to a significant 'stateless' population living in The Gambia, linked to porous national borders throughout the region.

With respect to labor, the 2018 Gambia Labor Force Survey (GLFS)<sup>4</sup> produced by the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) placed the unemployment rate of youth at 41.5%, higher in the rural zones at 69.4%, than in urban environs (30.6%), with Basse (24.6%), Brikama (21.7%) and Kerewan (16.3%) ranking amongst the highest. And while the overall unemployment rates for youth (ages 15-35 years) is shown to be 44.7 per cent for *males* and 55.3 per cent for *females*, the youth population of males with a diploma (62.3%) and secondary education (57.5%) have the highest proportions of unemployment. For females, those educated in early childhood education (73.7%) and tertiary (66.6%) education suffer the highest proportional rates. Meanwhile, the national level of youth "not in employment, education, or training (NEET)<sup>5</sup> stands at 56.8 per cent, topping out at 44.7% for males and 56.3% for females, and an urban to respective rural comparison of 54.1% to 45.9%.

### **The Political Context**

Regionally speaking, the re-election of President Macky Sall of Senegal could be said to be directly linked to Gambia's well-being with regard to the political and security landscape of the Senegambia region. Presumably, over the next five years, The Gambia would have a listening ear in Dakar in President Sall, a counterpart who has been willing to support the country vis-à-vis ECOWAS, as well as through bilateral engagements. It is important to note, however, that the recent reporting of an alleged gas and corruption scandal that has led to the recent resignation<sup>6</sup> of the President's brother, Aliou Sall, from his appointment as head of Senegal's state-run savings deposit bank (CDC - *Caisse des Depots et Consignations*) in late June 2019, has also energized political opposition voices in Senegal. While President Sall himself has rejected the accusations leveled against his brother, the situation lends itself to speculation that political instability may be possible.

The alleged scandal, amongst others in recent years involving misappropriation of funds by public authorities, raises the issue of transparency in governance, the management of natural resources, as well as the potential for politicization and tainting of Senegalese justice. Where the perception grows of Senegal's rich endowment of natural resources, so logically may expectations held by citizens about improvements in their standard of living. And while protests and demonstrations over the scandal involving the President's younger brother may not see many consequences in the short term, pent up frustration and anger in the medium and longer term likewise hold the potential to generate tensions that could destabilize the country, having broader ripple effects on the Senegambia region.

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<sup>4</sup> For more information, see: Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) [The Gambia] 2018. The Gambia Labour Force Survey 2018, Banjul, The Gambia: GBoS. Available online: <https://www.gbosdata.org/downloads-file/the-gambia-labour-force-survey-glfs-2018> [accessed 29 June 2019]

<sup>5</sup> NEET rates speak to those unemployed and inactive, at once without employment and also not attending school or training programs, feature amongst the most at risk of becoming economically and socially excluded, in association with, among other things, economic dependency.

<sup>6</sup> BBC News, 25 June 2019, "Aliou Sall, Senegal president's brother, resigns post amid corruption claim" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48753099> [accessed 8 July 2019]

Internally, however, concerns in the political arena in The Gambia since 2018 have emerged in full force. In the course of the last year, political behaviors have shifted perceptions in The Gambia from political *hope* to political *despair*. A milestone in this process seems to be the issues of cohesion plaguing the Coalition, notably marked by tensions between President Barrow and the head of the UDP, Hon. Ousainou Darboe, which came to a head at Mr. Darboe's dismissal as Vice President in early 2019.

What dominates as a transversal thread remains the *distractions* caused by such tensions amongst leaders and institutions tasked with taking transition forward. Similar questions have been raised over the influence and uncertainty related to the approaches and tendencies of an executive presidency, which has subjected authorities and institutions to increased public scrutiny. With Gambians transfixed on the behavior of new leadership under President Adama Barrow and the Coalition-led government that took power in early 2017, a marked sense of attention and critique is also being given to the orientation, style, approach, and basis for political decision-making in the "New Gambia". Despite both assurances and actions by President Barrow that good governance and the empowering of citizens through local governance were amongst the nation's top strategic priorities, those who participated in the 2019 update study were often quick to point out that the reality on the ground did not always reflect such lofty ideals. Importantly, attention turned toward political issues and away from governance has subjected critical areas of intended advancement in the realm of national development to delay.

#### *Governance*

The Gambia continues to grapple with an array of internal challenges within the realm of governance, threatening peace and security, including disputes over land and the environment, political tensions (inter- and more markedly in 2019, *intra*-party conflicts), as well as *inter-ethnic* intolerance and polarization, associated with perceptions of discrimination. This is linked to demonstration of resistance and even violence, such as recent events related to Gambia's social caste system practiced in select areas, as well as migration and youth unemployment, the content of which pose significant questions for local and national governance.

In spite of some advances in the course of reforms, key structural challenges also present obstacles to the country's transition process, challenging the turning of a new page, beyond Jammeh's two decades of authoritarian rule. In particular, the absence of dialogue spaces and infrastructure for cultivating national reconciliation, have yet to truly coalesce or form on their own, as peacebuilding initiatives. Meanwhile, the signs are very clear that the country has instead entered into a process of fighting old battles, as behaviors of political figures struggle with, and in some cases, demonize each other in search of settling old scores. This has led to insecurity of tenure in public institutional leadership, compelling Gambians to question the veracity of commitments and willing intentions for follow-through, made by their leaders who formed the 2016 Coalition. Similarly, many continue to feel frustrated and relatively powerless amidst what appear to be political games played by opportunists, many of whom feel comfortable stoking ethno-linguistic sentiment and provoking perceptions of religious bigotry, poking at open wounds, rather than contributing toward building foundations for reconciliation and peaceful co-existence.

Generally speaking, however, institutions are slowly re-gaining both trust, and an appeal for hope. For example, Gambians report a good degree of trust in the broader justice system<sup>7</sup>, aided by the *Gambianization* of the judiciary, aided by President Barrow's appointment of new Supreme Court

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<sup>7</sup> Afrobarometer (2018) Trust and Perceived Corruption: Findings from Afrobarometer Round 7 Survey in The Gambia, available online: <https://afrobarometer.org/media-briefings/trust-and-perceived-corruption> [accessed 22 June 2019]

Justices in early 2019. This, in addition to decentralization and related efforts to clear case backlog have been a welcome development, enabling Gambians to more readily access justice in their own regions, as opposed to travelling to Banjul, enduring extended adjournments at astronomically high costs, both social and financial. Additional progress on the judicial front includes the work of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), which emerged in December of 2017 through an Act<sup>8</sup> of the same name, receiving presidential assent on 13 January 2018. Officially launched in October of 2018, the 11-member TRRC will investigate the Yahya Jammeh era from 1994 to 2017, led by the chairperson, Lamin J. Sise. Similarly, the launch of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), led by the chairperson Mr. Emmanuel Joof (although yet to be fully functional), has made important public pronouncements to address and critique key conflict issues.

Established by an Act of the National Assembly in 2017, the NHRC is an independent and permanent institution<sup>9</sup> mandated to promote, monitor, investigate and protect human rights, as well as create a culture of human rights in The Gambia. Its other functions include recommending appropriate remedial action to the Government regarding a human rights violation, seeking appropriate redress on behalf of victims, and assisting the Government in the formulation of appropriate policies and laws to guarantee human rights. In carrying out its mandate, the NHRC addressed two serious concerns that were emergent at the time of this writing, including reports over violence and discrimination within the Serahule community in URR (i.e. the caste system), as well as statements made by presidential advisor Mr. Henry Gomez, over his suggestion to supporters that those such as the *Operation 3 Years Jotna* movement, who have come out in protest to demand Mr. Barrow's term in office be limited to his 3 year campaign commitment, risk being shot, as historical examples have shown.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Protests & Unrest*

As a whole, Gambians are active on the political scene engaged in confronting or addressing these and other nationwide public concerns, which can be seen as a call for response to unmet needs. In other manners of organizing, the Gambia Action Party (GAP), for instance, legally recognized in January of 2019,<sup>11</sup> is a new political actor which intends to hold forth on a socio-economic agenda focused specifically on the conditions of Gambia's health issues. Commitment to this particular type of concern shines light on the relevance of key social issues needing to be addressed.

The demonstration and resulting arrest by police of members of the Operation 3 Years Jotna in May 2019, as discussed later, also highlights both the need for proactive conflict management *as well as* opportunities for prevention and overtures by key leaders, which have the potential to be made in service of promoting and sustaining stability. With additional protest movements amongst young people emergent since the 2018 CDA, including *Jotna* and *Dafa Doy* (*Enough is Enough*) movements (the latter of which is specifically working against issues of corruption and human rights abuses by

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<sup>8</sup> The TRRC Act provides for the establishment of the historical record of the nature, causes and extent of violations and abuses of human rights committed during the period July 1994 to January 2017 and to consider the granting of reparation to victims.

<sup>9</sup> The five members of the Commission were sworn into office on the 14th February 2019.

<sup>10</sup> See Press Release – NHRC – 18 June 2019

<sup>11</sup> About the same time as the GAP was registered, the National Convention Party (NCP), meanwhile, received a suspension by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which noted that it had failed to hold one unified party congress, in place of two different ones, in violation of Section 127 of the Electoral Act. For more information see The Point Newspaper 21 January 2019 “NCP Suspended from all electoral activities” available online <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/ncp-suspended-from-all-electoral-activities> [accessed 21 June 2019].



state agents such as police), activists and leaders must account for the meaning of continuing growth of protests in the context of Gambia's democratic experience as selected methods that citizens have chosen to use in order to engage their leaders on issues they feel have otherwise fallen on deaf ears.

Security Sector Reforms (SSR), meanwhile, considered fundamental for the future stability of the country remain slow in its initial stages, although the establishment of the Office of National Security led by National Security Advisor Mr. Momodou Badjie, also proposes a noteworthy development shaping the context both directly in its advance, and indirectly where it slows down. The prolonged presence of ECOMIG forces, meanwhile, has instability implications on broader perceptions, influencing both external, as well as internal ones. Any subsequent (anticipated) extension of ECOMIG has led many, including some in high positions of authority, to believe that frustration and demoralization has ensued amongst Gambian forces, ultimately suggesting SSR's slow pace as important source for instability and further challenges to broader reform processes.<sup>12</sup>

While advances in governance have been made, some less visible, though equally important progress made by duty bearers as stewards of the transition have been overshadowed by the more visible political behaviors, including those of actors such as the United Democratic Party Leader and even the President, both of whom receive stark criticism for what seem to be actions that position them for the future, if not outright campaigning. This flies in the face of electoral laws, while having real effects on governance and citizen confidence. Infighting, including some decisions made by the President (as discussed further below), has become cause for concern as an unweaving of the fabric of good governance, wherein firings of those in key positions are widely perceived to be politically motivated.

This has resulted in engagements made on an *ad hoc* basis, outside the boundaries of the original Coalition M.O.U. Without a reliable system, many claim the Coalition model is fast collapsing.

As reported in 2018, recruitment and hiring did not always reflect original intentions claimed, particularly as the President was seen to cozy up to UDP through appointments, including the Hon. Ousainou Darboe as Vice President in 2018. He would be subsequently replaced in 2019 by Health Minister Dr. Isatou Touray. In real terms, attention drawn *away from* any hopes of a well-functioning Coalition has in turn affected key and/or prominent efforts in national development, including for example, some speculate, the most recent decision to postpone Gambia's plans to host the 2019 Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Summit, deleteriously impacting the anticipated employment opportunities and related development and infrastructure projects in the Banjul Area for the current year.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> From a historical perspective, SSR is not a new phenomenon or experience for the Gambia, in which historical lessons abound. In 1919, The Gambia Regiment was disbanded. In 1981, following the abortive coup in which hundreds died, the paramilitary (field force) was disbanded, and members were sent home on three months' leave. Following screening, some were transferred into the police, while others to the army, with the rest sent home. Nonetheless, the importance of this process is said by some to be overhyped, with exaggeration of the real threat posed by the army. It could be recalled that during the 2017 political impasse, many thought the Gambian army would go against the people, which it did not, to the credit of leaders and rank and file. Exposure and peace keeping missions have also helped to develop the orientation of Gambian soldiers, many of whom are achieving BA and MA education, and have been trained in places such as Turkey, the US, UK, and Nigeria. As reported, these officers, like other citizens, are interested in a career and promotions, caring and providing for their families, and to retire peacefully like any public servant.

<sup>13</sup> As of 20 June 2019, The Gambia and Saudi Arabia would sign a \$92.5M OIC funding agreement for Gambia to host the OIC Summit in 2022. The priority infrastructure projects include: a) the construction of a 50 KM road network within the OIC concentrated area; b) enhancement of the transmission and distribution network for the electricity grid;

Civil service reforms, meanwhile, are slow to come. Defining characteristics in 2019 point to the challenge that individual interests prevail over clear criteria as the basis on which to appoint, or hire competent staff to deliver results, affecting both discipline and efficiency of the public workforce. Likewise, a high turnover rate is affecting service delivery, which make some point to the reality that Gambia has had three VPs, health ministers, and Agriculture ministers in the last 18 months. Long-standing and significant deficits also continue in the health system. Medication shortages have given way to claims of internal corruption, while the lack of adequate facilities and resources turn younger professionals, including doctors, away from taking up posts in rural areas, most in need. The progress of reforms in multiple areas is said to also have affected decisions amongst members of the Diaspora community, some of which returned to the country in December of 2017, only to leave again as progress on many fronts has been slow, lacking the promise initially felt by all.

### *Migration*

With respect to migration, young Gambians continue to leave the country in significant numbers. The Gambia has become one of Africa's largest origins of external migration *per capita*, comparable to massively sized populations such as that of Nigeria. Much attention has been given in this regard to the nation's burgeoning population of youth and young people, up to 69% of whom as noted earlier based on Gambian labor statistics, from rural areas, remain unemployed. Struggles around the push factors for migration, as well as the reintegration of voluntary and involuntary returnees from Africa, Europe, and elsewhere, further challenge the country's social, political, cultural, and economic systems and development. In contrast to 2018, however, more emphasis is now being given to those who are returning, as countries within the EU have prompted both voluntary and involuntary returns, in addition to committed funding to support the repatriation and reintegration.

### **Social & Environmental Issues**

Environmental concerns, including those linked to land disputes, as well as social tensions related to inter- and intra-religious relationships continue to brew, with the latter emerging to effect governance related decisions and perceptions. Where President Barrow came under fire for offering no statements during Christian feasts and holidays (a marked departure from all his predecessors), many view the absence or token presence of Christians in cabinet and National Assembly as unprecedented in Gambian political history, stressed by instances such as President Barrow's intervention to remove Hon. Ya Kumba Jaiteh as a nominated member of the National Assembly, subsequently replaced by a Muslim appointee.

Others have criticized bodies such as Gambia's new Constitutional Reform Commission (CRC) which has a critical role to play in addressing some of these matters in structural terms. Established by an Act of the National Assembly in June, 2018, this independent body's main functions<sup>14</sup> are to review and analyze the current Constitution, draft a new Constitution for the Republic of The Gambia, and prepare a report in relation to the new Constitution. Although much anticipated, the CRC, too, has

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c) enhancement of water production, treatment, and distribution, and; d) the construction of a new VIP Lounge at the Banjul International Airport.

<sup>14</sup> Pursuant to the Constitutional Review Commission Act, 2017, the CRC, in carrying out its work, is not subject to the direction or control of any person or authority. As an institution, it is guided by the following core values: Inclusiveness, Independence, Integrity and Participation. The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) comprises 11 Members made up of a Chairperson designated by the Chief Justice, Vice Chairperson nominated by the Minister of Justice and 9 other Members nominated by the President. All of them were appointed by the President.

been criticized along social imperatives in a highly diverse society, in that their references to marginalized groups such as women and the physically-disabled selectively leave minority groups such as Christians or the Ahmadiya Muslim sect, out. Meanwhile, the sudden government imposed tax hike announced early this year came to the fore during Ramadan (May) 2019, introducing a 75% burden on alcoholic beverages produced by Gambia's main producer, Banjul Breweries, was taken by some to suggest similar religiously-oriented dictates. This resulted in the brewery announcing that it may be forced to close. At the time of this writing, protests amongst workers remained ongoing, despite government reassurances that measures would be taken to ensure the brewery remained viable.

The question of land ownership and dispute resolution over questions of disinheritance in the Gambia, discussed herein as a major conflict driver, has persisted, if not worsened since 2018. Land grabbing and changes to generational practices have posed fundamental threats to social coexistence in some areas, generating tensions as a primarily internally-driven insecurity phenomenon linked to both structural deficits in policies and local governance behaviors. As discussed further in this report, foreign investors and Estate Developers feature prominently in this puzzle, as new actors seen to exacerbate land conflicts. Fueled by the influx of investments, the acquisition of, and disputes over land earmarked for *commercial* profits, means that farm land and community lots are quickly being sold for their commercial values. This is fast reducing the overall agricultural usage, while aiding in elevating social tensions, at times along lines of party loyalties, or in the case of power exerted vis-à-vis the caste system, where citizens have become dispossessed of their land.

Meanwhile, climate change is an underlying, structural conditioning that frustrates many of these contextual realities. Man-made pollution is also compromising vast areas of natural resources as demonstrated in the case of the Nyambai forest, where it is reported that corrupt practices by owners and local political actors led to both legal violations and health risk exposure, or invoking fears around detriment to the tourism economy, as in the case at Sanyang beach. Across the country, meanwhile, in areas such as Brikama, up to 90% of the court cases or back-log are reported to be land related.

While some peacebuilding funding (e.g. through support from actors like the UN Peacebuilding Fund) has been committed to addressing key structural vulnerabilities and obstacles to prevention or non-violent dispute resolution, the great majority of land disputes remain unresolved and festering, often dividing communities and families, as well as subjecting the country to additional tensions in view of security forces such as the police who are called in to intercede. Growing socio-environmental impacts including visible indicators of rising inequality linked to rapid rise in land value and re-claiming of borrowed land, characterize experiences across the nation. Many of the disputes that have found their way to courts, remain unresolved, or further aggravated by reports of discrimination and politicized behaviors of public officials. Babylon, Taneneh, Deya, Berending, Penyem and Fallah all offer key hotspot examples, which remain potentials for violent conflicts if not handled properly.

#### The Upshot

Lest these challenges uniquely define the current outlook of possibility and potential for Gambia's future *beyond* the growing pains of democratic transition, it is important to remember that for all its woes, The Gambia boasts one of the most significant examples of non-violent coexistence in the world. The remarkable pathway of resilience through the country's history speaks to coexisting inter-ethnic and interreligious relationships and communities, making it the envy of the West African region, with lessons that travel well beyond that. Despite many obstacles, moving forward means seeing beyond challenges into the realm of opportunities, which, in some cases, simply represent a double-edged sword.



The space for expression of political views, opinions, divergent and dissenting views, cultural expression and rights has markedly expanded in the last year, improving as other democratic freedoms oblige. There are, for example, more private radio and TV stations, as well as print and online newspaper sources. Artistic, cultural expressions which are basic rights and can help in building peace, can now be more easily transmitted, far and wide. These forums for expression, as well as traditional media, are serving as vents and filters through which the expression of some of the anger, frustration, and disappointments, can also be released, as they await due attention. Festivals like in Nyoro Jataba in LRR are notable examples of rituals and traditions that keep Gambians living harmoniously. There is now a wider scope for manifestation of artistic expression and cultural diversity and many both celebrate and find these ultimately healthy and connective in Gambian society, despite regional or ethnic associations, or instances where certain groups experience marginalization of their cultural space. In addition, Sierra Leoneans, Ghanaians, and Nigerians can also be heard over the air and through presence in various circles and events, emphasizing relative co-existence amongst neighbors.

Similarly, where many people view Gambia's youth and young people through the eyes of the more visible themes like migration and returnees, it is important to recall that despite the challenges they face, young people's lives are shaped by many factors and forces, both positively and negatively, as they too endeavor to constructively shape society. In this, young people at once feel inspired, and constrained. An underlying contributor to youth unemployment, for example, is the lack of access to quality educational and training opportunities that are also matched with market and labor demands, which inspires young people to seek alternative means for survival, including informal employment and recourse in irregular migration.<sup>15</sup> Finding the space to discuss these issues meaningfully with elders, also remains a practice less visibly fostered.

Despite these challenges most often associated with trouble and conflict, one need look no further than a few years ago, where young people became an important driver of peaceful change to jumpstart the country's transition away from authoritarian rule. As one observer recalls, youth emerged as a political force to challenge Jammeh's authority during the 2017 political impasse, largely responsible for the *#GambiaHasDecided* movement popularized on social media. This helped to educate Gambians of all ages about their rights, opening space for political expression and debate during trying moments.<sup>16</sup> Re-examined in this light, the role of youth today and exercise of newfound freedom of expression, sometimes surpasses reasonable critiques. Nevertheless, entitled attitudes have added, in some cases, to chaotic civic protests that, for some, go beyond comfortable boundaries of expectations when it comes to democratic citizenship exercise. The potential to either continue on a confrontational, or constructive contribution to the advancement of socio-political and socio-economic gains for all, will be up to Gambians, both the young and the wise, to further decide.

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<sup>15</sup> Connolly, L. (2018) "Sustaining Peace in the 'New Gambia': The Need for Investment in Peace and Development." Available online <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/sustaining-peace-in-the-new-gambia/> [accessed 11 June 2019].

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

## Key Conflict Drivers

1. ACCOUNTABILITY & POLITICAL LEADERSHIP DURING TRANSITION
2. LAND GOVERNANCE, LAND DISPUTES & RESOLUTION PRACTICES
3. STATUS OF NATIONAL REFORMS & COMMISSIONS
4. SOCIAL COHESION, SOCIAL BEHAVIOR & THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY
5. GAMBIA'S YOUNG POPULATION
6. VULNERABILITIES OF CLIMATE AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

*This presentation of findings below provides insight into key trends and patterns associated with the most urgent amongst conflict dynamics identified. These results, as well as some of the salient or noteworthy examples below, emerged and were refined through multiple collaborative analytical exercises.*

### **Accountability & Political Leadership during Transition**

#### *a. Rising Indicators of Corruption & Discrimination*

Indicators of corruption are on the rise in 2019, with the use of terms *corruption* and *nepotism* featuring widely in multiple conversations during individual, small group, and larger research activities during the “update” process. Reports of corrupt behaviors linked to personal enrichment in the political arena was further linked to perceived discrimination, reflecting a lack of accountability and diminishing trust that the actions of leaders or civil servants were acting fairly. This was particularly strong in reference to ward/district, and village levels. Questionable practices that point to the active use of bias in decision-making was also observed in interactions with authorities. Corruption presented in the rising frustration in this regard, specific to environmental protections (or lack thereof) was more evident in 2019 than in 2018, and has shown to be directly associated with frustration and protests that have in some cases turned violent. In others, actions or inaction by public authorities deliver the message to residents that leaders are willing to turn a blind eye to environmental protection of communities’ lands, health, and livelihoods, for their personal gain, subverting the overall confidence and trust between citizens and the state, while elevating the attributions of corrupt practices to those who hold power, many of whom are also identified with one or another ethnic group (see more below).

With regard to the environmental dimension, the Nyambai Forest incident, where officials found evidence that the Chinese *Infinity New Energy Enterprise (INEE)* company was enabled to operate under the radar and without specific knowledge by the government of its alleged polluting activities, suggests a particular type of national and local authority support or permission. Similar incidences occur with regard to sand mining or fishing, where in the case of the latter, extraction by foreign vessels (with *Chinese* companies being named most frequently), with one former security sector official reminding interviewers that even in cases where ships are “caught” and reprimanded, they are often quickly set free without consequence, in all likelihood, continuing about their business. Protests and violence that

has occurred in places like Faraba Banta, were linked to these dynamics, as environmental protests (in the case of Sand Mining in Faraba) often involving young advocates, have led to shootings and death at the hands of State agents (Police Intervention Units, or PIU).

Similarly, behaviors of the Executive are also being carefully observed, where patterns have emerged regarding the rapid effort by Estate Development actors to acquire and license commercial property. As investments roll into the New Gambia, land value increases, making its sale and trade a point of contention. In many cases, communal land is unmarked, or locally-contested by families who may never have needed to demarcate it, or, may have been swindled by a family member who opted to sell their land without their consultation, further affecting family division. Those who are able to legally acquire land and mark it, run into conflict with those who hold dual claims, sometimes even documented claims where one land parcel has been sold multiple times with the authorities' involvement. The use and illegal sale of lands, even in protected areas such as the Tourism Development Area, or TDA where the Government had seized properties from former President Jammeh in 2018, further enable forms of illegal and unregulated activity such as over-fishing, or unregulated polluting activities, through unlicensed and environmentally damaging extraction.

While the Gambia Tourism Board condemned all sales in a recent press statement, such practices are common. Similarly, Estate Developers are reported to be bypassing the Ministry of Trade, or the Gambian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI), to deal directly with the Office of the President. This has raised eyebrows, given the behaviors of Estate Developers and Foreign Companies to acquire communal land in their transactions (often with local community or family conflicts attached), which in turn further agitates or exacerbates land disputes and family conflict issues, and have been connected to unregulated environmental pollution across the country. Furthermore, the direct channel between foreign investments and the Office of the President means that neither the appropriate institution, or civil society observers like GCCCI, have the ability to monitor which types of investments are being made by foreign investors.

Corruption has also reinforced the way that Gambians perceive ethnic tensions and 'ethno-politics' to be on the rise in the post-authoritarian context. Corrupt behaviors range from passivity or overlooking responsibility or limits under legal prescriptions, such as the enforcement duties of local officials who are unable to account for why factories are able to operate without proper licensing, to that of active, if small time gains. Security forces have been reported as coercing some travelers to buy 'laissez passer' if they cannot produce their Identification Cards (I.D.). In other cases, reflecting the 2018 CDA findings, frustration grows, often along ethnic lines, in terms of the power and favoritism played by Alkalos and VDC chairpersons, as political interference has enabled nefarious behaviors by some officials who overstay their known term limits, or, in other instances, block others from participating. Some have been mismanaging or misappropriating public funds, or processes of VDC participation, out of line with prescriptions of the Local Government Act (LGA). Clashes over discrimination have come to a head between members of higher and lower *caste system*, as was seen in the URR region (reported in Diabugu, Bajaha Kunda, Garawol and Koina) in recent months. These have led to instances of violence and arrests in social, religious, and political spaces, as upper caste members respond to lower caste members who have begun to exert their legal rights, under the constitution and local acts, for example, to participate in local politics or hold positions such as the VDC.

Linked in a causal loop, corrupt or discriminatory behaviors on the part of public officials reinforces perceptions of ethnic or tribal favoritism. Citizens who face micro-aggressions through lived experiences of discrimination by government personnel (e.g. security forces on the street who question

one's *Gambian-ness* due to their first or last name, or personnel in passport- or I.D. card offices who insinuate that by virtue of their family name or how one spells their last name, may still not be *Gambian*, despite them producing I.D. cards<sup>17</sup>), reinforce the notion that corruption likewise assumes an ethnic dimension, as discrimination further reinforces presumed linkages between one's ethnic group and political affiliation. This has further ripple effects as discrimination is experienced in spaces such as District Tribunals or local authorities such as Alkalos responsible for resolving land disputes, and may develop a pattern of favoring their kin or those from their own tribe in their decisions over minority group members. Some, for instance, have noted that the use of Mandinka language amongst court authorities such as judges, may privilege some, while putting others at a disadvantage.

Other sectors beyond the political are also affected. Health institutions, lacking basic products, have been reported to be selling medication destined for public institutions, sold instead to private ones, while citizens have been made to pay extra 'fees' to obtain national documents like passports. Public procurement contracts, as claimed by some, have been issued on the basis of affiliation and association, rather than on a transparent process.

*b. Poor communication and coordination, lack of transparency and clarity, undermining public trust*

As in 2018, a lack of regular updates and greater visibility, or, the sending of confusing or mixed messages by the President and Ministries, sustain perceptions of a disconnected and aloof Commander-in-Chief who is not concerned with establishing connection with everyday Gambians. A common refrain was that *President Barrow hides in the Statehouse*, making decisions in a way that wanes popular enthusiasm that the country's transitional leaders will bring anything more than 'business-as-usual' to the post-Jammeh period. In 2019, perceptions point to a growing sentiment and questions of whether President Barrow's actions are ultimately more focused on shoring-up his own political base and power ahead of a potential 2021 run, rather than making good on commitments made in the context and spirit of the Coalition.

During the time of this study's data generation phase, a key issue remained the lack of forthright clarity many expected to see delivered by Mr. Barrow himself, regarding whether he would sit a five-year term (in accordance with the current Constitution), or, honor earlier commitments of the three-year term as agreed amongst Coalition members. While the President had on various occasions, directly and indirectly made reference to his intentions to stay for five years, what was consistently troubling and what many feel has fostered a growing sense of skepticism or mistrust (voiced even amongst supporters) was that in the air of public debate over the issue, the President seemed to have been positioning himself first and foremost to seek personal gains for an upcoming political candidacy, rather than make decisions in view of clarifying public understanding and addressing a significant and glaring issue. By mid-June 2016, after data generation had been completed, Mr. Barrow made an announcement of his plans to stay in office a total of five years, until 2021.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The government has made strides to re-issue cards, a critique noted in the 2018 CDA, today under ECOWAS standards. In 2019, however, issuance remains a centralized process and linked to corrupt behaviors, in addition to barriers that inhibit their acquisition, not only due to the cost of the cards (D450), but also to costs of travel and time spent that Gambians from as far as URR must shell out to physically acquire their ID cards physically in *Banjul*. For further information, see <https://www.biometricupdate.com/201809/gambias-biometric-id-cards-ready-for-distribution-october-1>

<sup>18</sup> Foroyaa (17 June 2019) "Barrow Vows to Stay in Office Until 2021" Available online: <http://foroyaa.gm/barrow-vows-to-stay-in-office-until-2021/> [accessed 29 June 2019]

Despite this, in the long absence of a clear statement by Mr. Barrow and/or the Coalition regarding the “3 vs. 5” question, speculation and mistrust grew significantly, thus shaping the image of these leaders in the public’s eye, a factor likely to affect political life moving forward. This is also doing damage to the spirit of the Coalition itself, and not without ripple effects. Comparisons have been raised with moments in Gambia’s past, wherein a national moral compass prevailed in guiding the country through difficult times, at the risk to the political capital of those who made them. In this sense, comparisons have been made to the calling of elections by Sir Jawara Dawda in 1968/69, ahead of the scheduled 1970 date. While this angered many in his party, it nevertheless delivered upon campaign promises while making good on the moral imperative “*Ngor, Sama Kadu*”.

These highly visible effects have damaged relationships and imposed on the effectiveness of institutions at all levels, harming not only the advancement of intra-institutional and broader reforms, but also social cohesion. For instance, lines of loyalty have been drawn not only between families living in the same compound, but also amongst staff within public institutions and structures. This includes the security sector and local government (e.g. VDCs, sometimes in violation of the Local Government Act of 2002), leading to marginalization of individuals and a sense of unhealthy competition, while perceptions of unfairness or favoritism by supervisors or in promotions, get reinforced. The context is ripe for clarity and prevention, which can both inform the public and prevent further downtrends in confidence, beyond the ‘business-as-usual’ refrain that many are beginning to once again expect.

Mixed messaging delivered by public institutions and the Executive regarding key issues are also notable. The announcement of pardons by Mr. Barrow, doled out to the PIU officers involved in the Faraba Banta shooting trial, was a cause for national attention. As the [Voice Gambia](#) news reported:

*“President Barrow accepted the appeal from the community of Faraba for the discontinuance of the prosecution of the officers of the Police Intervention Unit as well as the civilians standing trial for their role(s) in the unfortunate Faraba Banta incident. Meanwhile, the community stated that they were satisfied and appreciative of the responsible leadership demonstrated and acts of compassion that, President Barrow and his government had undertaken after the incident, such as the visit by the President to the community in the immediate aftermath of the incident, the setting up of a commission of inquiry and appointment of a coroner as well as his decision to act on the recommendations of the investigative commission, among other gestures. The president has accordingly accepted to respect and grant the wishes of the community, particularly families of the victims, to immediately withdraw all the charges against the PIU officers and civilian perpetrators concerned.”*

Despite this gesture and corresponding announcement about the pardons by the government spokesperson in January of 2019, the Ministry of Justice had not been previously informed of this Executive decision. At the time, Attorney General and Justice Minister Tambadou recognized that no official halt to the inquiry had been ordered. He would later speak to the Office of the President’s Press Release as an “unfortunate choice of words”, exemplifying the broader trend that the absence of coordination and communication is also tied to mixed messaging around, in this particular instance, an extremely sensitive case.<sup>19</sup>

Despite any well-meaning intentions behind these gestures, critics have noted that a pre-trial pardon is not within the President’s power to grant, while the apparent lack of communication or consultation

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<sup>19</sup> At the time of this writing, the pardons had been revoked, and the process for the accused PIU officers continues. On 7 May, Justice Minister Tambadou announced that the accused officers would face manslaughter, rather than murder charges (For more information, see Radio Gambia (2019) “Police To Prosecute Three In Alleged Fertilizer Scandal” available online at <http://gambiana.com/faraba-banta-inquiry-chairman-condemns-barrows-pardon/> [accessed 10 June 2019].

between top level authorities and ‘overreach’ of the President *bypass* the type of due process that citizens come to expect in the ‘New Gambia’. Vested in the authority of other institutions, concerns are present that such interventions reflect a slippery slope, and that authoritarian-leaning may be fair game in an ‘anything goes’ atmosphere. Exemplary of this was the recent imposition by government of a severe tax hike on Banjul Breweries, a massive employer and producer for the tourism industry, unilaterally and suddenly imposed in May of 2019, targeting alcoholic beverages. The 10 to 75% rise sent shock waves not only through the company and its workers (who were immediately affected by the company’s announcement of the likelihood of layoffs or closure), but also through the network of suppliers, customers, and distributors dependent on the broader economy of its production and sales. The *modus operandi* finds yet another example of the government’s non-consultative and imposing behavior, which concern many and cause confusion across the land, raising social and economic tensions that can be avoided or prevented.

With top-down imposition, or where institutions fail to communicate, or coordinate with each other horizontally, *or* where the roles and boundaries or mandates between institutions are unclear, this can at times have dramatic and conflict-provoking spin-off effects. Overlap in institutional functions affecting resource allocation and spending (duplications) impact the quality of public service delivery, including emergency response systems, damaging public confidence in government. A noteworthy example of the detriment and triggering outcomes of these dynamics is that of the public frustration which has led in some cases to fire fighters being approached with hostility and even impeded from conducting their work. The origins of disaffection stem from the Fire Brigade’s inability to properly conduct its duties due in part to overstretched personnel and faulty equipment procured, some of which includes equipment such as second-hand fire trucks donated by Evon County in the UK, which have been known to break down.

Officials from various Ministries confirmed that in addition to this, a central problem is the *incompatibility* between the fire-fighting equipment acquired by the Ministry of Interior, and the type of fire *hydrants* installed by NAWEC<sup>20</sup>, ultimately setting the stage for property damage and losses that fire brigade and rescue service members are helpless to prevent during fire outbreaks and related emergencies. The capacity of the Fire and Rescue Service to respond to emergency situations<sup>21</sup>, meanwhile, has also been compromised by a moratorium on hiring (in addition to the police), in place since 2017. Expectation management seems difficult at best, one can expect, as overlapping and highly visible and anticipated development projects such as the Baja Kunda fire station (slated for completion in 2019), may wind up empty and unable to be staffed due to the moratorium’s freeze on hiring. This is further compounded in the minds of many by the general lack of transparency in the procurement process and oversight within ministries, supporting a cycle in which residents and fire and rescue personnel are pitted against one another, elevating levels of frustration and ultimately incurring losses that might otherwise be prevented.

*c. Cabinet Shuffling linked to disruptions to National Development*

Another significant dynamic is that of what look to be highly-politicized behaviors coming out of Gambia’s State House, which have begun to show signs of negative effects on the progress of National Development. Since taking office, President Barrow has had three Vice Presidents, reshuffled his

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<sup>20</sup> NAWEC, or the Gambia’s National Water & Electric Company, is the country’s sole provider of water and electricity.

<sup>21</sup> As Gambia continues to pursue reform in the Security Sector, the Fire Brigade has been brought into the Office of National Security. However, little clarity remains as to the possible overlap of Disaster Management and Fire and Rescue, which must be considered.



Cabinet twice, overseeing additional and abrupt firings of once political allies, which includes the recall of Gambian Ambassadors linked to the UDP.

Brewing interpersonal tensions between President Barrow and former Vice President, UDP leader and Secretary General Ousainou Darboe leading up to his firing, along with two of his allies<sup>22</sup> at the time, currently leaves no UDP members in the President's Cabinet. This pattern has not gone unnoticed, leading many Gambians to question the intentions of the current President and the shift of attention away from the spirit of the Coalition to securing his own political base ahead of the next elections. While reshuffling and firing may well be done within the legal purview of the President, the dynamic and ripple effects that the insecurity of tenure for public leaders and the impact of constant changes on their institutions, has proven interruptive of national development progress in less visible, but no less deleterious ways.

On the one hand, interpersonal tensions with the UDP and President have consumed a once vibrant hope for the Coalition, all but collapsing its original spirit of purpose and commitment, and raising doubts in the public's mind about whether the President's actions reflect a genuine interest or not in his previously stated commitments. On the other hand, frequent Cabinet shuffling has had harmful effects on both the motivation of staff, on the advancement of internal institutional reforms, and on development progress, affecting development partners and programming efforts through the instability that change of leadership and strategic directions present. Evidence points to delays in programming and planning that have subjected key reform (e.g. Security Sector) to setbacks, as new leadership comes and goes all too frequently for stability and progress to take root.

## **Land Governance, Disputes, and Resolution Practices**

### *a. Lack of national land policy or unifying framework for customary and statutory systems*

Confirmed by recent studies,<sup>23</sup> evidence from the 2019 CDA, illuminates the challenge that Gambia lacks a unified land policy, as well as regulations, in addition to clear implementation procedures for defining and demarcating boundaries. Existing and at times, overlapping legal frameworks give little consideration for equity. And while efforts have been made at the national level in the direction of constructively managing and regulating land issues (i.e. the launch of the Land Commission), it remains clear that the overarching national land policy and deficit in local dispute resolution capacities, poses a serious and perhaps one most concerning amongst all conflict dynamics in The Gambia. In a system that involves overlapping, and ostensibly non-communicating entities including Traditional, Statutory, and even Religious authorities and mechanisms holding various stewardship duties over land use and land dispute resolution responsibilities, a national policy is but a *starting point*. More than that, attention to new norm setting, as well as clear division of labor and responsibilities, oversight, strong working relationships, individual or institutional capacities, and collaboration incentives amongst all actors and entities involved in land and dispute stewardship, would be important to stabilize this particular conflict-generating system. To date, the Land Commission, established in September 2018 to operate under the Ministry of Local Government and Lands with new members appointed by President

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<sup>22</sup> Two other political allies of Darboe also lost their positions. Agriculture Minister Lamin Dibba and Minister to Trade, Regional Integration, Industry, and Employment, Amadou Sanneh were also fired by President.

<sup>23</sup> Synthesis Report LGAF (2013) "Issues and Options for Improved Land Sector Governance in the Gambia Results of the Application of the Land Governance Assessment Framework" Available online: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLGA/Resources/Gambia\\_Summary.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLGA/Resources/Gambia_Summary.pdf) [accessed 11 June 2019]

Barrow, advises on policy issues, although few stakeholders involved in the CDA were very clear about when and where or how it will operate, nor about what its mandate and expectations will be in terms of other bodies and actors.

There is likewise, the persistent absence of basic data about land demarcation and communal ownership boundaries that has also been unable to keep up with rapid urban expansion and development. Demarcation practices by Physical Planning have been slow to come, nor is data digitalized and centrally accessible, problematizing sales and claims, as well as making disputes and resolution extremely complicated. This undermines any hopes of benefiting from a more streamlined system as land becomes a hot commodity for foreign or domestic investors. Together, the lack of guidelines regarding free-hold land between communities in rural sectors, and rapid rise of land value, have led to practices and behaviors that have exacerbated family and communal tensions, particularly over unregistered ‘ancestral’ properties.

Unmarked land has led to the practices whereby Estate Developers swiftly buy up property, sometimes sold by a family member without knowledge or permission from their kin, compelling multiple claims of the same land. Double-sales by nefarious actors, as well as re-claiming land once lent by previous generations to other families, are also growing causes for concern, pitting residents and Estate Developers at odds in the absence of clarity regarding demarcated boundaries. Tensions may occur, for example, as lands one lent may be re-claimed by a *lending* family (often of one ethnic group) for the purposes of profit, while *leasing* families who may have farmed it for a few generations (often of another ethnicity who are considered ‘strangers’) lose access to their livelihoods, only to raise tensions and further claims of discrimination, dividing communities along ethnic lines. Traditional leadership, such as that of Alkalos, a first stop and preferred option for many over the police or courts to resolve local conflicts, are commonly reported to arbitrate or mediate in biased or politicized fashion, losing the trust of many residents when failing to demonstrate that their own personal interest, rather than fair decisions or the broader public interest is taken into account in resolution.

#### *b. Dispute Resolution Capacities & Violence*

Where traditional authority falls short, other dispute resolution capacities are overburdened and lack access to support from objective data about land. This has complicated the experience of the Alternate Dispute Resolution Secretariat (ADRS), an entity that operates semi-autonomously, heavily involved and trusted in resolving land disputes. Despite its promise to fill some important gaps, it remains highly under-resourced and currently unable to reach sufficiently across the national territory. Beyond ADRS, Gambia suffers from a lack of capacity in trusted, community-oriented dispute resolution in general, disallowing localized disputes to be addressed at the closest level, in a preventive and sustainable fashion.

These long-standing disputes, as well as attempts at resolutions, in some cases, can be by Gambian courts, are reported to have significant effects on families and community division. This has been the case of a land dispute between families and now the communities of Gunjur and Berending, which had been decided upon by Gambia’s Supreme Court in 2016. Enforcement of this ruling, however, does not seem to have materialized, while further violent clashes led to the homicide of Mr. Buba Jammeh in March of 2019. Tensions can also fester in relation to interventions, or lack thereof, by local authorities such as Alkalos, who beyond acting with perceived bias, are reported to be unprepared to deploy effective skill as mediators. As noted earlier, some are seen as rather corrupt, making decisions that are in favor of individuals or their personal interests, ethnic group, or political affiliation, rather than in fairness or for the public good. Furthermore, state society trust also suffers as, in the



case of the murder at Gunjur, the assailant remains at large. Interviews conducted for this analysis reveal that residents feel the reaction by police, Alkalos, the governor, and VDCs to these issues, all of whom were named as not responding appropriately or in a timely fashion to *earlier* stages of these disputes, has led to further outgrowths of frustration and indignation. Youth from these areas have threatened to take action, and, in this particular case, this has led to the closure of the Gunjur police station on a temporary basis in anticipation of vigilante retaliation attacks.

*c. Degradation of Natural Resources and Pollution*

The rapid development of commercially zoned land means that a reduction in overall farm land is also occurring, with deleterious effects. Availability of arable land is at risk from both climate effects, as well as development infrastructure and private commercial expansion. In this dynamic, as noted above, evidence also points to the relative persistence of tensions linked to protests over extra-legal *permissions* or licensing granted for extractive industries by officials who overlook improprieties or official regulations for their own gain. Some of these cases reported point to the harmful effects that private companies have had on the natural environment, as well as to local health impacts of surrounding farmers in terms of air pollution. As protests and anger continue, preventable issues of community concern are left *mostly* (but not in all cases) *unaddressed* by authorities. In this, as examples have already shown, environmental impacts such as air and soil quality affecting residents, are likely to rise, and have increased potential to spill into violence.

Exemplary of this is the fish dumping linked to the Nissim Fishmeal Factory, which has been ascribed to a combination of massive over-fishing by foreign companies, as well as a saturation of raw goods in the market for production, has left Gambians angry and suffering the consequences of dead fish washing up on their shores. Despite the source, the impact is clearly affecting livelihoods and natural environment, with what many claim as inadequate response from government. Reports from Sanyang beach from early in 2019, for example, evidence poor legal enforcement of environmental commitments made by Nissim, as well as heightened concerns around adverse effects on the tourism industry to local businesses. Meanwhile, attention by government to appropriately address citizens' concerns, seem to continue unanswered. This pattern poses significant cause for concern, as similarly patterned events have led to protests by activists over unregulated activities by foreign enterprises, that have been at the heart of violence during citizen and citizen-police clashes in places like Faraba Banta, Gunjur and Sanyang. Other hot spot areas have been reported in Kartong, Berending, Maduar, Kasa kunda, Busumbala, Babylon, Lamin, and Mandinarin.

### **Status of National Reforms & Commissions**

As noted previously, The Gambia's transitional experience has brought about a number of key reform processes, notably in the security and justice sectors. National Reform Commissions, formally established by corresponding legal acts and institutions (e.g. TRRC or Constitutional Reform Commission), are understood as those bodies enabled to move reform processes forward in pursuit of materializing specific objectives.

On the other hand, the transitional period has *also* witnessed efforts by the executive and justice system to address sensitive issues (i.e. those involving public servants or institutions) through the use of different types of commissions, or *commissions of inquiry*. Generally speaking, such commissions may be used to address issues of public interest or concern, helping to neutralize the potential for bias of public actors and institutions in such matters. In light of key public issues arising in the transitional period, the Government of The Gambia has established *commissions of inquiry* regarding certain

incidences of violence involving public security actors, for example.

Reiterating acknowledgement of the key distinctions highlighted above, the section that follows speaks to the status of ‘national reforms and commissions’, examining *both types* of commissions and their *impacts*, together. This is done specifically because of the likeness of destabilizing dynamics revealed during analysis to be linked to both types of bodies, dynamics which are associated with commissions’ origins, processes, and ultimately, outputs and implementation. Thus, readers should take care in noting that while *national reform commissions* must not be confused with *commissions of inquiry*, the data and analysis herein did suggest that *both* types of established entities embody citizens’ aspirations (or fears) toward *accountability*, serving as beacons or the basis upon which the delivery of results to the public has come to be expected, nearly as mechanisms of oversight alongside the ongoing renewal of democratic governance by an administration that has publically announced its commitment to uphold the rule of law.

*a. Inquiry and Responses to Violent Incidences*

Flash point violence potential warned about in the 2018 CDA findings, relayed concerns about tensions boiling over on issues regarding land disputes and protests linked to environmental pollution. In other cases, friction between citizens and security forces, including ECOMIG, were also observed. Since 2018, a series of flash point violence incidences occurred, including the death of protesters at Faraba Banta not long after the conclusion of the 2018 CDA.

In cases where violence did occur, authorities were relatively quick to call for commissions of inquiry into the circumstances. However, given the slow or interrupted pace at which results about such incidences have been delivered, these inquiries themselves have begun to present as timely and proximate conflict factors that augment doubts about whether public authorities are genuinely interested and prepared to uphold unbiased, due process in the New Gambia.

Exemplary of this is the case of the death of Haruna Jatta by gunshot wounds, allegedly at the hands of ECOMIG forces in June of 2017, exposing the tension around ECOMIG presence in the Kanilai area (Fonis, WCR), deployed not long after Jammeh took exile. High-level security officials and advisors have since expressed doubts regarding the true need for ECOMIG’s presence in Kanilai, while past comments by President Barrow boasting of ECOMIG presence and other security forces serving his protection, meanwhile, have not gone down well with the public in general.

The heretofore unconcluded investigation about the death of Mr. Jatta by ECOMIG itself has been credited nearly two years later with exacerbating the tensions currently seen to be affecting the work of the TRRC, which has begun to attempt their own inquiry activities in the same Foni area, understood to be home to Jola communities, and APRC/Jammeh supporters. Some APRC leaders have attempted to discredit the TRRC in the eyes of their constituencies, labeling it as a ‘witch-hunt’, put on by a Mandinka-dominated government that has failed to reassure the Jola (from which former President Jammeh himself hails) and others, of their commitment to pursue truth and justice, thus undermining cooperation and understanding of the transitional justice process within the Fonis.

Violence also came to pass shortly after the completion of the 2018 CDA, with the shooting to death of three environmental protesters at the hands of Gambian Police (PIU) in Faraba Banta. Despite the President’s gesture toward reconciliation in January 2019 to pardon the police, the ‘overreaching’ actions of Mr. Barrow were heavily critiqued and eventually revoked, allowing the legal process to continue. Meanwhile, at the close of the primary research phase of the 2019 CDA, yet another

shooting occurred at Kanilai, this time involving Gambian Armed Forces (GAF), who allegedly shot Ismalie Tamba,<sup>24</sup> himself a former member of the military. Mr. Tamba was shot in the back, allegedly after a disagreement about Mr. Tamba's (also a native of Kanilai) driving through a GAF security checkpoint. This adds yet another incident to the tensions between security forces and communities at Kanilai, for which authorities have called upon further inquiry.

As Gambians both abroad and at home grapple with revelations emergent in the transition, the nation remains fixated on the ongoing TRRC testimony hearings. Herein, concerns have been expressed by those closely involved that atrocity revelations have led to mounting tensions and the perceived need for vengeance, as expressed by those who have been directly and indirectly victimized. Similarly, 2019 evidence suggests resentment and frustration have grown over the slow pace of the *reparations* delivery, as well as the very nature of understanding by citizens about who is entitled to reparations as a result of the TRRC process.

This gap in comprehension has been associated with the TRRC's existing inability to both perform proper education and sensitization efforts, as well as access funds for victim support under the reparations program. As no donors have committed any funds to reparations, the TRRC relies instead on the relatively limited, currently ad-hoc, and sometimes token support offered by other sources, such as the Gambia Victim's Center for Human Rights Violations, or the Diaspora community. Left unaddressed or unchecked, these dynamics linked to the ongoing TRRC efforts constitute a significant potential for risk, exposing vulnerability to the Transitional Justice process as well as the general state of social cohesion in the country. Facilitated by the flow of social media messaging, the proactive management of information to properly inform and educate, as well as dispel rumors, above and beyond the noteworthy efforts of the Commission's community outreach work, will be key.

An example of such realities recently came to pass during TRRC testimony, shortly after the completion of the data-generation phase of this report.<sup>25</sup> This occurred during an incident following the subpoenaed appearance of Mr. Yankuba Touray, a former AFPRC junta member, refused twice to testify before the TRRC. When held in contempt of the TRRC Act, Mr. Touray argued immunity under the 1997 Constitution. Ultimately, he would be sent to the Kairaba police station where angry citizens immediately gathered in frustration, reportedly attacking the station by throwing stones, leading police to disperse the crowds using tear gas. This incident highlights and reinforces the need expressed by many who participated in this analysis, for authorities to ensure that all institutional reforms are carried forward during transition, in order to ensure post-authoritarian stability.

*b. Security and Justice Reform Delays impacting National Development Progress*

While the much-anticipated TRRC and Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) showed relatively positive signs of progress and momentum through transparent and participatory processes<sup>26</sup>, overall delays associated with these and other reforms and inquiries, foster their own type of destabilizing dynamics, including the above-mentioned actions by authorities who may not swiftly or transparently

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<sup>24</sup> At the time of this writing, Mr. Tamba was reportedly released from hospital and expected to recover.

<sup>25</sup> Fatu Network (26 June 2019) "Chaos Erupts At TRRC As Summoning Of Stubborn Yankuba Touray Misfires" Available online: [fatunetwork.net/chaos-erupts-at-trrc-as-summoning-of-stubborn-yankuba-touray-misfires/](https://fatunetwork.net/chaos-erupts-at-trrc-as-summoning-of-stubborn-yankuba-touray-misfires/) [accessed 29 June 2019]

<sup>26</sup> For more information, Voice Gambia (2019) "Gambia's Constitutional Review Commission Officials, Politicians Brainstorm on Reforms" Available online <https://www.voicegambia.com/2019/05/19/gambias-constitutional-review-commission-officials-politicians-brainstorm-on-reforms/> [accessed 5 June 2019]

act upon the conclusions and/or findings delivered by highly-anticipated commissions of inquiry. The lack of action on key issues, however, not only raises social tensions through enhanced public scrutiny and frustration, it also evidences a negative impact to the progress of National Development, negatively influencing levels of state-society trust in a vulnerable time, as delays lead to further and sometimes nefarious attributions of motive.

For example, where the Jannah Commission was granted two extensions to continue its efforts into the complex financial activities of former President Jammeh, it has only recently submitted its findings in March 2019. The April announcement by the government regarding a six-month period needed to assess the Commission's findings have left many feeling unsettled, particularly in light of the implications of public money assessed to be involved in the Commission's activities, as well as recuperated from the sales of former President Jammeh's possessions. The delays lead to broader frustration and skepticism held by Gambians from all corners who at once suffer and bemoan poor public service delivery of the state, adding to the widely-criticized lack of transparency in decision-making regarding public fund expenditures, including expectations around precarious investments made to the nation's electricity and water. A lack of clarity about the dealings of the leads some to arrive at conclusions, accurately or not, that further corruption may be occurring behind closed doors with respect to the handling of the Commission's conclusions. As one analysis workshop participant put it: *"The Jannah Commission was extended two times, and we can all accept that it will take six months to release [findings]. But, when will they tell us? [Even with the announcement] the public needs to be updated over time, as we don't know if more delays will occur, nor what justifications there are for that"*.

For Gambians on all sides of an issue, reform and inquiry delays feed into the sense of mistrust about the state's intentions to follow through on its commitment to bring justice and improve quality of life under the new political dispensation. The narrow margin for error given by the public suggests impatience, and that acute attention is being paid to all efforts. This is compounded by the lingering sentiment first expressed in the 2018 CDA process, that decisions behind closed-doors at State House are not judged to be in line with expectations of transparency and proper stewardship of public information and funds. Evidence from 2019 further suggests that delays in key reforms have also endangered key development partner relationships, affecting not only perceptions about government, but also key initiatives, subjecting partners and institutions to constraints, programming setbacks, and demotivation. As one participant in the 2019 update lamented, *"[leaders] have already begun focusing on campaigning, not reforming"*. Ongoing delays, left unchecked or prolonged, are likely to continue polluting overall levels of public confidence.

Importantly, despite these realities, it is noteworthy to contextualize here that Gambia currently faces an onslaught of major, co-occurring, national reform processes. This not only consumes national and international resources, but also subsumes personnel from government and civil society sectors, as well as the public's attention, in mind, body, and levels of patience, putting stress and strain on the transitional system across the board. Such may be said for actors in positions of accountability, whose leadership and capacities are in many cases, left feeling overstretched. Nevertheless, the delays or perceived lack of update or inaction erodes levels of trust that Gambians hold in their leaders, weakening the fledgling sense of state-society trust, and imperiling the fragile rebuilding of confidence that such reforms intend to bring about in the 'new' state orientation.

Thus, while expectations around pace and patience with reforms must be properly managed by the public and their critics, the reform process inherently provides ample opportunity for elected authorities to demonstrate adherence to norms of transparency, while making good on any 'benefit of

the doubt' that the public has afforded to them as stewards of transition. The 2019 update process suggested that this benefit of the doubt is giving way to increased skepticism, as reforms propose one of the more urgent measuring sticks by which to assess whether leaders will make decisions that elevate the public and national interest over personal gains. Furthermore, delays for any reason put at risk key infusions of funding and technical assistance that sometimes fundamentally underpin the very operation of such Commissions. Evidence from this 2019 update suggests that this opportunity teeters on the boundary of being squandered.

The progress of others, such as the oft-cited Anti-Corruption Commission and Civil Service Reform, remains yet unclear, while the Land Commission, whose mandate and reach as a 'policy advising' body although appointed, leaves confusion in the public about how this body's work will be oriented (future focused, or on the past?) as well as how it will interact with Gambia's existing legal infrastructure and traditional authority already tasked with addressing land issues and disputes.

Reforms and public sensitization around the reform processes, however, have also been criticized as not going far enough, being under-resourced and done in a rush for purposes of political expediency within the broader Transitional Justice and Security arenas. Trauma/healing for participants or the wider public is one area this research can cite as critically important for sustaining social cohesion in a difficult time. And while the Reconciliation Unit under the TRRC is responsible for attending to trauma-healing and reconciliation in view of victims and the broader national community, and had, by late 2018 developed action plans, the unit is not necessarily in a position to fully address the broader need. Although development partners such as the EU, the UK, and the UN through the UNDP are contributing assistance to Gambia's Victim Center for Human Rights Violations, in order to provide basic medical and livelihood support to victims, critical potentially destabilizing questions remain unanswered, such as how Gambia will manage TRRC revelations that some involved in committing violations or atrocities may still remain in positions of power in civil or military services.

The Security Sector Reform, too, thus poses numerous and timely challenges, finding itself at a critical juncture. This is in part due to lingering decisions that have yet to be made, linked in part to unaddressed tensions between those in positions to *deliver* on critical decisions, long delaying and inhibiting the ability of the broader reforms to move forward. While at the time of this writing, Gambia awaited the much-anticipated launch of the National Security Policy (released officially on 10 June, 2019), the evidence from the 2019 CDA research process revealed that while overarching *policy* guidance is a critical first layer to be clarified in the reform process to be tackled, leadership could have nevertheless moved forward with important advances on prerogatives such as *right-sizing* of forces. To date, amongst the estimated pool of 18,000 personnel about whom vetting decisions must be made, the status of less than 100 individuals has been decided upon.

Similarly, clear exit plans and correspondingly appropriate reintegration packages for security personnel, whether new hires or veterans, have yet to be clarified. Vetting may prove more complicated than it sounds, due to the nature of interpersonal relationships, social pressures, and politicization that characterizes and may ultimately inhibit authorities' decision-making about who to vet, when, and with what type of support gets offered as military personnel return to civilian life. Security sector advisors (which include advisors from across Asia, Europe, and Africa) consulted in the 2019 CDA update process admonish that tensions are likely to mount as the TRRC hearings begin to reveal that some involved in past atrocities remain employed and in positions of power within the sector.

Perilous fatigue amongst the donor community has also reportedly begun to set in, and the lack of collaboration or key decision-making presents as one of the most significant obstacles to advancing with SSR objectives at this time. Process-wise, shuffling of leadership and the *insecurity of tenure*, as mentioned earlier, have also slowed progress, as important steering committee<sup>27</sup> meetings were simply not held for much of 2018 due in part to the constant changes or absence of steering committee chairpersons. Similarly, in other security-related decision-making, donors like the EU are feeling strained as they await news on whether to move forward with planning and funding for extending ECOMIG’s current mandate (set to expire in August 2019). The EU has yet to receive a signal from the Government of The Gambia as to whether to initiate discussions with ECOWAS for such purposes.

## **Social Cohesion, Social Behavior, and the Role of Civil Society**

### *a. Strength and Connectedness of Civil Society in Transition*

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the Gambia have long been on the forefront of efforts to promote democratic norms and values. However, the transition period has evidenced relative weakness of the sector, including in organizations or individuals who hold particular thematic expertise or specialization (e.g. CSOs focused on Security). This has meant that CSO oversight and support in key reform areas may be absent. It has also run CSOs thin as they remain fragmented and rather stretched in their financial and human resources. A once powerful and respected sectoral leader, The Association of NGOs known as “TANGO”, many lamented, no longer provides the type of energy and resources to convene actors, ideas, agendas, or deliver guidance as a sectoral leader, as many have come to expect in previous years.

Beyond a lack of connectedness with each other, Civil Society and Government infrequently engage to exchange or model good communication; or, in relevant cases, even partake in cooperation or collaboration on certain issues of national interests or debates. Much public debate is left to treatment on the air, through an array of radio and television programming, or social media channels, which more often than not are reported to bring such actors into antagonistic exchanges.

As in 2018, the complementary challenge of misinformation and in some instances, hate speech sent through social media channels, as well as over radio, television, or other online sources, perpetuates such issues, leading to greater social division. The overall quality and accuracy of information reported by all forms of press/media, too, are often criticized for not being entirely accurate, or lacking conflict sensitivity. This means that reporters and public opinion-shapers may also be contributing significantly toward sowing discord, rather than producing messages or reporting that reinforces social cohesion. Whereas, for example, efforts like the Gambian Press Union’s (GPU) code of ethics being developed for journalists is an example of a more concerted effort to counter-act the spread of misinformation, this is one of the few, particularly when considering the sources from which most Gambians get their news and information.<sup>28</sup> Civil society actors and leaders of social institutions are well-positioned to make inroads and likely to mitigate these forces faster, and more effectively, than state counterparts.

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<sup>27</sup> As of the start of the CDA process, the President had appointed Attorney General and Justice Minister Tambadou as Steering Committee Chair.

<sup>28</sup> Afrobarometer and CEPRRASS (2018) [Afrobarometer](https://afrobarometer.org/publications/gambia-summary-results-2018) Summary of Results Round 7 Survey in The Gambia – 2018. Available online: <https://afrobarometer.org/publications/gambia-summary-results-2018> [accessed 22 June 2019]

*b. Attitudes and Information regarding Civic Roles and Responsibilities*

Social behaviors and attitudes, notably, the lack of familiarity and education around civics and the roles and responsibilities by all actors in a democratic system, continue to support the rise of social tensions. This is particularly relevant for young people and social activists who are involved in organizing around public concerns and demands. Notable instances include antagonisms reported in 2018 and again in 2019 between young people and state security agents, the former of which demonstrate tendencies or formation of attitudes that (falsely) equate democracy with ‘anything goes’ liberties, rather than a more sophisticated internalization of the law and civic responsibilities, particularly where (or not) state agents are also operating under the legal right and responsibilities to act based on democratic requirements of the state. This factor has been credited to have contributed to both the Faraba, Gunjur and Busumbala incidences.

Since the change of government, many young people are reported to have begun ascribing themselves extensive, albeit unrealistic claims to rights and freedoms in more absolute terms. Such things manifest over social media in the form of condemnations or hate speech against particular ethnic groups, tribes, or political parties, etc. The general atmosphere of intolerance manifested through the tit for tat hurling of insults is a favorite past time of both public users and anonymous trolls. This space of friction has led to tensions, particularly as young people active in protests face off with police mobilized to exert control and use appropriate force to manage crowds, breaking up and controlling protests which may not hold necessary permits under existing laws.

The contentiousness between citizens who wish to protest, albeit at times without following existing regulations, and a police force representing a state that yet lacks the full confidence of its citizens, reinforces a vicious cycle, wherein people feel more aggrieved and less heard, feeding into further frustration. An associated problem currently being addressed in the reform process regards existing laws have been criticized as being undemocratic or even *draconian*. The pace at which protests over legitimate demands of citizens have emerged, has challenged both Gambia’s civilian leadership and security forces like the police, as well as activists and the broader public, both of whom continue to navigate and negotiate rights and responsibilities when it comes to participation in democratic expression. Delays in Constitutional and Security Sector Reform, some of which aims to establish new institutional guidelines and professionalization, including sensitization and capacity-building for police, have by most accounts taken immediate steps to address any illegal or inappropriate use of force (e.g. Faraba Banta shooting and recent investigation into the 2019 shooting at Kanilai).

While some organizations and government agencies, including the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE), and even development partners like UNICEF have supported civic education initiatives and the integration of peace studies in curriculum development, a faster moving, wider-reaching, broader and more urgent sensitization around such peace, civics, and democracy themes during the transitional period has not yet been pursued. Sensitization around civics is severely lacking, as groups like NCCE remain underfunded, and seems to have been able to achieve little when it comes to supporting movement *away from* acceptance or prioritization of legacy and patron-model expectations or practices which prioritize and welcome actions and messaging that reinforces the ‘taking care of your own’ objective. The relative deficit of action by citizens to get informed and in turn make legitimate demands on public authorities to exercise a ‘government-as-public-servant’ model, plays a significant role in enabling the patronage model to flourish, with the consequence of failing to re-establish new norms and relationships that move beyond mindsets of authoritarian legacy.

#### *d. Tribalism and Ethnopolitics*

A concerning trend that continues in 2019 is one that sees Tribalism, Ethno-politics, and Identity-related tensions shaping the political and social conflict landscape. For some, this has intensified since 2018's findings, with some using terms like "unmitigated" to describe the degree to which ethno-linguistic politics are present, as leaders take advantage of regional, tribal, and ethnic affiliations for rallying support by using divisive rhetoric, to the detriment of national cohesion and unity promotion. Despite Gambia's enviable record of social cohesion, political behavior in 2019 continues to reveal troubling signs of active erosion. Few, if any, concerted efforts seem to be on the horizon to address this.

Ethnicity and tribe are noted in 2019 as becoming more commonly used as a means by which individuals in positions of leadership and power at all levels of civilian government, are able to discriminate in public appointments, hiring or firing processes, and instances that should otherwise be protected by Gambian laws. The expressions and rhetoric of politicians who draw upon existing tensions and grievances to gain support within broader constituencies, is also problematic. As one security official put it, the '*weaponizing* of identity' is thus more pronounced today than it has ever been.

A concerning area where similar practices may come to pass is within the Security Sector, where regular internal promotions and hiring, or the lack thereof, *combined with* lack of transparency about rationale for hiring and firing processes, leave the perception that promotions are based on nepotism and ethnic favoritism, rather than merit. One example cited during the analysis process was the confusion generated by actions such as the *reinstatement* of formerly dismissed high-level personnel without any legal process or clarity by which they were taken back. This, in turn, frustrated some of the more junior officers and put trust amongst the ranks into question.

Like corruption, the practices of nepotism and favoritism can be notoriously difficult to *prove*. The relative population size of The Gambia also means that while such nefarious intentions and practices may be present, they may also be falsely attributed to actors and their actions, in some cases. As one civil society leader raised during one of the analysis workshops, a government or civil society leader may hire somebody who, unbeknownst to them, may be kin, or come from the same tribe or area, only eventually to realize this after being accused of bias or nepotism. What this demonstrates is that sensitivities to transparency and objective criteria that align with a merit based system is fast becoming a widely-held expectation and demand, if alongside the existing use of patronage models.

In light of these challenges, there is a notable absence of core, visible figures and opinion-shapers, whether in politics or social institutions, who seem to openly and earnestly champion national and ethnic unity in politics, as well as practice it. While some symbolic overtures have been made by political party leaders, as well as President Barrow's recent 2019 Koriteh statement,<sup>29</sup> few seem to more actively take up the mission of seriously discrediting divisive practices and norms that foster tribalism and ethno-politics. This concern, perhaps above all else, was a resounding agreement amongst research participants in both 2018 and again in 2019's CDA process. Where everybody is talking about increased 'tribalism' shaping Gambian politics, few seem to be undertaking serious or consistent action to interrupt its reproduction.

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<sup>29</sup> For more, see The Voice Gambia "[President Barrow says Nation Building is Difficult](https://www.voicegambia.com/2019/06/08/president-barrow-says-nation-building-is-difficult/)", 08 June 2019, Available online, <https://www.voicegambia.com/2019/06/08/president-barrow-says-nation-building-is-difficult/> [accessed 10 June 2019].



*e. National Identity*

Gambian national identity, meanwhile, remains a key factor associated with various conflict dynamics. Structural obstacles to the acquisition of national identity and corresponding rights, begin with a notable discrepancy between the Constitution and existing legislation<sup>30</sup>. They continue with impediments such as those faced by Gambians in accessing national identity, such as for eligibility in scholarship and educational opportunities, or even identification cards, which for instance, are required to be produced at police checkpoints or to participate in voting. The potential consequences, however, extend much beyond that. As a 2015 UNHCR & IOM Report<sup>31</sup> observed:

“Countries which provide very limited rights based on birth in the country — in particular, that provide no access to nationality for those born in the country and resident during their childhood (enabling automatic or optional access to nationality at majority) — risk creating large populations of people whose nationality is doubtful or who are stateless. Where this lack of rights based on birth in the territory is at its most acute [including Gambia]... it can be near-impossible for the children of immigrants to become nationals and be integrated into the national community if they do not belong to an “indigenous” ethnic group. Even if those in this situation may have a theoretical access to the nationality of one or other of their parents, such a nationality may be inaccessible in practice as those connections become steadily weaker; or useless to them, if their lives and identity are established where they now live.”

Under the current constitution, birth in the national territory (except in the case of orphans or unknown parents) does not automatically guarantee citizenship to those with at least one foreign-born parent. Although Gambia’s Children’s Act states that every child has the right to acquire citizenship, this is further defined by the peculiarities of the child’s, and in some cases, parent’s national origin and birthplace. Following others in the Commonwealth system, Gambia has removed rights to nationality based purely on birth in the national territory, even if this renders a child otherwise stateless by default.<sup>32</sup> For those born abroad, Gambian citizenship is only legally granted as a birth right if one parent is both a citizen, and was born in The Gambia.

Gambia’s naturalization process similarly prescribes differing time orientations for acquiring citizenship. Naturalization may occur from one spouse to another after 7 years, while for all others, a period of 15 years of residency is stipulated in order to begin the naturalization process.<sup>33</sup> And while the current legislation conflicts with provisions in the existing Constitution when it comes to this time frame, CDA participants noted that it is the process and corresponding challenges of acquiring proper legal documentation to demonstrate 15 years of residency in country, as part of the naturalization process, that primarily discourages foreign-born from proceeding, with many electing not to do so.

For those legally entitled to national identification cards, of which the Government began production after a long moratorium lasting until October of 2018, accessing this form of I.D. finds two important obstacles. The first is that cards are only accessible today at *one* centralized location in Banjul. While the resumption of production of new and improved cards has, on the one hand, aided in record keeping and tracking, as well as enabling Gambians of diverse ethnicity and family origin to prove

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<sup>30</sup> See the Constitution of 1996, amended in 2001, and the Gambia Nationality and Citizenship Act No. 1 of 1965.

<sup>31</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR & IOM - Nationality, Migration and Statelessness in West Africa*, June 2015, pp. 12, Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/55b886154.html> [accessed 8 June 2019]

<sup>32</sup> For more information on citizenship rights, see UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *UNHCR & IOM - Nationality, Migration and Statelessness in West Africa*, June 2015, pp. 12, Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/55b886154.html> [accessed 8 June 2019]

<sup>33</sup> Gambia’s Children’s Act, No.5 of 2005, section 8

their identities, it has on the other hand, still proven to limit access to many residents. For those with fewer means, as well as for those from rural quarters, the high cost of acquisition (450 Delasi), in addition to time and travel costs to Banjul to collect I.D. cards, is problematic. Reports suggest that additional card processing centers will expand into other regions.

The second and related concern, however, is that for some of those who are able to access the I.D. issuing center, they have experienced discrimination by authorities, suggesting due to their names that they are simply not Gambian. Meanwhile, as one aggrieved interviewee remarked, “[*there are*] countless Gambian Mandinkas born in Casamance, and Guinea-Bissau, but no one questions their identity in The Gambia”.

The trajectory of this issue of unresolved pathways to citizenship and official Gambian rights vs. lived discrimination resonates as further cause for concern when considering the massive youth population coming of age – young people who may or may not be able to participate in political parties and voting in the coming campaigns. This is noteworthy particularly amidst the ongoing tensions noted between political parties and leaders who use ethnicity and young energy as tools to rile their followers’ support. Those who ‘grew up Gambian’ having arrived at a young age, but may at once be unable to access formal national identity, and rights to vote, may feel increasingly disenfranchised, enabling tensions to build. Discussions with immigration officials, however, revealed that poor information dissemination about identification rights and I.D. card acquisition to the public has implications on levels of frustration that some non-Gambian citizenship applicants may feel when they are sent referrals for more documentation, or outright rejected. These challenges point to the need for attention to both structural, and individual level action, in terms of preventing any further rise of tensions, as well as the potential for manipulation by certain actors to generate social conflict through identity politics.

#### f. *Gender-based Violence*

A major and increasingly urgent issue remains that of gender-based violence (GBV) predominantly affecting women (but also young men, as reported in the 2018 CDA document), as well as broader psychological trauma linked to a history of violent authoritarian practices, both of which are seen to impact and shape political and social relations in the current transitional experience. Not all violence, however, is readily or easily visible. Many traumatic and violent experiences such as rape of women, remain hidden, or masked, as social pressures such as stigma serve as powerful deterrents against speaking out. While many female participants in the 2019 study (many of whom held positions of some official nature in government or civil society) made at least cursory mention of this reality in general, many also noted that women and young men who face violence, are either unable to articulate or report their experiences, or find safe recourse to protection through state mechanisms, given the pernicious nature of abuse, intolerance, culture of silence, unresponsive institutions, and predominance of traditional norms and actors, including cases of those who practice FGM/C. The experience of rural women and the inability to speak out was previously evidenced in all-women focus groups in the 2018 CDA study.

Other forms of violence and oppression subject women to complications on a daily basis, as violence transcends the private and public sphere. In one example, an interviewee recounted the story of a colleague whose husband denied her the ability to return to her work at State House, based on his accusations that she was engaging in prostitution at work. The female official who noticed her absence admonished more broadly that: “*men have to be the educators [for other men]. When work is 50/50, or at least 60/40 at home, then the household is right, and when the household is right, the workplace is right. [To interviewer] I’m sure you won’t go back home today and help your wife [to prepare Iftar]? I’m even missing some of the things you are saying here, simply because I am consumed with thinking about what I have to go home to cook tonight*”.

Another key structural form of violence currently inhibiting women's participation as political leaders is reflected in the extremely low representation of Gambian women to elected office, or public appointments. It is relevant to ask why it is that women candidates are not taking part in elections at the same rate of their male counterparts. One answer offered to that question, reiterated in the 2019 CDA update as it was in 2018, is that political parties are less likely to provide or prioritize support and financial funding to aspirational female candidates, while general attitudes prevail, reinforcing norms that stigmatize women's role or ability to be leaders at all.

It is important to note, however, that such attitudes may not be limited to political party leadership, rather than borne out in the wider public. For example, responses to a 2018 Afrobarometer poll<sup>34</sup> found that when Gambians were asked to select from a choice of statements about whether they felt more strongly that (a) *men make better political leaders and thus should be elected than women*, **or** that; (b) *women should have the same chance of being elected as men*, results showed that men and women in both rural and urban environs agreed nearly two times more strongly with statement "b" than with "a". Nevertheless, the stigmatization and corresponding practices built around the presumption that women are less prepared for leadership roles in politics than men, remain a defining trait of patriarchal society; a tendency which demotivates broader participation and impedes women's participation in local and national governance, only further compounded by the lack of opportunity and levels of internal solidarity or financial support shown by political party colleagues.

Today, there are only two elected female National Assembly members, while President Barrow's cabinet sees fewer women than under leadership in both of Gambia's previous administrations. Importantly, Gambia does have a National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women (NPAGW), in force since 1999, and has a Women's Act linked explicitly to CEDAW and other international protocols. Similarly, the re-drafting of the Constitution, a process ongoing through the CRC, is said to ensure the enactment of gender-responsive legislation, while the Ministry of Justice, in a [Statement on the Global Citizen #LeveltheLaw Campaign](#), has made commitments to reduce barriers to political participation, increase access to health rights, and encourage participation more broadly. Discussions about a gender parity law for the National Assembly, for instance, are ongoing.

*g. Deficits in psychological/trauma healing support systems*

Physical, psychological, and emotional trauma associated with over two decades of authoritarian practices, being more exposed than ever through TRRC hearings, are concerning to many given their potential to effect relationships in the workplace, in the street, and in Gambian homes. More than that, embedded fear and mistrust sown into the national social fabric over the course of the Jammeh years, suggest a significant potential that trauma can build into outward tensions, seemingly without notice. The significant number of "back way Returnees" who have also experienced violence and trauma during their journeys northward also harbor the effects of trauma, without the proper tools and capacities to manage them or related issues and vulnerabilities effectively and constructively. This poses cause for concern as more and more return with feelings of resentment toward an administration they feel is complicit in dashing their dreams, and attempt to reintegrate without being fully supported in their psychological needs. On the whole, Gambia remains significantly underprepared in its professional and infrastructural capacities to proactively or even reactively deal with effects of such trauma. By one account, Gambia has but *one* practicing clinical psychologist with expertise in this

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<sup>34</sup> Afrobarometer and CEPRASS (2018) [Afrobarometer](https://afrobarometer.org/publications/gambia-summary-results-2018) Summary of Results Round 7 Survey in The Gambia – 2018. Available online: <https://afrobarometer.org/publications/gambia-summary-results-2018> [accessed 22 June 2019]

arena, and only one facility that currently only treats the more serious of psychiatric cases.

The increased national consciousness provoked by TRRC testimonies brings to light some unsettling truths of history. As Gambians listen attentively, they are faced with the dispelling of long-held beliefs that ‘foreigners’, rather than Gambians, were responsible for carrying out violent acts under the Jammeh administration. The more that people internalized that their neighbors, acquaintances, or even family and friends were responsible for aiding or abetting such actions, the more difficult it will be to manage emotions and maintain interpersonal trust. As one report recently noted, *"I can't believe Gambians did this to other Gambians,"* has become one of the most commonly heard statements in the country.<sup>35</sup> For a population of just under two million, Gambians’ efforts to constructively process and deal with the past is a task that requires multiple proactive, trauma-support inputs for effective short, and long-term management.

## **Gambia’s Young Population**

### *a. Reach of Reintegration Support for Voluntary Returnees and Involuntary Deportees*

Although a moratorium on deportees is in effect, more are expected to return from the EU in line with demands made by EU country constituencies, where anti-immigrant sentiments have grown. The IOM reports that nearly 8,600 Gambians went to Europe in 2017 alone. IOM indicates that since 2017, the organization has assisted nearly 4000 Gambians who have primarily returned home from Libya and Niger, in addition to helping to skill returnees, and mitigate further departures by irregular means, by raising awareness about risks and challenges. Preventive efforts remain ongoing, as three new centers to provide outreach and information about migration options and alternatives to irregular migration were recently established and staffed (LRR, WCR, and URR) through the National Youth Council (NYC), funded by IOM and the EU. This, alongside other organizations such as International Trade Centre’s YEP (Youth Empowerment Project), aims to tackle the push and pull forces and pressures of irregular migration by improving employability of potential and returning young migrants.

YEP provides skills-training for those who wish to develop professionally in relevant local industry. Through the International Trade Center and EUTF, YEP has offered trainings in Basse, Bansang, Julangel, Janjanbureh, Farafenni, Soma, and other locations, with new initiatives being offered in conjunction with Germany’ Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Enabel, and IMVF, under the “tekki fii – Make it In the Gambia” effort. Courses have been organized in conjunction with, amongst others, partners in the Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI), or the Gambian Technical Training Institute (GTTI), through funding from partners like GIZ, accessible for Greater Banjul Area youth. Efforts to decentralize such training to reach rural sectors beyond Banjul, are reportedly underway. Despite these efforts, real constraints remain, while critiques from almost all corners abound that the reach for supporting *returnees* who will continue to come home, simply does not go far enough. By the numbers, the GIZ funded initiative proposes training a mere 1,500 individuals over a three-year period. While helpful, this is a mere “*drop in the bucket*”, as one civil society leader directly involved in supporting returnees, poignantly noted. With moratoriums on hiring in public service continuing, for example, in the police, fire and rescue, and military, other streams for training or employment remain limited.

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<sup>35</sup> BBC, “Letter from Africa: Torture Revelations Transfix The Gambia” Available online <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48525284> [accessed 22 June 2019]

b. *Social Risks and Vulnerabilities*

The voluntary and forced return of young Gambians poses both economic and social risks. Returning young men and women arrive without much safety net, particularly those who are *involuntarily* returned from places like Germany, and receive little to no assistance at all. Most or all will face difficult reintegration scenarios should they attempt to return to their family's home. Significant concern in this regard coalesces around those reported to be more vulnerable and easily swayed into illicit activities, as these provide what they need for the short term. As a result of these observations, social stigma against young people has also grown, in a cycle that links young people and especially Returnees to a higher frequency of reporting on crime and illicit activities in the country. Whether or not young people or Returnees in particular are more likely to be involved in such activities, or whether or not there have been *real* increases in Returnee participation in such criminal activities on the whole, is not necessarily known. However, an increase in *reporting* on crimes in 2017 through 2019, compared to 2016 and before, may also support the type of easy scapegoating and social stigma that remains hard to shake, further imposing social pressures on young people more broadly.

In other realms, tensions between Gambians and non-Gambians factors into young people's experiences. Those who take up legal employment may do so in companies who offer them lower wages and compel them to work under conditions such as long hours that do not follow labor regulations. This is evidenced to drive despair and resentment, helping to pit Gambians and shop or factory owners –many of whom are of South Asian or Lebanese descent- against one other. The relative instability in earnings, job security, or safety of labor protection demotivates young people. As one respondent put it – “*just look for yourself – at the beginning of each month, there's always a new [young Gambian] cashier in the market*”.

Meanwhile, *intra*-youth resentment is also reported to have grown, as well intentioned funding programs for returnees unintentionally marginalizes those who never left. While this does not appear to be a more urgent concern with respect to conflict dynamics at this time, its peripheral association bears mentioning for purposes of conflict prevention and avoiding social divisions and stigma early on, given that many more young people who have endured conditions at home and *not* migrated out of the country, may continue to feel dispossessed and without access to the multi-million Euro packages they read about being offered to Returnees. Additional challenges that *all* young people must face include a reduction in access to traditional forms of employment or subsistence such as farming, as climate changes are an identified push factor of internal rural to urban migration in the first place. A deeper structural challenge in terms of employability, too, is linked to the incongruence or misalignment of existing educational curricula and skills-training programs to the needs and demands of the labor market, or emerging entrepreneurship opportunities in The Gambia.

Importantly, in the face of stigma at home and in general amongst their age group, young migrants' reintegration from abroad in the context of a transitional Gambia means that young people are apt to find comfort and care in familiar socio-cultural spaces such as religious houses and tribes. One of the concerns voiced about those working with young returnees is that many have been exposed to extremist ideologies along the course of their journeys northward, and may be more susceptible to the influence of actors who support such views or actions. There is a risk in more radical actors welcoming in young people who find themselves vulnerable and in search of care and support. Those who suffer social stigma or rejection or tensions within their own homes due to the sense of loss, guilt, and/or shame associated with the failure of economic investments of having to return, were widely reported to be of concern, cited in both the 2018 and 2019 analyses.

It was in this light that a related dynamic came into conversation regarding the split by a former member of Gambia's Supreme Islamic Council (GSIC), a movement said to potentially harbor more extreme ideologies. Said to be linked to long-standing discontent of a personal and political nature with leaders within the Council, the split has given rise to the *Rawdatul Majalis* movement or community, referred to on multiple occasions as *potentially* coalescing more radical views. At the very least, the group is now outside the 'control' or 'watch' of the Council. This has caused some noticeable division in the Islamic community, with examples cited that GSIC's declarations or decisions have been met with counter declarations made by *Majalis* leaders. Although the link between the *Majalis* and more radical views could not be more thoroughly examined by this study, the divergence in one of Gambia's most important social institutions (GSIC) bears note on a number of fronts in light of the supreme level of trust and promising role that religious leaders and institutions are reported to have for Gambians,<sup>36</sup> and their potential to *proactively* address conflict dynamics, including by prevention through the mentoring and guidance of young people; a constituency that finds itself on the front line of conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

Still, clarity about the *Majalis* community and its impact on intra-faith relations seems murky at best in the minds of most. What becomes relevant for the purposes of conflict analysis is that in the transitional period, the separation of *Majalis* leadership from the GISC suggests a critical vulnerability in the potential of religious leaders as peace actors, or even to perpetuate or instigate further division and conflict. Evidence from the CDA 2019 research process suggests<sup>37</sup> that members from both the Gambia Supreme Islamic Council (GISC) and *Rawdatul Majalis* have made overtures to speak with one another, despite these offers being turned down. This suggests that attempts to engage constructively and directly on this split do not seem to be delivering much hope for understanding or clear answers for the wider Muslim community.

## **Vulnerabilities of Climate and the Natural Environment**

The Gambia's economy and natural resources become an important asset for national development. For a country that is heavily reliant on taxes for revenue, and cripplingly burdened under high external debt-servicing<sup>38</sup>, the economy and everyday livelihoods depend much on agriculture, as much as new trade deals,<sup>39</sup> and the showcasing of its natural environment that draws in tourists from around the world. With these benefits come multiple vulnerabilities, including a rapid rise in the value of land, urban expansion, and an explosion of unregulated extractive industries linked to practices of corruption, depletion of forests, along with other earth and sea resources. These elements place climate, the natural environment, its care, and the many benefits reaped from it, squarely on center stage of the agenda for national peacebuilding.

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<sup>36</sup> Afrobarometer (2018) "Corruption and Trust in The Gambia, 2018" Available online: [http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab\\_r7\\_dispatchno263\\_corruption\\_and\\_trust\\_in\\_the\\_gambia.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r7_dispatchno263_corruption_and_trust_in_the_gambia.pdf) [accessed 22 June 2019].

<sup>37</sup> Collaborative Analysis Participant Comment. For further information, see: <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/majmouatu-rawdatul-majalis-writes-to-gsic>

<sup>38</sup> Gambia's macroeconomic overview reveals that public debt landed around 87% of GDP in 2018, while interest payments hover around 26% of domestic revenues, deleteriously impacting possibilities for public investment and service delivery. Source: [World Bank](https://www.worldbank.org/)

<sup>39</sup> See for example, the Sustainable Fishing Partnership Agreement (SFPA) signed in December 2018 between Gambia and the EU: [https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/press/eu-signs-sustainable-fishing-partnership-agreement-republic-gambia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/press/eu-signs-sustainable-fishing-partnership-agreement-republic-gambia_en)

Deleterious changes to climate and lands once used for farming, have reduced overall returns and complicated the sourcing of livelihoods, as planting and growing seasons have shifted or become shorter, and expectations of rains have varied, making cultivation all too complicated and short, if not impossible. Gambia faces threats from climate and environmental degradation on multiple fronts, affecting social relations through economic hardship and densifying urban spaces, associated with rural to urban migration, and local to national food insecurity risks in a country already reliant on imports. While oversight and regulation of extractive industry and pollution issues have been discussed in previous sections of this report, the legal enforcement of seas such as marine patrols for overfishing or illegal activities such as pollution or trafficking, is also severely under-resourced.

Participants in this 2019 update also held perceptions that in many cases, national and local authorities have simply been reluctant to genuinely address their concerns regarding pollution or environmental degradation. However, there were also instances in which authorities reported that they had indeed attempted to be proactive, such as holding community forums in the case of dead fish dumping, in order to inform the community about the actions they were taking. It was further notable that such authorities may not always enjoy accurate or complexity of information such as the various attributable factors or sources of such ills, even when making genuine efforts to show communities that they care.

Similarly, and specific to the driver of environmental vulnerabilities, analysis revealed a significant absence of non-partisan, skilled, and consultatively oriented *mediative* actors who stand prepared to proactively prevent or mitigate rapidly developing conflict and flash point issues such as those linked to food insecurity. While at once consumers and shops face new constraints on both prices and deliveries, it is also unclear whether the underlying issues for the original cost-hike are truly being addressed, or whether the ‘solution’ was sought vis-à-vis an interest-based approach involving all relevant actors. The overall pattern of top-down decision enforcement, here on a food security-related decision that widely affects Gambians, does not, in this analysis, suggest that mediative capacities within institutions and/or community to act in such circumstances, exist.



## Key Peace Engines

1. Civil Society Organizations
2. National Reforms, Commissions & Committees
3. Religious & Traditional Leaders
4. The Media Sector

### Overview

Despite the many instability generating forces shaping The Gambia today, actors from all sectors and regions have been working tirelessly to support peace and stability. Despite even the many critiques it has received, the institutions that comprise the Government of the Gambia demonstrate commitment to working through planning, programming, and supporting activities that enable new social, political, cultural, and economic norms and possibilities during the country's transition. At the time of this writing, the Government had just announced that a new policy unit would be established within the Office of the President, to 'balance government from policy to implementation'.

Still, *many hands make peace work*. Whereas the Government of the Gambia has a critical role to play, other actors and factors from all sectors come together in their own unique way to shape what this report has termed "peace engines". Such engines are the forces identified in today's context that hold or enable the greatest potential to reinforce movement toward stability, social cohesion, and creation of conditions that can enable a more just and peaceful coexistence through Gambia's transition. Many of the key forces and actors most evident in supporting peace and stability that feature prominently in 2019, were also present in the 2018 results. Importantly, readers should note that ***all peace engines identified in the 2018 CDA remain viable***. The 2019 update process, however, allows for the showcasing of new and relevant actors or organizations whose prominence resonates in relation to some of the aforementioned 'updated' conflict dynamics.

No matter what engine for peace one considers, a central challenge affecting *all actors* remains the fact that the practices of communication, cooperation and coordination, which require at their core a certain level of trust, confidence, and transparency, are seen to have been fundamentally subverted and undermined through a legacy of authoritarian practices. This is a dilemma principally of orientation, which undergirds and affects the broader potential for peace, as it has affected all sectors and leaders. This relatively 'intangible' feature of Gambia's experience in transition must be emphasized and discussed, in order for the value of peace engines identified to be fully cultivated and realized, if they are the most likely to foster the necessary social, economic, cultural, and even support for political scaffolding for peacebuilding in The Gambia through this time of transition.

### Civil Society Organizations

As noted in the 2018 findings, Civil Society Organizations have a significant role to play, in what should be a complementary role to Government, particularly as Gambia continues to re-structure socio-political norms and expectations beyond the Jammeh years. What 2019 data evidenced was that this sector remains relatively weak in terms of individual and institutional capacity *overall*. With the change of government, some celebrated leaders have shifted out of the sector to take up better paid

positions within public institutions. Similarly, a drawback to the sector remains the lingering perception from the Jammeh years that the Civil Society sector and leaders, particularly those more critical of the government, are a natural *opponent* to government and political actors, rather than an ally to national development. Many express frustration at this perception, particularly as government and civil society work toward pursuing, upholding, and/or improving upon the same laws and initiatives, domestic or global, signed onto by Gambia.

Notably, a soured and mistrustful relationship between the Security forces and Civil Society sector, informed by a history of behaviors whereby armed state agents and members of the intelligence community participated in violating and abusing Civil Society members, remains an issue to be ironed out through appropriate channels, forums, and mechanisms. Gambia's civil society also lacks expertise in the security arena, disabling any type of sounding board and complement to institutional dialogue and exchange regarding the reforms and changes ongoing in both sectors.

In cases of national development concerns such as safety and health, complementarity and coordination between civil society actors and government institutions like the National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) and Gambian Network of AIDS Support Societies (GAMNASS) to address the spread of HIV/AIDS, is just one of many opportunities to ensure sustainable outcomes emerge out of proper planning or resource management, particularly in view of known concerns that international actors like the Global Fund, will shift their funding away from The Gambia by year's end.

The Civil Society sector as a whole stands to address their own internal or *intra-sectoral* agenda and means of organizing, communicating or coordinating, as well as helping to manage and promote the less 'tangible' issues of improving ethnic relations and coexistence. In the realm of facilitating new norms and accountability, or transitional justice in its broader sense, groups with strong reputation for non-partisan activism such as FLAG and YEP, Gambian Youth Ambassadors, amongst others, can do much by way of sensitization around civic rights and responsibilities, human rights, and education, for example, in coordination with NCCE and international partners.

It is notable that even in the course of the 2018 and 2019 analysis processes, it was difficult to locate and engage with some of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, such as young Returnees who may simply be 'off the radar'. Critiques have been levied at initiatives such as those fostered by YEP, which may also be 'missing' or out of touch with some of those difficult to reach individuals, who may not readily engage with formal or elite institutions, or in the space where YEP reaches. This issue raises the question of whether or what benefit might be seen in creating supportive networks through collaboration with existing institutions such as religious and traditional leaders, or even other international partners who have national networks that have the potential to offer access and connection to target groups, for instance.

WANEP – The Gambia Chapter of the West Africa Network for Peace Building is a reputable organization that keeps their finger on the pulse of peace and peacebuilding needs across the country. Their national network for Early Warning (NEWS), among other initiatives in capacity building through international funding partnerships, provides critical observations of patterns and trends on conflict and violence, localized conflict patterns and relevant actors, offering a broader opportunity for analysis and temperature about the development of state-society relations in general. This qualitative data and human network WANEP enjoys is perhaps unique in the country, and can serve as a model for counterbalancing forces unleashed by misinformation or rumors that spread easily through social media. Similarly, WANEP's efforts in years past have resulted in collaboration amongst

Gambians from all walks and regions with the purpose of exchange, informing, educating, contemplating, and collaboratively analyzing key dynamics that affect society at all levels.

Similarly, the semi-autonomous ADRS is identified as playing an important role in the land-related dispute resolution questions, particularly in light of the time it will take for Gambian actors to iron out land policy and consider how to bring traditional and statutory systems and actors into dialogue or even encourage collaboration. In the meantime, the technically skilled, though under-resourced, and yet difficulty to access ADRS holds significant potential to prevent violence seen in land dispute outgrowths, if strategically supported.

### **The Promise of National Reforms, Commissions & Committees**

Fledging, or fully functioning Commissions, many of which are made of up career activists in the arenas of human rights protections such as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), currently play an instrumental role in forwarding both women's and youth's rights, bringing visibility to such concerns, both as agents of just-peace and change, and in service of the pillar of non-repetition. Education and sensitization efforts are ongoing, and can be particularly effective when targeting women, children and youth, through activities that fall under the TRRC's *Never Again* campaign. The truth-seeking and reconciliation mandate of the TRRC have led to various challenges and even hostilities, which must continuously be managed. Witnesses have been accused of cooperating but lying, while others are telling the truth, but not cooperating. Nevertheless, some of these answers lie in the very composition of the Commission as a model, which, like the NHRC, see its members come from all ethnic groups and backgrounds.

The visibility the TRRC and of the NHRC, both of which promote civic education and civic responsibility, help to raise people's awareness about human rights, in line with Gambia's commitment to address violations. As the efforts of these commissions are harmonized with international treaties on these issues, it is possible to render their work more robust by mobilizing around linkages to international organizations and development partners promoting the same. These bodies, however, also remain relatively small and, as noted earlier, underfunded with regard to achieving certain key objectives, many of which can better enable Gambians to hold their fellow citizens and leaders to account. The NHRC for example was only brought into being as the National Human Rights Commission Act was enacted in December 2017. Its five members, however, were only sworn in by early 2019. The TRRC meanwhile, has been credited by many with persevering to "wake Gambia up" from a long slumber of denial, helping the country put historical events in the proper light and order, revealing that Gambians themselves were capable of heinous crimes, keeping record, preserving, and memorializing such experiences.

Still, many organizations and institutions, while working toward committed transitional outcomes, feel highly constrained by the lack of resources, or the token efforts made by donors that may look good on paper, while doing little to create impact. Perhaps one of the most important areas of reform for the purposes of conflict prevention and shoring up of social cohesion remains that of Security Sector Reform (SSR). Like other reforms and commissions-as-actors, SSR must be held in view of a dual potential – on the one hand, as a conflict driver, as well as a significant engine to ensure peace and stability, particularly in view of any eventual post-ECOMIG era. Steps taken to forward toward achieving SSR objectives will be a strong sign to the public that the architecture of the former regime is truly being dismantled and competently replaced by professionalized institutions, leadership, and personnel. All efforts to advance swiftly and competently along the road map that SSR actors have

identified, will be key for sustaining peace. For this, however, evidence illuminates the need for stronger engagement, ownership and leadership of the broader SSR process by Gambian authorities to reduce disgruntled sentiment that some have expressed with delays, as well as with the presence of ECOMIG forces, lest current and burgeoning priorities such as right-sizing of forces and appropriate exit-package support for those exiting forces, fail to materialize.

The promise of SSR as a peace engine, meanwhile, is harnessed in its potential to reassure the general public that security institutions and leaders address long-desired accountability. Movement toward civilian oversight and democratic control such as the advancement of a national security police, must be complemented by the additional layers of reform outlined in current plans, which can better enable a panorama in which trained and professionally-oriented security forces put service delivery at the center of human security and development for the nation.

The Inter-Party Committee (IPC), meanwhile, which helps coordinate relationships and serve as a dialogue forum amongst Gambia's political parties, is another key agent for constructive change management. This is particularly demonstrated by the commitment of its members (who come from all parties) to abide by their mandate and not stray into other missions or engagements. Nevertheless, the IPC has received capacity-building from the UN and other partners, and shown themselves to intervene effectively in cases where politicization encroached upon the function of supposedly independent institutions, like the courts. Under the Chairmanship of the former spokesperson (Coalition 2016) and National Assembly Member for Serrekunda East, the Hon. Halifa Sallah (PDOIS), the IPC has successfully established itself as a respected medium for the resolution of politically motivated conflicts, delivered through engagements and dialogue efforts.

While there remains a gender parity imbalance in terms of IPC representatives, which individual parties put forward to participate in the IPC, its members do enjoy widely held respect, and seem to respect each other, suggesting good indicators moving forward. The IPC itself can deliver greater visibility and foster development of pro-positive attitudes that affirm Gambian women as strong and capable political and social leaders, and not just those of a certain age, to include younger female leaders as well. The IPC is often mentioned by research participants in this study, for their role in sensitizing the public and political party members on issues of tribal politics and exclusionary ethnolinguistic practices. An emergent group linked to the IPC is the newly established platform of the **Inter-Party Youth Committee**, currently supported by the UNDP and local partners WANEP, Gambia's National Youth Council and International Republican Institute (IRI). IPYC has convened young leaders in dialogue to discuss issues of political violence prevention, tolerance, and peaceful party cohesion. It is unclear, however, what the relationship will be between the IPC and the youth committee.

### **Religious and Traditional Leaders**

Religion and the role of religious leaders was evidenced as critical as a force for peace in The Gambia in 2018. And while in 2019 members from at least the Islamic and Christian communities participated in the research, religion was also one of the *least* mentioned 'issues' during the 2019 effort. Religious leaders feature as the most highly-trusted group of leaders amongst Gambians,<sup>40</sup> followed by traditional leaders in second place, suggesting that while their popularity and reach is widespread

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<sup>40</sup> Afrobarometer (2018) "Corruption and Trust in The Gambia, 2018" Available online: [http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab\\_r7\\_dispatchno263\\_corruption\\_and\\_trust\\_in\\_the\\_gambia.pdf](http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Dispatches/ab_r7_dispatchno263_corruption_and_trust_in_the_gambia.pdf) [accessed 5 June 2019].

(though not without challenges and their detractors, as the 2018 CDA noted), it is noteworthy to see the relative incongruence between the visibility these leaders seem to have specific to transitional goals and national development, and the conflict prevention potential they might have, or are certainly entrusted to hold forth upon by the wider public in the transitional environment.

For instance, while Muslim and Christian actors are reported to have been involved in mitigating some important political tensions in the recent past, including the 2017 political impasse. As one representative from the GSIC expressed, the contributions of the Islamic leadership may be less publicly visible in accordance with their values, working more from the base of communities than the public spotlight. However, as one workshop participant noted, there yet seems to be any established inter-religious platform or engagement undertaken between these two houses that might encourage dialogue and/or targeted conflict prevention on a regular basis.

While relatively good relations between the majority Muslim and Christian minority communities is widely cited, the role of leaders and religious groups in peacebuilding presents an important area for further inquiry. Likewise, Gambia's overall relationship with actors in the Gulf States and investors has raised some concern amongst certain actors, who are weary of any less than transparent transactions, support, and influence they may exert. For the Supreme Islamic Council, the question of youth also features large in their potential, particularly as it aligns with the concern for splinter groups and more radical views to interrupt the current level of peace and coexistence *within* the Islamic community.

### **The Media Sector**

According to a 2018 Afrobarometer poll,<sup>41</sup> Gambians, both male and female, in both urban and rural areas, tend get their media *more* frequently from Radio, followed by internet-based sources, including social media, with television input being somewhat more evenly distributed in terms of frequency, although not particularly strong. These sources edge out traditional print news like newspapers as those used to gain information, suggesting that the media's conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity capacities may be best focused more around efforts and sources from which Gambians are more likely to draw their information. As opposed to print media and public information dissemination in English, radio programming in targeted languages other than English offers a clear advantage for reaching diverse audiences through information dissemination and sensitization efforts that are undertaken by key actors (e.g. the NCCE, Fire and Rescue, Security Sector Actors, Ministry of Interior, TRRC, etc.).

Critiques heard about the media during the 2019 CDA update was that inaccurate reporting and the spread of misinformation, often as reporters try to get a jump on a story without proper triangulation or processing, may unintentionally cause more harm than good, particularly if such things are further misused down the chain of information consumers. Weakened skills and/or capacities of institutions, in part due to a long-standing, sub-standard practices or adherence to unethical norms under 22-years of censorship and misinformation campaigns, have exposed the sector to vulnerabilities, and the need to rebuild.

Much like Security Sector Reform, the media sector offers a double-edged sword. It is at once able to influence significantly, as a clear force to prevent conflict, by helping to encourage accountability, serving as hub for civic exchange, and spreading accurate information, updating the public on key

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<sup>41</sup> Afrobarometer and CEPRASS (2018) [Afrobarometer](https://afrobarometer.org/publications/gambia-summary-results-2018) Summary of Results Round 7 Survey in The Gambia – 2018. Available online: <https://afrobarometer.org/publications/gambia-summary-results-2018> [accessed 22 June 2019]

issues and contributing to the promise of sustained peace in The Gambia on the whole. On the other hand, the common refrain that digital platforms and radio personalities may help to foster the certain messaging or information to inflame tensions. As noted earlier, the initiatives such as Gambia Press Union's (GPU) ethical code development offers expansion of this sector's professionalizing and capacities to perform *accountable* journalism, setting standards by which media actors and those wielding and dealing with public information can also hold each other accountable. The second edge, however, portends a far greater challenge, and it is perhaps along these lines that a marked absence of attention has been given to the non-traditional media sector's role in promoting and sustaining peace, or, *enabling* some of the key conflict dynamics outlined above. This is specific to the forces and influence that media-based debate on public issues has, particularly over radio, in addition to the use of social media channels to spread hate speech and tribalism, given the risks it poses to the overall social cohesion of the nation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All actors are duly reminded to review the recommendations contained in the 2018 Conflict and Development Analysis, reading this set of 2019 recommendations as an addendum to that text;
2. Development partners and associated donors, including the primary funding source for this 2019 update, should invest more appropriately and continually in the process of participatory analysis and related national capacity-building activities, as the basis for orienting and adjusting its peacebuilding programming investment. Adequate provision of finances should be considered in line with the demands of such analysis methodologies, so as to ensure that the claims underlying terms like “participatory and inclusive”, as well as the aspirations behind meaningful development of local capacities for such efforts (beyond one-off, annual exercises), are fully supported and realized. Taken as the basis for peacebuilding programming investment and planning, the financial means allocated for analytical endeavors such as the 2018 CDA and 2019 update, should more realistically reflect, or be proportional to, the total funding envelope being committed;
3. Targeted investments should be considered by government and development partners, including UN-Agencies, responsible for properly interpreting analytical results, recommendations, and related contextual expediencies, in service of moving effectively from analysis to peacebuilding programming design, in order to craft more strategic interventions, supporting national partners in all stages of the process to do the same;
4. With regard to Security Sector Reform, the United Nations and other Intergovernmental Organizations such the AU (or other IGOs) should consider mobilizing Good Offices and prominent *mediative* figures in support of key and timely SSR related decision-making amongst high-level Gambian actors charged with that task, in service of overcoming ongoing obstacles that otherwise present obstacles to these key reforms;
5. The capacities of conflict sensitivity, and inter-institutional communication and coordination should be immediately and meaningfully expanded in key institutions, beginning with the Office of the President, which can benefit from conflict sensitive optics in analysis and decision making, with the intent of enabling more preventive and effective management of key issues, including, e.g. how and when to addressing key issues of violence and the potential consequences of specific decision making that implicate institutional stability in the transitional period (i.e. the administration of institutions involved in key reforms and relations with Development Partners);

6. Reasonable efforts should be made by the President of The Gambia, His Excellency Adama Barrow, to show more visibility and engage in more frequent public communications in discussing his views and management efforts around key instability-related issues as outlined in this report, such as to provide regular information and updates to the public on key reforms, through *radio* and in various *languages*, speaking to issues of national concern and development, as a way to assuage doubt, concern, and growing perceptions of corruption and mistrust; President Barrow must make every effort, through his Press Office, to help disabuse Gambians of any false premises or assumptions they may hold regarding executive plans, commitments, and rationales for time and resource expenditures, or the need for extensions or delays;
7. All relevant political and institutional actors should make reasonable efforts to promote norms of accountability and transparency, while aiding in the effort to clarify any potential mixed messaging to the public, for example, by assessing and advising on the impacts of behaviors that lead to declining confidence and rising mistrust by the public about the current government, including, for example, the influence through gifts and/or overreach by the Executive in the affairs of other branches of government, such as the National Assembly, or lack of transparency and clarity regarding donations made to the First Lady's foundation;
8. All relevant institutions and leaders should commit to advancing the establishment of a unified national land policy, prepared in consultation with key actors, accounting for trends of urbanization and land-investments, and in alignment with treaties to which Gambia is a signatory, protecting against gendered and other forms of discrimination. In addition to establishing conflict prevention and response mechanisms specific to the processes of disputes over boundaries, land acquisition, discrimination, etc., government actors must immediately address and improve upon setting and enforcing institutional requirements, regulations, and practices that ensure the collection of, and access to survey data, supporting real-time tracking and updates, and wider, institutional or private (i.e. Estate Developers and investors) use for ensuring clarity of boundaries of communal land and holdings. All efforts by Land Ministry and technical assistance partners, as well as local government structures, should continue with sensitization processes on policies and laws, while advancing immediately to implement *Cadastral Mapping* system that makes survey data accessible in live time to relevant actors and institutions;
9. Considerations should be made for a Commission of Inquiry to complement the Land Commission, similar to what has been done with inquiries into the assets of former president Jammeh, in order to address conflicts and disputed ownership such as lands reportedly distributed by Jammeh and party leaders to "new settlers" in exchange for loyalties;
10. As reforms and policies develop, so too must investments be made in building institutional capacities in mediation, dialogue, and collaborative negotiation skills, processes, and systems, in both government and civil society sectors, which can be drawn upon and deployed more readily in flash-point situations such as those related land disputes management, de-escalation of security sector tensions, or crises revolving around food security. In this vein, commitments by central and local government to the use of existing tools and mechanisms such as ADRS should be made, with the real effect of expanding ADRS's ability to deliver upon such requests, to reach all regions, beginning with the hot spot areas outlined in this document, building upon its reputation as a trusted, effective mediator in land disputes;
11. In line with the development of mediative capacities, national executive and legislative actors, in conjunction with economic and environmental security actors, should consider means by which to prevent and/or address escalation of social tension in relation to shocks generated by external fluctuations relative to key imports, consulting with relevant stakeholders in order to establish a system and proactive means (e.g. a cadre of mediation and negotiation advisors) by which to reduce burden and escalatory behaviors related to consumers and consumption;



12. Make all reasonable efforts, in line with land policy and reforms, to promote dialogue amongst stewards of *statutory* and those of *traditional* practices of land dispute management (i.e. Ministry of Lands, Governors, Chiefs, Councils, Alkalos, and relevant security sector actors). Learning from the successful experiences of other countries in the region or beyond, can be helpful;
13. Through consultation with professionals and the TRRC, amongst others, invest in institutional capacities and national agenda development to support psychological trauma-related needs that can encourage peaceful processing of experiences and national healing; this is particularly relevant for outreach and care deliver to rural sectors unlikely to be reached by Banjul-based efforts;
14. High-level political and traditional leaders should make reasonable efforts to publicly endorse national unity, while publicly discrediting and abandoning any behaviors that promote ethno-political discrimination, encouraging henceforth coexistence initiatives linked to National Development initiatives, in order to de-*ethnitize* politics and de-*politicize* ethnicity in all negative forms, in service of reinforcing pluralism, respecting diversity, and promoting real gender equity;
15. Similar efforts should be made to re-establish and incentivize the behaviors of foreign investors to engage with indicated institutions of commerce, trade, and investment as a first stop, before the Office of the President, so as to reduce the growing perception of corruption;
16. Make all reasonable efforts to advance with Civil Service Reform, and related internal institutional reforms, in specific view of preventing overlap, duplication, and the current gaps identified in communication and coordination amongst institutions visible for their deliver of public services. Specific examples may touch upon procurement and bidding processes that entail strong linkages to other key public services or institutions, enabling a system and/or means for interaction and verification that is conflict-sensitive (e.g. NAWEC and Ministry of Interior for streamlining Fire and Rescue services delivery);
17. Conducting a nationwide study on Social Cohesion should be taken into consideration by the Government of the Gambia and/or Development Partners, undertaken by an impartial actor, and whose results should be discussed amongst all relevant stakeholders, in order to establish a commonly acceptable set of metrics and indicators that can be used in orienting national policy and informing programming efforts;
18. Civil Society Actors should consider setting in motion a regular forum for exchange regarding key transition issues, and, potentially, the development of shared agenda items that mutually support social cohesion and ongoing peacebuilding efforts; contributions in this exchange may lend themselves to conflict prevention through collaboration, building increased familiarity and trust amongst actors, avoiding duplication of efforts, and socializing insights or foresight specific to conflict prevention issues; This should include, *inter alia*, engagement with public-opinion shapers and relevant actors, including publishing house owners, editors and broadcasters (radio and television), regarding the use of social media channels for dissemination of hate speech and messages that encourage discrimination along xenophobic and ethno-linguistic lines; The promotion of key actors, such as TANGO and GPU must be considered;
19. Government should make all reasonable efforts to improve upon youth employment and protections, enabling and incentivizing opportunities in conjunction with high-investment areas of the private sector, and with new national trading partners, in all viable sectors, to better enable young people's connections to, and re/investment in, their communities;
20. Consideration should be made for the establishment of a Commission made up of Gambians knowledgeable on immigration and migration matters,<sup>42</sup> who may also address partners such as France and

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<sup>42</sup> Mentionable include: Fatou Bensouda, Hon Assan Jallow, Chrispin Grey Johnson, Ann Therese Ndong Jatta, Dr. Sise, Jaha Dukureh, etc.

the EU to negotiate a special temporary treatment for Gambians, modeling such intervention after the example of former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who successfully engaged former US President Obama for respite concerning Liberians in the US. The current US Administration has extended this by 6-months.

21. Encourage better coordination and communication amongst the eco-system of land related authorities at the national and local levels, emphasizing demands and practices of transparency and accountability; this can go a long way in demonstrating to the Gambian people that national, district, and local authorities take environmental degradation seriously, and will work against corruption that can lead to lasting environmental damage, helping to reaffirm government's commitment to environmental protection;
22. Sensitize both citizens and relevant actors, such as political parties, more frequently and through a nation-wide effort, regarding constitutional provisions, as well as civic roles and responsibilities; employ a joint civil society/government task force to support, interconnect, and/or expand the efforts of bodies such as the NCCE, or others, such as relevant committees within the National Assembly or even civil society organizations, encouraging as well all government entities and leaders to make a commitment to supporting, and modeling good practices in terms of civic responsibilities and ethical behaviors;
23. In line with existing professionalization efforts, develop conflict sensitive and ethical investigative journalism capacities of individuals and institutions, with system for distribution through social media – building a trusted reputation and ensuring that practices extend to the norm-creation around radio broadcasts and formal and informal internet-based information dissemination;
24. Encourage intra- and inter-religious dialogue amongst houses and communities of worship, capitalizing on the social trust Gambians widely and deeply place in their religious leaders, in order to more cohesively engage key issues of prevention, which includes the mentoring and guidance of young people, and particularly Returnees in all aspects of the reintegration process, especially in rural communities;
25. As recommended in 2018, continue to support the development of IPC's mediative capacities and reflective practices regarding their role as a key-actor in the transitional period, as well as to enhance their potential in preventive peacemaking and overall familiarity of political parties and leaders with conflict sensitivity, in line with their role and possibilities of their mandate;
26. Conduct similar work with the Inter-party "Youth" Committee, in order to support context and role analysis of this actor, as well as explore potential linkages and developmental needs of this committee, specific to their contributions and conflict-prevention role linked to young Gambians, social cohesion, and linkages to the work and agenda of relevant bodies like the IPC;
27. As a prerogative of the President, consider the establishment of the Armed Forces Council, which, as established under the current constitution, could enable and facilitate a more direct line of engagement and communication between the GAF and the President, generating more direct and ostensibly better civilian-military relations as reforms unfold;
28. The CRC should inquire into issues related to emerging concerns voiced by experts, such as those regarding the Military's interest in Agro-business, which has been justified under conditions of the current Constitution and existing mandates and guidelines governing the Security Sector, all of which are in a reform process. Any significant decision-making in this transitional period for any such actor that implicates public resources and community rights, should be well-studied and publically debated amongst relevant actors, as these may have both short and long-term impact on currently reforming policies and institutions.

29. In line with good governance practices, and in encouragement of accountability and transparency practices, the CRC should consider mandating that all presidential appointments are subject to public review vis-à-vis the appropriate bodies, such as the National Assembly;
30. Relevant actors should make all efforts to facilitate the strengthening of Gambia's Intellectual Property Rights Law and implementation, particularly in view of this as a source of income that can enable Gambian artists to receive payments and royalties when their music is played on radio, TV, in hotels, etc.
31. Entities of the Project Management Team should widely consult with communities on the results of both the 2018 CDA and 2019 'update' findings, making available both written copies to relevant stakeholders, as well as oral presentations that can be delivered in local languages;

## Suggested Areas for further Inquiry

- Role of Religious Leaders, Inter-Sect Relations, and Opportunities for Inter-Religious Peacebuilding in The Gambia;
- The Impact of GBV and gender discrimination on National Development;
- National Social Cohesion and related studies, including the challenges and barriers faced by institutions and minority groups, to include social and religious minorities (e.g. Ahmadiya Muslims, Christian communities, and those who face discrimination related to the existing Caste system);