



Peace and Prosperity in the Gambia:

Problems and Prospects

Report on the
Symposium on
Security,
Governance, and
Development in
the Gambia

2-4
September **2024**



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Coordinators

Mr George Lwanda, Head of Resident Coordinator's Office, The Gambia; and Mr Abdel Ghader Khdeim, Peace Building Fund, Coordinator, United Nations.

Consultant and Lead Rapporteur

Prof Dan Kuwali is the Commandant of the National Defence College-Malawi (NDC-MW) and Extraordinary Professor of International Law, Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria.

Rapporteurs

Alpha MK Lowe, Administrator (Office of the Vice-Chancellor) and Adjunct Lecturer (School of Business and Public Administration), University of The Gambia (UTG); Mr Omar Dibba, Legal Counsel, LAFOJ; and Mr Essa Sanneh, Member of Parliament, National Youth Parliament.

Disclaimer

The Rapporteurs take full responsibility for the views expressed in this Symposium Report. They do not, in any way whatsoever, represent the views of the respective institutions the Rapporteurs serve or those of the Partners who supported the symposium's hosting.



Group Photograph capturing some of the Participants at the Symposium

Acronyms

ABA	American Bar Association
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CRPD	Center for Research and Policy Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
GAF	Gambian Armed Forces
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFRS	Gambia Fire and Rescue Services
GRTS	Gambia Radio and Television Services
HCI	Human Capital Index
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FY	Financial Year
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MOPE	Ministry of Petroleum and Energy
MOFEA	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
MOTWI	Ministry of Transport Works and Infrastructure
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGBV	Network Against Gender Based Violence
NSC	National Security Council
NSS	National Security Strategy
NYP	National Youth Parliament
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
ONS	The Office of National Security
PBA	Performance-Based Allocation
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SoE	State-Owned Enterprises
SSR	Security Sector Reform
TAA	Turn Around Allocation
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TRRC	Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations
UN	United Nations Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UTG	University of The Gambia
WAVE	The Women's Association for Victims' Empowerment

Executive Summary

The United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), in partnership with the World Bank, the Government of The Gambia, and the Centre for Research and Policy Development (CRPD), organised a Research Policy Seminar on the theme '**Peace and Prosperity in The Gambia: Problems and Prospects.**' This solution-oriented seminar convened policymakers, practitioners, academics, and civil society representatives, was designed to critically examine contemporary challenges and opportunities related to security, governance, and development in The Gambia.

Since transitioning to a multiparty republic following the 2016 Presidential Elections, The Gambia has moved beyond the autocratic rule that lasted from 1994 to 2017. As one of the smallest countries on continental Africa, covering approximately 10,700 square kilometers with a population of 2.5 million, The Gambia faces unique and often overlooked development challenges.¹ Despite the lack of significant mineral resources, agriculture remains a cornerstone of its economy. Nearly 60% of the land is devoted to agriculture, which supports about 75% of the population through crop cultivation and livestock rearing.²

Economic activities in The Gambia are largely centred around small-scale manufacturing, focusing on processing peanuts, fish, and animal hides. While the country has experienced positive gross domestic product (GDP) growth, rising food prices have exacerbated poverty, which reached 18.5% in 2023. The Gambia's economic advancement relies heavily on foreign aid and the prudent economic management of international partners. However, the fiscal deficit remains a persistent issue, projected at 4.2% of GDP for 2023. It is crucial for the Government of The Gambia, the civil society, and development partners to address these economic challenges to achieve peace and prosperity in line with the United Nations Sustainable Goals as aligned with the African Union Vision 2063 and the country's development plan.

To achieve sustainable growth, The Gambia must diversify its revenue streams and manage high overall and external debt risks effectively. This is not just a goal but a necessity for this coastal country's future. Strengthening governance, particularly in combating corruption within public procurement and public finance management, is crucial. Challenges are compounded by limited digitalisation and discretionary powers. The country also faces demographic pressures, with a population density of 176 people per square kilometre. Urban and peri-urban areas, which house 57% of the population, experience heightened tensions and conflicts over land rights between communities and the state. Rapid peri-urbanisation has further led to deforestation and loss of agricultural land, exacerbating climate change impacts.

1 Banna Sawaneh, "Democracy and Democratic Consolidation in The Gambia," Faculty of Administration, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, Conference Proceedings Vol IV, 2020.

2 African Development Bank Group, Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for The Gambia for the period 2021-2025, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/gambia-country-strategy-paper-2021-2025>

Addressing these issues requires an integrated approach to building resilience. The Symposium discussed how to promote accountable governance, social cohesion, national reconciliation, and inclusive economic growth in The Gambia. The Participants also explored necessary comprehensive security reforms to align the armed forces and uniformed services with national development objectives. By focusing on the recommendations from the Symposium, The Gambia can work towards achieving peace and promoting prosperity, creating a stable and inclusive environment that supports sustainable development and growth. The recommendations are applicable to the relevant stakeholders, including the Government of the Republic of The Gambia, the civil society, and development partners, including the UN, the AU, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Policy Recommendations

The recommendations outlined in this report provide a roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders to work towards a more equitable and inclusive society, where economic growth benefits everyone, regardless of gender or region. The symposium concluded with the following ten key actionable recommendations to address pressing challenges and promote stability, sustainable development, and inclusive growth:

1. Support Economic Development and Diversification

- **Promote Economic Diversification:** Develop various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, to reduce dependency on a single industry and create new job opportunities.
- **Encourage small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) Growth:** Support SMEs through access to finance, training, and market opportunities.
- **Expand Economic Activities:** Support new sectors beyond agriculture, such as tourism, technology, and renewable energy. Promote investment in small-scale industries and value-added processing.
- **Promote Agro-Processing:** Invest in technology and infrastructure for processing crops and fish to enhance agricultural productivity and value addition, boost export potential, and create jobs.
- **Develop Social Protection Systems:** Implement safety nets by creating comprehensive social protection programmes, including unemployment benefits, social insurance, and targeted assistance, to support vulnerable populations.
- **Ensure Equitable Access:** Social protection systems should reach all segments of society, particularly those most in need. Legal reform is necessary to ensure equal rights for women to access financial services, land, and other economic benefits.

2. Enhance Governance and Strengthen Democratic Institutions

- **Enact New Constitution:** To complete the process of transition from autocratic rule to democracy, The Gambia requires a new constitution that provides a system of checks and balances and takes into account the people's interests and aspirations.
- **Enhance Electoral Processes:** Improve electoral systems to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections, increase voter education, and safeguard against fraud.
- **Support Judicial Independence:** Protect the judiciary from political interference and strengthen legal frameworks to uphold the rule of law.
- **Promote Inclusive Governance:** Foster broad-based participation by involving diverse stakeholders, including marginalised and minority groups, in decision-making processes.

- **Implement Anti-Corruption Measures:** Enhance transparency and accountability in public procurement and financial management. Strengthen institutions responsible for combating corruption and ensure effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

3. Implement Inclusive Economic Policies and Address Demographic Challenges

- **Develop Inclusive Economic Policies:** Address income inequality and ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for all segments of society, focusing on reducing poverty and supporting marginalised groups.
- **Promote Inclusive Urban Planning:** Implement equitable land management policies and develop sustainable urban planning strategies to manage rapid urbanisation and mitigate conflicts.
- **Support National Reconciliation:** Foster national unity through inclusive dialogue and reconciliation initiatives that address historical grievances and promote social cohesion.

4. Promote Sustainable Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability

- **Integrate Sustainability into Development Plans:** Promote green technologies and sustainable practices to ensure that economic development strategies include environmental considerations.
- **Implement Climate Adaptation Strategies:** Develop and implement strategies to mitigate climate change impacts on agriculture, food security, and biodiversity. Invest in climate-resilient agricultural practices and sustainable land management.
- **Promote Reforestation and Conservation:** Address deforestation and land degradation through reforestation projects and conservation programs. Encourage sustainable agricultural practices.

5. Strengthen Law Enforcement and Security Sector Reform

- **Reform Security Institutions:** Improve the effectiveness and accountability of law enforcement and security agencies through training, oversight, and community engagement.
- **Enhance Conflict Prevention Mechanisms:** Develop early warning systems and conflict resolution mechanisms to address potential threats before they escalate.
- **Align Security Forces with Development Goals:** Ensure security institutions align with national development objectives and contribute positively to societal stability.

6. Enhance Digitalisation and Invest in Infrastructure Development

- **Promote Digital Transformation:** Invest in digital infrastructure to improve public services, enhance transparency, and reduce corruption. Digitalise key sectors such as public administration, finance, agriculture, and health.
- **Upgrade Infrastructure:** Improve transportation, energy, and communication infrastructure to support economic activities and enhance connectivity within the country.

7. Invest in Human Capital and Promote Education and Skills Development

- **Improve Education and Training:** Allocate resources to enhance education and vocational training programs. Expand access to quality education and vocational training to build a skilled workforce.

- **Support Lifelong Learning:** Promote continuous learning and skills development to adapt to changing economic conditions and technological advancements.
- **Enhance Healthcare Services:** Invest in healthcare infrastructure and services to ensure a healthy population capable of contributing to economic growth.

8. Foster Regional and International Partnerships

- **Strengthen Regional Cooperation:** Enhance cooperation with neighbouring countries and international organisations to address cross-border security issues, share intelligence, and coordinate responses.
- **Leverage International Support:** Engage with international partners for technical assistance, funding, and knowledge sharing to support development programs.

9. Promote Inclusive Economic Growth and Strengthen Social Protection Systems

- **Support Marginalized Groups:** Ensure economic growth benefits all segments of society, including women, youth, people with disabilities, and marginalised communities. Implement policies that promote equal opportunities.
- **Enhance Social Protection:** Develop comprehensive social safety nets, including unemployment benefits, social insurance, and targeted assistance programs to support vulnerable populations and mitigate economic shocks.

10. Engage in Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Conduct Rigorous Research and Policy Analysis

- **Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Engage diverse stakeholders, including government, private sector, civil society, and international partners, to leverage resources and address complex challenges.
- **Support Evidence-Based Policy Making:** Develop strategies based on rigorous academic research and analysis. Use findings to inform policy decisions and ensure effective and targeted interventions.

Introduction

The Symposium on Security, Governance, and Development in The Gambia, held from 2 to 4 September, 2024, at the Sir Dawda Kairaba International Conference Center in Banjul, was a crucial event focused on addressing the country's pressing challenges and opportunities. Organised by the Center for Research and Policy Development (CRPD) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in The Gambia, the symposium convened a diverse group of stakeholders, including government officials, civil society leaders, and international experts, to discuss strategies for enhancing security, governance, and development.

The event featured expert presentations, panel discussions, and breakout sessions aimed at thoroughly examining The Gambia's security, governance, and development efforts and challenges. The primary objective was to formulate actionable policy recommendations to guide the country's development agenda.

Participants engaged in various sub-thematic areas, including: Peace and Prosperity in The Gambia: Problems and Prospects; Fostering Inclusive and Accountable Governance; Deepening Democratic Governance; Strengthening Democracy: Insights from Participants; Achieving Sustainable Peace and Security; Promoting Peace and Security; The Political Situation in Foni; Climate Security in the Gambian River Basin; Transitional Progress in The Gambia from a UN Perspective; and Strategies for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth. Additionally, a plenary session provided an overview of the collaboration between the UN and the World Bank.

This report summarises the discussions, ongoing efforts, challenges, and recommendations emerging from each sub-thematic area. It also highlights key moments from both the opening and closing ceremonies.

Overall, the symposium offered a comprehensive analysis of The Gambia's security, governance, and development landscape, identifying both achievements and ongoing challenges. The collaborative efforts of the participants aim to establish a roadmap for effectively addressing these issues and advancing The Gambia's democratic and developmental objectives.

Objectives of the Symposium

The solution-oriented Seminar brought together participants from the public service, academia, non-governmental organisations, development partners. The participants included policymakers, practitioners, scholars, and civil society actors to critically reflect on the issues of security, governance, and development in The Gambia. As an integrated approach is necessary to building resilience is essential to mitigate these challenges, the symposium also sought to foster discussions on sustaining accountable governance, social cohesion, national reconciliation, and inclusive economic growth in The Gambia. Generally, the symposium sought to achieve the following five overarching objectives:

1. To generate ideas and strategies to address and overcome socio-economic disparities, improve governance practices, and ensure that development projects in The Gambia are inclusive and equitable. This includes exploring pathways to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth, enhance social cohesion, and promote effective conflict prevention and resolution.

2. To evaluate the key social, political, and security challenges impacting governance in The Gambia. Identify and propose measures to strengthen national and community-based security mechanisms, enhance transparency, and improve the effectiveness of governance institutions, aiming to foster stability and trust across all levels of society.
3. To explore methods for strengthening institutional integrity and upholding the rule of law in The Gambia. Focus on improving transparency and accountability within public institutions, combating corruption, and ensuring that legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms effectively protect human rights and contribute to a just society.
4. To examine ways and means for strengthening peace and security in The Gambia by addressing root causes of conflict. Discuss strategies for promoting peace, unity, and social cohesion to achieve national reconciliation and stability.
5. To examine opportunities for strengthening regional and international partnerships to support The Gambia's security and development objectives. Discuss how collaborative efforts with neighbouring countries and international organisations can address cross-border challenges, enhance resource mobilisation, and support national development goals.

Remarks by Mr Karl-Frédérick Paul, United Nations Coordinator, The Gambia



Mr Karl Frédéric Paul, United Nations Resident Coordinator, The Gambia delivering his opening remarks during the symposium.

Distinguished Guests, Esteemed Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Good morning, and welcome to our symposium on “Peace and Prosperity in The Gambia: Problems and Prospects.”
2. As we gather here in the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara International Conference Center, we embark on a crucial journey to help shape The Gambia’s future – a future of sustainable peace, inclusive prosperity, and resilient democracy.
3. The story of The Gambia, a country small in size but great in spirit, is a story of transformation and hope. Yet, this story is not without its challenges.
4. These challenges—and, more importantly, the opportunities they present—are what bring us together for this critical symposium on “Peace and Prosperity in The Gambia: Problems and Prospects.” Let us begin by acknowledging the remarkable strides The Gambia has made.
5. Since 2016, we have witnessed a transition that has captured the world’s attention. The Gambian people’s commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law has been nothing short of inspiring. However, as we celebrate these achievements, we must confront the stark realities that continue to shape the nation’s trajectory.

6. The challenges we face are complex and interconnected, demanding our collective wisdom and unwavering commitment to overcome them. Despite the country's economic growth, poverty remains a persistent adversary. The rising cost of food has further strained household budgets, pushing more families to the brink.
7. Additionally, rapid urbanisation and climate shocks present both opportunities and formidable challenges. This has led to heightened inter-community tensions, particularly over land rights. Challenges that may undermine the country's peace and social cohesion.
8. Our task in this Symposium is to explore and suggest how to harness these challenges and turn them into opportunities that will ensure inclusive, sustainable development in The Gambia. These challenges are not unique to The Gambia. Across West Africa and indeed the global South, nations are confronting similar issues of economic vulnerability, rapid urbanization, climate change, and governance reforms.
9. Your discussions here, therefore, have the potential to offer valuable insights not just for The Gambia, but for our entire region and beyond.
10. It is against this backdrop that we have convened this symposium. Over the next three days, our objectives are threefold:
 - a. First, we will critically assess The Gambia's progress on its National Development Plan. This assessment must be honest and comprehensive, identifying our achievements and the areas where we have fallen short. Only through such candid evaluation can we chart a meaningful path forward.
 - b. Second, we aim to pinpoint the critical obstacles to peace and prosperity in our nation. But identification is not enough. We must propose practical, context-specific solutions that align with the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes addressing the critical issues of social cohesion, national reconciliation, and comprehensive security sector reforms.
 - c. Third, perhaps most importantly, we will formulate concrete policy recommendations. These will inform a comprehensive policy brief that will directly support The Gambia's development agenda and guide future interventions. Your expertise, insights, and commitment to The Gambia's future will be crucial here.
11. The format of our symposium has been carefully designed to maximise your collective expertise. We will hear presentations from renowned speakers, engage in panel discussions with subject matter experts, participate in breakout sessions for in-depth exploration of specific issues, and come together in plenary sessions to synthesise our findings. This structure ensures that we examine our challenges and opportunities from every angle.
12. Throughout these discussions, I urge you to remember the key themes guiding our deliberations. As we grapple with them, I urge you to think boldly and creatively. Challenge assumptions, share best practices, and imagine innovative solutions. Our complex challenges demand nothing less than our collective wisdom and determination. The United Nations is fully committed to supporting The Gambia in implementing the recommendations from this symposium.

13. We stand ready to leverage our global expertise and resources to turn your insights into concrete actions. Our role is that of a partner, not a prescriber. Gambians must own and drive solutions to The Gambia's challenges.
14. As we embark on these three days of intense discussion and collaboration, I challenge each of you to approach this symposium as a catalyst for change. Let us aim for specific, measurable, and actionable outcomes. Our goal should be nothing less than a clear roadmap for enhancing peace and prosperity in The Gambia, with defined roles for all stakeholders.
15. The path ahead may be challenging, but I am filled with optimism. The very fact that we are gathered here—policymakers, academics, civil society leaders, and development practitioners—is a testament to our shared commitment to The Gambia's future.
16. Together, we can chart a course towards a more peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive Gambia—a Gambia that not only achieves its national development goals but also serves as a beacon of hope and progress for West Africa and beyond.
17. Thank you all. I look forward to three days of vibrant discussion, innovative thinking, and collaborative problem-solving.

Let us make every moment count for the future of The Gambia.



His Excellency Adama Barrow, the President of the Republic of The Gambia shaking hands with Mr Karl-Frédéric Paul, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in The Gambia in a file photo

Remarks by Mr Franklin Mutahanaka, World Bank Resident Representative for The Gambia



Mr Franklin Mutahanaka, the World Bank Resident Representative for The Gambia

- **Lordship Chief Justice – Hon. Justice Hassan B. Jallow**
- **Senior Government Officials,**
- **United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr. Karl-Frédéric Paul,**
- **Development Partners**
- **Distinguished Speakers**
- **Distinguished Members of the Civil Society Organizations and Academia**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.**

1. It is with pleasure that I join colleagues from the United Nations and The Gambia and the Centre for Research and Policy Development to reflect on the contemporary issues relating to security, governance, and development in The Gambia.
2. In November 2021, The Government of The Gambia accessed its first Turn Around Allocation (TAA), opening a window of opportunity to intensify engagement and support the country pursue major reforms, build resilience, and transition out of fragility.
3. In July this year, the World Bank conducted a comprehensive assessment of the TAA support, and the country's eligibility for Financial Year (FY) 25 was renewed. The TAA remains an important instrument in supporting The Gambia to pursue and consolidate major reforms, already underway. For three years, the TAA has provided The Gambia with critical financing to support the country partnership framework, bringing the

allocation (for the two years) to US\$253.7 million for IDA20, more than double the International Development Association (IDA) 20 Performance Based Allocation (PBA).

4. We appreciate the Government for the significant progress made through fiscal year 2024, achieving many of the milestones in its TAA strategy. Since The Gambia first accessed the TAA in November 2021, significant gains have been made on the Government's strategic goals centered around restoring trust between citizens and the state, good governance, sustainable land management, and access to basic services. The roadmap to develop an inclusive and gender sensitive land policy has been completed, and the formulation of the land policy is ongoing. The National Health Insurance Bill is enacted, and mass birth registration conducted, including in rural regions. A Civil Registration and Vital Statistics platform is effective, contributing to significant improvement in access and provision of basic services, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups for which we consider an important achievement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. There is still an opportunity to intensify engagement to support The Gambia to pursue major reforms to build resilience. Transitioning out of fragility is not linear, and there are no quick fixes or easy solutions.
6. Accelerating progress on the milestones and demonstrating continued commitment to the Turn Around Strategy is vital. The milestones were identified by the Government, and full ownership of the TAA Strategy by all sector ministries is key to advancing this reform agenda. For this second generation of TAA Strategy, the Government should embrace reforms that effectively lay the foundations for a successful transition and begin to consolidate some of the gains. The World Bank Group is ready to support. However, progress needs to be accelerated on key milestones including:
 - Progress on the land policy and action plan;
 - Progress on Security Sector Reform;
 - Continued progress on the post-Truth, Reconciliation, Reparation Commission, including its recommendations, as well Justice sector reform;
 - Progress on addressing the drivers of Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV), including those rooted in gender inequality and providing Gambian women the enjoyment of their human rights.
7. The World Bank is committed to continuing its support for The Gambia in implementing reforms that drive inclusive growth, a crucial foundation for sustainable development. Wish you all productive discussions over the next three days.

Thank you very much for listening.

Keynote Address by Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre, Chief Executive Officer, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)



Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre

- **Honourable Seedy K. M. Keita, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs of the Gambia,**
 - **His Lordship Justice Hassan Bubacar Jallow, Chief Justice of The Gambia,**
 - **Mr. Karl-Frédéric Paul, United Nations Resident Coordinator in The Gambia,**
 - **Mr. Franklin Mutahakana, World Bank Resident Representative for The Gambia,**
 - **Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,**
1. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office which is organizing this symposium on "Peace and Prosperity in the Gambia: Problems and Prospects", in collaboration with the World Bank, the Government of the Gambia and the Centre for Research and Policy Development.

2. The Gambia's impressive progress over the past few years has regrettably unfortunately not garnered the media attention it deserves. However, this transformation offers valuable lessons, particularly for the broader African context. Two key insights stand out: the crucial role of effective leadership and the rejection of fatalism as a barrier to progress.
3. Since 2017, The Gambia's evolution has highlighted both the opportunities and challenges inherent in political transitions across Africa. During this time, West Africa has grappled with issues such as militancy, coups, deforestation, droughts, and the impacts of climate change. Additionally, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was instrumental in stabilizing The Gambia following the contentious 2016 elections, has experienced setbacks in regional integration, evidenced by the withdrawal in 2023 of Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali.
4. The Gambia, therefore, stands out as a beacon of hope in a troubled region. The election of President Adama Barrow in January 2017 has enabled the country to move away from the brink of crisis and embrace a new beginning. Since then, The Gambia has made notable strides in stability, economic development, and upholding the rule of law, marking a significant transformation for the nation.
5. Over the past seven years, political stability has set the stage for significant economic and social transformation in The Gambia. According to the African Development Bank (AfDB), the country's real GDP increased from 4.9% to 5.6% between 2022 and 2023. Key economic indicators are promising, with notable growth in tourism, construction, and manufacturing. Additionally, the AfDB projects that 70% of Gambians will have access to electricity by the end of this year, underscoring the nation's progress.
6. Ambitious infrastructure projects are notably transforming The Gambia. As a matter of fact, the completion of the 24-kilometer long, 942-meter-high Senegambia Bridge, a key element of the TransGambia Corridor project funded by the African Development Bank and the European Union, has significantly boosted trade with neighbouring Senegal. What once took two days by ferry to cross the Gambia River now takes just 10 minutes. This rapid transit is also enhancing the agricultural sector, which forms the backbone of the Gambian economy, by enabling fresh produce to reach markets more swiftly and allowing farmers to secure better prices for their goods.
7. On the social front, last month The Gambia's National Assembly reinforced its dedication to gender equality and human rights by affirming the ban on female genital mutilation (FGM) enacted in 2015. This decisive action sends a strong message to girls and women throughout the country, ensuring that FGM will not interfere with their education, limit their economic opportunities, or compromise their overall well-being.
8. Such an important decision has rightly attracted attention from organizations dedicated to gender equality. Notably, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Amina J. Mohamed, commended the Gambian lawmakers' progressive legislation as "a monumental achievement for Gambia's women and girls." This landmark decision signals a future where girls and women in The Gambia can not only aspire but thrive.
9. Consolidating peace and expanding prosperity necessitate robust institutions and effective checks and balances. Achieving these goals hinges on good governance, which is the central focus of APRM, the African Peer Review Mechanism. Launched in 2003, this homegrown tool for self-assessment aims to transform Africa's economies, political systems, corporate practices, and socio-economic conditions. It promotes adherence

to standards and codes, such as the African Declaration on Democracy, Elections, and Governance, which have been embraced by its Member States.

10. The APRM does not issue scorecards but instead conducts in-depth reviews of its 44 Member States. It publishes reports on these reviews, which are discussed by Heads of State and Government at least annually. During these discussions, leaders motivate each other to advance their national development goals and align with continental and global strategies.
11. The APRM provides a platform for sharing experiences and best practices, fostering ongoing dialogue among its Member States on key decision-making issues. No single country has a definitive formula for success, so in the absence of such a recipe, peer learning is viewed as the most effective means of driving sustainable change. This approach focuses on the APRM's five thematic areas, including the original four (Democracy and political governance, Economic governance and management, Corporate governance, and Socio-economic development), plus State resilience to shocks and disasters, a new addition prompted by the continent's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
12. The current Gambian administration has swiftly worked to enhance the country's image and strengthen its credentials. Just one year into President Adama Barrow's term, The Gambia joined the APRM during the 27th Ordinary Summit of the APR Forum of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa. This accession was a tangible manifestation of the country's strategic Pillar 1 in the revised National Development Plan, which emphasizes "good governance, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and the empowerment of citizens through decentralization and local governance."
13. In August 2021, an APRM mission visited The Gambia and was warmly received at State House by President Adama Barrow. The mission also engaged with various Ministers to review the APRM process and raise awareness about its importance. This visit was a positive and encouraging development. To build on these gains, The Gambia should deepen its involvement in the APRM, with sustained engagement being essential for continued progress.
14. One of the key challenges faced by APRM Member States is ensuring the continuity of the APRM process. Without institutional support, the process can easily be mired in abeyance. Therefore, I urge the Government of The Gambia to pass an APRM Act, allocate a dedicated budget for APRM activities, and establish national structures to consolidate and sustain the APRM process.
15. The Gambia stands to gain significantly from its active participation in the APRM and can also offer valuable insights to other Member States undergoing political transitions. While contexts may vary across the continent, the sharing of successful practices and lessons learned can provide guidance and inspiration for others.
16. With the turbulence of the 2016 elections now behind, a country review of The Gambia – the first of its kind – would provide a comprehensive view of the nation's progress. This review would highlight advancements in various areas of public affairs, including ease of doing business, judicial independence, and adaptation to extreme weather events, allowing both Africans and Gambians to appreciate the strides made.

17. The APRM is an institution where every voice matters, as governance experiments are often not widely shared. While African countries vary in size, resources, and challenges, each has the potential to positively influence the continent's future. On February 18, 1965 – a date deeply ingrained in the collective memory of Gambians – Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara, who later became The Gambia's first Head of State, remarked: "We are a small nation, but we believe that the orderly nature of our people can contribute to the peace and stability of our continent." This sentiment underscores the belief that every nation, regardless of its size, can play a role in advancing Africa's progress.
18. Africa must diligently shape its narrative to forge a new path for itself and its relations with the world. The way we represent ourselves holds the power to heal and restore. As the renowned Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie articulated in her influential TED Talk on *The dangers of a single story*, "Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity."
19. The APRM review reports are essentially narratives with unique characters and plots. While they are grounded in reality, they are as compelling and insightful as any work of fiction. The question we face is: What kind of stories do we want others to remember, especially those with vastly different experiences who may not fully grasp our realities? Should we highlight tales of deprivation and conflict, or should we focus on stories of resilience, revival, and renewal? The choice is ours to make.
20. Governance stories must be told consistently and with care. The APRM recognises the sensitivities involved in scrutinising government actions. However, with patience and perseverance, we can transform our impactful narratives into vibrant symphonies akin to the melodious strains of the kora at family celebrations.
21. During my tenure, the APRM will customise its support for The Gambia to ensure effective solutions for its governance challenges.
22. In closing, I commend the United Nations, the World Bank, and other partners for their collaborative efforts in exploring pathways to sustained peace and prosperity in The Gambia.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations and thank you for your attention.

Fostering Inclusive and Accountable Governance in The Gambia

In her keynote address, Dr. Satang Nabaneh emphasised the importance of fostering inclusive and accountable governance in The Gambia, highlighting the key challenges that hinder progress in these areas.³ She defined inclusive governance as an approach that ensures no one is left behind, aligning with the global goals outlined in Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16. Inclusive governance is a cornerstone of a just society. It entails that the voices of marginalised societies are heard and included in legislation and policy making. Inclusive and accessible governance strengthens the bonds between the citizens and the government. Having an inclusive society and policies can reduce the polarisation of the society. Other relevant SDGs reinforce this commitment by addressing marginalisation and responding to the diverse needs of all groups, including income, health, education, gender equality, employment, and inequality.

Dr. Nabaneh discussed several critical issues, including building trust in institutions, tackling the opaque national debt, and promoting inclusivity for marginalized groups such as women, youth, and ethnic minorities. She also pointed out challenges posed by the hyper-presidential system, weak political parties, and the absence of effective checks and balances. Additionally, she emphasised the necessity for a new constitution and a comprehensive analysis of the country's context to advance the governance agenda. In The Gambia, fostering inclusive and accountable governance is pivotal for building a more equitable and effective political system. To achieve this, several key strategies must be implemented:

- **Promote Broad-Based Participation in Governance:** Inclusive governance hinges on the active involvement of various stakeholders, including marginalised groups, women, youth, and civil society organisations. By ensuring that all voices are heard and considered in decision-making processes, The Gambia can create policies that are more representative and equitable. This broad-based participation enhances the quality of governance and fosters greater social cohesion and trust in the government, as citizens feel more connected to and represented by their leaders.
- **Enhance Transparency and Accountability Mechanisms:** Transparency and accountability are foundational to good governance. To build open and responsible institutions including within political parties, The Gambia must implement robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating government actions. Public audits, anti-corruption measures, and open data initiatives are essential tools for preventing abuses of power and ensuring that public resources are managed efficiently and ethically. These measures help to build public trust and ensure that government operations are conducted with integrity.

³ Satang Nabaneh, 'Fostering Inclusive and Accountable Governance in The Gambia,' presentation at the symposium on Peace and Prosperity in The Gambia, 2 September 2024.

- **Strengthen Legal and Institutional Frameworks:** A robust legal and institutional framework is crucial for effective governance. The Gambia needs to invest in developing and enforcing laws and regulations that uphold the rule of law, protect human rights, and ensure justice. Strengthening these frameworks not only supports democratic values but also creates an environment where governance is conducted transparently and equitably. The Gambia can better serve all its citizens and maintain a just society by reinforcing legal structures and institutional processes.
- **Foster Civic Engagement and Public Dialogue :** Encouraging active civic engagement and open public dialogue is vital for building an informed and participatory citizenry. Providing platforms for public consultation, feedback mechanisms, and community forums allows citizens to engage in governance and hold their leaders accountable. Such engagement strengthens democratic processes and ensures that policies and decisions are reflective of the needs and priorities of the population. The Gambia can promote a more responsive and inclusive governance system by facilitating these interactions.
- **Support Capacity Building and Institutional Development:** Investing in capacity building for government institutions and personnel is essential for achieving effective and inclusive governance. Training and development programs for public officials, along with efforts to strengthen institutional structures and processes, enhance the ability of institutions to perform their roles efficiently and transparently. This investment ensures that government bodies are well-equipped to handle their responsibilities and contribute positively to the governance framework.



His Lordship Justice Hassan Bubacar Jallow, Chief Justice of the Republic of The Gambia- moderating a session at the symposium.



Members of the Gambian Police Force in the line of duty in a file photo

Deepening Democratic Governance in The Gambia

The panel discussion brought together prominent experts to discuss the challenges and opportunities for strengthening democratic governance in the country. The moderator and panelists offered insights into various aspects of governance, constitutional reform, multilateralism and civic engagement, gender and transitional justice, and the role of international partnerships in the democratic transition. They emphasised that democracy cannot thrive in an environment of instability, previously described as being in a “coma” during autocratic rule. Citizens generally associate democracy with development and improved welfare, underscoring the necessity of representation for all individuals in government. The panel covered the following issues:

- **Socio-Economic Governance and Accountability:** Emphasised the integration of modern technology in governance, specifically the digitisation of the judiciary. This advancement is expected to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability, enhancing access to justice and expediting court processes.
- **Constitutional Reform:** The importance of adopting a people-centered constitution was discussed, along with the need for an independent judiciary and parliament. The role of political parties, the media, and security sector reforms were highlighted as essential for ensuring accountable governance and democratic stability.
- **Regional Challenges and Civic Societies:** Addressed the decline in multilateralism within regional bodies like the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the impact of political instability in neighboring countries. The role of civic societies in democracy and the need to focus on human rights and reduce political polarization were discussed.
- **Gender and Transitional Justice:** The challenges related to women’s political participation and the need for effective transitional justice mechanisms were highlighted. The discussion included the necessity of mutual legal assistance to address transnational crimes and historical human rights abuses.
- **Youth Engagement:** The critical role of youth in The Gambia’s democratic transition was underscored, emphasizing the need for their full engagement in governance processes to ensure a cohesive social contract and sustainable democratic development.

With the end of Jammeh’s rule in 2017, there emerged a renewed hope for democracy. The current government, supported by both domestic and international stakeholders, is committed to rebuilding democratic institutions. Participants noted improvements in the rule of law, human rights, and governmental transparency. Nonetheless, they recognised ongoing challenges, particularly regarding ethnic politics, media freedom, and the independence of key governmental bodies.

The discussion spelt out the following challenges:

- **Lack of Technological Integration:** Insufficient integration of modern technology in governance processes, affecting transparency, efficiency, and access to justice.
- **Weak Constitutional and Institutional Frameworks:** The need for a people-centered constitution, independent judiciary and parliament, and the roles of political parties, media, and security sector reforms to ensure democratic resilience.
- **Erosion of Multilateralism:** Decline in the effectiveness of regional organizations like the AU and ECOWAS and the impact of political instability in neighboring countries on The Gambia's democratic transition.
- **Gender Inequality and Transitional Justice Deficiencies:** Barriers to women's political participation and the need for effective transitional justice mechanisms to address historical and ongoing human rights abuses.
- **Youth Disengagement:** Insufficient involvement of youth in governance processes, impacting social cohesion and the social contract between the government and its citizens.

Ongoing Progress and Milestones

Participants highlighted several significant strides made since 2017:

- **Constitutional Reforms:** The ongoing constitutional reform process aims to replace the 1997 constitution with one that reflects the aspirations of the Gambian people, including provisions for presidential term limits and the protection of rights.
- **Public Service Improvements:** Government initiatives to enhance service delivery in health, education, and infrastructure were acknowledged as vital for restoring public trust.
- **Free and Fair Elections:** The successful conduct of elections since 2017 has bolstered confidence in the electoral process, evidenced by increased voter turnout.
- **Access to Information Act:** Enacted in 2021, this act promotes transparency by granting citizens access to governmental information.
- **Security Sector and Judiciary Reforms:** Prioritisation of reforms in these sectors aims to ensure their independence and effectiveness.
- **Implementation of Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC) Recommendations:** The establishment of the TRRC is a critical step towards addressing past human rights abuses and promoting national healing.
- **Oversight Bodies:** The creation of bodies like the National Human Rights Commission plays a crucial role in promoting accountability and monitoring government actions.

During the breakout session, participants critically assessed the democratic trajectory of The Gambia, acknowledging the historical context of its governance. While democracy has roots in the nation, it faced severe suppression during Yahya Jammeh's 22-year authoritarian regime, characterized by human rights abuses and the erosion of democratic principles. The peaceful transition of power to President Adama Barrow in 2017 was recognized as a pivotal moment, heralding renewed efforts to rebuild democratic institutions. However, participants underscored that substantial challenges persist, necessitating ongoing commitment to strengthening democracy.

The breakout session underscored that while The Gambia's journey towards democratic governance is fraught with challenges, the progress achieved since 2017 is noteworthy. Continued efforts in constitutional reform, public service improvements, and the establishment of oversight bodies are essential in solidifying the foundations of democracy in The Gambia. Participants remain optimistic about the nation's future but stress the necessity for unwavering commitment to democratic principles.

Challenges in the Democratisation Process in The Gambia

Despite notable progress, several challenges remain, particularly:

- **Weak Constitutional and Institutional Frameworks:** The need for a people-centered constitution, independent judiciary, and parliamentary roles were highlighted as critical for democratic resilience.
- **Inadequate Political Strengthening:** Weak political institutions and limited civil society capacity hinder effective political participation.
- **Perceived Lip-Service to Democracy:** There is a growing concern that governmental commitment to democracy may lack genuine intent, leading to public disillusionment.
- **Gender Inequality:** Barriers to women's political participation and deficiencies in transitional justice mechanisms were pointed out as significant obstacles.
- **Youth Disengagement:** Insufficient involvement of youth in governance processes affects social cohesion and the social contract between the government and citizens.
- **Ethnic Politics:** The manipulation of ethnic identities for political gain undermines democratic governance.
- **Media Capture:** Concerns were raised regarding the media's independence, with powerful interests often influencing reporting and stifling dissent.
- **Limited Legislative Independence:** The executive's undue influence over the National Assembly was noted as a barrier to the separation of powers.
- **Foreign Aid Dependence:** Heavy reliance on foreign aid can compromise national sovereignty and democratic governance, as conditions attached to aid may not align with local needs.
- **Lack of Technological Integration:** Insufficient adoption of modern technology in governance hampers transparency and access to justice.

- **Erosion of Multilateralism:** Declining effectiveness of regional organizations like the AU and ECOWAS impacts The Gambia's democratic transition amid regional instability.

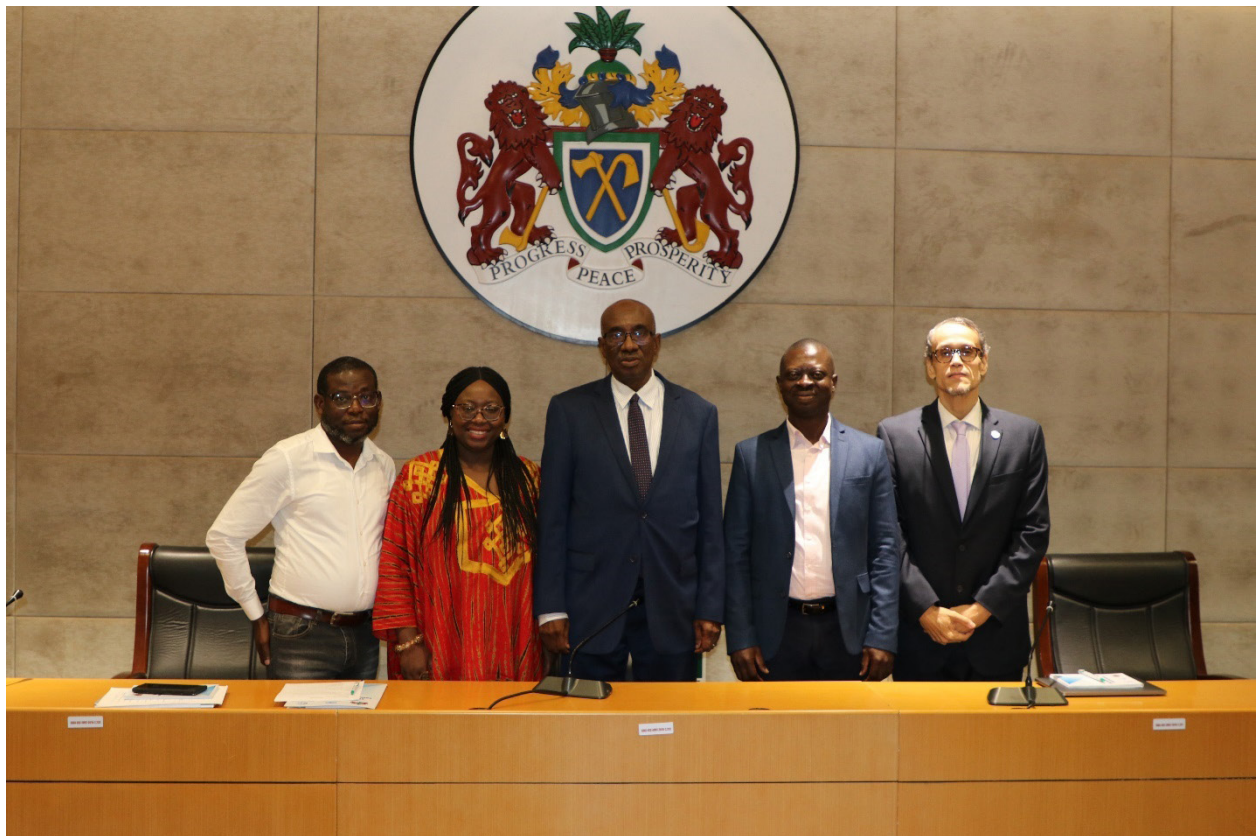
Recommendations for Deepening Democracy in The Gambia

To advance democratic governance in The Gambia, several critical areas require focused attention and action. To strengthen the democratic fabric of the nation, participants proposed several actionable recommendations to reinforce its democratic foundations, promote inclusive governance, and ensure a vibrant and resilient democratic future:

1. **Advance Constitutional and Institutional Reforms:** Adopt a people-centered constitution that ensures the independence of the judiciary and parliament. Support the development of democratic political parties, a free media, and effective security sector reforms to promote accountable governance.
2. **Strengthen Electoral Integrity and Processes:** Ensure that elections are free, fair, and transparent by enhancing electoral systems to prevent fraud and manipulation. Improve voter education and implement robust safeguards against electoral malpractices. Strengthening the independence and capacity of electoral bodies is crucial for building public confidence in democratic processes and ensuring legitimate governance outcomes.
3. **Enhance Civic Education and Engagement:** Promote comprehensive civic education to equip citizens with knowledge about their rights and responsibilities, as well as the functioning of democratic institutions. Foster active citizen engagement in public affairs to create a more informed electorate. Ensure access to information in accordance with legislation, while addressing concerns regarding media capture that can hinder this process.
4. **Promote Rule of Law and Judicial Independence:** Uphold a strong legal framework and ensure an independent judiciary that applies laws consistently and fairly. Protect the judiciary from political interference to maintain public trust and reinforce democratic principles.
5. **Foster Transparent and Accountable Governance:** Implement measures to enhance transparency in government operations, such as open budgeting processes and public access to information. Hold public officials accountable through audits and independent oversight committees, ensuring that actions align with democratic values and serve the public interest. Emphasize the importance of independent oversight institutions, particularly in the judicial selection process.
6. **Support Inclusive Political Participation and Promote Gender Equality:** Ensure that all segments of society, particularly marginalized groups such as women, youth, and minorities, can participate in the political process. Introduce legislative measures to enhance women's political participation and create opportunities for diverse perspectives in governance.
7. **Enhance Youth Engagement:** Recognize the youth as a significant constituency, given that they constitute nearly 55% of the population. Develop strategies to actively

involve youth in governance processes, ensuring their voices contribute to national development and democratic stability.

8. **Integrate Technology in Governance:** Implement digital systems for the judiciary to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accountability in legal processes. Leverage technology across governance to improve overall service delivery and public engagement.
9. **Full Implementation of TRRC Recommendations:** Prioritise accountability and reparations for victims of past abuses to restore public trust, emphasising the comprehensive implementation of the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission's findings.
10. **Media Law Reforms:** Strengthen legal frameworks to ensure media independence and protect journalists, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability.



L-R: **Dr Luqman Saka**, Director of Research, Centre for Research and Policy Development, **Dr Satang Nabaneh**, Research Professor of Law, University of Dayton Human Rights Centre, Nigeria, **His Lordship Justice Hassan Bubacar Jallow**, Chief Justice of the Republic of The Gambia **Mr Paul Osei Kuffour**, Network Coordinator for West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network, and **Mr Karl- Frédéric Paul**, United Nations Coordinator, The Gambia.

Achieving Sustainable Peace and Security in The Gambia

Dr Catherine Kelly's presentation on the subject highlighted three interconnected aspects essential for establishing peace and security in The Gambia: the necessity of a people-centred security strategy and coordinated implementation, the fundamental role of justice in security, and the importance of effective governance of the security sector through oversight institutions that prioritise serving citizens. Dr. Kelly's presentation emphasises the importance of fostering peace as a fundamental aspect of the ongoing changes in The Gambia's security system. She argued that as the country undergoes a transition, it is crucial to integrate Security Sector Reform (SSR) with the judiciary reform process, given their sensitivity and interdependence.

In implementing SSR programmes, leaders must engage with survivors to understand past failures and identify necessary changes. Concurrently, crafting a national security vision is crucial for guiding integrated strategy implementation and mobilising resources. Dr. Kelly emphasised the importance of effectively communicating the National Security Strategy (NSS) and urged reflection on both the inclusivity of the strategy and the nature of that inclusion to foster community-based SSR, ultimately leading to sustainable peace and security in The Gambia. Developing a forward-looking strategy is vital for addressing a challenging past and improving security and justice delivery while fostering confidence in institutions. The presentation discussed various sources of resilience and challenges for peace and security in The Gambia. Notable sources of resilience include:

- **Establishment of key institutions:** The adoption of the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the creation of the National Security Council (NSC) and the Office of the National Security Adviser, the forthcoming National Security Council Bill in Parliament, which could formalise inter-agency coordination and recent legislation aimed at creating formal institutions for security sector governance (SSG).
- **Transparency of the Gambia Armed Forces (GAF):** The Armed Forces have demonstrated openness and transparency to citizens, which is vital for maintaining peace and security. The GAF's openness to working with civil society organisations like the Centre for Research and Policy Development (CRPD) on human rights and security issues has contributed to transparency.
- **Strength of Civil Society Organisations:** The resilience and progressive development of The Gambia are significantly bolstered by the active participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).
- **Judicial and Parliamentary Independence:** Enhancing the independence of Parliament and the judiciary is essential for strengthening checks and balances, as well as for implementing state security and justice reforms. Other positive developments are a well-managed National Human Rights Commission, a Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security interested in collaborating with the GAF.



Peace and security in The Gambia



However, there are significant challenges that need to be addressed. These include the rejection of the draft constitution, which featured key elements for strengthening checks and balances and supporting civilian democratic rule. Additionally, despite references among the National Security Strategy, Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC) recommendations, and the National Development Plan (NDP), implementing an integrated approach to peace and security has been hampered by intraparty conflicts, limited resources and donor coordination, and varying levels of public awareness about these initiatives.⁴ Therefore, a comprehensive approach addressing various interrelated factors is essential to achieve sustainable peace and security in The Gambia. Security sector reform requires integrating justice with security to achieve transparency and accountability in the defence and security sector, which should be people-centred.⁵

Recommendations for Achieving Sustainable Peace and Stability in The Gambia

The following key strategies are vital for fostering long-term stability:

1. **Address Root Causes of Conflict:** Sustainable peace and security can only be realised by tackling the underlying causes of conflict. This involves addressing economic disparities, social injustices, and political disenfranchisement that fuel unrest. Effective conflict prevention strategies must focus on inclusive economic development, equitable distribution of resources, and strong social cohesion programs. By mitigating these root causes, The Gambia can create a more stable and harmonious society.
2. **Strengthen Institutional Capacity for Dispute Resolution and Conflict Prevention:** Utilise diverse dispute resolution mechanisms by integrating state and non-state mechanisms for conflict resolution by mapping existing methods and creating a comprehensive approach that includes traditional and formal methods. Leverage academic expertise by engaging them in research and policy development related to peace and security, establishing partnerships to inform policy decisions. Involve state institutions, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and marginalised groups in the reform process to address the needs of survivors and foster a resilient, cohesive society. Focus on community-level education to build trust in peace and security efforts. Launch educational programmes and organise community forums for dispute resolution and conflict prevention.
3. **Enhance Inclusivity and Coordination of Security Organs:** Strengthen coordination of security actors to create synergy. It is crucial to build and fortify the institutions responsible for maintaining peace and security—such as the police, judiciary, and conflict resolution bodies—to enhance their ability to manage disputes, uphold the rule of law, and respond effectively to security threats. Investing in these institutions ensures they are equipped to handle the complexities of conflict and security challenges. Educate citizens on military justice including partnering with CSOs to raise awareness about military and civilian court functions through informational materials and public seminars. Collaborate with the Bar Association and CSOs to provide pro bono legal services, enhancing legal support and advocacy.

⁴ The full list of recommendations can be found at African Center for Strategic Studies, Round Table Conclusions, <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Gambia-RT-Conclusions-EN.pdf> (accessed 12 September 2024)

⁵ Catherine Lena Kelly, “Achieving Sustainable Peace and Security in The Gambia,” presentation at the Symposium, 3 September 2024.

4. **Foster Community Engagement, Reconciliation and Victim Protection**
Mechanisms: Community engagement and reconciliation efforts are fundamental to achieving sustainable peace. Promoting dialogue among different ethnic, religious, and social groups can help bridge divides and build mutual trust. Supporting grassroots initiatives that encourage community cooperation and understanding is essential for healing divisions and fostering a more cohesive society. Create dedicated institutions for protecting victims of violence and human rights abuses, focusing on immediate and long-term support. Develop a legal framework and safe spaces for victims.
5. **Promote Regional and International Cooperation:** The Gambia's peace and security are intertwined with regional and international dynamics. Strengthening cooperation with neighbouring countries and international partners is crucial for addressing cross-border security issues, sharing intelligence, and coordinating responses to regional threats. Collaborative efforts can enhance stability and create a more secure environment for The Gambia and its neighbours.
6. **Invest in Human Development and Resilience:** Investing in human development supports long-term peace and security. Prioritising education, healthcare, and economic opportunities helps build resilience and reduce vulnerability to conflict. Social programmes and community development initiatives that promote economic empowerment contribute to sustainable stability by addressing the root causes of conflict and supporting a more resilient population.
7. **Foster National and Local Ownership and Enhance Public Trust:** Ensure local communities and stakeholders play a significant role in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of peace and security initiatives. Engage local leaders and support community-led projects. Improve communication strategies to keep the public informed about peace and security initiatives. Implement a communication plan with regular updates and feedback mechanisms across various media platforms.
8. **Develop Integrated National Strategies:** Formulate coordinated strategies for transitional justice (TJ) and security sector reform (SSR) through comprehensive assessments, aligning them with national goals, and establishing clear implementation timelines.
9. **Improve Budget Management and Invest in Technology:** Enhance budget practices to ensure transparent funding for justice initiatives. Develop detailed budget plans and monitoring mechanisms to track fund utilisation. Enhance the efficiency of security and justice sectors through technology investments, using digital tools for progress tracking and public engagement.
10. **Strengthen Parliamentary Oversight and Enhance Civil-Military Relations:** Establish a robust parliamentary defense and security committee to ensure transparency and accountability, with clear definitions of public information. Improve communication and collaboration between military and civilian sectors through joint training programmes and regular dialogue.



Brig Gen Saleh Bala making his presentation at a panel discussion during the symposium

Promoting Peace and Security in The Gambia

This panel discussion noted challenges such as outdated security legislation and porous borders that need to be addressed. Advocacy is directed towards enhancing community policing, improving police capacity and salaries, and adopting more regionally focused security approaches. Panelists agreed on the need for well-crafted legislative measures to improve coordination among security forces. Challenges include inadequate funding and the necessity for regional cooperation to strengthen security operations. The discussion also noted that efforts were underway to enhance security coordination and communication. Revisions of the Gambia Armed Forces Act and the Gambia Fire and Rescue Services (GFRS) Act are being pursued to improve community policing, establish quick response networks, modernise and strengthen security frameworks.

A study on violent extremism (VE) in The Gambia reveals that while over 80% of Gambians do not perceive a significant VE problem, poverty and sectarian tensions are underlying issues. The military and security sector are seen as insufficiently equipped to handle VE, and there is a greater trust in local leaders, including *imams*, for addressing these issues. The role of women in VE prevention is recognized, but gender equality is not universally supported. Ethnic diversity is viewed positively, and there is general hope for a peaceful future. Collaboration with regional and international institutions is considered crucial for addressing radicalisation.

Panelists were pleased that the police have increased their presence in communities, and initiatives are in place to improve rapid response capabilities. They also noted the improved regional corporation, especially the efforts to enhance border management between The Gambia and Senegal, including joint measures to address drug trafficking. With regards to capacity building, the seminar noted that pilot programmes for community policing were being implemented in regions such as Kerewan and Kunkujang. Integrated border management initiatives and responses to recent drug scandals are also in progress. Generally, the discussion centred on the following key issues:

- **Coordination and Communication in Security Measures:** Efforts are underway to enhance security coordination and communication. Revisions of the Gambia Armed Forces Act and the GFRS Act are being pursued to improve community policing and establish quick response networks.
- **Legislative and Operational Challenges:** There is a need for well-crafted legislative measures to improve coordination among security forces. Challenges include inadequate funding and the necessity for regional cooperation to strengthen security operations.
- **Violent Extremism and Public Perception:** A study on violent extremism (VE) in The Gambia reveals that while over 80% of Gambians do not perceive a significant VE problem, poverty and sectarian tensions are underlying issues. The military and security sector are seen as insufficiently equipped to handle VE, and there is a greater trust in local leaders, including *imams*, for addressing these issues. The role

of women in VE prevention is recognized, but gender equality is not universally supported. Ethnic diversity is viewed positively, and there is general hope for a peaceful future. Collaboration with regional and international institutions is considered crucial for addressing radicalization.

- **Security Legislation and Regional Dynamics:** Challenges such as outdated security legislation and porous borders need to be addressed. Advocacy is directed towards enhancing community policing, improving police capacity and salaries, and adopting more regionally focused security approaches.

Currently, The Gambian Government and other stakeholders are making the following efforts towards a more secure and peaceful environment, leveraging both local and regional resources and expertise:

- **Legislative Reforms:** Revisions are underway for the Gambia Armed Forces Act and the GFRS Act to modernize and strengthen security frameworks.
- **Community Policing and Security Presence:** The police have increased their presence in communities, and initiatives are in place to improve rapid response capabilities.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Efforts are being made to enhance border management between The Gambia and Senegal, including joint measures to address drug trafficking.
- **Capacity Building:** Pilot programs for community policing are being implemented in regions such as Kerewan and Kunkujang. Integrated border management initiatives and responses to recent drug scandals are also in progress.

There were two breakout sessions discussing strategies to promoting peace and security in The Gambia. These sessions allowed participants to expatiate on the key takeaways from the morning session and share their insights on how to achieve sustainable peace and security in The Gambia. The following are the key takeaways from the breakout sessions:

- **Reform of the Security Sector:** The National Security Adviser's office, while established, lacks a solid legislative foundation due to the absence of a National Security Bill. This reliance on unsustainable contract funding undermines long-term security strategies. The deployment of Senegalese forces to guard the Gambian President raises significant concerns regarding state sovereignty and the integrity of national security.
- **Economic Factors:** The National Development Plan (NDP) must incorporate human security elements, aligning defense and security strategies with broader development goals. This alignment is crucial to effectively combat poverty and safeguard basic freedoms. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) should be integrated into the education system to equip youth with market-ready skills, addressing the rising unemployment crisis. Infrastructure development and the establishment of social safety nets are vital for fostering economic growth and supporting vulnerable populations.

- **Political Factors:** Political will and active local involvement are essential for delivering effective services to marginalised communities, thereby preventing resistance and fostering stability. Enhancing peace education and engaging civil society organizations can cultivate national pride, which is pivotal for sustaining peace. Upholding the rule of law and ensuring accountability are foundational for maintaining peace and security.
- **Social Factors:** Promoting respectful communication and empowering community-based structures can facilitate conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Involving religious councils and media professionals is crucial for achieving sustainable peace, particularly through the dissemination of accurate information and monitoring of misinformation on social media. Gender inclusion in peace and security initiatives, alongside a focus on restorative justice, is critical for comprehensive peace efforts.
- **Land Reforms:** The contentious land issue requires the operationalization of a land policy, the implementation of a land use master plan, and improvements in waste management through geospatial planning.
- **Youth Unemployment:** The limited job market, exacerbated by the lack of retirement among older individuals, necessitates the opening of opportunities for the private sector. Encouraging public-private partnerships (PPPs) and reducing operational charges can create job prospects for educated youth.
- **Urban Planning and Education Access:** Poor urban planning has resulted in children traveling long distances for education. Decentralizing resources and establishing educational institutions in remote areas is essential for equitable access.
- **Judicial Delays:** The backlog in the court system is fostering frustration and potential self-justice. There is an urgent need for expedited legal processes and reform in judicial management.
- **Law Enforcement and Historical Wounds:** While improvements in law enforcement are underway, the legacy of arbitrary practices from the dictatorship period still impacts current operations. Recent incidents involving Senegalese forces underscore ongoing issues related to territorial integrity and cross-border relations.
- **Correctional Center Issues:** Reforms in correctional facilities are needed to address overcrowding and improve conditions. Alternative measures for decongesting prisons should be considered.
- **Interfaith and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue:** Promoting dialogue among diverse religious and ethnic groups is essential for enhancing social cohesion and preventing conflict.
- **Domestic Violence:** Addressing domestic violence is critical for ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals and communities.

Key Recommendations for Peace, Security, and Development in The Gambia

Achieving and sustaining peace and security in The Gambia requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both immediate threats and underlying factors.⁶ For The Gambia to make significant strides towards achieving sustainable peace and security while addressing key challenges in land management, youth employment, judicial efficiency, and social cohesion, the session resolved as follows:

1. **Enhance Legislative and Institutional Frameworks:** Enact the National Security Bill to provide legislative support for the National Security Adviser's office and establish a dedicated secretariat for sustainable operations.
2. **Strengthen Law Enforcement and Security Sector Reform:** Reform and enhance the capacity of law enforcement and security institutions through improved training, accountability measures, and community policing initiatives.
3. **Promote Inclusive Governance and Dialogue:** Ensure that all segments of society are represented in governance processes and encourage open dialogue among political leaders, civil society, and community members.
4. **Foster Economic Development and Opportunity:** Revise the National Development Plan (NDP) to incorporate human security elements and promote job creation through public-private partnerships and investment in infrastructure.
5. **Enhance Early Warning and Response Systems:** Develop effective early warning systems to identify potential threats to peace and security, allowing for proactive and timely interventions.
6. **Improve Community Engagement and Regional Cooperation:** Increase community involvement in peacebuilding efforts and strengthen collaboration with neighboring countries to address cross-border issues and enhance security.
7. **Address Socio-Economic Factors:** Implement strategies to tackle poverty, unemployment, and grievances, particularly focusing on educational and economic opportunities for women and marginalized groups.
8. **Enhance Public Communication and Trust:** Develop communication strategies to keep the public informed about security measures and establish accessible mechanisms for addressing grievances with security forces.

⁶ Dan Kuwali, "Oversight and Accountability to Improve Security Sector Governance in Africa," *Africa Security Brief No. 42*, <https://africacenter.org/publication/asb42en-oversight-accountability.security-sector-governance/>

9. **Revise Correctional Systems and Judicial Efficiency:** Reform prison systems and judicial processes to address overcrowding and delays, ensuring humane management and the effective use of technology for case management.
10. **Foster Interfaith and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue:** Promote initiatives that encourage dialogue and cooperation among diverse religious and ethnic communities to build mutual understanding and prevent conflict.



Dr Catherine Lena Kelly catching up with Prof Luqman Saka during the Symposium



Towards Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth in The Gambia

The Gambia is undergoing a critical transitional phase focused on revitalizing its economy, strengthening security, and establishing a robust political framework. In his presentation on the subject, George Lwanda noted that The Gambia is at a critical juncture, having made notable progress in human development—life expectancy increased from 50 years in 1990 to 62 years in 2019, and the economy grew by 4.5% in 2022 despite global challenges.⁷ However, the country continues to face persistent poverty, significant inequalities, and the looming threat of climate change. To address these development challenges and advance towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), transforming the role of the state is essential. This transformation involves three key dimensions: reforming state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to enhance their efficiency, developing innovative solutions to close the funding gap for the National Development Plan (NDP), and adopting a systems thinking approach centred on four interconnected ‘engine rooms’ of development.

Lwanda noted that SOEs play an important part in the country’s development, addressing infrastructure deficits, which are significant barriers to economic growth. However, SOEs face the challenge of weak accountability and oversight, including limited access to capital. SOEs also have outdated infrastructure, particularly aging systems limit operational efficiency; weak governance structures relating to poor transparency and accountability due to outdated policies from the previous regime. SOEs also face significant financial challenges due to limited access to capital and competing government priorities. Thus, balancing technical and political oversight is critical, with political oversight potentially providing beneficial support if managed properly.

Reforming SOEs is crucial, as these entities play a vital role in sectors like agriculture, energy, and transportation. Unfortunately, many SOEs are struggling, with a collective net loss of GMD 2.02 billion in 2022. Challenges such as outdated infrastructure, weak governance, political interference, and limited access to capital have hindered their performance. Hence, the need for public-private partnerships to inject private sector effectiveness into the public service by recapitalizing SOEs and strengthening their oversight mechanisms and productivity.

Mr Lwanda noted that The Gambia’s transition towards a more democratic and prosperous society is fraught with challenges but also presents significant opportunities. Mr Lwanda argued that addressing the interconnected issues of SOE reform and funding gaps requires a comprehensive and systemic approach. By fostering collaboration among government, private sector, and development partners, The Gambia can pave the way for sustainable economic growth and improved governance. As The Gambia embarks on this transformative journey, it is essential to recognise that achieving the ambitious goals outlined in the NDP will come with both financial and human capital costs. A commitment to transparency, accountability, and

⁷ George Chikondi Lwanda, “Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in The Gambia,” presentation at the Symposium, 4 September 2024.

innovative solutions will be key to realizing the vision of peace and prosperity for all Gambians.

To improve this situation, the Gambian government should implement performance contracts for SOEs, strengthen corporate governance, explore public-private partnerships, invest in capacity building, and consider partial privatisation where appropriate. Additionally, addressing the significant funding gap in the NDP—estimated at 80%—requires innovative financing solutions such as green bonds, impact investing, and blended finance mechanisms. The Gambia can transform its development landscape by pursuing these reforms and innovative strategies and better aligning with the SDGs. Achieving sustainable development and fostering inclusive growth in The Gambia involves a multifaceted approach that integrates economic, social, and environmental considerations.⁸

Recommendations for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth in the Gambia

The following key strategies are essential for driving long-term progress:

1. **Prioritise Sustainable Economic Policies:** Implementing policies that integrate environmental protection with economic development is crucial to ensuring that economic growth is both sustainable and equitable. This includes promoting green technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable agricultural practices. By embedding sustainability into economic planning, The Gambia can achieve growth without compromising environmental integrity, thereby supporting long-term development goals.
2. **Enhance Access to Quality Education and Skills Training:** Investing in education and vocational training is fundamental to fostering inclusive growth. Access to quality education and skill-building opportunities enables individuals to contribute effectively to the economy and enhances their employability. Ensuring that educational programs are available to all, including marginalised groups, supports equal opportunities and strengthens the resilience of the workforce, driving sustainable economic progress.
3. **Support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):** SMEs play a critical role in economic diversification and job creation. Policies that provide access to financing, capacity building, and market opportunities can support their growth and drive inclusive economic growth. Encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation within the SME sector stimulates economic activity and lays the foundation for a more resilient and diversified economy.
4. **Promote Social Protection and Equity:** Effective social protection programs are essential for ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are widely shared. Implementing safety nets such as healthcare, pensions, and unemployment benefits helps protect vulnerable populations and reduces economic inequality. By promoting equity and ensuring that all segments of society benefit from growth, The Gambia can enhance social stability and support sustainable development.
5. **Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Most development partners come with earmarked areas that may not align with the priorities of the country hence disconnect in interventions. Sustainable development and inclusive growth require active collaboration among the government, private sector, civil society, and international partners. Engaging

⁸ Government of The Gambia, National Development Plan (2018-2021), [https://gambia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/1-The Gambia-National-Development-Plan-2018-2021-FullVersion.pdf](https://gambia.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/1-The%20Gambia-National-Development-Plan-2018-2021-FullVersion.pdf).

multiple stakeholders in the development process ensures that diverse perspectives are considered and efforts are coordinated effectively. This collaborative approach enables The Gambia to address complex challenges and leverage resources to support broad-based development.

6. **Strengthening Corporate Governance:** Enhance Board Independence: Improve decision-making and accountability by strengthening the independence of SOE boards. Improve Financial Reporting Standards: Foster transparency and stakeholder trust through robust financial reporting practices.
7. **Exploring Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Engage the Private Sector by utilizing PPPs to inject expertise and capital into key SOEs. Learn from successful models in neighboring Senegal to leverage private sector resources effectively.
8. **Capacity Building:** Invest in Training Focusing on financial management by enhancing budgeting, financial reporting, and resource allocation skills. Strategic Planning: Develop long-term strategies aligned with national development goals and SDGs. Operational Efficiency by implementing best practices to streamline operations and reduce waste.
9. **Innovative Financing Mechanisms:** Explore New Financing Options: Address funding gaps for the NDP through green bonds, which attract investment for climate-resilient infrastructure projects; impact investing by engaging investors interested in social and environmental returns; and blended finance through combining public and private funds to maximise the impact of investments in social enterprises.



Mr George Lwanda, The Head of the Regional Coordinator's Office, making his presentation at the Seminar.

Achieving Socioeconomic Development and Inclusive Growth in The Gambia

The primary focus of the discussion was to explore the pathways toward sustainable development and inclusive growth in The Gambia, a nation facing significant economic and social challenges. Since gaining independence, The Gambia has experienced fluctuating economic growth. From 1968 to 1978, the country saw an average growth rate of 5%. However, this rate declined significantly in the subsequent decades, averaging only 3% from 1979 to 2016. This decline has been characterized by volatility, where years of positive growth were often followed by periods of stagnation or negative growth. The panel discussion focused on the multifaceted challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainable development and inclusive growth in The Gambia. Key issues discussed include the country's economic volatility, recent developments, and specific barriers to inclusive growth, particularly in relation to gender equality.

The panel under this subject outlined key policy strategies for promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment as central elements of inclusive growth in The Gambia. Inclusive growth necessitates equitable distribution of economic benefits across all social groups, especially marginalised communities such as women and those in rural areas. To address this, the panel explored socio-cultural, economic, and institutional barriers and proposed policy recommendations to advance gender equity, enhance infrastructure development, and improve income redistribution, all contributing to a more balanced and sustainable economic framework.

Since 2017, The Gambia has experienced more consistent positive growth averaging around 4.5%, although this growth has been challenged by external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic. The National Development Plan aims for 7 percent growth by 2027. Despite recent positive trends, there is a need to ensure that growth is inclusive, especially in rural areas where poverty rates remain high. Factors contributing to economic volatility in The Gambia include persistent effects from economic mismanagement under the former president that compromised financial stability; infrastructure deficiencies, especially The Gambia's poor infrastructure quality hinders economic activities and development; and weak human capital as the Human Capital Index is alarmingly low, with children today expected to achieve only 40% of their potential.

Key challenges to sustainable development include: governance and institutional weakness, particularly corruption and nepotism undermine effective governance and a conducive investment environment; lack of sustainable energy solutions stifles industrial growth and economic activities; discrepancies between job opportunities and workforce skills limit productivity and economic transformation; under-resourced health sector impacts public health and productivity; and rapid decline in the Gambian dalasi and rising inflation threaten economic stability and purchasing power.

Inflation on the price of food is the biggest strain on growth as it affects people's purchasing

power, especially the 62 per cent that live below the poverty line in The Gambia. Inclusive growth is the socioeconomic development that leaves no one behind. It is equitable, and fair as economic growth is distributed to everyone and opportunities are provided to all evenly. Although women are the ones who are deeply involved in economic affairs in the informal sector, they are usually sidelined in terms of economic growth.

The Gambia is at a pivotal moment where strategic reforms and inclusive policies can significantly impact its trajectory toward sustainable development. By addressing the outlined challenges collaboratively, the nation can harness its potential for growth, improve living standards, and create a more equitable society for all citizens. The panelists emphasized the need for a collective effort from all stakeholders—government, civil society, and the private sector—to realize these goals and ensure a prosperous future for The Gambia.

The breakout session in Group B focused on the vital topic of socioeconomic development and inclusive growth in The Gambia. Participants included government officials, civil society representatives, and community leaders who shared insights on several pressing issues, including women's empowerment, the role of state-owned entities (SOEs), legal reforms, poverty reduction, youth unemployment, and budgetary considerations. The session aimed to identify challenges and propose actionable recommendations to foster sustainable development in the country. The breakout sessions had the following key takeaways:

- **Socioeconomic Inclusion:** Women's Empowerment: Empowering women is crucial for sustainable development. Initiatives that enhance women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities are essential. Community Engagement: Engaging communities in discussions about women's roles and rights fosters a culture of inclusion and supports gender equality.
- **State-Owned Entities (SOEs):** Board Appointments: The legitimacy of appointments to SOE boards is critical. Since the President oversees these appointments, ensuring transparency can enhance public trust. SOEs face significant infrastructural challenges and executive interference, which undermine their effectiveness. Addressing these issues is essential for fulfilling their mandates. A robust system of checks and balances is necessary to ensure accountability and transparency in SOE governance, including independent audits and public reporting.
- **Legal Reforms for Equity and Protection:** Gender Pay Gap: Despite reports of a non-existent gender pay gap, accessibility remains an issue. Women are underrepresented in leadership roles, necessitating legal frameworks to promote gender parity. Menstrual Health: The absence of workplace provisions for women during menstruation needs to be addressed through policies that offer flexible work arrangements and health support. Consultation with Women: Policies affecting women should be developed in consultation with them to ensure their needs are accurately represented.
- **Poverty Reduction and Social Protection:** The heavy tax burden on citizens needs intervention to alleviate intergenerational poverty. A comprehensive review of tax policies could provide relief for low-income families. Diversified agricultural practices are essential for economic inclusion. Supporting smallholder farmers through training and market access can enhance food security. The government should lead efforts to reduce inflation and collaborate with partners to establish effective social protection for vulnerable populations.

- **Youth Unemployment and Decentralization:** Enhancing skills among youth through expanded vocational training programs is essential for improving employability. Development initiatives should be decentralized to enhance access to resources in rural and urban areas, allowing local governments to address specific community needs. Investment in rural infrastructure and economic opportunities is crucial to mitigate irregular migration and urban overcrowding.
- **Budgetary Considerations and National Assembly Engagement:** The government recorded a budget deficit of 3.50% of GDP in 2023. Prioritizing efficient spending and revenue generation is vital to improving this situation. The National Assembly must engage in budget discussions to ensure adequate funding for youth-related programs. Collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports is necessary to advocate for increased allocations. Youth needs should be incorporated across all ministries. The National Youth Council (NYC) should compile relevant budget lines and advocate for increased funding.
- **Trade Imbalance:** The Gambia is grappling with a significant trade deficit characterized by high import dependency and limited export of local agricultural products.
- **Limited Economic Diversification:** The economy's heavy reliance on agriculture makes it vulnerable to external shocks, hindering overall economic resilience.
- **Challenges in Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** The Gambia faces difficulties in attracting FDI, attributed to perceived political instability, regulatory obstacles, and inadequate infrastructure.
- **Underutilised Fishing Resources:** The country's coastal waters are rich in marine resources that remain largely untapped due to poor sustainable management and insufficient investment.
- **Shortage of Vocational Training Opportunities:** There is a critical lack of skilled labor necessary for industrial growth and economic diversification, compounded by limited technical and vocational training options.
- **Gender Inequality and Need for Legal Reforms:** Persistent gender inequality affects women's access to education, employment, and political participation, highlighting the urgent need for legal reforms and policies to address these disparities.

Achieving socioeconomic development and fostering inclusive growth in The Gambia requires a holistic approach that addresses economic and social barriers and governance dimensions.⁹ By prioritising gender equality, investing in human capital, and fostering an enabling environment for women's economic participation, The Gambia can unlock its full potential for sustainable and equitable development. Collaborative efforts from the government, civil

⁹ The World Bank, *Gambia - Country Partnership Framework for the Period FY22-26* (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/450591652556583165/Gambia-Country-Partnership-Framework-for-the-Period-FY22-26>.

society, and the private sector are essential to create a more inclusive and prosperous future for all Gambians. The strategies below emphasise the importance of inclusive economic policies, investment in human capital, economic diversification, effective social protection, and strong governance in driving socioeconomic development and achieving inclusive growth in The Gambia. The Gambia can lay the foundation for a more equitable and prosperous future by focusing on these areas. The following strategies are essential for promoting comprehensive progress and equitable development:



Dr Amina Sillah making her point in a plenary session.

Recommendations for Achieving Socioeconomic Development and Inclusive Growth in The Gambia

1. **Expand Access to Financing and Foster Inclusive Economic Policies:** Develop microfinance programs and financial literacy training specifically for women entrepreneurs. Collaborate with financial institutions to create flexible loan products with supportive collateral requirements. Design and implement economic policies that ensure broad-based benefits, focusing on reducing poverty and narrowing income gaps. Expand access to quality education and vocational training for disadvantaged groups. Promote progressive taxation to fund social programs, enhancing social safety nets for vulnerable populations. Implement land reforms that secure tenure rights and provide equitable access to resources for rural communities.

2. **Invest in Human Capital Development:** Allocate resources to improve education quality and accessibility, particularly in rural areas. Provide vocational training tailored to market needs and support scholarships for girls and women in higher education. Enhance healthcare access to ensure a healthy and productive workforce.
3. **Promote Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment:** Strengthen legal protections for women, ensuring equal rights in inheritance, land ownership, and workplace safety. Expand educational and vocational training opportunities for women in non-traditional fields like technology and engineering. Involve women and diverse regional representatives in policymaking processes. Implement gender-responsive budgeting and conduct gender impact assessments. Launch public awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equity.
4. **Support Economic Diversification and Innovation:** Encourage innovation across sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology to create new job opportunities. Support entrepreneurship and foster a conducive environment for startups.
5. **Enhance Energy and Infrastructure Development:** Invest in sustainable energy solutions and improve energy efficiency. Prioritize transportation and digital infrastructure expansion to enhance trade and access to services, especially in rural areas. Leverage public-private partnerships and foreign direct investment for infrastructure projects.
6. **Enhance Social Protection Systems:** Implement effective social safety nets, including unemployment benefits and targeted assistance programs, to support vulnerable populations. Address youth unemployment by providing relevant training for marketable *skills* that enable self-employment.
7. **Strengthen Governance and Institutional Frameworks:** *Reform governance frameworks* to tackle corruption and improve public service delivery. Ensure transparency and accountability in government operations to build trust and improve service delivery. Strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks to create a favorable environment for investment.
8. **Foster Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaboration between government and the private sector to drive innovation and investment, particularly in infrastructure and technology.
9. **Implement Legal Reforms:** Update laws related to inheritance, land ownership, access to credit, and gender-based violence to enhance women's economic participation.
10. **Develop Supportive Infrastructure:** Invest in childcare facilities and promote work-life balance policies to enable greater female workforce participation. Offer incentives for companies providing on-site childcare and flexible work arrangements.

The discussions highlighted critical areas for achieving socioeconomic development and inclusive growth in The Gambia. By addressing the outlined challenges and implementing the recommended actions, The Gambia can progress toward a more equitable and prosperous future. Commitment to inclusive growth, particularly through the empowerment of women

and youth, is essential for fostering a sustainable and resilient economy. Collaborative efforts among government, civil society, and community stakeholders will be vital in driving these initiatives forward. The Gambia's economic outlook remains favourable, with projected GDP growth supporting the need for inclusive policies that address structural constraints and promote financial inclusion. By implementing these comprehensive recommendations, The Gambia can foster inclusive growth and socioeconomic development that benefits all citizens, particularly marginalized groups. Prioritising gender equality, human capital development, and economic diversification will be crucial in building a more equitable and sustainable future. Collaborative efforts among government, civil society, and the private sector will be vital in driving these initiatives forward.



Professor Dan Kuwali taking notes during the symposium while a colleague listens attentively.



Agricultural production in The Gambia



The Senegambia bridge that revolutionised trade and travel in the region

Policy Recommendations

The recommendations outlined in this report provide a roadmap for policymakers and stakeholders to work towards a more equitable and inclusive society, where economic growth benefits everyone, regardless of gender or region. The symposium concluded with the following ten key actionable recommendations to address pressing challenges and promote stability, sustainable development, and inclusive growth:

1. Support Economic Development and Diversification

- Promote Economic Diversification: Develop various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, to reduce dependency on a single industry and create new job opportunities.
- Encourage small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) Growth: Support SMEs through access to finance, training, and market opportunities.
- Expand Economic Activities: Support new sectors beyond agriculture, such as tourism, technology, and renewable energy. Promote investment in small-scale industries and value-added processing.
- Promote Agro-Processing: Invest in technology and infrastructure for processing crops and fish to enhance agricultural productivity and value addition, boost export potential, and create jobs.
- Develop Social Protection Systems: Implement safety nets by creating comprehensive social protection programmes, including unemployment benefits, social insurance, and targeted assistance, to support vulnerable populations.
- Ensure Equitable Access: Social protection systems should reach all segments of society, particularly those most in need. Legal reform is necessary to ensure equal rights for women to access financial services, land, and other economic benefits.

2. Enhance Governance and Strengthen Democratic Institutions

- Enact New Constitution: To complete the process of transition from autocratic rule to democracy, The Gambia requires a new constitution that provides a system of checks and balances and takes into account the people's interests and aspirations.
- Enhance Electoral Processes: Improve electoral systems to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections, increase voter education, and safeguard against fraud.
- Support Judicial Independence: Protect the judiciary from political interference and strengthen legal frameworks to uphold the rule of law.
- Promote Inclusive Governance: Foster broad-based participation by involving diverse stakeholders, including marginalised and minority groups, in decision-making processes.
- Implement Anti-Corruption Measures: Enhance transparency and accountability in public procurement and financial management. Strengthen institutions responsible for combating corruption and ensure effective enforcement of anti-corruption laws.

3. Implement Inclusive Economic Policies and Address Demographic Challenges

- Develop Inclusive Economic Policies: Address income inequality and ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for all segments of society, focusing on reducing poverty and supporting marginalised groups.

- Promote Inclusive Urban Planning: Implement equitable land management policies and develop sustainable urban planning strategies to manage rapid urbanisation and mitigate conflicts.
- Support National Reconciliation: Foster national unity through inclusive dialogue and reconciliation initiatives that address historical grievances and promote social cohesion.

4. Promote Sustainable Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability

- Integrate Sustainability into Development Plans: Promote green technologies and sustainable practices to ensure that economic development strategies include environmental considerations.
- Implement Climate Adaptation Strategies: Develop and implement strategies to mitigate climate change impacts on agriculture, food security, and biodiversity. Invest in climate-resilient agricultural practices and sustainable land management.
- Promote Reforestation and Conservation: Address deforestation and land degradation through reforestation projects and conservation programs. Encourage sustainable agricultural practices.

5. Strengthen Law Enforcement and Security Sector Reform

- Reform Security Institutions: Improve the effectiveness and accountability of law enforcement and security agencies through training, oversight, and community engagement.
- Enhance Conflict Prevention Mechanisms: Develop early warning systems and conflict resolution mechanisms to address potential threats before they escalate.
- Align Security Forces with Development Goals: Ensure security institutions align with national development objectives and contribute positively to societal stability.

6. Enhance Digitalisation and Invest in Infrastructure Development

- Promote Digital Transformation: Invest in digital infrastructure to improve public services, enhance transparency, and reduce corruption. Digitalise key sectors such as public administration, finance, agriculture, and health.
- Upgrade Infrastructure: Improve transportation, energy, and communication infrastructure to support economic activities and enhance connectivity within the country.

7. Invest in Human Capital and Promote Education and Skills Development

- Improve Education and Training: Allocate resources to enhance education and vocational training programs. Expand access to quality education and vocational training to build a skilled workforce.
- Support Lifelong Learning: Promote continuous learning and skills development to adapt to changing economic conditions and technological advancements.
- Enhance Healthcare Services: Invest in healthcare infrastructure and services to ensure a healthy population capable of contributing to economic growth.

8. Foster Regional and International Partnerships

- Strengthen Regional Cooperation: Enhance cooperation with neighbouring countries and international organisations to address cross-border security issues, share intelligence, and coordinate responses.
- Leverage International Support: Engage with international partners for technical assistance, funding, and knowledge sharing to support development programs.

9. Promote Inclusive Economic Growth and Strengthen Social Protection Systems

- Support Marginalized Groups: Ensure economic growth benefits all segments of society, including women, youth, people with disabilities, and marginalised communities. Implement policies that promote equal opportunities.
- Enhance Social Protection: Develop comprehensive social safety nets, including unemployment benefits, social insurance, and targeted assistance programs to support vulnerable populations and mitigate economic shocks.

10. Engage in Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Conduct Rigorous Research and Policy Analysis

- Foster Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration: Engage diverse stakeholders, including government, private sector, civil society, and international partners, to leverage resources and address complex challenges.
- Support Evidence-Based Policy Making: Develop strategies based on rigorous academic research and analysis. Use findings to inform policy decisions and ensure effective and targeted interventions.



Mr Abdel Ghader Khdeim, Peace Building Fund, Coordinator, United Nations, making a point during a break away session



A Participant making a point during a breakaway session.



Economy in The Gambia

Research: The Gambian River Basin: Climate Change and Water Resource Management

Introduction

The Gambia River, a transboundary watercourse shared by Guinea Bissau, Guinea, and Senegal, is central to the livelihoods and ecosystems of the region. The entire territory of The Gambia lies within the Gambia River Basin, where saline conditions prevail in the lower reaches and tributaries. These areas host significant population centers and tourism facilities. Effective management of water resources is crucial for the nation's development and sustainability. Current legislation does not align with the new policies, and existing sector institutions lack the necessary structure and organization to implement an integrated approach to water management.

The Centre for Research and Policy Development conducted a study to analyse the current conditions of communities along the Gambia River and assess the impact of climate change on their economic activities. The study investigated climate variability and the vulnerabilities of these communities, focusing on the lack of infrastructure and essential amenities in the region. Additionally, the study evaluated potential climate adaptation strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. These strategies may include sustainable agricultural practices, improved water management systems, and community-based initiatives designed to enhance resilience. By addressing these factors, the study sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of how climate change impacts these communities and to develop practical strategies for enhancing their adaptive capacity.

Study Objectives

This study aimed to analyse the current situation of communities along the Gambia River and examine the impact of climate change on their economic activities. Specific objectives include:

1. **Conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** This will evaluate socio-economic conditions, ecosystems, and climate-related impacts on water resources comprehensively.
2. **Identifying and Prioritising Climate Risks:** Focus on changes in precipitation patterns, temperature variability, and extreme weather events affecting hydrology and ecology.
3. **Assessing Existing Adaptation Strategies:** Evaluate the measures employed by communities, governments, and stakeholders to mitigate climate risks and enhance adaptive capacity.

Key Priorities for Water Resource Management

The primary goals for water management in The Gambia include:

1. **Operationalisation of the National Water Policy:** This aims to ensure Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM).

2. **Capacity Building:** Strengthening both human resources and infrastructure within relevant sector institutions.
3. **Groundwater Management:** Improving management practices for groundwater, which serves as the main source of domestic water.
4. **Community Empowerment:** Engaging communities effectively in water management processes.

Climate Change Impacts

The Gambia River Basin faces escalating challenges due to climate change, which poses significant threats to regional security and stability. Key impacts include:

1. **Rising Temperatures and Altered Rainfall Patterns:** These changes jeopardize food security and economic growth for populations reliant on river resources.
2. **Extreme Weather Events:** Increased frequency of such events can exacerbate competition and conflicts over water access.

Addressing these vulnerabilities through a comprehensive climate security initiative is essential. Effective water management measures—such as sustainable irrigation practices, watershed management, and water-sharing agreements—are critical to fostering resilience in the face of climate unpredictability.

Ecosystem and Biodiversity Preservation

Maintaining ecosystems and biodiversity is integral to climate security in the Gambia River Basin. Climate change can disrupt ecosystems, leading to diminished services, habitat loss, and species extinction. Key conservation activities include:

1. **Creation of Protected Areas:** Safeguarding critical habitats.
2. **Sustainable Land Management:** Promoting practices that enhance ecosystem resilience.
3. **Reforestation Programs:** Restoring lost habitats and increasing carbon sequestration.

Socioeconomic Vulnerabilities

Preexisting vulnerabilities in the River Gambia Basin may be exacerbated by climate change, resulting in increased food insecurity, poverty, and migration. To mitigate these issues, comprehensive adaptation and resilience strategies are essential, such as:

1. **Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Promoting methods that increase productivity while preserving resources.
2. **Income Diversification:** Encouraging varied economic activities to reduce dependency on single sources of income.
3. **Social Safety Nets:** Establishing programs to support disadvantaged groups.

Study Findings

The study revealed several critical findings regarding the communities along the Gambia River:

1. **Economic Dependency:** Many communities are heavily reliant on agriculture and fishing, making them particularly vulnerable to climate variability and economic shocks.
2. **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** There is a significant lack of infrastructure, including water supply systems, sanitation facilities, and transportation networks, hindering effective resource management and community resilience.
3. **Limited Access to Training:** Insufficient vocational and technical training opportunities contribute to a shortage of skilled labor, impacting local economic diversification efforts.
4. **Gender Disparities:** Women face substantial barriers in accessing resources, education, and decision-making roles, which limits their capacity to adapt to climate impacts.
5. **Community Engagement:** Successful adaptation strategies have emerged from community-led initiatives that emphasize local knowledge and participation, highlighting the importance of grassroots involvement in water resource management.
6. **Climate Adaptation Options:** Various adaptation strategies, including sustainable agricultural techniques, improved water management systems, and community-based projects, were identified as effective means to enhance resilience against climate change.
7. **Rising Temperatures:** The region is experiencing a significant increase in average temperatures, leading to more frequent heatwaves and extreme weather events.
8. **Changing Rainfall Patterns:** Rainfall patterns are becoming increasingly erratic, with prolonged droughts followed by intense, unpredictable rainfall, disrupting agricultural cycles and water availability.
9. **Impact on Agriculture:** Agricultural productivity is declining due to shifting weather patterns, affecting crop yields and food security. Farmers are struggling with unpredictable planting and harvesting seasons.
10. **Water Scarcity:** Water sources are becoming increasingly scarce, exacerbating challenges for both drinking water supplies and irrigation for agriculture.
11. **Increased Risk of Natural Disasters:** The frequency and intensity of natural disasters, such as floods and storms, are rising, causing damage to infrastructure and displacing communities.
12. **Biodiversity Loss:** The changing climate is impacting local ecosystems and biodiversity, with many species facing habitat loss and increased risk of extinction.
13. **Health Impacts:** There are increasing health risks associated with climate change, including heat-related illnesses, waterborne diseases, and respiratory issues due to poorer air quality.

Recommendations from the Study

The findings above provide a comprehensive understanding of how climate change affects local communities and develop actionable strategies to improve their adaptive capacity. Below are some recommendations to address these concerns:

- 1. Develop Climate-Resilient Agriculture:** Invest in climate-resilient agricultural practices and technologies, including drought-resistant crops, improved irrigation systems, and adaptive farming techniques to enhance productivity and food security.
- 2. Improve Water Management:** Implement efficient water management strategies, such as rainwater harvesting, better irrigation practices, and the development of sustainable water sources to address water scarcity.
- 3. Enhance Early Warning Systems:** Strengthen early warning systems for natural disasters to improve preparedness and response, minimising damage and protecting communities.
- 4. Promote Biodiversity Conservation:** Support conservation efforts and the protection of natural habitats to preserve local biodiversity and mitigate the impacts of climate change on ecosystems.
- 5. Strengthen Infrastructure:** Invest in infrastructure improvements to withstand extreme weather events and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters, including flood defenses and resilient buildings.
- 6. Address Health Risks:** Develop public health initiatives to address climate-related health issues, including heatwave response plans, improved water sanitation, and air quality monitoring.
- 7. Raise Awareness and Build Capacity:** Conduct public awareness campaigns and build local capacity to understand and adapt to climate change impacts, ensuring communities are better equipped to handle environmental challenges.

Research: Political Situation in Foni

Background

The Casamance conflict, originating from the southern and eastern border regions of The Gambia, particularly Foni, has given rise to a complex array of challenges requiring immediate attention. This region, consisting of five constituencies and historically aligned with former President Yahya Jammeh and the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), is currently at the center of heightened military activity and is experiencing an influx of refugees from Senegal, as well as Internally Displaced Persons, due to the ongoing low-intensity violence in Casamance.

Despite the region facing tensions since the early 1980s, the deployment of the ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG) since 2017 has further complicated the situation. In 2022, Senegalese ECOMIG forces were involved in deadly clashes with the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) rebels, marking the first instance of fighting spilling into Gambian territory, which had grave consequences for residents in Foni. Notably, four young men from Foni were killed in shootings near the border between The Gambia and Casamance in late 2022, leading to frequent media reports of violence that have strained social relations in the area.

Although tensions have eased since then, the memory of Harona Jatta's death during a protest demanding ECOMIG's withdrawal from Foni in June 2017 continues to resonate, fueling claims from political activists about ongoing human rights violations in the new Gambia. The five National Assembly representatives from Foni have persistently urged the government to focus on the region, arguing that it has been marginalized since the electoral defeat of Jammeh in 2016.

The unique dynamics of the Foni region—shaped by its historical political ties, increased military presence, and incidents of violence—pose risks to social cohesion and national unity. If the underlying issues and grievances in Foni are not addressed swiftly, the potential for a widening divide could threaten the stability and unity of the nation as it strives to solidify its democratic progress. Therefore, there is an urgent need for initiatives that extend beyond short-term conflict resolution and aim to promote enduring peace and stability. As such, the Center for Research and Policy Development conducted a study on the political situation in Foni with support from the UN Peacebuilding Fund. The study sought to provide a nuanced and current understanding of the conflict dynamics in the region, informing evidence-based policy recommendations to mitigate conflict, address grievances, and enhance social cohesion.

Objectives of the Research

The primary objectives of this research were to:

1. **Analyse the Impact of the Casamance Conflict:** To assess how the ongoing conflict affects the political, security, and socio-economic conditions in the Foni region.
2. **Identify Grievances and Challenges:** To document the specific grievances and challenges faced by residents, particularly those related to violence, displacement, and marginalisation.

3. **Explore Community Resilience:** To examine the resilience strategies employed by communities in response to the conflict and its repercussions.
4. **Facilitate Dialogue:** To create spaces for community discussions that allow for diverse perspectives on the conflict and its impacts to emerge.
5. **Inform Policy Recommendations:** To provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers aimed at addressing the underlying issues and fostering social cohesion.

Methodology

The study comprised of a qualitative research conducted in June and July 2024 across the five districts of Foni. During this period, the research team carried out 30 key informant interviews (KIIs) with community members, traditional and religious leaders, activists from both the region and the diaspora, and academics to gather diverse perspectives on the political, security, and socio-economic conditions in Foni, as well as the impact of the Casamance conflict on its residents. The KIIs provided valuable insights into citizen grievances, challenges, and resilience, alongside discussions on the conflict's effects on the community.

These findings were further enriched by 10 focus group discussions, with two held in each of the five constituencies of Foni. These discussions not only highlighted residents' experiences but also facilitated community dialogues that revealed a range of sometimes divergent viewpoints. The selected communities for this research included Somita, Brefet, Kusamai, Sibanor, Kanilai, Ballen, Kanwally, Kafengkeng, Wassadou, and Kalagi. These locations were purposefully chosen based on the intensity of conflict impact, proximity to the border, and community diversity, ensuring a comprehensive representation of experiences, including those of Internally Displaced Persons and host communities for refugees from Casamance. This approach aimed to provide a holistic view of the challenges and resilience present within these communities.

Key Findings

Below is a summary of the findings of the study:

1. **Governance and Development Challenges:** The report highlights significant governance and development issues in Foni, including inadequate healthcare services and a perceived political marginalization by the current government due to the region's historical ties to former President Jammeh. Although local political leaders are viewed as influential because of their proximity to power, there is widespread dissatisfaction with their performance following the elections, as many residents feel they are "disconnected from the people."
2. **Economic Difficulties:** The region is grappling with major economic challenges, including high prices for basic commodities, agricultural difficulties stemming from a lack of farm implements, and market and storage issues exacerbated by the ongoing Casamance conflict. Residents attribute the decline in agricultural productivity to the government's withdrawal of tractors that were previously provided by Jammeh. This shift has forced the community to revert to traditional farming practices, significantly impacting livelihoods, as many residents had relied on mechanized agriculture. Community initiatives, such as bakeries, and support from non-governmental organizations have become vital, as residents perceive government assistance as insufficient.

3. **Social Solidarity and Fractures:** Despite strong social ties through community activities and cultural practices, potential fractures exist due to political and ethnic differences, as well as economic hardships. However, effective conflict resolution mechanisms are in place, primarily through dialogue and mediation facilitated by elders and community leaders. These traditional methods are widely regarded as effective in addressing community issues.
4. **Impact of the Casamance Conflict:** Foni's proximity to the Casamance conflict significantly affects residents' sense of safety and trust in authorities. Incidents of violence and a perceived lack of effective government intervention have heightened feelings of fear and insecurity, contributing to a sense of marginalization.
5. **Transition and Marginalization:** Foni is undergoing a transition from the benefits and privileges experienced during Jammeh's era to a current feeling of marginalization under the new government.
6. **Political Dissatisfaction:** There is a noticeable gap and dissatisfaction between political leaders and the people of Foni, contributing to unrest and discontent.
7. **Economic Decline:** The region's once-modernized farming practices have reverted to traditional methods, with some young people turning to illicit activities due to economic hardships.
8. **Traditional and Socio-Cultural Practices:** Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms and socio-cultural practices are being utilized to foster social cohesion within the community.
9. **Mixed Perceptions of ECOMIG Forces:** The local population has mixed feelings about the ECOMIG forces. While they benefit from health care services provided by ECOMIG, their presence is viewed with ambivalence.

Implications for Policy Makers and Practitioners

The findings of this study carry important implications for policymakers and practitioners engaged in transitional justice discussions in The Gambia. The analysis reveals grievances related to the legacies of Jammeh and provides insight into the complexities faced by residents. It emphasizes the necessity for government, civil society, and traditional leaders in Foni, along with development partners, to employ socially acceptable approaches to address socio-economic challenges and enhance political stability.

Recommendations from the Study

The report concludes with medium- to long-term recommendations:

1. **Address Political Tensions:** Political leaders should collaborate with local authorities in Foni to address tensions arising from political disagreements and perceived ethnic differences, particularly in multicultural communities. Engagement with elected leaders can foster confidence and enable citizens to participate effectively in the political process.
2. **Improve Healthcare Services:** The government should prioritize improving access to healthcare and the quality of services at Bwiam Hospital. Respondents have expressed

concerns about the quality of care and the availability of medical supplies. Enhancing these services will help rebuild trust and mitigate feelings of neglect.

3. **Support for Agriculture:** To address the negative impact of the withdrawal of tractors on agriculture, especially for youth who relied on mechanisation, the governments should provide access to tractors and other farming implements. This support could alleviate grievances and improve food production. Additionally, enhancing market access and storage facilities is essential for transforming the socio-economic conditions of the community.
4. **Promote Inclusive Governance:** Ensure that governance structures are inclusive and address the concerns of all communities, including those feeling marginalised.
5. **Revise and Support Agricultural Practices:** Update mechanized farming techniques, improve market access, and provide support for youth involvement in agriculture to revitalize the local economy.
6. **Enhance Security Measures:** Strengthen security measures and provide support to local chiefs to maintain order and address security concerns effectively.
7. **Increase Humanitarian Assistance:** Provide targeted humanitarian assistance to address the immediate needs of the community and support economic and social development initiatives.

Research: United Nations and World Bank Collaboration on Joint Analysis and Monitoring

Background

The collaboration between the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank aims to support the Government of The Gambia in addressing immediate post-transition challenges following the 2017 political changes. This partnership focuses on aligning the strategic priorities of both organizations with the needs of The Gambia to ensure effective and sustainable interventions.

The World Bank provided a Turnaround Allocation of U\$225 million over three years to assist the Gambian government in achieving five strategic objectives essential for development and stabilization. This financial mechanism is designed to support countries in fragile situations or undergoing significant political transitions. The allocation aims to help The Gambia achieve stability, human capital development, and inclusive growth.

United Nation's Role in the Turnaround Allocation

The UN's role in the collaboration is multifaceted, including monitoring the implementation of the Turnaround Allocation and conducting joint analyses or studies. The collaboration involves a steering committee and technical working groups that focus on specific thematic areas such as governance, security, climate change, and economic development. The UN assigns specialized agencies to assist in monitoring the corresponding activities within the selected strategic objectives.

Methodology

The study employed qualitative analysis, key informant interviews, and a comprehensive review of project documents and reports from both the UN and the World Bank. Interviews included representatives from the UN, such as the Peace and Development Advisor, World Bank staff, consultants, and representatives from the Government of The Gambia.

Challenges Encountered

The study encountered data collection difficulties. Obtaining information from relevant partners and obtaining reliable and up-to-date data proved challenging. The data obtained from partners could sometimes be outdated. The study also encountered coordination challenges. Aligning the efforts of various stakeholders with competing priorities affected participation in technical working groups. Convincing government representatives to attend meetings was difficult due to a lack of resources for coordination, such as transport allowances and catering.

Studies Conducted

Three significant studies emerged from this collaboration:

1. **Conflict and Development Analysis:** This study, conducted jointly by the UN and the World Bank, provided a comprehensive analysis of the socio-political landscape and highlighted areas requiring immediate attention to prevent conflict recurrence and promote peacebuilding.

2. **Political Economy Analysis:** This study examined the governance and economic dynamics in The Gambia, focusing on the interaction between political and economic factors that affect stability. It also looked at the potential impact of flooding and other climate-related threats on the country's stability and development efforts
3. **Joint Analytical Work:** The UN and World Bank conducted joint studies to monitor the implementation of the Turnaround Allocation, involving representatives from government agencies and working groups focused on specific thematic areas.

Operational Challenges Encountered

1. Coordination and communication issues, such as miscommunication and delays in information sharing, led to overlapping efforts and gaps in program implementation.
2. Recruitment processes for funding were delayed due to bureaucratic procedures and capacity constraints.
3. Obtaining reliable data to support activities and information was challenging due to data reliability issues in The Gambia.
4. Effective engagement of local stakeholders was challenging due to varying levels of capacity, resources, and political dynamics within the country.

Strategic Challenge(s) Encountered

Alignment of organizational priorities between the UN and World Bank was sometimes challenging due to differing priorities and approaches, especially in terms of organizational policies reflecting their distinct mandates and operational frameworks.

Recommendations for Improvement:

1. **Enhanced Coordination:** Establish regular coordination meetings and create joint working groups to streamline efforts and align activities. Appoint focal points within each organization to facilitate information sharing and resolve emerging issues.
2. **Joint Planning and Coordination:** Create integrated work plans to reflect the collaboration, assign clear roles and responsibilities, and establish regular communication channels to facilitate information sharing and coordination.
3. **Increased Flexibility and Adaptability:** Enhance program design and implementation to adapt to changing contexts and emerging needs.
4. **Enhanced Local Stakeholder Engagement:** Prioritize building local capacity and fostering ownership to ensure culturally appropriate and sustainable interventions. Adopt participatory approaches to ensure relevance and ownership.
5. **Leveraging Expertise:** Capitalize on the UN's experience in governance, human rights, and peacebuilding, and the World Bank's expertise in economic development to enhance collaboration.
6. **Focus on Sustainability and Resilience:** Invest in institutional capacity building, promote sustainable economic practices, and integrate climate resilience measures into development strategies to help countries achieve long-term stability and growth.

Closing Remarks

In his closing remarks, Mr Karl Frederick Paul, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in The Gambia underscored the significance of the symposium as a vital platform for dialogue and collaboration among key stakeholders. He expressed gratitude to all participants for their engagement and contributions, which enriched the discussions on the pressing issues facing The Gambia today.

The Resident Coordinator highlighted the importance of the lessons learned during the event, emphasizing that these insights should not only inform individual actions but also inspire collective efforts towards fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development. He urged participants to take these lessons back to their organisations and communities, advocating for the implementation of strategies that prioritize good governance, democracy, peace, and security.

Furthermore, Mr Paul reiterated the critical role of collaboration among government bodies, civil society organisations, and the private sector in driving meaningful change. By working together, these stakeholders can create an enabling environment that ensures the benefits of development reach all segments of society, particularly marginalised groups. The promotion of good governance and democratic principles is essential for maintaining peace and security, which are foundational for The Gambia's long-term stability and prosperity.

The Resident Coordinator expressed optimism about The Gambia's potential to achieve a more equitable and prosperous future. Mr Paul encouraged everyone to remain committed to the shared vision of sustainable development, reminding them that it is through concerted efforts and unwavering dedication that the nation can overcome its challenges and unlock its full potential. In closing, he thanked everyone for their participation and encouraged ongoing dialogue and cooperation in the pursuit of a brighter future for all Gambians, emphasising that a united commitment to good governance, democracy, peace, and security will be key to the nation's success.

Programme

Monday, 2 September 2023

- Venue** : The Sir Dawda Kairabu Jawara International Conference Centre, Banjul, The Gambia.
- 08:30 – 09:30** : **Welcome Remarks**
 : **Host – Mr Karl- Frédéric Paul**, United Nations Resident Coordinator, The Gambia.
 : **Co-Host–Mr FRANKLIN MUTAHAKANA**, World Bank Resident Representative for The Gambia.
 : **Keynote Address–Ambassador Marie–Antoinette Rose Quatre**, Chief Executive Officer, African Peer Review Mechanism
- 09:30–10:00** : *Health Break and Group Photo*
- 10:00 – 10:30** : **Presentation: “Fostering Inclusive and Accountable Governance In The Gambia” by Dr Satang Nabaneh**, Research Professor of Law, University of Dayton Human Rights Center.
- 10:30 – 12:00** : **Panel Discussion: “Deepening Democratic Governance in The Gambia”**
 : **Moderator – His Lordship Justice Hassan Bubacar Jallow**, Chief Justice of the Republic of The Gambia.
 : **Mr Mvemba Phezo Dizolele**, Senior Fellow and Director. Africa Program, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
 : **Dr Satang Nabaneh**, Research Professor of Law, University of Dayton Human Rights Centre.
 : **Dr Luqman Saka**, Director of Research, Centre for Research and Policy Development, The Gambia.
 : **Mr Paul Osei Kuffour**, Network Coordinator for West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network, Gha.
- 12:00–13:00** : *Lunch Break*
- 13:00 – 14:00** : **Break Away Session: “Discussion Groups on Deepening Democracy in The Gambia”**
 : **Group A– Dr Satang Nabaneh.**
 : **Group B– Ms Lala Touray**, Senior Program Officer for The Gambia Office, National Democratic Institute (NDI).
- 14:00 – 15:00** : **Plenary Session– “Key Findings from Research and Way Forward”**
 : **“Political Economy of The Gambia”**

: **“Group B-Conflict and Development in The Gambia”**

15:00 – 15:30 : *Health Break*

15:30 – 16:30 : Plenary Session: “Key Takeaways”

: **Rapporteur: Essa Sanneh**, National Youth Parliamentarian

Tuesday, 3 September 2024

08:30 – 09:00 : Recap and Housekeeping

: **Rapporteur Essa Sanneh**, National Youth Parliamentarian

09:00 – 09:30 : Presentation: “Achieving Sustainable Peace and Security In The Gambia” by **Dr Catherine Lena Kelly**, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Justice and Rule of Law, African Center for Strategic Studies, United States.

09:30 – 10:00 : *Health Break*

10:00 – 12:00 : Panel Discussion: “Promoting Peace and Security in The Gambia”

: **Moderator-Dr Catherine Lena Kelly**, African Center for Strategic Studies, United States.

: **Mr Abdoulaye Sawo**, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Office of the National Security Advisor, Office of the President and Cabinet, The Gambia.

: **Brigadier General (r) Saleh Bala**, Founder, White Ink, Nigeria.

: **Dr Bakary Sambe**, Regional Director, Timbuktu Institute-African Centre for Peace Studies, Dakar, Senegal.

: **Mr Sait Matty Jaw**, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Centre for Research and Policy Development, Banjul.

12:00 – 13:00 : *Lunch Break*

13:00 – 14:00 : Break Away Session: “Discussion Groups on Promoting Peace and Security in The Gambia”

: **Group A-Brigadier General (r) Saleh Bala.**

: **Group B-Mr Biran Gaid**, Lead, Democratic Governance Centre for Research and Policy Dialogue.

14:00 – 15:00 : Plenary Session: “Key Findings from Research and Way Forward”

: **“Climate Security in The Gambian River Basin.”**

: **“Political Situation in Foni.”**

14:00 – 15:00 : *Health Break*

- 15:30 – 16:30 : Plenary Session– “Key Takeaways”**
: Rapporteur: Essa Sanneh, National Youth Parliamentarian

Wednesday, 4 September 2024

- 08:30 – 09:00 : Recap and Housekeeping**
- 09:00 – 09:30 : Presentation: “Towards Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth in The Gambia”** by **Mr George Lwanda**, Head of Resident Coordinator’s Office, The Gambia.
- 09:30 – 10:00 : Health Break**
- 10:00 – 12:00 : Panel Discussion: “Achieving Socioeconomic Development and Inclusive Growth in The Gambia”**
: Moderator: Mr George Lwanda, Head of Resident Coordinator’s Office, The Gambia.
: Mr Ephrem Niyongabo, The Gambia, The World Bank
: Prof Momodou Mustapha Fanneh, Vice Chancellor Euclid University, The Gambia.
: Dr. Amina Sillah, Associate Professor, Towson University, United States of America.
: Mr. Momodou K. Dibba, National Coordinator, National Social Protection Secretariat.
- 12:00 – 13:00 : Lunch Break**
- 13:00 – 14:00 : Break Away Session: “Achieving Socioeconomic Development and Inclusive Growth in The Gambia”**
: Group A–Mr Ndegen Jobe, Security Sector Focal Point, Centre for Research and Policy Development, University of The Gambia.
: Group B–Mr Momodou K. Dibba, National Coordinator, National Social Protection Secretariat.
- 14:00 – 15:00 : Plenary Session: “Key Findings from Research and Way Forward” on “United Nations and World Bank Collaboration on Joint Analysis and Monitoring.”**
- 14:00 – 15:00 : Health Break**
- 15:30 – 16:30 : Plenary Session: “Key Takeaways”**
: Rapporteur– Essa Sanneh.
- 16:30 – 17:00 : Closing Remarks.**
: Host- Mr Karl Frédérick Paul, United Nations Resident Coordinator, The Gambia.

List of Participants

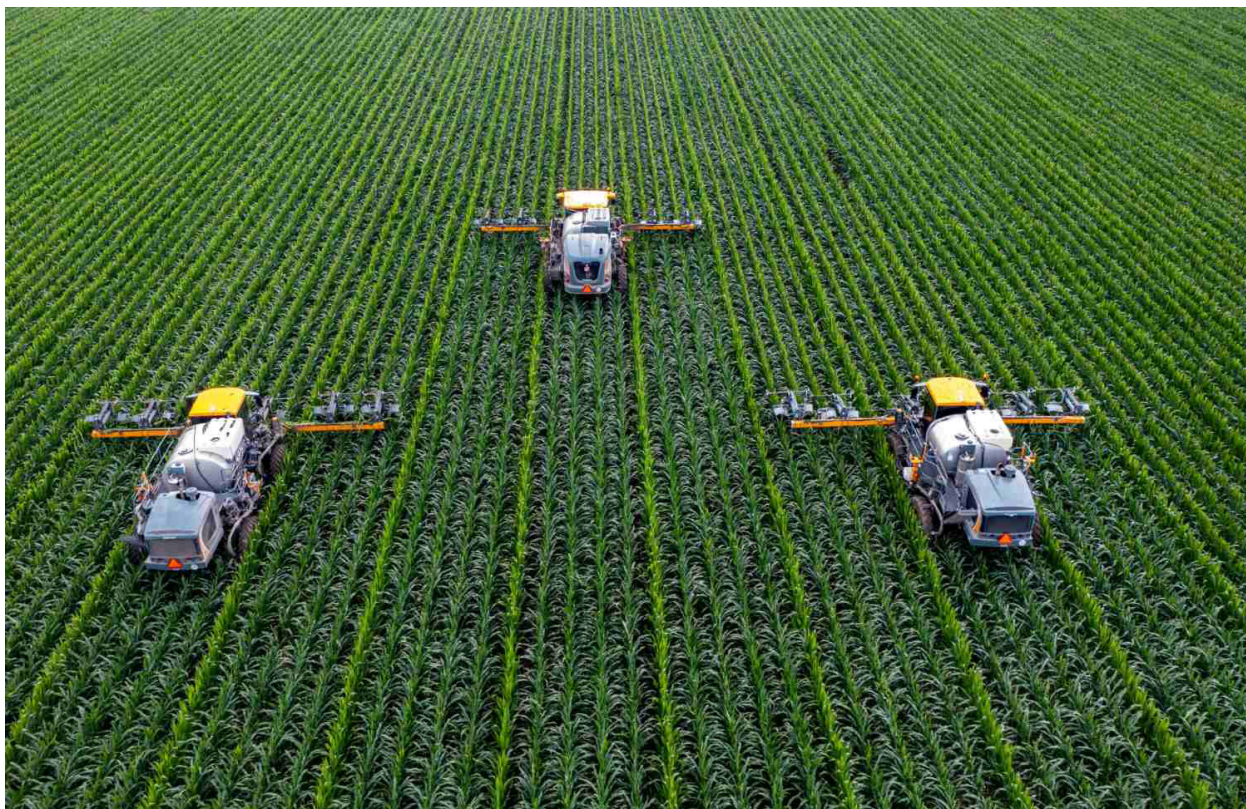
1. **Mr Karl-Frédérick Paul**, United Nations Resident Coordinator, The Gambia
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7. **Dr Luqman Saka**, Director of Research, Centre for Research and Policy Development (CPRD), The Gambia.
8. **Mr Paul Osei Kuffour**, Network Coordinator for West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network.
9. **Ms Lala Touray**, Senior Program Officer for The Gambia Office, National Democratic Institute (NDI)
10. **Mr Essa Sanneh**, National Youth Parliamentarian, The Gambia
11. **Dr Catherine Lena Kelly**, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Justice and Rule of Law, African Center for Strategic Studies, United States.
12. **Mr Abdoulie Sawo**, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Office of the National Security Advisor, Office of the President, The Gambia.
13. **Brigadier General (r) Saleh Bala**, Founder, White Ink, Nigeria.
14. **Dr Bakary Sambe**, Regional Director, Timbuktu Institute-African Centre for Peace Studies, Dakar, Senegal.
15. **Mr Sait Matty Jaw**, Co-Founder and Executive Director, CPRD.
16. **Mr Biran Gaid**, Lead, Democratic Governance Centre for Research and Policy Dialogue.
17. **Mr George Lwanda**, Head of Resident Coordinator's Office, The Gambia.
18. **Mr Ephrem Niyongabo**, The World Bank, The Gambia
19. **Prof Momodou Mustapha Fanneh**, Vice Chancellor Euclid University, The Gambia.
20. **Dr. Amina Sillah**, Associate Professor, Towson University, United States of America.
21. **Mr. Momodou K. Dibba**, National Coordinator, National Social Protection Secretariat.
22. **Mr Ndegen Jobe**, Security Sector Focal Point, Centre for Research and Policy Development, University of The Gambia.

23. **Mr. Momodou K. Dibba**, National Coordinator, National Social Protection Secretariat.
24. **Mr Abdel Ghader Khdeim**, Peace Building Fund, Coordinator, United Nations.
25. **Brig Gen (Prof) Dan Kuwali**, Commandant, National Defence College-Malawi
26. **Mr Filly Sosu**, Social Registry Manager, National Social Protection Secretariat, The Gambia.
27. **Mr Abdoulie Badjie**, Development Officer, Programme Communications and Advocacy, United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator, The Gambia
28. **Sainey Ceesay**, United Nations Development Programme
29. **Mr Omar A Jammal**, Judiciary, The Gambia
30. **Mr Justin Hacios**, ONS
31. **Mr Yaya Jammeh**, United Nations
32. **Kujeh Kah**, World Bank
33. **Sukai John**, Think Young Women
34. **Markus Angala**, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
35. **Alpha MK Lowe**, University of The Gambia
36. **Ousman Totta**, QTV
37. **Mamat Faye**, QTV
38. **Ketta Nfally Dartoo**, Ministry of Information (Mol), The Gambia
39. **Maimuna P Mendy**, Network Against Gender-Based Violence (NGBV)
40. **Amie MF Sighatah**, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
41. **Awa Manreh**, Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS)
42. **Ebrima Badjie**, GRTS
43. **Abdoulie Nyasi**, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA), The Gambia
44. **Omar Dibba**, LAFOJ
45. **Adegen Jobe**, CRPD
46. **Bafoday Sanyang**, Ministry of Petroleum and Energy (MOPE)
47. **Sunkung Danso**, Child Fund
48. **Isha C Sow**, CPRD
49. **Adama Jallow**, The Point
50. **Lunia Reguigi**, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
51. **Pusepa Sunam**, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
52. **Achagy Bos Bah**, Ministry of Transport Works and Infrastructure (MOTWI)
53. **Fatou Jallow**, UNDP
54. **Bernard Gomet**, Beakanyang
55. **Mamadou Salieu Bah**, Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRCO)
56. **Mariama Kummeh**, CPRD
57. **Essa Sanneh**, National Youth Parliament (NYP)
58. **Isatou Joof**, Ministry of Petroleum and Energy
59. **Mariana Kummeh**, CPRD

60. **Mr Justin Hoccius**, EU Adviser, The Office of the National Security (ONS)
61. **Quin Plankett**, UNFPA
62. **Pusha Sunveam**, UNFPA
63. **Amie MF Sighateh**, UNDP
64. **Musa Coesat**, UNDP
65. **Abdoulie Nyass**, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
66. **Lamin Rene Loya**, ABA
67. **Isha C Saw**, CPRD
68. **Marian J Ceesay**, WAVE
69. **Gilbatta Bafin**, WAVE
70. **Abdoulie O Bali**, NYP
71. **Bernard Gomet**, Beakanyang
72. **Aisha Jebe**, MFW
73. **Musa K Ceesay**, Peace Network
74. **Mamoudou Jallow**
75. **Kebbal N Fally Dailo**, Ministry of Information (Mol)
76. **Ndegan Jobe**, CPRD
77. **Essa Sameh**, NYP
78. **Kumba Jallow**, TANGO
79. **Mamoudou Saliou Bah**, UNRCO
80. **Matty Kah**, CPRD
81. **Macfula Yara**, Ministry of Petroleum and Energy
82. **Baboucarr Fatty**, CPRD
83. **Iman DIBBA**, University of The Gambia (UTG)
84. **Abdoulie O Bah**, NYP
85. **Essa Sanneh**, NYP
86. **Aisha Jobe**, Making Finance Work for Africa (MFW4A)
87. **Momodan Mustapha Fanreh**, Eucud University
88. **Lamin Rene Loua**, ABA
89. **Gilberta Badjie**, WAVE
90. **Ndey Njoneh Jay**, CPRD



Gambia economic development



Gambia economiy

