

Toward a New Gambia: Linking Peace and Development

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IPI launched the SDGs4Peace project in 2016 to understand how the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is being rooted at the national and local levels and to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In its preamble, the 2030 Agenda states, "There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development." The SDGs4Peace project asks how countries are operationalizing this link in practice to realize the 2030 Agenda's holistic vision.

The project focuses on five case studies: the Gambia, Greece, Guatemala, Lebanon, and Myanmar. Each of these case studies is based on fieldwork, including interviews with representatives of governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society. While these countries are at different levels of development, each is going through a period of internal transformation. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda therefore provides them an opportunity not only to buttress existing aspirations but also to build new partnerships that transcend traditional approaches.

As many countries are only just starting to implement the 2030 Agenda, this project also presents an opportunity to spread the word about the SDGs and why they matter to local leaders and communities. By bridging the local with the global, it can highlight ways of working toward shared goals and adapting them to specific contexts.

This issue brief was drafted by Lesley Connolly and Cheryl He. The views expressed in this publication represent those of the authors and not necessarily those of the International Peace Institute. IPI welcomes consideration of a wide range of perspectives in the pursuit of a well-informed debate on critical policies and issues in international affairs.

Introduction

On December 1, 2016, Gambians took to the polls and successfully replaced then President Yahya Jammeh with current President Adama Barrow, who won 45.5 percent of the vote to Jammeh's 36.7 percent. Jammeh, who had been in power since 1994, surprised the international community and conceded the election, committing to make way for Barrow. However, a mere week later, Jammeh contested the results and declared a state of emergency. This not only exacerbated tensions at the political level but also heightened the risk of violent protests and the eruption of conflict throughout the country.¹

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with the support of the UN and the African Union (AU), responded swiftly to this threat. As a first response, the mission, composed of the heads of state of Ghana, Liberia, and Nigeria, was deployed to convey the regional body's support for a peaceful political transition in conformity with the results of the election. However, during the ECOWAS summit in Abuja, Nigeria (attended by eleven heads of state), the regional body declared its intent to take all measures necessary to enforce the results of the election, deploying a military force to the Senegalese border that could mobilize to intervene and remove Jammeh from power at any given moment.² After almost seven weeks of mounting pressure, Jammeh peacefully relinquished power on January 21, 2017.

Soon after, on April 6, 2017, the country held National Assembly elections, with the United Democratic Party (UDP) winning the majority of seats. With this win, the Barrow-led UDP was able to solidify power and begin redefining the nation's priorities, including the need to attract investment and to meet the high expectations of the public.

As President Barrow moves forward in consolidating power and advancing democracy and development in the country, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the sustaining peace resolutions offer frameworks that can guide policymakers in planning and implementing inclusive policies that address both peace and sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by UN member states in September 2015,³ and in April 2016 the concept of sustaining peace was reaffirmed by

1 Lesley Connolly, "The Gambia: An Ideal Case for Prevention in Practice," *IPI Global Observatory*, October 4, 2017, available at <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/10/the-gambia-an-ideal-case-for-prevention-in-practice/>.

2 Lesley Connolly and Aissata Athie, "Sustaining Peace and Prevention: Comparing Responses to Crises in Gambia and Burundi," International Peace Institute, March 2017, available at www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Applying-Sustaining-Peace_Prevention-Workshop-note-4.pdf.

3 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (October 21, 2015), UN Doc. A/RES/70/1.

dual General Assembly/Security Council resolutions, providing a roadmap for peace and development.⁴ Both of these frameworks offer holistic approaches that emphasize the link between sustainable development and peace; as noted in the 2030 Agenda, “There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.”

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in the Gambia over the course of two weeks in May 2017, most of which took the form of semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders involved in the Gambia’s development process, including those involved in revising the National Development Plan. To ensure maximum diversity of sources, interviews were conducted with government officials and representatives of the UN in the Gambia, the private sector, international partners, and local and international civil society. Interviews were also conducted in New York with representatives of key UN departments and member states. Considering the fast pace at which the new government is consolidating power and developing its National Development Plan, it is important to note that this paper reflects the situation on the ground at the time of writing.

Gambia’s National Development Plan and the 2030 Agenda

Prior to the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Gambia was already working toward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) laid out in the 2000 Millennium Declaration. The Gambia developed several poverty reduction and economic development strategies in line with the MDGs.⁵ However,

as of 2014 the Gambia was not expected to meet any of the MDGs by the following year despite progress made on some fronts.⁶ In September 2015 the government endorsed the 2030 Agenda but has taken little action to integrate the SDGs into its development agenda, and the country still faces significant development challenges.

According to the 2017 Global Peace Index, the Gambia has fallen eighteen places since 2016 and is among the top five countries to have experienced the largest deterioration in an ongoing conflict.⁷ In addition, the Gambia is facing a range of socioeconomic challenges including increasing poverty, a growing rural-urban divide, a decreasing literacy rate, and high unemployment.⁸ Between 2010 and 2015, poverty remained flat at 48 percent, while GDP growth averaged around 3 percent, which is lower than the country’s population growth.⁹ Meanwhile, as rural poverty increases, the wealth gap between rural and urban Gambians is widening: 10.8 percent of the population lives below the poverty line in Banjul, compared to 69.8 percent in rural Gambia.¹⁰ The country’s literacy rate sits at 40.1 percent and is lower for women (35.5 percent) than for men (45.7 percent). Only 51 percent of the working age population is employed and unemployment rates are even higher in rural areas.¹¹

The transition to a new administration brought the opportunity to develop a new National Development Plan (NDP), which identifies the government’s priority areas and outlines an action plan to meet its election pledges—beginning with transitional justice and security sector reform. As of January 2018, the government had released and circulated a draft of the NDP for consultation and finalization. The plan emphasizes the importance of an integrated and holistic approach to develop-

4 UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262.

5 See International Monetary Fund, “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP),” available at www.imf.org/external/np/prsp/prsp.aspx#HeadingG; and Gambian Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, *Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) 2012–2015*, 2011, available at http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/gambia/documents/about_us/page_2012_2015_en.pdf. See also “How HUMAN were the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): The Gambian Perspective?,” *The Standard*, July 13, 2016, available at <http://standard.gm/site/2016/07/13/human-millennium-development-goals-mdgs-gambian-perspective/>.

6 Gambian Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, *Level of Achievement of the MDGs: MDG Status Report, 2014*, June 2014, available at www.gm.undp.org/content/gambia/en/home/library/poverty/mdg-2014-report.html.

7 Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Peace Index 2017*, p. 25, available at <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/06/GPI-2017-Report-1.pdf>.

8 World Bank, *Macro Poverty Outlook for Sub-Saharan Africa: The Gambia*, October 2017, available at <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/214601492188159621/mpo-gmb.pdf>; Government of the Gambia, *National Development Plan (Draft)*, 2017.

9 Government of the Gambia, *National Development Plan (Draft)*, 2017.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

ment, with a forward-looking agenda addressing economic, environmental, social, and governance issues and a commitment to good governance and a reduction of inequality. It also commits the government to environmental sustainability, recognizing the potential of renewable energy, and acknowledges the importance of developing the agriculture sector, infrastructure, and the tourism industry as a means to strengthen the economy.¹² Furthermore, the NDP strongly emphasizes gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women and youth and commits the government to developing more inclusive policies, including in relation to persons with disabilities. This emphasis is consistent with the 2030 Agenda's exhortation to leave no one behind. Further, there is a strong emphasis on linking peacebuilding and sustainable development, placing SDG 16 at the center of the national action plan.¹³

The plan, however, is broad in its ambition. It needs to identify areas of focus and determine how to sequence interventions to identify "quick wins" that can be systematically communicated to the public. There are a few central priorities that could be highlighted as immediate needs, including youth empowerment; gender equality; innovative approaches to boost tourism, infrastructure, and agriculture; climate change mitigation; and investment in renewable energy.

The development priorities set by the government have attracted a significant amount of international support, and the Gambia has tried to remain on the international community's radar to secure its support in the long term. In January 2017 the Gambia's ambassador to the UN, Mamadou Tangara, requested the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to consider putting the country on its agenda. The PBC responded positively, embarking on a scoping mission with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Peacebuilding Support Office in March 2017. As part of this

venture, mission leaders met with civil society members and high-level government officials, including President Barrow. Upon returning to New York, the Peacebuilding Commission convened a meeting at the request of Ambassador Tangara to provide a briefing on the outcome of its visit and invite deliberation on how to support the peacebuilding priorities identified by the government in a strategic and coherent manner.¹⁴

That same month, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffery Feltman visited the Gambia and met President Barrow, civil society groups, the country's Independent Electoral Commission, and the UN country team.¹⁵ In recognition of the central role of ECOWAS in the Gambia, UNDP and ECOWAS signed a memorandum of understanding in March 2017 to consolidate their relationship and expand their traditional areas of cooperation.¹⁶ While it is not one of the Peacebuilding Commission's countries of focus, the Gambia remains on its radar, championed by South Korea, the current chair. However, as the end of South Korea's tenure nears, there is no guarantee that the Gambia will remain a priority for the commission.

In terms of international financial support for the country, funding commitments and contributions are in line with government priorities. The Peacebuilding Support Office has released \$3 million in emergency support to the country (\$1.4 million for security sector reform, \$1.2 million for transitional justice, and \$400,000 for support to strengthen policy and analytical capacity in the office of the president).¹⁷ Moreover, the African Development Bank has pledged \$158 million to the Gambia (\$100 million for the trans-Gambia transportation program, \$50 million for national support to the government, and \$8 million for engagement with the private sector).¹⁸ The World Bank has committed to providing the Gambia \$56 million in budget support to help address a high

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Peacebuilding Commission, Informal Meeting on the Situation in the Gambia, Chairperson's Summary of the Discussion, April 19, 2017, available at www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/oc/Chair%20Summary_Informal%20PBC%20meeting_The%20Gambia_19%20April%20-%20FINAL.pdf.

¹⁵ Cholo Brooks, "Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Concludes Visit to Six West African States Including Liberia," *Global News Network Liberia*, March 4, 2017, available at <http://gnnliberia.com/2017/03/04/secretary-general-political-affairs-concludes-visit-six-west-african-states-including-liberia/>.

¹⁶ ECOWAS, "ECOWAS and UNDP to Further Strengthen Cooperation and Their Relations," March 17, 2017, available at www.ecowas.int/ecowas-and-undp-to-further-strengthen-cooperation-and-their-relations/.

¹⁷ Interview with the Peacebuilding Fund, New York, May 2017.

¹⁸ Formal lunch focusing on the Gambia on the sidelines of the Peacebuilding Commission Annual Session, New York, June 30, 2017.

deficit and provide basic public services.¹⁹ The EU has pledged €70 million for statebuilding and budget support with a focus on security sector and prison reform, training for security personnel and journalists, and youth empowerment initiatives.²⁰ In the first quarter of 2018, a donor pledging conference will aim to attract investment needed to meet government priorities and achieve the goals outlined in the NDP.²¹

Despite the delicate situation in which the country finds itself, it is no longer on the agenda of the Security Council, nor is it a Peacebuilding Commission country of focus. It does not have a UN peacekeeping or special political mission overseeing the transition. With vast challenges ahead, the Gambia is at a tipping point. The 2030 Agenda and sustaining peace resolutions can provide a roadmap for the Gambia to solidify its political transition and achieve long-lasting peace

and development with the support of regional and international actors.

Challenges and Opportunities in Implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Gambia

While all the SDGs are relevant to the Gambia, certain goals could be prioritized to meet the immediate demands of the population during the transition. These include those connected to youth empowerment and economic inclusivity, which could help address the mass migration of Gambian youths toward Europe. Goals that include a focus on achieving gender equality, ensuring the provision of public services, investing in environmental sustainability, and stabilizing state institutions that support peace and development could also be prioritized. These priorities are all present

Figure 1. The seventeen SDGs



19 "World Bank Commits \$56 Million to Gambia in Budget Support," *VOA Online*, July 11, 2017, available online at www.voanews.com/a/world-bank-commits-fifty-six-million-gambia-budget-support/3938009.html.

20 Interview with the EU Office in the Gambia, the Gambia, June 2017.

21 The main donors to the Gambia include the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the Commonwealth of Nations, the European Union, Germany, Turkey, and the United States of America.

in the “vision of the new Gambia” laid out in the government’s National Development Plan (NDP).²²

CREATING INFRASTRUCTURE FOR INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE GROWTH: GOALS 1, 4, 7, 8, AND 9

Goal 1 of the SDGs (“end poverty in all its forms everywhere”) calls for a renewed focus on the most vulnerable, an increase in access to basic resources and services, and greater support for communities affected by conflict and climate-related disasters.²³ Decreasing poverty requires economic growth, sustainable development, quality education, and dignified employment, linking Goal 1 to Goal 4 (“ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”) and Goal 8 (“promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”). Central to economic growth and development is the need for investment in infrastructure, as captured in Goal 9 (“build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”), as well as in a sustainable energy supply, reflected in Goal 7 (“ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”).

The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 173 out of 188 in UNDP’s Human Development Report of 2016.²⁴ The new administration inherited a dire economic situation.²⁵ Economic mismanagement by the previous regime resulted in losses estimated at 4 percent of GDP annually from 2014 onwards.²⁶ By the end of 2016, total public debt was 120 percent of GDP, up from 47 percent at the end of 2015.²⁷

Despite an increase in tarred roads and better access to education and healthcare under the

Jammeh regime, the Gambia needs more resilient and higher-quality infrastructure to boost tourism and agriculture and create jobs.²⁸ Improved infrastructure is attractive to foreign investors and local businesses looking to expand, both of which could contribute to economic growth (through corporate tax payments, for example) and the reduction of youth unemployment (through the provision of greater economic opportunities). The SDGs could provide a platform for mapping how infrastructure development can be leveraged to advance other development goals together with strategic public-private partnerships. This, in turn, could make government planning and spending more efficient and effective.

Increasing Agricultural and Industrial Exports

The Gambia has a significant opportunity to invest in agriculture to increase its exports.²⁹ Agriculture employs 46.4 percent of the working population and 80.7 percent of the rural working population in the Gambia. Despite the Jammeh government investing heavily in agriculture, in 2016 the sector contributed 20 percent of GDP, a decline from the 31 percent average of previous years. In addition, 72 percent of those living in poverty rely on agriculture for their livelihood, and 91 percent of the total population work as farmers.³⁰ The decline in agricultural production is connected to a variety of factors, including weak policy and institutional frameworks as well as climate shocks and rainfall variability.³¹

The Gambia’s trade has also shrunk. Exports are in decline and the country is increasingly reliant on imports, which accounted for 39 percent of GDP in 2014 (33 percent food and agricultural products and 43 percent fuel and manufacturing inputs).³²

22 The “vision of the new Gambia” incorporates the notions of creating a society where the highest standards of governance are upheld and all are considered equal before the law; all the government is held accountable and there is social cohesion; citizens enjoy the highest standard of living and access to health, education, food, and basic services; and women and youth can reach their full potential. For the full vision, see the Government of the Gambia, National Development Plan (Draft), 2017.

23 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (October 21, 2015), UN Doc. A/RES/70/1.

24 UNDP, *Human Development Report 2016*, available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report>.

25 UNDP, presentation of the National Development Plan, the Gambia, 2017.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Government of the Gambia, 2017, National Development Plan (Draft), 2017.

29 See, for example, Amadou Jallow, “Gambia Set to Sign MOU with Chinese Agricultural Firm,” *allAfrica*, April 27, 2015, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201504272356.html>.

30 Government of the Gambia, 2017, National Development Plan (Draft), 2017.

31 Ibid.

32 Government of the Gambia, *The Gambia: Harnessing Trade for Growth and Employment*, April 2013, available at www.enhancedif.org/en/system/files/uploads/the_gambia_dtis_update.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=3204.

Nonetheless, the country has opportunities for increased trade. The Gambia has served as a regional port, with imported goods being transported inland using the Gambia River. Moreover, its classification as a least-developed country exempts it from tariffs in most export markets.³³

In addition, investing in value-adding industries such as processing factories and testing labs could allow the country to export processed goods instead of raw products to current and previously inaccessible markets, thereby increasing profits and tax revenues. If scaled up and managed effectively, such industries could increase food security, reduce spending on expensive imports, and boost the potential for the Gambia to become a regional trading hub.³⁴

Reinvigorating the Tourism Sector

Tourism is the second-highest contributor to GDP in the Gambia (currently between 12 and 16 percent). It directly supports over 35,000 jobs (and indirectly supports 40,000) and generates \$85 million in foreign exchange earnings.³⁵ In 2014, with the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, tourism dropped from contributing 22 percent (in 2012) to the national GDP to just 0.9 percent.³⁶ In 2016 the country experienced further declines in tourism as a result of political instability from the elections.³⁷

There is optimism that the stability brought about by the change of government may restore Gambia's attraction as a tourist destination. The Gambia's comparative advantages in this sector include its relatively good weather, short rainy season, English-speaking population, cheap accommodation and food, and relative peace and stability. To maximize these advantages, however, the country must improve its tourism infrastruc-

ture, including by developing more hotels and tour operators and, in particular, by working to ensure reliable electricity in the capital.³⁸ In addition, it could undertake a more effective advertising campaign to attract European tourists year-round and increase scheduled flights to the country to attract non-package and off-season travel. Expanding the tourism season beyond the European winter would also provide more reliable employment for the Gambian population and help boost economic growth.³⁹

Making Electricity More Reliable

Access to reliable electricity sits at the top of the government agenda. The Gambia has some of the most expensive electricity in the world.⁴⁰ The National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC) is the sole supplier of electricity in the Gambia. The challenge is that NAWEC does not have sufficient generating capacity to meet the energy needs of the country. Previously, the Gambia produced 80 megawatts of electricity, which met only half of the country's projected demand. In recent years, the supply has been halved to 40 megawatts, resulting in frequent electricity cuts, particularly for those living far from the country's capital.⁴¹ This has led to widespread complaints that large segments of the population experience close to twenty-four hours without electricity, with many arguing that supply was more reliable under the Jammeh regime.⁴²

In an effort to improve conditions, in 2017 NAWEC signed a memorandum of understanding with Senelec, the main electricity provider in neighboring Senegal, to supply up to 10 megawatts of electricity to parts of rural Gambia.⁴³ One of the key priorities in the immediate term is to invest in another generator for the national electricity

33 Ibid.

34 Interview with National Farmer's Association in Banjul, the Gambia, June 2017.

35 Government of the Gambia, National Development Plan (Draft), 2017.

36 The Gambia after Elections: Implications for Governance and Security in West Africa, 2017, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/senegal/13225-20170310.pdf>.

37 Edrissa Sanyang and Sanna Camara, "The Gambia after Elections: Implication for Governance and Security in West Africa," Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2017, available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/senegal/13225-20170310.pdf>.

38 Government of the Gambia, National Development Plan (Draft), 2017.

39 Rochelle Turner and Evelyne Freiermuth, "Travel and Tourism: Economic Impact 2017 Gambia," World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017, available at www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/countries-2017/gambia2017.pdf.

40 Saikou Jammeh, "Gambia's Electricity Tariff among World's Highest," *Daily News*, March 26, 2012, available at <http://dailynews.gm/africa/gambia/article/gambias-electricity-tariff-among-worlds-highest>.

41 "Gambia: Can NAWEC Be Fixed at All?, *Jollof News*, May 11, 2017, available at <https://jollofnews.com/2017/05/11/gambia-can-nawec-be-fixed-at-all/>.

42 Fatou Jeng, "NAWEC Calls for Patience as Second-Hand Machines Are Being Repaired," *The Point*, June 12, 2017, available at <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/nawec-calls-for-patience-as-second-hand-machines-are-being-repaired>.

43 Office of the President of Gambia, "Gambia-Senegal Energy Cooperation to Improve Power Supply," *The Point*, July 12, 2017, available at <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/gambia-senegal-energy-cooperation-to-improve-power-supply>.

supplier. Additionally, the government could also consider funding smaller energy providers to diversify the energy market in order to meet the country's growing needs.⁴⁴

Thus far, development of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and bio-waste has been limited. However, the lack of a sustainable power supply and the volatility of petroleum prices have encouraged the government to look into developing local renewable resources.⁴⁵ Investment in new renewable energy projects could provide a means for households to meet their electricity needs and enhance economic development. Due to the vast amount of sunshine the country receives, solar power is an area of opportunity. Many countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Tanzania, have implemented affordable solar-power initiatives that assist both businesses and individual homes. The home-based systems in these countries are small and only power a few lights, mobile-phone chargers, and TVs, but they are useful in the event of rolling blackouts and help ease the economic burden of power cuts on small businesses.⁴⁶

Improving Transportation across the Gambia River

Transport is critical for the efficient functioning of the Gambia's economy. It links areas of production to markets and facilitates access to public services. For the private sector, transport infrastructure is critical to increase competition and provide greater opportunity for public-private partnerships.

The fact that the country is divided in two by the Gambia River is central to the discourse on transport. Connecting the two banks is important to foster social cohesion and economic integration—not only in the Gambia but also in Senegal.⁴⁷ Currently, a journey across the Gambia River to the north bank on the ferry can take up to three hours. If the ferry breaks down or is otherwise busy,

people can take a small fishing boat to cross the river. These are often overcrowded and more than twice as expensive as the ferry. Moreover, the ferry only operates from 5:30am to 6:00pm, which limits access to the greater Banjul area. This is especially problematic because specialist hospitals are located in Banjul, meaning that, in cases of emergency, people must still cross the river to access urgent medical care.

In addition, crossing the river is the quickest way to reach Senegal from Banjul.⁴⁸ Investment in infrastructure to cross the river, therefore, would not only improve the connectivity of rural regions to the capital and improve their access to quality healthcare and education but could also boost trade with Senegal.

Creating Jobs and Providing Vocational Training

One of the goals of the SDGs is to “achieve full and productive employment, and decent work, for all women and men by 2030.”⁴⁹ To achieve this goal in the Gambia, there is a need to focus on skills education, especially for youth, who make up more than half of the population.⁵⁰

With the change in government, youth have high expectations for change in the country, especially in regard to increased opportunities for decent work. The lack of decent employment opportunities has led to a dramatic rise in youth migration toward Europe. A major impediment to youth securing jobs is the education system—at both the university and high school levels—which have high pass rates but little focus on skills development. Moreover, 31.6 percent of children between 7 and 15 years old are not in school, 29 percent of whom have never received formal education of any kind.⁵¹ There is a need both to expand the base of those who attend school and to focus more on vocational training to assist youth seeking white-collar opportunities.

44 Interview with UNDP representative, New York, May 2017.

45 US Agency for International Development, “Gambia Power Africa Fact Sheet,” August 9, 2016, available at www.usaid.gov/powerafrica/gambia.

46 Bill McKibben, “The Race to Solar-Power Africa,” *New Yorker*, June 26, 2017, available at www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/26/the-race-to-solar-power-africa.

47 Government of the Gambia, National Development Plan (Draft), 2017.

48 During field work in June 2017 in the Gambia, the authors undertook a trip across the river. Information provided was gathered during this trip as well as from interviews with travelers on board the boat.

49 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (October 21, 2015), UN Doc. A/RES/70/1.

50 More than half of Gambians were under the age of 18 in 2012. UNICEF, “At a Glance: Gambia,” 2013, available at www.unicef.org/infobycountry/gambia_statistics.html.

51 Government of the Gambia, National Development Plan (Draft), 2017.

Supporting entrepreneurs could also foster economic growth and employment. For example, the UN Conference on Trade's Empretec program, which works to help current and hopeful entrepreneurs build skills to support them in developing "innovative and internationally competitive small and medium-size enterprises."⁵² EMPRETEC offers seven programs that focus on entrepreneurship-training workshops, including specific programs for youth and women.⁵³ They are based on two central methodologies that work to shift the behavior of participants: the "Entrepreneurship Training Workshops and a comprehensive Business Development Support and Advisory Service."⁵⁴ With the support of UNDP, the initiative was set up in 2014 and has worked with 2,500 entrepreneurs across six regions in the country so far. Further investment in these programs could not only help expand their reach but also assist in developing and strengthening the skills youth need to increase their economic opportunities.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY: SDG 5

Goal 5 of the SDGs promotes gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Because of the interconnectedness of the SDGs, addressing Goal 5 can also address other goals, including by reducing poverty (SDG 1) and increasing the quality of public health (SDG 3). The Gambia ranked 173 out of 188 on UNDP's 2016 Gender Inequality Index, with women still struggling to access economic resources, healthcare, and education.⁵⁵ Women and girls continue to be disadvantaged due to patriarchal norms and practices, including in customary law, which does not allow women to inherit land and which does not give women equal status in judicial processes. In addition, women cannot control or own land

despite their predominant role in farming and their role in ensuring food security, and women disproportionately face financial access barriers that prevent them from participating in the economy and improving their lives, including access to credit and bank accounts.⁵⁶ Additionally, many women have poor access to social services, healthcare, and education, and work in low-wage jobs. Gender-based violence is frequent in the Gambia, with 20 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 having experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.⁵⁷

Despite being illegal, underage marriage is still prevalent, with 30 percent of women between the ages of 20 and 24 having married before the age of 18. This forces many girls to leave school prematurely.⁵⁸ Seventy-five percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone female genital mutilation,⁵⁹ and the maternal mortality rate in 2015 was 706 deaths per 100,000 live births. While this figure has decreased over the past twenty-five years, it remains high in comparison to global averages.⁶⁰

The Jammeh regime demonstrated a commitment to empowering women and reducing gender inequality, including by establishing the National Women's Council within the Department of State for Women's Affairs, which acts as a forum for women to access legal support.⁶¹ The ensuing adoption of the Women's Act (2010), the Sexual Offences Act (2013), and the Women's Amendment Act (2015) banning female genital mutilation also signified progress in advancing the rights of women.⁶² In addition, in 2012 the Gambia adopted a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, recognizing the impact that conflicts in neighboring countries have on Gambian women.⁶³ Enforcement, however, has been a

52 See www.empretecgambia.gm/about-us-basic.

53 See www.empretecgambia.gm/trainings.

54 Ibid.

55 UNDP, *Human Development Report 2016*; Interview with chairperson of TANGO, the Gambia, May 2017.

56 UN Development Programme (UNDP), *The Gambia Sustainable Development Goals Roadmap: United Nations MAPS Mission to the Gambia Report*, 2017.

57 Ibid.

58 United Nations and Government of the Gambia, *The Gambia United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017–2021*, 2017; Interview with the chairperson of the Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO), the Gambia, May 2017.

59 UNDP, *The Gambia Sustainable Development Goals Roadmap: United Nations MAPS Mission to the Gambia Report*, 2017.

60 WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group, and United Nations Population Division Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group, *Maternal Mortality in the Gambia 1990 – 2015*, available at http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/gmb.pdf.

61 Access Gambia, "Department of State for Women's Affairs," available at www.accessgambia.com/information/womens-affairs-department.html.

62 Bruce Asemota, "Gambia: Women's Act 2010 Amendment a Step in the Right Direction," *The Point*, March 3, 2017, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201703030793.html>.

63 The Government of the Gambia, *The Gambia National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*, 2012.

challenge. This is particularly the case in the provinces, where female genital mutilation is deeply entrenched in the culture. There is also concern that many in the country associate strict enforcement of these laws with the former regime and that the change of government will result in greater disregard for these protections.⁶⁴

Women in the Gambia also face financial exclusion, mainly due to limited access to land and credit. Social and cultural norms make it difficult for women to acquire vital information on available financial services, while the lower literacy rate among women (35.5 percent compared to 45.7 percent for men) means more women have difficulty processing and comprehending information they do have access to.⁶⁵ Simply being able to open a bank account and access credit would help expand the economic opportunities available to women in the Gambia.

Gender inequality is also sustained by the large amount of time women spend doing unpaid care work, which entrenches women's poverty in the Gambia.⁶⁶ Worldwide, it is estimated that if unpaid care work were assigned a monetary value, it would constitute between 10 and 39 percent of global GDP.⁶⁷ This is an area that has been largely overlooked or taken for granted by policymakers. Efforts to provide childcare could give women freedom to pursue other economic opportunities. One example is an initiative of Gaye Njorro Hair Plus, a vocational training center set up by a graduate of UNCTAD's Empretec entrepreneurship program, which provides childcare in its facilities so that mothers with children can attend training sessions.

Despite the difficult and repressive operating environment for civil society organizations championing women's rights in the Gambia under the Jammeh regime,⁶⁸ some organizations have

been successful. The National Women Farmers Association (NAFWA), for example, is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that promotes commercially viable agriculture and food security among female farmers in order to move them away from subsistence farming and toward economic self-sufficiency. NAFWA also builds women's capacity to open and manage small businesses and advocates for more land ownership rights for women.⁶⁹

The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), an umbrella organization of NGOs operating in the Gambia, takes a slightly different approach.⁷⁰ It works to educate men in the Gambia on how women can contribute to society and how they can be supported in this effort. It is also teaching fathers the importance of education for girls, especially in rural regions.⁷¹

INCREASING RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE: SDG 13

SDG 13 promotes action to curb climate change and its impacts. Due to its geographic location, the Gambia is one of the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly declining rainfall, increasing temperatures, and rising sea levels. Considering its reliance on land for agricultural and subsistence activities, as well as on beaches to attract tourism, the effects of climate change will have a significant and direct impact on livelihoods in the Gambia. Coastal erosion threatens the Gambia's pristine beaches—the country's main tourist attraction. Significant property damage is reported each year due to windstorms, floods, and loss of crop yield. In 2010 alone, urban floods affected more than 35,000 people, damaged 2,371 houses, and destroyed food and cash crops. Extreme climate events also damage roads, bridges, power lines, and telecommunications infrastructure in both urban and rural areas.⁷²

64 Interview with representative of UN Population Fund (UNFPA), Greater Banjul, the Gambia, June 2017.

65 Government of the Gambia, *National Development Plan (Draft)*, 2017; John Isaac, "Expanding Women's Access to Financial Services," World Bank, February 26, 2014, available at www.worldbank.org/en/results/2013/04/01/banking-on-women-extending-womens-access-to-financial-services.

66 Interview with UN Population Fund, the Gambia, June 2017.

67 UN Research Institute for Social Development, "Why Care Matters for Social Development," February 2010, available at [www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(LookupAllDocumentsByUNID\)/25697FE238192066C12576D4004CFE50?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(LookupAllDocumentsByUNID)/25697FE238192066C12576D4004CFE50?OpenDocument).

68 In 2016 Freedom House rated the Gambia as "not free," with a rating of 6.5 out of 7 (with 7 being the least free), highlighting the repressive political environment, lack of civil and political freedoms, and constant threat of reprisals and detention against NGOs. Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2016: The Gambia," 2016, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/gambia>.

69 See <http://nawfa.gm/about.html>.

70 TANGO was founded by a group of NGOs to minimize conflict and competition between NGOs and encourage partnerships.

71 Interview with Fatai Saine Gaye, owner of Gaye Njorro Hair Plus, Greater Banjul, the Gambia, June 2017.

72 Malanding S. Jaiteh and Baboucarr Sarr, "Climate Change and Development in the Gambia: Challenges to Ecosystem Goods and Services," 2011, available at www.columbia.edu/~msj42/pdfs/ClimateChangeDevelopmentGambia_small.pdf.

To build resilience to climate change, under Jammeh's regime the Gambia engaged with UNDP's Global Environment Finance Unit (UNDP-GEF) and the Green Climate Fund,⁷³ both of which aim to foster development in countries while maximizing their environmental assets and decreasing the impact of climate change.⁷⁴ The Gambia secured funding from both the UNDP-GEF and the Green Climate Fund to support sustainable development initiatives.⁷⁵ More recently, the new government has been proactive in responding to the challenges that climate change presents. In 2017 it launched new UNDP-GEF-funded programs to adapt agriculture to climate change, building on a UNDP-GEF-funded project launched in 2016 to protect coastal lands.⁷⁶

Despite these efforts, further action is needed. The new government must be more proactive in developing "green" business policies, particularly to protect the Gambia River from pollution as industrial activity is ramped up. Moreover, the Gambia must reduce its heavy reliance on rainfall for agricultural purposes, as the rainy season has been arriving later each year. One option would be to develop an irrigation system that uses fresh water from the Gambia River.⁷⁷

BUILDING A PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY: SDG 16

Goal 16 highlights the peace and development nexus: "Without peace, stability, human rights and effective governance, based on the rule of law, we cannot hope for sustainable development." This specific SDG aims to "significantly reduce all forms of violence, and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity."⁷⁸ Pursuant to this goal, President Barrow's administration committed to enhancing and improving "human rights, access to justice and good governance for all."⁷⁹ There are three

elements to the government's plan: undertaking a constitutional review, improving rule of law, and instituting a transitional justice process. After decades of bad governance, the government is committed to regaining the trust of the population, building strong institutions, and restoring its reputation as a beacon of democracy on the continent.⁸⁰

While a significant proportion of the funding pledged by international donors is being allocated to security sector reform, transitional justice, and institution building, comparatively little has been directed toward sustainable development. While sustainable development cannot happen without peace and stability, it also must not be assumed that sustainable development will automatically follow from peace without deliberate planning.

Providing Access to Justice

The new government has initiated a process to review and update the 1997 constitution to ensure it meets the needs of the Gambian people. This will be challenging due to the manipulation of the country's institutions by the former regime over the past two decades to maintain and centralize power around one man. It is important that this process is comprehensive and consultative to ensure the constitution is people-centric rather than driven by political expediency.⁸¹

In order to strengthen the rule of law in the country, the government is planning to reform the legal sector and solidify proposals for the establishment of a human rights commission. This will include a comprehensive review of existing criminal justice legislation to reform laws restricting political and civic freedoms, especially relating to freedom of expression. The government will work to establish more courthouses and ensure that judges and magistrates can operate on a full-

73 UNDP started the Global Environment Finance Unit to help countries eradicate poverty and significantly reduce inequalities and exclusion by catalyzing environmental finance for sustainable development. The Green Climate Fund operates within the framework of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to help developing countries counter and adapt to climate change.

74 Interview with UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the Gambia, June 2017.

75 UNDP, "Global Environmental Finance," available at www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/global-environment-finance.html.

76 See UNDP-GEF, "Enhancing Resilience of Vulnerable Coastal Areas and Communities to Climate Change in the Republic of Gambia," available at www.thegef.org/project/enhancing-resilience-vulnerable-coastal-areas-and-communities-climate-change-republic-gambia; and "Strengthening Climate Services and Early Warning Systems in the Gambia for Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change," available at www.thegef.org/project/strengthening-climate-services-and-early-warning-systems-gambia-climate-resilient.

77 Interview with UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the Gambia, June 2017.

78 UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (October 21, 2015), UN Doc. A/RES/70/1.

79 United Nations and Government of the Gambia, *The Gambia United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017–2021*, p. 106.

80 Ibid.

81 Interview with solicitor general of the Gambia, the Gambia, June 2017.

time basis in rural areas where justice is difficult to access. These efforts to expand the judicial infrastructure can help make people more aware of their rights.⁸²

In addition, the government will work to strengthen the office of the ombudsman. The role of the ombudsman during the transitional period in the Gambia is to address complaints of injustices and human rights violations committed by the public sector, including maladministration, mismanagement, or discrimination. In addition, the ombudsman looks into issues around prison standards and works to spread awareness of human rights and responsibilities to uphold them. Strengthening the office of the ombudsman provides a good opportunity to unite the country and ensure rights are upheld during a time of political consolidation, especially as the ombudsman is seen as accessible to the public and nonpolitical.⁸³

The government has also committed to the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission to address the gross human rights violations of the past. This mechanism aims to hold abusers accountable for their actions, provide closure for those affected by human rights violations, help the government establish and document an accurate historical record of events, and pay reparations to victims.⁸⁴ Aiming to assist in the development of this mechanism, in May 2017 the Ministry of Justice held a three-day national stakeholders conference on justice and human rights in collaboration with UNDP, the Institute of Human Rights Development in Africa, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and UNICEF. The conference sought to create a forum for consultation and dialogue as a prelude to fundamental constitutional and institutional reforms that will strengthen the rule of law and the protection of human rights in the Gambia. It identified challenges and gaps in the justice system and allowed for discussions concerning the design of a transitional justice strategy and the establish-

ment of applicable transitional justice mechanisms for the Gambia moving forward.⁸⁵

Many interviewees, however, highlighted that there is anxiety around whether transitional justice should be the priority for the Gambia and how it should tie in to other aspects of development. Many question why the central focus has been transitional justice when there are more immediate problems that could be addressed, such as lack of access to electricity and a need for economic growth. In order to create positive peace, the government must therefore address transitional justice side by side with sustainable development to meet the expectations of the population and address issues of the past.⁸⁶

Reforming the Security Sector

At present, there is also a need to address the personal security of Gambians during the political transition. Under the Jammeh regime, the Gambia was considered one of the safest countries on the continent. However, due to a perceived lack of law enforcement, there is less fear of repercussions for committing crimes, and security concerns are rising as a result. Reports of rape, house break-ins, and pretty crime have increased, leaving people concerned that the new government is not prioritizing the safety of ordinary people.⁸⁷

In order to strengthen the population's trust in the security forces, the government has undertaken security sector reform. Central to this process is the formulation and adoption of a comprehensive national security policy, along with the necessary legislation. The policy would seek to identify threats to national security, clarify the functions of the country's key security institutions, and structure them in line with the provisions of the policy.⁸⁸ There are particularly security threats in areas of the country previously aligned with Jammeh. In early June 2017 there were clashes in the village of Kanilai, a largely pro-Jammeh area located near Senegal's Casamance region, which is home to a violent separatist movement. There is a

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ UNDP, *The Gambia United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017–2021*, available at www.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/operations/gambia/document/gambia-united-nations-development-assistance-framework-undaf-2017-2021.

⁸⁵ Government of the Gambia, report of the national stakeholder conference, May 2017.

⁸⁶ Interview with UN country team in the Gambia, the Gambia, May 2017.

⁸⁷ Interview with WANEP representative, the Gambia, June 2017.

⁸⁸ Interview with the UN country team in the Gambia, the Gambia, May 2017.

concern that, if these two areas align, it could increase insecurity in the country. The government must engage with those in the political opposition, including those aligned to Jammeh, to encourage inclusivity and reduce tensions.

Connected to this is a reform of the prison system to improve its facilities, security, and logistics to ensure international standards are met. Issues with prisons include maltreatment of female and young prisoners, the use of harsh interrogation techniques, overcrowding, poor infrastructure, and rampant corruption. Reforming this system requires training prison officials to ensure they see their role as rehabilitators rather than punishers.⁸⁹

Promoting the Role of Civil Society and the Media

Goal 16 calls for building institutions that are not only inclusive and effective but also accountable, and a vibrant civil society is integral to ensuring accountability. Despite autocratic rule over the past two decades, the Gambia has an active civil society committed to promoting democracy in the country.

The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO), mentioned above, is an umbrella organization founded in 1983 with a membership of over eighty national and international civil society organizations working with communities around the country. TANGO's members focus on areas including health, education, women's empowerment, agriculture, access to credit, and small enterprise development projects. Since the transition, TANGO's members have started to engage in peacebuilding activities and the promotion of human rights and good governance, previously inaccessible topics. The organization has taken seriously its responsibilities to educate people on understanding and exercising their new freedoms and rights as well as on how to hold the government accountable and ensure it does not abuse power.⁹⁰

In addition to civil society, the media is also an active player in the political sphere in terms of

exerting checks and balances on the government and educating the population about human rights. This media freedom is a new phenomenon in the Gambia. Previously, any politically active voice was silenced. The radio station Teranga FM, for example, was shut down four times during Jammeh's rule. As a result, most radio stations did not report news or political affairs but focused on social, cultural, and sporting events.

During the political impasse and parliamentary elections, however, this changed. The media played a pivotal role in providing information on developments and for the first time hosted political debates on the radio, enabling a broad base of the public to become politically engaged. There is now overall recognition that the media plays an important role in bridging the gap between the government and the people. This also means that radio translators need to be trained to ensure the message of the government is communicated broadly and accurately.⁹¹

The Gambia Press Union has initiated projects to ensure equal access to the news and to increase public participation in rebuilding the country, regardless of people's education level. It also plans to build journalistic capacity to ensure responsible reporting in the Gambia. The Gambia Press Union is focusing on training journalists on "how to cover the issue of transitional justice and human rights, and how to ensure that the messages conveyed will bring about national reconciliation."⁹² To achieve this, the union is working with the Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure to remove certain laws that restrict democratic participation and undermine human rights, a legacy left behind by Jammeh.⁹³

One recent setback to media freedom, however, is the closure of one of the Gambia's daily newspapers, the *Daily Observer*, for failure to pay taxes. This has raised concern in some quarters that the paper is perceived as a Jammeh-owned entity. The government has also signaled it might seize the paper as an asset of Jammeh in line with recent court rulings on seizure of assets of the former

89 Bruce Asemota, "Barrow Urged to Build New Prisons" *The Point*, May 30, 2017, available at <http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/barrow-urged-to-build-new-prisons>.

90 Interview with president of TANGO, the Gambia, June 2017.

91 Interview with president of the Gambia Press Union, the Gambia, May 2017.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

president.⁹⁴ This move could indicate a reversal of media freedom, especially for media outlets associated with the former regime.

Youth also emerged as a political force in the movement challenging Jammeh's authority and were largely responsible for the #GambiaHasDecided movement by popularizing it via social media platforms. This movement was created to ensure the people's voice was heard through the election results and played a crucial role in educating Gambians on their rights as voters and in opening space for political debate, especially during the political impasse.⁹⁵

Since the transfer of power to the new administration, youth have continued holding the government accountable via the National Youth Council. The National Youth Council was established in 2000 and has played a central role in empowering Gambian youth during the transition. Several interviewees from civil society and the private sector stressed that there has been little communication from the new government on what is being done and what plans it has for the country. There have only been isolated incidents of protests and demonstrations, but many interviewees warned that these illustrate brewing tensions. The National Youth Council has managed to diffuse a number of protests planned by youth, but the fear is that, if youth are not engaged in the short term, their "energy [to bring about change] can easily slip to dissent."⁹⁶ There is a sense that they feel responsible for putting this new government in power, so they are anxious to see results, including more employment opportunities, better quality of life, and more stable electricity.⁹⁷

Conclusions and Recommendations

Almost a year after Gambians went to the polls to usher in their first democratically elected president, the political scene remains volatile as the new government tries to find its footing. Seven opposition parties came together in 2016 to remove one

man from power. The current president, Adama Barrow, was considered to be a uniting leader. Now, however, the unity that removed Jammeh appears to have eroded.⁹⁸ Many of the parties in parliament are focusing their attention on the next election rather than keeping watch during the transitional period. It is vital that this government recognizes that it is a transitional government and not a permanent fixture and therefore focuses on stabilizing the country rather than seeking power and privilege.

Nonetheless, significant progress has been made, particularly relating to media freedom. A fully liberalized broadcasting sector now exists, and the government is encouraging and supporting the establishment of private television stations. The government has made progress in its National Development Plan, though it is yet to be operationalized. This being said, concerns have been raised that there is too much focus on transitional justice, security sector reform, and constitutional review, while aspects of development that impact people's daily lives are being neglected.

The country is at a tipping point; public expectations remain high and the government is yet to communicate effectively with the citizenry to allay fears of regression to authoritarian rule. While there are tradeoffs that have to be made where resources are limited, development planning should remain an integral part of discussions around governance, transitional justice, and security. This means reducing poverty, increasing economic opportunities for all, and including, listening to, and empowering youth. At the same time, the government must strive to strengthen peace, governance, political participation, rule of law, and security, and seek to deliver justice to victims of violence and conflict through the implementation of an effective transitional justice process.

The following recommendations emerged from extensive interviews with senior government and UN officials, private sector leaders, and local and international civil society actors.

94 Abdoulie Nyockeh, "Gambia: Daily Observer Closed," *The Point*, June, 15 2017, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201706151042.html>.

95 See www.facebook.com/GambiaHasDecidedPage/.

96 Interview with chairman of the National Youth Council, the Gambia, June 2017.

97 Ibid.

98 Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2017: The Gambia," 2017, available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/gambia>.

Recommendations for the Gambian government:

- **Develop a communication strategy for the 2030 Agenda:** The government should develop a communication strategy to engage with the public, especially youth and those outside the greater Banjul area, to manage expectations and challenge the perception that it is ignoring the needs and demands of the population. This could be achieved by regularly engaging with the National Youth Council, TANGO, and other civil society organizations throughout the country to ensure their voices are heard. To regularize engagement, the government should commit to holding monthly town hall meetings throughout the country to allow representatives from communities to share grievances and priorities.
- **Support the development of programs that encourage inclusive growth and increase economic opportunity:** The government should work with Empretec and the Chamber of Commerce to partner with organizations that teach entrepreneurial skills and other useful skills for job seekers. To help youth and women access capital for business development, the government should work to attract greater foreign investment in initiatives such as microloan programs.
- **Explore public-private partnerships to improve infrastructure:** The government should publicly commit to working with the private sector, particularly to improve infrastructure and public transportation. Improved infrastructure will assist not only in exporting and importing goods more effectively but also in connecting the regions north of the river with the greater Banjul area. Further, the government should fund small energy providers to scale up their production to meet electricity demands and move away from reliance on diesel. The government should focus on developing the country's agricultural sector, as well as more light-manufacturing industries to maximize processing of raw materials. These efforts would require external support.
- **Identify immediate priorities in the National Development Plan:** The NDP comprehensively analyzes the challenges the Gambia faces and offers ideas for how to address them. However, the government should identify the immediate

priorities for the country and present these in a cohesive manner to secure the necessary funding at the donors conference for the Gambia in early 2018.

Recommendations for regional and international actors:

- **Expand UN support to locally owned initiatives:** UN headquarters, including the Peacebuilding Support Office and UNDP, should further develop and support projects that build on sources of resilience in the country. The Gambia's vast civil society network is working on many national issues and could be supported in terms of both financing and capacity building. In addition, the UN country team is small and needs greater capacity to effectively work with the government on peace and development issues. Increased staff to support human rights, transitional justice, security sector reform, and economic development would assist the country in meeting its national development priorities.
- **Anchor international support in regional responses:** The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) should continue to engage in the Gambia. ECOWAS and the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWAS) played a central role in encouraging Jammeh to leave power and should continue to invest in the Gambia to ensure stability. Stability can be achieved by building the capacity of government officials, including facilitating sharing of lessons and exchanges with other countries in the region to learn from their experiences. UNOWAS should also continue regularly visiting the Gambia to support the government, and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mohamed Ibn Chambas should continue meeting regularly with President Barrow. ECOWAS should continue to support security sector reform and ensure the ECOWAS Mission in the Gambia (ECOMIG) provides interim security measures until the national army is reformed.
- **Coordinate international support through the Peacebuilding Commission:** The Peacebuilding Commission should work to promote an integrated, strategic, and coherent approach to peacebuilding in the Gambia, noting that security, development, and human rights are

closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. The commission can play a bridging role among relevant UN entities by sharing advice on peacebuilding needs and priorities, in line with the respective competencies and responsibilities of these bodies. The Peacebuilding Fund should continue to work with the government of the Gambia in deploying funds to the country, in collaboration with the UN country team. As part of a longer-term strategy, the Peacebuilding Commission should accept the government's request for eligibility.

- **Support reporting on progress in achieving the SDGs:** UNDP, specifically the Mainstreaming, Acceleration, and Policy Support (MAPS) department within the Bureau of Policy and Programme Support, should work with the government to develop a 2030 Agenda implementation report. This plan could build off the MAPS mission to the Gambia in August 2017 and the SDG roadmap prepared for the Gambia, and resources could be leveraged to improve tracking of progress and implementation.

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