

The Gambia's democratic transition has been progressing since 2017, though it still requires consolidation. The process includes a broad range of political reforms.

The constitutional reform is an area that, after a promising start, saw a setback with the draft Constitution not securing the required majority in the Parliament in September 2020. An impasse followed and despite engagement of international mediators, the process has not resumed so far. Following the presidential elections in December 2021 and parliamentary elections in April 2022, the president and his government pledged to revive the constitutional reform. The commitments to these effects are also included in the White Paper. This will, however, remain a difficult task since a large majority for a new constitution needs to be found in the National Assembly, followed by a high voter turnout and positive voting in a referendum for it to be adopted.

The transitional justice process had made good progress, and is currently at an important juncture. The Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) was established in 2017 and has since achieved international recognition for its achievements, especially for the level of confidence that they could build with perpetrators – many of whom came forward voluntarily to confess atrocities – and for the level of public interest generated by the live public hearings and outreach activities. The TRRC published its final report in November, 2021, containing recommendations for follow-up in terms of criminal investigations, prosecution, reforms, reparations and memorialisation. In line with the previously set agenda, in May 2022, the government published its White Paper where it committed to implement almost all recommendations of the TRRC report.

The Government is currently in the process of preparing a detailed implementation plan for the White Paper. It is expected that the Government will seek donor support for the implementation process.

The WP contains several important commitments related to prevention of gender-based violence and support for its victims. The importance of the gender dimension is highlighted by a separate chapter of the White Paper focusing on Sexual and Gender Based Violence mirroring a separate volume of the TRRC report.

The new NDP also has a sufficiently developed discussion on several policy aspects from a gender perspective. The government explicitly acknowledged the need for full and equal participation and leadership of women in all areas of sustainable development. It also acknowledges the prevailing deep-rooted gender inequalities with women suffering from more difficult access to decent work, facing occupational segregation and gender wage gaps. A particularly strong underrepresentation of women is visible in political and economic decision-making processes. The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments is 9%¹⁰.

The Gambia is explicitly seeking to progressively limit reliance on donor funding and strengthen its ability to collect taxes. Mobilisation of more domestic revenue notably requires reforms of tax policy and strengthening the Gambian Revenue Authority. Ensuring adequate fiscal space also requires improved public financial management, prudent planning of expenditure and keeping debt sustainability risks in check. The adverse global economic environment makes progress towards these objectives more difficult. In the near term, donor financing remains key for funding major policy areas.

There are a number of key sector national public policy documents which provide basis for SRBC4 support, e.g. The Gambia National Social Protection Policy 2015-2025, The White Paper implementation plan with corresponding budget, The Gambia National Employment Policy and Action Plan 2022-2026, The National Migration Policy (NMP) 2020-2030, and a Labour Migration Strategy and action Plan. The current Action will contribute to stimulating the policy dialogue around these, especially under a Team Europe approach (Member States present in The Gambia will be invited to policy dialogue sessions).

In terms of capacities, the public administration is affected by weaknesses in physical facilities and human resources. In mid-2022, an increase in civil service wages took place, yet its impact on incentives will be mitigated as high inflation significantly reduces its real impact. Human capacities are heterogeneous and logistic capacities are overall weak. The institutional framework to ensure the effective coordination of implementation strategies and policies is still in need of improvement. The gaps arising from the lack of a functional institutional framework

¹⁰ UNDP. HDI 2021