



# Integrated Country Strategy

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## THE GAMBIA

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## 1. Chief of Mission Priorities

On December 4, 2021, more than 89% of registered Gambian voters cast their votes in the country's first free and fair presidential election in a generation. The previous week, the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) submitted its final report leading to widespread calls for full implementation, including prosecution of those who committed crimes in the Jammeh era. These developments underscored progress in The Gambia's democratic, rule of law-based development and a firm rejection of the country's authoritarian legacy. The government faces the challenge of solidifying and codifying advances in human rights and economic freedom made in the past five years. As critical legislation stalls, corruption worsens, and COVID-19 undermines economic growth, the United States has a unique role to play in supporting the Gambian people as they continue their democratic transition.

U.S. Embassy Banjul's mission goals and objectives are to: 1) strengthen democratic institutions, support good governance, and advance human rights; 2) promote inclusive, country-led development; and 3) mitigate the impact of chronic staffing disruptions and seek innovative solutions to support the Mission's increased diplomatic engagement. The Embassy's priorities are consistent with the Government of The Gambia's priorities as outlined in The Gambia's National Development Plan (2018-2021) and higher-level U.S. strategies.

U.S. Embassy leadership and personnel will implement this Integrated Country Strategy by prioritizing resource requests; coordinating and collaborating with non-resident interagency teammates, the host nation, diplomatic missions and international organizations, and civil society; pursuing these priorities in a methodical way that builds resiliency and diversity among the team; and reviewing the strategy annually to ensure continued alignment with U.S. government national security objectives and host nation efforts.

## 2. Mission Strategic Framework

**Mission Goal 1:** Strengthen democratic institutions, support good governance, advance human rights, and increase the level of international cooperation in efforts to counter transnational crime, corruption, and other cross-border criminal matters..

- **Objective 1.1:** With U.S. support, the Government of The Gambia improves its delivery of responsive governance through inclusion of civil society and other stakeholders in the decision-making process.
- **Objective 1.2:** With U.S. support, the Government of The Gambia holds human rights abusers accountable and strengthens its institutions to prevent a reoccurrence past abuse.
- **Objective 1.3:** In cooperation with the Government of The Gambia (GoTG), strengthen U.S. and The Gambia border security through prevention of visa fraud and facilitating legitimate travel on visas.

**Mission Goal 2:** Promote Inclusive Country-led Development.

- **Objective 2.1:** Gambian officials, supported by U.S. assistance, improve their capacity and resources to better manage the economy to support growth, increase the well-being of its citizens, and combat official corruption.
- **Objective 2.2:** Economic engagement by the private sector increases, improving economic conditions in the country.

**Management Objective 1:** Mitigate the impact of chronic staffing disruptions and seek innovative solutions to support the Mission's increased diplomatic engagement.

**Management Objective 2:** Mitigate the impact of Chancery spacing shortages and configuration issues.

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### 3. Mission Goals and Objectives

**Mission Goal 1** | Strengthen democratic institutions, support good governance, advance human rights, and increase the level of international cooperation in efforts to counter transnational crime, corruption, and other cross-border criminal matters.

**Description** | As the Barrow administration enters its second term, support for new political freedoms remains strong, but the government is struggling to meet citizens' expectations related to improved living conditions and greater economic opportunity. One of the major obstacles to progress is weak institutions that struggle with a lack of capacity and unclear mandates. The mission should position itself as the country's democratic partner, supporting the government's reform efforts and provide assistance as The Gambia strengthen its institutions, combats corruption, enables transparent and democratic governance, protects human rights, and carries out transitional justice processes to prevent future abuses and contribute to national healing. The legislature, civil society, and ordinary Gambians need to become more effective at influencing and monitoring government activity.

**Objective 1.1** | With U.S. support, the Government of The Gambia improves its delivery of responsive governance, including through inclusion of civil society and other stakeholders in the decision-making process.

- **Justification** | Five years after expelling former president Jammeh at the polls, Gambians remain eager for fundamental changes and more inclusive governance. To strengthen the connection between the government and the people, and to ensure representative policymaking, the National Assembly, working-level civil servants, and civil society organizations need to be strengthened and empowered to play a more effective role in providing input and oversight. The mission will support this goal by providing capacity-building resources and engaging with the Gambian public to encourage active citizen participation.

- **Linkages** | Objectives are informed by, and directly respond to the priorities outlined in the 2021 NSC Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, the State-USAID Joint Strategic Goal Framework, the 2020 U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, and USAID/WA's Regional Development Cooperation Strategy.
- **Risks** | Failure to improve governance could lead to strife if the Gambian populace loses patience with the pace of democratic reforms. Extremist groups could find a foothold in disgruntled or maligned communities. The government could revert to authoritarian rule.

**Objective 1.2** | With U.S. support, the Government of The Gambia holds human rights abusers accountable and strengthens its institutions to prevent a reoccurrence of the abuses of the past.

- **Justification** | For democracy to take root in The Gambia, and for the nation to continue its recovery from the wounds of two decades of brutal dictatorship, the GoTG needs to ensure that the human rights of all citizens are protected, implement transitional justice processes to promote healing and prevent future abuses, and engage with civil society in pursuing these goals. The mission will advance this objective by providing assistance to the Gambian judiciary and by training government officials responsible for prosecuting human rights crimes.
- **Linkages** | Objective 1.2 addresses the 2020 U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, advances Joint Strategic Plan Strategic Objectives, and is consistent with Regional Development Cooperation Strategy Goals to strengthen democracy.
- **Risks** | A failure to provide accountability for human rights violators could lead to extrajudicial responses to alleged injustices, undermine the durability of the government's humanitarian reforms, and incentivize reoccurrence of those abuses.

**Objective 1.3** | Strengthen U.S. and The Gambia border security, identify Gambian internal and external risks.

- **Justification** | Ongoing A and G visa fraud contribute to the reduction in legitimate visa issuance through the demand of personnel time and resources.
- **Linkages** | Responds to the priorities outlined in the 2021 NSC Interim National Security Strategic Guidance and the Bureau of African Affairs' Joint Regional Strategy.
- **Risks** | Only five years since the transfer of power from the longtime Gambian ruler Yahya Jammeh to the free and fair election of President Adama Barrow in 2016, the country continues to struggle with corruption and ethnic tribalism, which corrodes the public's confidence in their government, soils their trust in democracy, and undermines U.S. support of democratic institutions of governance.

**Mission Goal 2** | Promote Inclusive Country-led Development.

**Description** | Institutional capacity in The Gambia is low and the leadership faces enormous challenges in creating an enabling environment for investment, growth, and job creation. Improving this capacity will strengthen the government's ability to increase the wellbeing of all citizens, improve security and stability, and sustain support for democratic governance. Corruption, a drag on economic growth and a serious deterrent to foreign investment, must be combatted. Improving inclusive country-led development will also ensure that all conditions for foreign investment reflect fair practices in the best interests of The Gambian people.

**Objective 2.1** | Gambian officials, supported by U.S. assistance, improve their capacity and resources to better manage the economy to support growth, increase the well-being of its citizens, and combat official corruption.

- **Justification** | For democracy to be fully embraced by all Gambians, the living conditions of the people must improve; and for long-term security, employment opportunities must grow, especially for young Gambians. Improvements in the supply of



electricity and expansion in the transportation networks are needed to support investment, boost export opportunities, and improve prospects for growth and job creation. Improved employment opportunities will decrease the rate of migration and strengthen the Gambian workforce. Transparency and fairness in the Government of The Gambia's infrastructure development projects is critical to ensure that investment is in the best interest of the Gambian people. The mission will achieve this through renewed MCC and USAID engagement.

- **Linkages** | This goal directly contributes to AF/AFR Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) goal of Strengthen Democracy, Human Rights, and Good Governance and USAID's Regional Development Cooperation Strategy Regional Development Objective 1 to enhance democracy, peace and stability, Regional Development Objective 3 to catalyze governments, institutions, and partners to strengthen Health systems, and Regional Development Objective 4 to reduce vulnerability of targeted populations.
- **Risks** | Lack of energy infrastructure and services is a top challenge for the GoTG and failure to provide basic electricity services to its population will impact the government's ability to govern, businesses will lack sufficient electricity, and citizens will not have enough power for their homes. Through MCC, the U.S. government will improve the GoTG's ability to provide energy to its people.

**Objective 2.2** | Economic engagement in The Gambia by the American and Gambian private sectors increases, thus improving economic conditions and increasing employment.

- **Justification** | Providing employment opportunities, especially for young Gambians, is a top priority for The Gambia, to increase citizens' wellbeing and improve stability and support for democratic governance.
- **Linkages** | This goal directly contributes to AF/AFR Joint Regional Strategy (JRS) goal of Strengthen Democracy, Human Rights, and Good Governance and USAID's Regional Development Cooperation Strategy Regional Development Objective 1 to enhance democracy, peace and stability, Regional Development Objective 3 to

catalyze governments, institutions, and partners to strengthen Health systems, and Regional Development Objective 4 to reduce vulnerability of targeted populations.

- **Risks |** With more than 50 percent of the Gambia's population under the age of 18 and a growing population, the GoTG will need to provide basic economic opportunities across the entire spectrum to not encourage Gambians to travel abroad and be more reliant on irregular remittances and create social frustration at home.

## 4. Management Objectives

**Management Objective 1** | Mitigate the impact of chronic staffing disruptions and seek innovative solutions to support the Mission's increased diplomatic engagement.

- **Justification** | Mission Banjul has a unique role to play in supporting the Gambian people as they continue their democratic transition. Our mission continues to expand its engagement, most recently with a new USDH Millennium Challenge Corporation position, and with concrete plans to reestablish a modest USAID presence and creation of a local PCS position. All resident and non-resident agencies require substantial day-to-day support in managing the increased USG investment and official visits to The Gambia. Increased USDH and LE staffing, as well as facilities improvements, are needed to take full advantage of national security opportunities represented by this transition.

The current Management Officer is also the Financial Management Officer and the Human Resources Officer. As noted above, the staffing footprint has doubled in the past five years, along with the addition of three (3) new NSDD-38s and two (2) agencies, Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Department of Treasury. While HR and financial management are officially supported regionally, the day-to-day problems always fall to the Management Officer. As a result of these challenges, the triple-hatted Management Officer is left with little time to strengthen internal controls and ensure continuity of operations. Post continues to request an FMO/HRO to safeguard financial and human integrity. To address the chronically poor state of the Embassy's facilities as noted above we continue to require a Facilities Manager.

The Resiliency Advisory Board (RAB) was formed at Embassy Banjul in Fall 2020 in recognition that, despite having hardworking, dedicated staff, the limited number of staff covering multiple portfolios had a great toll on the team. Employees stretched thin with managing resources, projects, and taskers leads to burnout and curtailment, or malfeasance due to lack of sufficient oversight and management controls. The RAB is

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creating a resiliency plan encompassing both personal and institutional resilience. The plan integrates diversity and additional TDY and institutional support from Dakar and Washington when there are staffing shortages.

- **Linkages** | Mission Resource Request 2021-2022.
- **Risks** | The Gambia's medical infrastructure is inadequate; medical providers and services are unreliable or unavailable to manage trauma, provide emergency medical services and critical care comparable to the United States. Medical facilities in Banjul are aged, neglected, and in various stages of disrepair. Electricity and potable water are frequently interrupted, contributing to poor hygiene and increased risk of communicable disease. Poor medical infrastructure contributes to minimal bidders on post positions, especially those with families, leading to nearly constant position staffing gaps. Banjul's Health Unit is permanently staffed by one local hire registered nurse and a newly hired administrative assistant. In the event of an emergency, the Embassy cannot provide adequate medical care. To ensure the health and safety of our Mission personnel in an austere medical environment (regardless of global pandemics), we require a Foreign Service Health Practitioner (FSHP), and a locally hired medical doctor.

**Management Objective 2** | Mitigate the impact of Chancery spacing shortages and configuration issues.

- **Justification** | Embassy Banjul's small and derelict Chancery lacks both the proper security setback and sufficient space to accommodate our current workforce. The non-ADA compliant building has been structurally reconfigured numerous times to accommodate staff increases, and the building is now over capacity. The Office of Overseas Building Operations (OBO) has identified two tracks to solve the Embassy's systemic building issues—repair the current Chancery's spacing and configuration issues in the short-term and identify a suitable site for a New Embassy Compound (NEC) in the long-term. OBO's Real Estate division is negotiating a Memorandum of Agreement on procuring land by mid-2022 upon which to build a NEC. There are additional life and safety gaps in the IRM-managed Chancery mailroom and OpenNet server room.
- **Linkages** | Office of Inspector General inspection report 2018.
- **Risks** | Structural integrity and space capabilities are insufficient which limits OBO's ability to address the configuration concerns.