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PART IV:

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Chapter 9.
Sustaining Peace in the "New Gambia"

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Introduction

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.[2] 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.[3]

Yet despite the country's fragile socioeconomic and political climate, the Gambia peacefully resolved its political impasse and successfully transitioned to democracy in January 2017. The impasse began on December 1, 2016, when Gambians took to the polls and voted in current President Adama Barrow, thus removing then-President Yahya Jammeh. Jammeh, who had been in power since 1994, shocked the international community by conceding the election, committing to make way for Barrow.

A week later, however, Jammeh contested the results and declared a state of emergency. This exacerbated political tensions and heightened the risk of violent protests and the eruption of conflict.[4] In an effort to avert a crisis, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with the support of the United Nations and the African Union (AU), responded swiftly, launching a series of high-level mediation efforts and deploying ECOWAS troops to the border.[5] These efforts were successful, and in January 2017 President Barrow was sworn into office, paving the way for a peaceful political transition.

This transfer of power was heralded as a landmark win for democratic governance on a continent often characterized by authoritarian rule and life-long presidents. The "New Gambia," as it is now commonly referred to, is re-engaging with the international community, and transition and development initiatives are already underway.

The question remains, however, whether the Gambia will be able to sustain peace in the long term. In an effort to answer this question, this chapter examines the Gambia through the lens of "sustaining peace;" a concept formally introduced into UN vocabulary in April 2016 by dual resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. The resolutions define sustaining peace as "a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account."[6] The resolutions also specify that sustaining peace is "a shared task and responsibility that needs to be fulfilled by the Government and all other national stakeholders."[7] The concept should therefore be seen as flowing through all three pillars of the UN's work to promote an integrated approach to peace, development, and human rights, where peace is seen as both an enabler and an outcome.[8]

This chapter highlights three main areas that should be prioritized for the purpose of sustaining peace in the Gambia: women's empowerment, youth empowerment and entrepreneurship, and

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1 Lesley Connolly is a Senior Policy Analyst at IPI.

2 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 .

3 There was an 18 percent increase in the number of people classified as poor in the Gambia between 2010 and 2015. As rural poverty is rising, the wealth gap between rural and urban Gambians is widening. In Banjul, 10.8 percent of the population lives below the poverty line compared to 69.8 percent of those in rural Gambia. The country's literacy rate is 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. 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.

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

5 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/ .

6 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.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

transitional justice and good governance. It explains how investment in these areas has helped prevent the escalation of conflict and how it can contribute to the maintenance of long-term national peace and stability.[9]

Women's Empowerment

The connection between gender equality, stability, and peacefulness is supported by a wealth of evidence. Indeed, "gender equality is a stronger predictor of a state's peacefulness than its level of democracy, religion, or GDP. Where women are more empowered, the state is less likely to experience civil conflict or go to war with its neighbors."[10] Moreover, there is a positive correlation between economic growth and gender equality and evidence that increasing "women's participation and representation in leadership and decision-making positions leads to higher levels of peacefulness and better development outcomes for society."[11]

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.[12] 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.[13]

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.[14] Seventy-five percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone female genital mutilation,[15] 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.[16]

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.[17] 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.[18] 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 h on Gambian women.[19] Enforcement, however, has been a 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.[20]

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9   This chapter is based in part on an issue brief published by IPI: Lesley Connolly and Cheryl He, "Toward a New Gambia: Linking Peace and Development," International Peace Institute, January 2018, available at www.ipinst.org/2018/01/toward-a-new-gambia-linking-peace-and-development .

10 See Chapter 2 of this volume.

11 Ibid.

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

13 Ibid.

14 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.

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

16 World Health Organization, UNICEF, UN Population Fund, World Bank Group, and UN Population Division Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group, *Maternal Mortality in the Gambia 1990–2015*, available at www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/gmb.pdf .

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

18 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 .

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

20 Interview with representative of UN Population Fund, Greater Banjul, the Gambia, June 2017.

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.[21] Simply being able to open a bank account and access credit would help expand the economic opportunities available to women in the Gambia.

Despite the difficult and repressive operating environment for civil society organizations championing women's rights in the Gambia under the Jammeh regime,[22] some organizations have been successful. The National Women Farmers Association (NAFWA), for example, is a nongovernmental 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.[23]

The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO), an umbrella organization of NGOs operating in the Gambia, takes a slightly different approach.[24] 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.[25]

Taking into consideration the strong links between gender equality and sustaining peace, the government should prioritize and mobilize funding for initiatives targeted at increasing women's empowerment and improving gender equality. It will also have to mobilize the necessary resources.

Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship

The Institute for Economics and Peace has found a strong correlation between "positive peace" (a concept similar to sustaining peace) and the Youth Development Index.[26] While the relationship between youth and peace is not simple or linear, there is evidence that "peaceful and resilient societies can better promote and benefit from youth development and youth-led entrepreneurship."[27]

This is especially true in the Gambia, where youth make up 65 percent of the population.[28] Youth unemployment in the Gambia sits at 70 percent, while the ratio of youth unemployment to adult unemployment is 2.3.[29] A major contributor to youth unemployment is access to high-quality education and training systems and a lack of skills or mismatch between the skills possessed and those demanded in the labor market.

This has contributed to young people seeking alternative means of livelihood, including through irregular migration and employment in the informal sector. Gambians are one of the top nationalities who have gone the "back way" to Italy in 2017, which sees them crossing the Mediterranean in search of greater economic opportunity.[30] A 2015 survey of 16-to-30-year-olds found that "65 out of 100 respondents claimed to know at least two friends or relatives who had travelled the back way"[31] to Europe, and 56 percent claimed that unemployment is the major problem

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21 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 .

22 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 .

23 See http://nawfa.gm/about.html .

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

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

26 Institute for Economics and Peace, "Youth Development, Social Enterprise, and Sustaining Peace," background note, June 2017.

27 See Chapter 3 of this volume.

28 Youth is defined as people under the age of 35.

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

30 Louise Hunt, "Meet the Gambian Migrants under Pressure to Leave Europe," IRIN, July 20, 2017, available at www.irinnews.org/feature/2017/07/20/meet-gambian-migrants-under-pressure-leave-europe .

31 Ibid.

affecting young people and motivating them to risk migration via the back way.[32]

With the change in government in the Gambia came the expectation of a higher quality of life, with better employment opportunities, greater access to education, and improved delivery of social services. The Barrow government has realized this need and placed youth unemployment as a top priority, offering skills training and apprenticeship schemes through the National Youth Service Scheme. However, the survey mentioned above found that "many young people were unaware of these programmes or did not believe they were effective."[33] More is needed from the government to communicate opportunities and connect with youth to understand their expectations. The National Youth Council offers an opportunity to establish this link (see Box 1).

In addition to government initiatives, several private institutions have launched initiatives in an effort to meet the demand for improved access to and delivery of education and training. One example is 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."[34] EMPRETEC offers seven programs that focus on entrepreneurship-training workshops, including specific programs for youth and women.[35] 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."[36] 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.

Due to its high youth population, prioritization of initiatives aimed at empowering youth should be a central focus of the new government's work on sustaining peace within the country. Investing in entrepreneurship as a means of job creation is an investment in peace.

Transitional Justice and Good Governance

The sustaining peace resolutions emphasized the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict, strengthening the rule of law, and fostering national reconciliation. This includes ensuring "inclusive dialogue and mediation, access to justice and transitional justice, accountability, good governance, democracy, accountable institutions, gender equality and respect for, and protection of, human rights and fundamental freedoms."[37] Transitional

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Box 1. 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 defuse 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."[38] There is a sense that youth feel responsible for putting this new government in power so are anxious to see the results of this change, including more employment opportunities and better quality of life.

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32 Louise Hunt, "The Gambia Faces Battle to Deter Its Young People from Migrating Abroad," *The Guardian*, September 11, 2015, available at www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/sep/11/the-gambia-migration-livelihood-empowerment-agricultural-project-concern-universal .

33 Ibid.

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

35 See www.empretecgambia.gm/trainings .

36 Ibid.

37 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.

38 Interview with president of the National Youth Council in the Gambia, Banjul, The Gambia, June 2017.

justice refers to the ways in which countries that have emerged from periods of conflict and repression address mass human rights violations where traditional justice systems cannot provide the necessary response. Some of the aims of transitional justice are to establish or strengthen rule of law and accountable institutions that enable individuals to voice grievances and seek justice for past and present human rights abuses.[39] Strong national institutions "play an important role in promoting and monitoring the implementation of international human rights standards at the national level."[40]

In line with this approach, when President Barrow assumed office he committed to enhancing and improving "human rights, access to justice and good governance for all."[41] 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.[42]

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.[43]

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-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.[44]

Another key area of concern in regard to rule of law is 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 breakins, and pretty crime have increased, leaving people concerned that the new government is not prioritizing the safety of ordinary people.[45]

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, ultimately strengthening rule of law and accountability in the country.[46]

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.[47] Aiming to assist in the development of this mechanism, in May 2017 the Ministry of Justice held a three-day national

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39 International Centre for Transitional Justice, "What Is Transitional Justice," available at www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice .

40 See Chapter 4 of this volume.

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

42 Ibid.

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

44 Ibid.

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

46 Interview with UN country team, the Gambia, May 2017.

47 UNDP, *The Gambia United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017–2021*.

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 establishment of applicable transitional justice mechanisms for the Gambia moving forward.[48]

While the focus of the new government should not exclusively rest on transitional justice, initiatives that aim to re-establish the rule of law and deal with past violations are important for enabling national reconciliation and the unity needed for the country to move peacefully forward into a new era.

Conclusions

As the Gambia moves forward in its transitional period and solidifies its national development plans, the new government must address transitional justice while investing in economic growth, gender equality, and youth employment in order to maintain peace and stability throughout the country. Neglecting any of these elements risks disgruntling a population in search of a more prosperous future.[49]

Looking at a country through the lens of sustaining peace, it is peace rather than conflict that is the starting point. This requires identifying and focusing on what is working in a society, rather than on what is broken and needs to be fixed. A sustaining peace approach focuses not just on restoring stability after violence but also on investing in structures, attitudes, and institutions associated with peaceful societies. Further, the sustaining peace approach can be used to examine all countries—regardless of whether or not they have experienced conflict.[50] Using this approach can help keep attention on countries, like the Gambia, that are not experiencing violent conflict despite the existence of internal vulnerabilities and external pressures but are nonetheless in need of long-term investment to sustain peace.

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

49 Interview with UN country team, the Gambia, May 2017.

50 See Chapter 1 of this volume.