



The Gambia

September 2023



PBF Investments in



TOTAL APPROVED \$34 M

CURRENTLY ACTIVE: \$15 M

Focusing on

- Transitional justice
- National peace architecture
- Women and youth empowerment
- Security Sector Reform
- Land dispute resolution
- CSOs institutional empowerment
- Cross-border community resilience

Partners



PEACEBUILDING CHALLENGES

In 2016, the refusal of President Jammeh to accept defeat following the presidential election triggered a constitutional crisis and a military intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Negotiations resulted in Jammeh's peaceful departure and President Barrow's inauguration as The Gambia's third President in January 2017.

Since then, The Gambia has been undergoing a peaceful democratic transition. Moving quickly to show The Gambia's citizens the benefits of democratic and accountable governance, the new Government immediately sought the assistance of the United Nations and the international community for a reform agenda that included overhauling the country's institutions, laying a new foundation of respect for the rule of law, addressing past human rights' abuses, promoting national reconciliation and opening the public space.

PEACEBUILDING FUND IN ACTION

The PBF was an early responder to the transition priorities in The Gambia, with critical support in the areas of transitional justice – including the establishment of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), Security Sector Reform (SSR) and strengthened coordination in the President's Office. Women and youth empowerment has been – and remains – another key area of focus, especially in regarding political and civic participation, mental health support as well as hate speech prevention, with on-going projects in the framework of the post-TRRC phase.

Other programmatic priorities have included support to reintegration of returnees, community conflict prevention regarding access to land and natural resources management, as well as cross-border cooperation with Senegal in conflict-prone areas for increased community resilience.

The most recent PBF project approvals (Q4 2022/Q1 2023) include support to the institutional empowerment of women-led CSOs as well as the implementation of several forward-looking TRRC recommendations, such as the establishment of a Peace and Reconciliation Commission, hate speech prevention and social cohesion in conflict-prone rural areas.

■ PEACEBUILDING FUND IMPACT

PBF support has helped to catalyze critical peacebuilding processes in a very short period, helping to prevent the country from collapsing into violence during this fragile transition period. Due in part to PBF assistance, the Government of The Gambia has made commendable progress in sustaining peace, particularly in the areas of transitional justice, Security Sector Reform, judicial and civil service reform and inclusive economic development.

Most notably, the transitional justice processes and the TRRC, in particular, have generated considerable public interest and the participation of victims and their families, witnesses and perpetrators in public hearings, statement-taking, investigations and outreach activities. Over 35,000 Gambians have been directly engaged in community-led outreach missions on the transitional justice process, including among the diaspora. In May 2022, the Government released its White Paper accepting 263 of the TRRC's recommendations (out of 265). Further in May 2023, the Government developed a five-year plan with a budget of 150 million USD to implement the TRRC recommendations. The TRRC is, according to experts quoted in the New York Times, the "most accessible truth commission in history."

The PBF also facilitated the establishment and operationalization of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), paving the way for increased respect for and awareness of human rights in The Gambia. The NHRC is independently monitoring the government's implementation of the TRRC recommendations with support from the PBF. With regard to SSR, together with ECOWAS and the EU, PBF support contributed to the establishment of the Office of the National Security Advisor and the development of the National Security Policy and SSR Strategic Plan 2020-2024.

The Fund has also been supporting increased participation of women in decision-making positions, including on the political scene – as it is currently supporting the establishment of quota systems for women in politics. The PBF also enabled to enhance inter-party dialogue (notably through the Inter-Party Committee), leading to the signing of the peace pledge by all registered political parties ahead of the 2021 presidential elections. A series of dialogue mechanisms were also put in place to facilitate greater engagement between political leaders, decision-makers and citizens. This notably contributed to inform the design of more inclusive local councils strategic plans, building on people's demands.

In view of addressing hate speech and fake news, the PBF enabled the operationalization of the first-ever national fact-checking platform, FactCheck Gambia. Still today, the inter-generational editorial team produces about 10 fact checks per week in view of verifying claims of national importance. 10 media houses, including community media, continue to be regularly engaged in fact-checking of claims made by public officials, while youth leaders are implementing Media and Information Literacy interventions at the community level.

KEY FIGURES REGARDING THE TRRC

- 23 public hearing sessions held, where 392 witnesses testified (including 238 victims, and 100 women)
- Over 2,800 videos of live footage produced and accessible publicly
- 66 religious and traditional leaders (including 27 women) sensitized on their role in reconciliation initiatives and 119 youth leaders (54 women) engaged in Youth Leadership Fora
- Over 50,000 Gambians engaged in community outreach on transitional justice
- 90% of Gambians from a 1,200 sample felt that the TRRC performed very well or well (from a 2020 perception survey)

■ PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION ENGAGEMENT

Since its initial engagement in support of a democratic transition in The Gambia in 2017, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has mobilized international support for the country's peacebuilding priorities. In particular, the support has focused on reforms in the areas of transitional justice, security sector reform, constitutional review, human rights, and women and youth empowerment. Recently, the Commission has helped to sustain international attention on The Gambia's efforts to advance the transitional justice process, including on the implementation plan related to the TRRC recommendations.