

National Voluntary Review Report on the status of implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)

by

The Government of the Republic of The Gambia



April 2022

TABLE OF CONTENT

	Page
I. Acronyms	2 - 3
II. Introduction and Methodology	4 - 5
III. Policy and Enabling Environment	6 - 7
IV. Progress on GCM Objectives	7 – 39
Objective 1	9 - 10
Objective 2	11 - 12
Objective 3	12 - 14
Objective 4	14 - 15
Objective 5	15 - 16
Objective 6	16
Objective 7	16 - 17
Objective 8	17 - 18
Objective 9	18
Objective 10	18 - 19
Objective 11	19 – 20
Objective 12	21
Objective 13	21 - 22
Objective 14	23
Objective 15	23 - 24
Objective 16	24 - 25
Objective 17	25 - 26
Objective 18	26 - 27
Objective 19:	27 - 32
Objective 20:	32 - 37
Objective 21	37 - 38
Objective 22	38
Objective 23:	38 - 39
V. Means of Implementation	39 - 40
VI. Perspectives (Next Steps)	40 - 41
VII. Annex A	42

ACRONYMS

- African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
- African Diaspora Finance Corporation (ADFC)
- African Union (AU)
- Alternatives to Detention (ATDs)
- Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI)
- Automated Clearing House (ACH)
- Balance of Payment Manual (BPM)
- Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs)
- Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG)
- Central River Region (CRR)
- Child and Environment Development Association-Gambia (CEDAG)
- Child Friendly Space (CFS)
- Children and Youth in Mobility (CYM)
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Common Country Analysis (CCA)
- Common Operational Partnership (COP)
- Department of Information Services (DOIS)
- Department of Social Welfare (DSW)
- Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI)
- Diaspora Development Fund (DDF)
- Diaspora Investment Incentives Scheme (DIIS)
- Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)
- Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS)
- Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs)
- Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR)
- Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS)
- Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA)
- Gambia Immigration Department (GID)
- Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA)
- Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS)
- Gambia Commission for Refugees (GCR)
- Gambia Diaspora and Migration Directorate (GDMD)
- Gambia Diaspora Experts Initiative (GDEI)
- Gambia Immigration Department (GID)
- Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA)
- Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS)
- Gambia Press Union (GPU)
- Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI)
- Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI)
- German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)
- Government of The Gambia (GoTG)
- Green Recovery-focused National Development Plan (GRF-NDP)
- Health, Border and Mobility Management (HBMM)
- Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs)
- Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)
- Information Communication Technology (ITC)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- International Health Regulation (IHR)
- International Migration Review Forum (IMRF)
- International Trade Center (ITC)
- Lower River Region (LRR)
- Long-Term Development Vision (LTDV)
- Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
- Migrants as Messengers (MaM)
- Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
- Micro-Finance Institutions (MFI)

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad (MoFA)
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MOFEA)
- Ministry of Health (MoH)
- Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MOHERST)
- Ministry of Interior (MoI)
- Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS)
- Ministry of Information, and Communication Infrastructure (MoICI)
- Migration Information Centers (MICs)
- Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE),
- Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia project (MSDG)
- Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSME)
- Money Transfer Operations (MTOs)
- National Agency Against Trafficking In Persons (NAATIP)
- National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA)
- National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM)
- National Development Plan (NDP)
- National Employment Policy and Action Plan (NEAP)
- National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS)
- National Migration Policy (NMP)
- National Referral Mechanism (NRM)
- National Remittance Sector Network (NRSN)
- National Youth Council (NYC)
- National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS)
- Non-Food Items (NFIs)
- North Bank Region (NBR)
- Office of the President (OP)
- Office of Vice President (OVP)
- Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)
- Personnel Management Office (PMO)
- Platform for Remittances, Investments and Migrants' Entrepreneurship (PRIME Africa)
- Points of Entries (PoEs)
- Programme for Accelerated Community Development (PACD)
- President's International Award (PIA)
- Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)
- Rights-Based Approach (RBA)
- Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL)
- Regional Health Directorate (RHD)
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs),
- Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP)
- Stake in the National Forum (SNF)
- Stolen and Lost Travel Document (SLTD)
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
- Thematic Working Groups (TWGs)
- United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- Upper River Region (URR)
- United Nations Country Team (UNCT)
- United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF)
- UN Network on Migration (UNNM)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASSCAL)
- West Coast Region (WCR)
- World Health Organizations (WHO)
- World Food Program (WFP)
- Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)

I. Introduction and Methodology

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is an effort, led by UN Member States, to set out a range of principles, commitments and understanding among Member States regarding the governance of migration in all its dimensions. It elaborates a comprehensive international cooperation framework on migrants and human mobility, grounded in the existing normative framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). The Government of The Gambia (GoTG) was among 164 Member States that adopted the GCM at the United Nations General Assembly on 19th December 2018.

This report presents the Government of The Gambia's progress in the implementation of the GCM following The Gambia's decision to undertake the first national review in April 2021 as well as updating of the same; the reference point also being the adoption of Agenda 2030. The review process of the status of implementation of the GCM objectives is based on renewed interest by the GoTG, specifically the Office of Vice President (OVP) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad, which have assumed the leading role to coordinate the process of updating the national voluntary review report on the status of implementation of the GCM. This review builds on the deliberations during the GCM regional review process in 2021 and further serves as an input to the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) to be conducted in May 2022.

The report presents the analysis of the policies, reports, and inputs from the national stakeholders, primarily government entities, civil society representatives as well as members of the UN Network on Migration (UNNM) with technical support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as the lead of the UNNM, reflecting whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches indicated in the guiding principles of the GCM. A UN Network on Migration (UNNM) was established globally in May 2018 to ensure effective, coordinated UN system-wide support to the implementation of the GCM. In June 2019, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in The Gambia endorsed the transformation of the then-existing UN Migration Working Group into the UNNM in The Gambia to support the Government of The Gambia in the implementation of the GCM as well as effective migration management and protection of human rights of migrants in The Gambia.

The UNNM, led by IOM with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as co-leads, meets regularly to coordinate UN The Gambia's migration interventions aimed to foster the implementation of GCM objectives. The Network also provided support to the government to facilitate the updating exercise of the National Voluntary Review on GCM implementation as part of Government's preparation to participate at the IMRF. Accordingly, a UN-IMRF taskforce was established

consisting of seven UN Agencies – namely, (IOM, ITC, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNDP and WFP) to support the GoTG on this process.

Aligned with the vision and the overall goal of the National Development Plan of The Gambia (2018-2021, which has been extended until 2022) in restoring good governance, respect for human rights, and rule of law, the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM) was established on 6 November 2019 under the leadership of the Office of the Vice President (OVP). With the establishment of the NCM and technical support from IOM, the Government of The Gambia has put in place a coordination structure to ensure a whole-of government approach on migration governance. The NCM launch also included a GCM prioritization exercise where the Government selected fifteen (15) out of the twenty-three (23) objectives of the GCM as priority objectives to address in short- to mid-term.

Under the overall guidance of the OVP as the lead for the NCM, the first national voluntary review was led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad (MOFA), with technical assistance from IOM, The Gambia. The national review process to engage all stakeholders working on migration issues was launched on 26 November 2020. The following Government institutions who are actively taking part in the NCM provided valuable inputs that formed the basis for the first national review report which was finalized in April 2021: Office of the President (OP), Office of the Vice President (OVP), Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), Gambia Commission for Refugees (GCR), Gambia Immigration Department (GID), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Affairs and Gambians Abroad (MOFA), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Information, and Communication Infrastructure (MoICI), Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE), National Agency Against Trafficking In Persons (NAATIP) and National Youth Council (NYC).

By the time IMRF is convened in May 2022, another year would have passed since the submission of the initial national review report on GCM implementation in April 2021. Hence, the relevance of this update exercise by the GoTG, under the overall guidance of OVP and technical leadership of MoFA through the Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) of the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM). This updating exercise was launched on 15th February 2022 with a two-day consultation bringing together members of the NCM and leads of TWGs, representatives of CSOs as well as UNNM members to collate inputs on progresses made since the initial review.

II. Policy and Enabling Environment

Since the launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), The Gambia has embarked on effectively aligning the SDGs with its medium-term National Development Plan (NDP 2018-2021, which has now been extended until the end of 2022). Importantly, the Government has expressed its willingness and commitment to the mid-term and annual review and implementation of the NDP, coupled with ensuring proper assessment of the significant steps taken in the attainment of the SDGs. The NDP has been noted as the first among a series of plans that will help domesticate the implementation of the SDGs in The Gambia.

Critical both to the SDGs and NDP is the issue of migration. The Government of The Gambia is committed to ensuring that migrants enjoy their fundamental human, social and economic rights and leveraging diaspora remittances and investments thereby contributing to GCM's Objectives 19 (Create conditions for migrants and diaspora to fully contribute to sustainable development) and 20 (Promote faster, safer, and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants). Although the NDP (2018-2021) does not capture migration as a cross-cutting theme, it however highlights the need for enhancing the role of Gambian diaspora in national development. Moreover, consultations are ongoing within the structures of the government as well as the UN system to reflect migration more comprehensively in the next iteration of the National Development Plan (2023 – 2027)) and Long-term Development Vision (Vision 2050) of The Gambia as well the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) which is also designed to be in line with the upcoming NDP.

In December 2020, a milestone was registered through the official launch of the first stand-alone National Migration Policy (NMP) 2020-2030 in The Gambia. Cognizant that migration is a phenomenon that is ever present in the lives of many in The Gambia, the Government of The Gambia led by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and with technical support of IOM demonstrated its commitment to manage migration, address challenges of irregular migration and maximize the benefits of well-managed migration through the National Migration Policy (NMP). Fundamentally, the launch of the policy document reveals the government's commitment to abide by both national and international principles related to the plight of migrants¹.

The NMP is a comprehensive and forward-looking document that seeks to provide a national framework for progressive migration management system. It envisions to provide governance on specific and overall aspects of migration policies and framework as a means to manage migration in a way that is beneficial to national development; including but not limited to: promoting effective collating and analyzing of migration data to inform evidence-based policymaking, promoting legal migration pathways as a means to prevent irregular migration; strengthening border management and facilitating licit movement of people and goods; ensuring protection of

¹ The Gambia Voluntary National Review, a Report on the Progress of the Implementation of SDGs, June 2020

rights of Gambian and non-Gambian migrants in The Gambia; addressing internal migration, encouraging engagement of Gambian diasporas; developing inclusive mechanisms for return and reintegration and facilitating migration in the context of climate change adaptation.

The policy also promotes national-level coordination and calls for necessary revisions of migration-related legislations to comply with current global norms on migration management. It is also gender-responsive and stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming throughout the policy document. Specifically, the NMP calls for improved nationwide services for vulnerable female migrants and provides a mechanism for a gender analysis to improve the working conditions of female migrants.

Further, the establishment of the NCM has strengthened and supported the coordination, synergy and complementarity of various stakeholders in the migration landscape. In addition, the government has taken significant steps through the National Voluntary Review, including the formulation of an updated National Employment Policy and Action Plan (NEAP) 2020-2025, review of the Labour Act of 2007, National Investment Policy 2018-2022, amongst others. In addressing drivers of migration such as climate change, the Gambia Government has formulated the National Climate Change Policy (2016-2025) as part of its efforts to manage risks associated with climate change, with the overall goal of ensuring inclusion of climate change in national planning and budgeting, decision-making and programmes, amongst others. Equally, it also aims to ensure the pursuit of “climate risk management for pro-poor and inclusive growth, and that social development will be an integral part of adaptation and mitigation measures against climate change”². This shows an awareness of the climate dimensions within the national migration policy area; however, these concerns are far from being mainstreamed in national human mobility legislation, policies or strategies.

The Government of The Gambia is currently formulating a Green Recovery-focused National Development Plan (2023 - 2027) and a Long-Term Development Vision (Vision 2050) (GRF-NDP and LTDV). The GRF-NDP as a successor to previous NDP will serve as the catalyst through which the short- and medium-term needs of the country will be comprehensively addressed. The LTDV on the other hand, will chart the long-term trajectory of the country’s development and transformation.

III. Progress on GCM Objectives

The Gambia has made significant strides in improving migration governance in the country by recognizing the importance of having a good migration governance structure aimed at involving all relevant stakeholders in the migration landscape. The launch and establishment of the NCM has created a government led inter-agency coordination platform for all migration actors aimed

² The Gambia Voluntary National Review, a Report on the Progress of the Implementation of SDGs, June 2020

at timely addressing of migration issues, mainstreaming of migration in national development plans and ensuring policy coherence. Through the leadership of the Office of the Vice President (OVP), the NCM has helped create a holistic and whole-of-government approach to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders on migration; enhance understanding on migration trends and dynamics; facilitate informed decision making and policy coherence; track progress in the implementation of migration related programmes; contribute to regional discourse on migration; and facilitate the implementation of continental and regional policies and protocols on migration at the national level.³

The OVP also serves as the Secretariat of the NCM responsible for convening meetings, coordinating activities of the NCM and overseeing the activities of the eight (8) Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) on specific migration issues. These thematic working groups consist of Border Management; Communications and Advocacy; Cross-Cutting Issues; Internal Migration; Labour Migration; Migration Data, Policy and Legislation; Migration and Development; and Return and Reintegration.

During the NCM launch in December 2019, a GCM prioritization exercise was also conducted where the Government of The Gambia prioritized 15 out of the 23 objectives as areas of priority for The Gambia in the short and medium time frame. These include:

Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies;

Objective 2: Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin;

Objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration;

Objective 4: Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation;

Objective 5: Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration;

Objective 8: Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants;

Objective 9: Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants;

Objective 10: Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration;

Objective 11: Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner;

Objective 14: Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle;

Objective 15: Provide access to basic services for migrants;

Objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration;

Objective 19: Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries;

³ National Coordination Mechanism on Migration Terms of Reference (ToR)

Objective 20: Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants; and

Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration.⁴

During the initial GCM implementation review process that began in November 2020, the review examined The Gambia's implementation progress of only some GCM objectives which were considered key at the time of the review, and not specifically the 15 prioritized objectives. It was observed that data was limited and, where available, it focused more on administrative data. It was equally observed that since the adoption of the GCM and prioritization of the objectives, relatively limited activities were carried out, although critical mechanisms were put in place for coordination and engagement. Therefore, the main objective of this review exercise is not only to update the earlier report to capture all 15 prioritized objectives, but also to look into the remaining eight non-prioritized objectives to ascertain whether any progress has been registered in their implementation since the April 2021 review.

GCM Objective 1: Collect and Utilize accurate and disaggregated data as basis for evidence-based policies

While there is commitment to ensure the collection, analysis and dissemination of timely and relevant data, significant gap exists in the manner data is generated and processed. Most of the data collected focuses on administrative data and, in many cases, it is neither well disaggregated nor completed in some instances. Most of the data collected are also meant for reporting purposes to regional bodies, including ECOWAS. While such gaps exist, the desire and technical capacity to collect data beyond administrative data is evident. For instance, in 2019, IOM in partnership with GBoS conducted a Mobility Assessment on Internal Migration to examine internal mobility dynamics in The Gambia and provide a socioeconomic profile of migrants from rural to urban settings. A complementary objective of the study is to also consider the profile of rural-to-urban migrants in relation to that of migrants assisted by IOM⁵. Furthermore, in supporting national efforts to enhance the Government's capacity in migration data collection and management, The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) in coordination with IOM launched the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in December 2020, which gathers and analyzes migration data to disseminate critical multi-layered information on the mobility, vulnerabilities, and needs of displaced and mobile populations that enables decision makers and responders to provide these populations with better context specific assistance.

Since the launch of DTM, the platform has continued to generate data on population mobility in The Gambia in four identified Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs). In The Gambia, DTM conducts

⁴ Report on the Launch of the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration and Global Compact on Migration Prioritization Workshop

⁵ Mobility Assessment on Internal Migration, IOM The Gambia 2019

Flow Monitoring activities at key transit points: Barra and Farafenni (NBR), Basse (URR) and Brikama (WCR) to monitor the mobility within and outside The Gambia. Flow Monitoring (FM) activities are conducted in coordination with national and local authorities as well as local partners. The FM tool consists of two main components: the Flow Monitoring Registry (FMR), which captures key data on the magnitude, provenance, destination and mode of travel of mobility flows, and the Flow Monitoring Survey (FMS), which are individual surveys conducted with travellers to gather detailed information about the profiles, migration experience and intentions of migrants. Since the launch in December 2020 to April 2022, seven (7) Flow Monitoring Points (FMP) reports have been published⁶. Data collection commenced in June 2021 and February 2022 with monthly reports published at DTM Reports/Flow monitoring (iom.int) <https://dtm.iom.int/node/17>. Moreover, The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) has integrated various migration modules in some of its periodic surveys and is committed to continuing to collect data and have recommended for the formulation of indicators to track progress. Similarly, GBoS is preparing to include migration related modules for the upcoming national census due to be conducted in 2023

In February 2021, the Ministry of Interior in close coordination with the Gambia Immigration Department (GID) launched Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) at four (4) Points of Entries (PoEs) with real time data exchange capability with the Immigration headquarters. MIDAS will enable the Government of The Gambia to monitor more effectively those entering and exiting their territory by land, while providing a sound statistical basis for migration policy-related planning. This will further improve the migration governance in the country through an evidence-based policy planning in migration management. The system will further help the Government of The Gambia to better understand mobility patterns through its statistical information and ensure that those crossing Gambian borders do not pose threats to national and international security.

Save the Children through its project “Improving the protection of children and youth in mobility along main migratory routes of West Africa” launched the PROMIS database in 2021, a system that collects data concerning migrant children’s biodata as well as services provided from the point of identification up to reintegration with their families. The database serves as a system that will allow for improvement in quality service delivery to Children and Youth in Mobility (CYM). With a view to better establishing the profiles of CYMs, Save the Children conducted a study on the profiles of children and young migrants and a mapping of child protection actors and services. The study was commissioned by the African Bureau on the Rights of Children. Additionally, a rapid migration situational analysis was conducted in January 2022 to collect data on trending migration-related issues in the two project zones of Soma and Farafenni.

⁶ <https://dtm.iom.int/gambia>

GCM Objective 2: Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country

The Gambia is committed to this objective and has taken various initiatives with a view to reducing youth unemployment through improved skills training. Under the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MOHERST) a National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Roadmap was launched to improve relevance, quality and access of skills training for young Gambians and the National TVET Committee was established with technical support from ITC. The Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI) in Mansa Konko has been renovated and is now providing skills training opportunities for young people especially those from the rural areas. The TVET offering at GTTI Annex in Julangal, URR, has also been diversified and expanded and construction is under way to open the training centre in Ndemban, LRR. The Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI) has opened several rural annexes and introduced new foundation programs. Other private training institutions such as Gaye Njorro or Insight Training Centre have also significantly increased their regional footprint. The decentralization of the skills training offering and investment in the TVET quality has been supported by Government flagship programs like the EU-funded Youth Empowerment Project and the Tekki Fii – Make it In the Gambia Program, that are implemented in partnership with ITC, GIZ, Enabel and IMVF.

MOHERST, the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA), in partnership with ITC, have introduced a formalized apprenticeship framework which is based on a competency model developed with the support of Sector Skills Council. The apprenticeship framework has been rolled out with employers and relevant private sector associations in three pilot sectors including agribusiness, construction and ICT.

Youth and Trade Roadmaps have been developed and launched by the Government through MOTIE, MOICI, MOTC related to agribusiness, ICT, tourism and creative industries, respectively. The roadmaps provide a blueprint to tap job opportunities for young Gambians by driving value addition in key sectors. More than 5000 young entrepreneurs have been supported under the Tekki Fii Program including through 1000 grants and start up packages. A mini-grant facility and revolving mini-loan scheme were launched to facilitate access to finance for young entrepreneurs. This activity was conducted from 2019 to date.

The Gambia College has opened a new campus in Basse URR in 2020 for Teacher training and various government partners are now providing trainings for young people in their own localities. Cash for work opportunities for returned migrants and those at risk of migrating is being provided. IOM in close collaboration with NEDI and GIEPA also provides entrepreneurship training to returnees.

Committing to this objective, the Ministry of Trade has launched the National Employment Policy 2021 with the aim of providing employment for at least 150,000 young people and the National Employment Policy and Action Plan (2022-2026) have been finalized and approved by the Cabinet and implementation has started.

The Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS) through different projects together with partners like the WFP, UNDP, Spanish Red Cross, and National Youth Council of The Gambia has contributed to addressing the adverse drivers of migration in communities affected by climate change. These includes livelihood project for women and household members, climate change mitigation/adaptation measures, peace building initiatives to prevent inter-communal conflict which is also an adverse factor compelling people to move, and support to migrants to withstand the economic impact of COVID-19. These initiatives have witnessed the engagement of more than 4500 people with 128,500 trees planted in 40 communities in NBR, CRR and URR. More than 1530 participants have received training on drought resilience crops management; and 65 women also received capacity building on eco-stove production to minimize the impact of climate change. Gender mainstreaming was observed in all programme and activity implementations.

The UNDP has provided livelihood support in various modalities, addressing lack of livelihood and employment opportunities as a driver of migration. Over 120 beneficiaries have been provided with business development services, 86 youths have been trained in agro-business at the Gambia Songhai Centre, 320 women entrepreneurs have been supported to participate in trade fairs, 200 women have been trained in e-commerce, and 270 women have been supported for improved access to finance. To counteract the adverse effects on livelihoods affected by Covid-19 impacts, the UNDP has also supported communities previously involved in eco-tourism, by social protection assistance and capacity development for alternative livelihoods. UNDP has also supported the Programme for Accelerated Community Development (PACD), through which 79 communities have seen improved infrastructure (water and electricity) and provided with some agricultural equipment and training.

The President's International Award (PIA) (Duke of Edinburgh International Award) in The Gambia provides livelihood skills training to young people of The Gambia. The key objective is to provide livelihood skills, training to youth in disadvantaged communities and those at-risk of taking irregular means of traveling. The PIA is currently operating a skills training Centre in Kerewan, North Bank Region. This facility since its inception in 2015 delivered training in Auto-mechanic, Carpentry and Joinery, Garment Construction; and Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy. Over 100 youth are trained and are currently gainfully employed.

Beyond employability and livelihood issues, The Gambia has continued to strengthen its democracy since the end of dictatorship in 2017. The end of political repression has led to the ending of the previously high outflow of Gambian political refugees.

GCM Objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration

The Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure as the lead ministry of the NCM's Communication and Advocacy Thematic Working Group (TWG) works with all partners in promoting informed migration decision-making, providing information on pathways for regular migration, and fostering a balanced and accurate discourse on migration. The Communication and Advocacy TWG has been meeting regularly and has developed a Migration Communications Strategy and Workplan in September 2020 and updated them in December 2021 to reflect current priorities and dynamics, emphasizing the need to address migration-related misinformation. A series of awareness raising activities were implemented under the leadership of the OVP in close collaboration with relevant institutions. These activities include nationally televised panel discussions to raise awareness about migration related issues. The TWG is also in the process of developing an annual workplan for 2022. Despite the fact that there remains a need for proactive communication on migration-related controversies, several government institutions (the Department of Community Development, the National Youth Council, among others) embarked on awareness raising initiatives in partnership with international development partners and civil society organizations. Notably, in July 2021, the Office of the Vice President conducted a nationwide sensitization tour engaging opinion leaders, youth and women on the theme "peaceful coexistence and irregular migration."

Showing further commitment to this objective, the Office of the Government Spokesperson as the principal mouthpiece of the Gambia Government incorporated initiatives into its action plan for effective communication on migration related issues. Among the activities planned under the Government Spokesperson is an outreach to schools and traditional communicators to help combat misinformation and disinformation on return and reintegration as well as international and internal migration procedures. Government information officers from the Department of Information Services (DOIS) are undergoing 15-month training on migration communication. They are equally equipped with media gadgets to facilitate their deployment as focal persons on migration communication.

Additionally, The Gambia Immigration Department is currently working on revitalizing its website for the timely and proper communication of all entry requirements including the issuance of visas. Currently, the website has already been built and a committee has been established to work on providing the relevant information that is to be uploaded in the website. The Department through its partners has participated in numerous sensitization activities raising awareness on the dangers associated with irregular migration across the country as well as promoting safe, orderly and regular migration procedures. The Department of Social Welfare in collaboration with National Agency Against trafficking in Person (NAATIP), conducted advocacy and sensitization on trafficking issues and the provision of psycho- social counseling at the border communities of Amdalai and Giboro and also sensitized the communities on the needs and rights of vulnerable migrants and to guide and assist them in meeting these needs.

There are four (4) Migration Information Centres (MICs) established as a result of the partnership between National Youth Council (NYC) and the IOM. Since inception, the centers have provided many services to the youth, potential migrants, migrant returnees and others. The MICs are situated in four regions in the Gambia, Basse URR, Pakalinding LRR, Brikama WCR, and Barra NBR. The MICs serve as a safe space for the youth. They serve as information hubs where youths could get valuable information on migration as well as available opportunities in The Gambia.

Officers at the Migration Information Centers conduct series of activities monthly. Most of the activities are centered on migration related areas and Information sharing on the dangers of irregular migration. This is done either at the center or in the communities. These activities include “attaya café” where officers of the NYC meet the youth at such gatherings. All these are geared towards passing information on migration and the opportunities available in the country.

There is currently a project called “Migrants as Messengers” (MaM). This project creates a lot of impact as regional program officers for Migration work closely with the migrant returnees in sensitizing communities on the dangers of irregular migration. They also discuss opportunities available in the country and how to access them. The MaM project also provides the participants the opportunity to hear and learn from some of the ordeals of the returnees.

GCM Objective 4: Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation

The National Migration Policy (NMP) 2020-2030 observed that the lack of proper documentation among Gambians put them at higher risk of being exploited during their migration experience.

The Gambia Immigration Department (GID), as the lead convener of the NCM Border Management TWG, works with relevant institutions to issue relevant documents to citizens and migrants. Part of the commitment includes providing relevant documentation, including civil registry, at all stages of migration. GID has supported the issuance of National Identification documents to returning Migrants in the provinces especially in CRR and URR, where most returnees had lost their documents during their irregular migration journeys. The Immigration Act of 1965 provides the legal framework for immigration into The Gambia with residence and entry permits for citizens of ECOWAS as well as non-ECOWAS countries.

GID, under the Ministry of Interior, is the government body charged with the issuance of visa and visa extension, work permits for migrants, and alien cards as well as the issuance of national documents for citizens such as passports and ID cards. Currently, there are three categories of residence permits being issued: Type A, B and C. Type A is for residence purpose only and mostly issued to retired foreign residents and students. Type B is used for employment and largely targets ECOWAS and other foreign nationals looking for skilled employment and recruitment in companies, while Type C is for unskilled workers and petty traders. GID also has

a Professional Standard Unit tasked to deal with complaints and disciplinary issues for both Gambians and non-Gambians. However, there is a need to expand migration complaints mechanisms beyond GID and integrate the court system into the process when and where necessary.

GCM Objective 5: Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.

The Gambia is a country that has seen its nationals (mainly young and male) risking their lives embarking on the perilous irregular journeys in search of better livelihoods and job opportunities abroad. Gambian children and youth have been cited among key nationalities and profiles arriving in Europe using irregular path, which is a cause for concern for both government and its partners in the migration landscape.

The Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE) is the lead convener of the NCM TWG on Labour Migration. A major milestone includes the development of a Labor Migration Strategy, validated in February 2021. A Policy Guideline for Ethical Recruitment and a Pre-Departure Training Manual to provide potential labor migrants with relevant information on the migratory process, before, during and after migration has been validated in February 2022 to ensure the protection of Gambian labor migrants. Thirdly, MoTIE is working on upgrading its Labor Market Information System and transform it into a Labor Market and Migration Information System and has participated in regional workshops organized by ECOWAS in July 2019 aimed at harmonizing data management tools to the standard of regional bodies.

Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) have been signed by the Government of The Gambia and Qatar and United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, given that the Qatar MOU was signed 10 years ago the Ministry of Trade is currently in the process of reviewing it. Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led a technical delegation to the EU and EU Members States to explore opportunities for bilateral labour agreements that will assist Gambians to travel legally to Europe and at the same time acquire skills as well as earn income to support their families in The Gambia and forge partnerships in supporting MSME development.

The Labour Migration strategy has been developed and validated, in partnership with IOM, whereby it will be launched together with the National Employment Policy and Action Plan.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), signed bilateral agreements with the Kingdom of Morocco, Ghana, Mauritius, Malaysia, Peoples Republic of China, Pakistan, Qatar and Azerbaijan to provide more than one hundred and fifty (150) full funded scholarships annually in the areas of Undergraduate, Masters and PhD studies, further contributing to expanding available options for academic mobility. The Ministry also serves as a nominating agency for the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Secretariat to provide scholarships to

Gambian students to undergo undergraduate, Masters and PhD training programs in all the sectors of the economy.

As part of scheduling the service commitments under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), MOTIE has set up a Standing Committee on Services to facilitate public private dialogue and identify opportunities for the private to tap regional market opportunities in priority integration sectors, namely professional services, finance, transport and logistics, tourism and ICT.

GCM Objective 6: Facilitate Fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work

The Gambia through the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MOTIE) in partnership with IOM has developed a validated Ethical Recruitment Guide and a Pre-Departure Training Manual.

Subsequent to the establishment and opening of the job center at the Department of Labour with assistance from IOM and ITC, another Job Center has been opened in Basse. Through the cooperation with the National Youth Council and ITC, the Youth Centres in Soma, Bundung and Janjanbureh have been revitalized and supported to provide information services to young Gambians related to job opportunities and migration. A youth service directory (www.yzd.gm) and a tollfree line have been established to provide more information about available opportunities in The Gambia.

As part of implementation of the GIZ's Programme for Migration Development, MOTIE has also signed an MOU with the German Development Agency to establish a migrant advisory center in all the regions.

The Labour Bill 2022, has also been finalized and approved by the Cabinet and it is currently at the Ministry of Justice for onward transmission to the National Assembly for enactment. This Bill, when enacted, will provide a mandate to the Department of Labour to regulate private employment agencies.

GCM Objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration

The Government of The Gambia ratified both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter and is working on domesticating the Children's Act 2005. The Gambia ensures the implementation of Article 28 of the UN CRC on the right to education for children of migrants. The Gambia has committed to achieving UN SDG 4 and ensuring inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning. The Department of Social Welfare developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Protection, Return and Reintegration of Unaccompanied and Separated Migrant Children in The Gambia. The SOPs have facilitated the support and

assistance, including family tracing, for children who have returned to The Gambia. The Gambia Red Cross is well positioned and continues to provide relevant humanitarian assistance and protection to vulnerable migrants – irrespective of their status - including those in transit. Access to basic essential services provided to migrants includes the healthcare, food, shelter, Non-Food Items (NFI) (clothing, hygiene/dignity kits), psychosocial support, legal support, family reunification, first aid, information, etc. Moreover, the Gambia Immigration Department referred vulnerable migrants to IOM to support with feeding, accommodation, and return to their respective countries in West Africa.

To strengthen mental health and psychosocial support for migrants and Gambian returnees, IOM and WHO supported the Ministry of Health in the development of a national Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) strategic framework and MHPSS Curriculum in line with WHO guidelines. Strategic documents are now in place to guide the country’s delivery of mental and psychosocial support services for the successful and sustainable reintegration of migrants and Gambian returnees. The curriculum is being used in training health institutions to train students and health care professionals to strengthen the capacity in the country.

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare through the support of UNICEF has developed the National Strategic Communication Plan on Children on the Move. It has been designed to address issues of protection needs for children on the move in The Gambia. The Strategy will particularly target children, women, young people, parents and guardians, men, first line officers, and law enforcement officers, with information to raise awareness and understanding of the risks along migratory routes and how these risks can be minimised.

GCM Objective 8: Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants

IOM The Gambia in collaboration with Gambian authorities mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad and the Ministry of Interior; provides support to stranded migrants in The Gambia and contributes with information sharing mechanisms for missing migrants under the framework of the international Missing Migrants project.

Committing to this objective, the Gambia Red Cross Society as an auxiliary institution to the Government of The Gambia has worked with communities, volunteers and partners to ensure preparation and response to humanitarian needs of migrants and this includes restoration of family link services which focuses on preventing separations, restoring and maintaining contact. When families are separated as a result of conflict, violence, migration or natural and man-made disasters, the Red Cross and Red Crescent network, helps to search for missing loved ones and relatives with the aim of restoring and maintaining family contact. This also includes missing migrants.

With a focus on promoting cross-border consultations for enhanced protection and assistance services to children, Save the Children in 2020 set up a Cross-border Taskforce to coordinate the return of Gambian, Senegalese, Guinean and Malian children identified in various places within Senegal. This taskforce was coordinated at Regional Office level and was most instrumental at the peak of the Covid pandemic. The taskforce included UNICEF, Child and Environment Development Association-Gambia (CEDAG) and other institutions in The Gambia. To further operationalize this cross-border cooperation, the Protejem Project intends on providing hybrid training for Gambian, Senegalese, Guinean and Malian border post officials.

GCM Objective 9: Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants

The Gambia is a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and all its three protocols including the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. The Gambia is committed to strengthening local capacity as well as working collaboratively with international partners to prevent, investigate, prosecute, and penalize smugglers. The Ministry of Interior is the lead convener of the NCM Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration and works with law enforcement agencies. Although the commitment has been there, little evidence exists to suggest that significant efforts have been taken to halt smugglers. First and foremost, The Gambia is yet to domesticate its Smuggling of Migrants Bill. This lack of legislation has made it a great challenge to prosecute smugglers who continue to facilitate the illegal transportation of persons across international border using the Mediterranean Sea. This challenge is reinforced by the fact that The Gambia is a country of origin and is increasingly becoming a country of transit and embarkment for migrants. Due to the lack of a legislation criminalizing migrant smuggling, migrant smugglers continue to thrive in this lucrative business with little or minimal consequence. For instance, following the 2019 shipwreck off the coast of Mauritania, one of the suspected smugglers was arrested and later granted bail by the police. In October 2020, 13 alleged smugglers, mainly from neighboring Senegal, were arrested in a joint operation by the State Intelligence Service and the GID as part of efforts to crack down on irregular migration. It is paramount to note that with all the intensified efforts being made by the Government of The Gambia to disrupt smuggling and irregular migration routes, migrant smuggling continues to remain a great challenge given the lack of a legislation to criminalize the act. However, there is a draft bill at the Ministry of Justice being reviewed.

GCM Objective 10: Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons

The Gambia is a party to several multilateral international treaties and conventions to combat trafficking in persons. The National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) established in 2011 is the lead government agency tasked with handling trafficking in persons cases. Although the government has underscored its willingness to fight against the menace, the

country in 2019, fell to tier 3 ranking of the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons Report. However, there have been efforts made by NAATIP and by extension the Ministry of Justice which include the revival of the National Task Force on Counter Trafficking that aims to strengthen protection, prevention, prosecution and partnership. These efforts resulted in the upgrading of the country in tier ranking from lowest Tier 3 in the 2020 US TIP Report to Tier 2 Watch List in the report. Increased efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers needs to be made. Furthermore, the Gambia Trafficking in Persons Act of 2007 is outdated and there is a need to review the legislation taking into consideration current trafficking trends. It is however worth noting that the government of The Gambia secured 3 convictions in 2021 of human trafficking and the perpetrators are serving jail terms. Although The Gambia's criminal code establishes criminal liability related to human trafficking and is used in conjunction with the TIP Act, there is a need to review the legislation to take into consideration the existing gaps in the administration of the act.

IOM through the funds from the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J /TIP) recruited a consultant to work with NAATIP state actors and non-state actors to develop a new plan of action 2021 to 2025 and thus was validated in August 2021.

The standard operating procedures and the national referral mechanism was equally validated and in addition, there is a data bank at NAATIP which feeds in data on all related cases of trafficking in persons and its related crimes, i.e. migration and children on the move.

GCM Objective 11: Manage borders in an integrated, secured and coordinated manner

As already stated in objective 1, Gambia Immigration Department (GID) through the support of IOM has installed the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) at four major Land Borders and with a central server located at the GID Headquarters. Plans are at an advanced stage to connect the MIDAS to the Interpol i24/7 database. The objective of this is to be able to detect Stolen and Lost Travel Document (SLTD) and also persons of concern.

GID through the support of IOM has established Inter – Agency Border Coordination Committees at nine land border crossing points with a rationale to strengthen cooperation, coordination and exchange of information among border agencies for effective border security and trade facilitation. The establishment of these committees has improved the working relationship among the border officials, thus helping in securing the borders effectively. The various committees have been organizing and conducting a series of joint border patrols as well as engaging border communities with a view of raising their awareness on cross border crimes such as Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons. The committee has also served as the information hub for the Border Management Thematic working group under the NCM which is chaired by the GID. The information and recommendations that are emanating from the quarterly

Inter-Agency Border Coordination Committee meetings are usually reported and discussed at the NCM Border Management TWG meetings.

The Gambia Immigration Department has also facilitated the rehabilitation of three (3) border posts and the construction of two (2) border posts. The rehabilitation and construction of border posts lead to a more conducive working environment. New infrastructure, donation of equipment and office furniture contributed to building a proper working environment for officers including the frontline border officials enabling them to execute their duties, and thereby contributing to making border management more efficient.

The Gambia Immigration Department through the support of the IOM, and the Spanish, French and the German police, have conducted series of capacity building trainings both locally and internationally on topics such as Smuggling of Migrants, Trafficking in persons, document security, among others. Through the support of the Gambia Red Cross Society, the Department has begun training its frontline border officials on first aid and other humanitarian border management topics.

Under the Health, Border and Mobility Management (HBMM) Framework, IOM works closely with Ministry of Health in the implementation of programmes which combines border management with human and health security which ultimately supports the implementation of the IHR (2005). In 2020, IOM supported the Ministry of Health in the development of a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the detection, management and referral of ill passengers at Points of Entry (PoEs) in accordance with International Health Regulation (IHR) 2005. This set of SOPs covers the detailed procedures and techniques for routine activities as well as procedure for responding to a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), specified under IHR (2005). The SOPs cover both the arriving and departing procedures. They provide information for determining which public health measures should be adopted for prevention, early warning and response to Public Health events at Points of Entry.

Furthermore, in 2021 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, IOM supported the response efforts of the GoTG to reduce transmission and enhance disease surveillance at Points of Entry (PoEs) and border communities. The interventions were anchored under The Gambia COVID-19 National Response Plan and IOM Global Strategic, Preparedness and Response Plan, which is aligned with the World Health Organizations (WHO) COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) and the UN framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID-19 (UN SERP).

GCM Objective 12: Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare in collaboration with IOM developed and launched the National Referral Mechanism for Vulnerable Migrants including Victims of Trafficking. The development of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) resulted in the elaboration of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the identification and referral of vulnerable migrants, including Victims of Trafficking as well as the NRM guidelines. The guidelines have been developed to enhance the understanding of first line officials and non-government actors to effectively respond to the protection needs of vulnerable migrants including victims of trafficking. Additionally, the Gambia Red Cross has been providing referral for migrants to access services: this assistance in terms of legal aid is provided through referrals to different stakeholders such as IOM, Department of Social Welfare (DSW), and National embassies/consular missions for protection services. The Department of Social Welfare through its decentralized structures provides psychosocial support to the returnees and through assessments, those with health issues are linked to nearest health facility for medical attention. The department also works with IOM to provide further support in the area of capacity building for returnees.

GCM Objective 13: Use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives

In line with principles and norms set by international migration law, States should commit to use migration detention only as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives. Considering the growing criminalization of irregular migration, which presents risks and often results in the detention of migrants in transit and host countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, many governments, including The Gambia, have been requesting IOM's assistance in returning nationals mainly from countries in North Africa that were stranded and/or facing hardship in detention centres since 2017. As migrants face unfavorable conditions in detention at transit and host countries, where Alternatives to Detention (ATDs) are mostly non-existent, IOM is committed to promoting ATDs under a Rights-Based Approach (RBA), with a view to managing irregular migration humanely, as opposed to detention, in full respect of international standards.

The Gambia Immigration Department being the Government agency charged with the responsibility of enforcing the Immigration laws of the country has since 2010 established a Migration Transit Centre at Tanji in the West Coast Region. The Centre serves as accommodation for migrants in transit and also provides the GID the opportunity to interview such migrants with a view to establishing their nationalities and also identify their protection needs among other issues. The GID always endeavors that all the processes that are required to be carried out in the centre on the migrants are done so quickly and not beyond 72 hours.

At the Centre, the rights of the migrants are well protected and treated with dignity at all times. Migrants are not kept in cells and are able to move freely within the Centre and even engage in psycho-social activities such as sports. Minors are separated from the adults as well as women from men. Currently, the GID partners with the Gambia Red Cross Society through an EUTF project for the provision of food and non-food items to migrants in transit whenever they are transported to the Centre. The migrants are given the opportunity to communicate with their family members as quickly as possible and also with their consular officers. In most cases, the GID invites the consular officers to the Centre once the nationalities of the migrants are confirmed as most of the time the migrants do not know or have no contact of their consular officers in The Gambia.

Immigration officers posted at the Centre have received trainings on the proper handling of migrants and the respect for their rights in line with various international laws and best practices. Currently, a Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) on handling of migrants has been developed through the Common Operational Partnership (COP) Gambia project and it will be validated soon.

At the Centre, once interviews are completed and all information recorded, migrants are provided with all relevant information relating to their rights in order to enable them make informed decision. Migrants who choose to return home voluntarily are quickly referred to the IOM for assistance while those who choose to remain in The Gambia especially those from ECOWAS member states are advised to regularize their Immigration Status.

In January 2021, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad led a technical delegation to Niger in a bid to explore opportunities of forging partnership with the Nigerien authorities in coordinating the identification of presumed Gambian citizens and providing necessary documentations for their voluntary repatriation and at the same time discourage holding Gambian migrants in detention centers. A similar mission was held in April 2018 to Libya for an enquiry into the situation of Gambian migrants in detention centres and possible consular services in a bid to provide alternatives to detention.

In April 2022, IOM, in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, organized a training on Alternatives to Immigration Detention to enhance capacity in international legal framework and ATDs approaches and good practices, with a view to promoting a common understanding and guiding stakeholders in conceiving, developing, implementing, and advocating for ATDs. The training brought together government counterparts, including members of the Return and Reintegration and Border Management Thematic Working Groups of the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM). The objectives of the training were to enhance the capacity of key government stakeholders on the International Legal Framework (main instruments and key principles) relating to detention, including alternatives to detention.

GCM Objective 14: Enhance Consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad has designated First Secretaries or Counselors in The Gambia's diplomatic missions abroad as diaspora and migration liaisons or focal points. Additionally, the Government of The Gambia organized a consular mission to Libya in March 2018 and to Niger in January 2021 to discuss the feasibility of opening a consular presence in Tripoli and Niamey, among other topics. In August 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with other stakeholders embarked on a European Tour to Gambian migrant destination countries to collect firsthand information on ways to engage them in nation building and to ensure they have consular protection within the EU.

GCM Objective 15: Provide access to basic services for migrants

In ensuring migrants have access to health services, regardless of their status, IOM through the Regional Health Directorate (RHD) deployed mobile health teams in communities across all regions in The Gambia from 2019 to 2021 reaching 1718 (1031 female, 687 male) beneficiaries in Farafenni (NBR), Brikama (WCR), Sare Futa (CRR), Base Town (URR), Jarra Soma (LRR), Essau (NBR), Kuntaur (CRR), Bwiam (WCR) and Barra (NBR). The initiative was aimed at strengthening the community's access to health services in areas of high return. Services covered the continuum of care, including prevention, health promotion, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliation based on identified health needs.

To promote access to clean water, basic toilets, and good hygiene practices for migrants and border communities, IOM supported the construction of boreholes and hand-washing stations in Fatoto, Gunjur, Missera and Tabanding in June 2021. The initiative aimed to strengthen access to basic services in communities with high cross-border movement and better position these communities to implement COVID-19 preventive measures. The UNDP through the PACD project has also supported the provision of water and electricity in 79 communities across The Gambia.

Beyond support to meet the physical health needs of migrant populations, IOM continues to support greater access to mental health and psychosocial support for migrants. To further strengthen MHPSS delivery, IOM supported the refurbishment of the only psychiatric facility in the country 'Tanka Tanka' facility, increasing its bed capacity from 100 to 150 in March 2022. This is aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of mental health patients and creating safe and dignified spaces that is in line with international safety, security and sanitary standards

The Gambia Red Cross has been providing humanitarian assistance to migrants through access to basic services like healthcare, food and non-food items, shelter, and other protection needs, irrespective of the legal status of migrants through the fixed and mobile Humanitarian Service Points (HSPs). There are currently three (3) main HSPs established and (5) kiosks situated along

migration routes serving the purpose of HSPs, and with the commitment to further establish more in other transit areas. There are MoUs signed between the Gambia Red Cross and relevant stakeholders like the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare on behalf of DSW, major health facilities under the Ministry of Health, The Gambia Immigration Department (GID), and the National Youth Council of The Gambia (NYC), to strengthen the protection system for people on the move- while ensuring their access to healthcare and other humanitarian services.

In a similar vein, Save the Children International continues to provide the needed protection and assistance services to Children and Youth in Mobility (CYM) upon identification. This includes the provision of emergency kits, food, health care services, psychosocial support, legal support and family reintegration through a service provider - CEDAG. In terms of accommodation and access to recreational facilities, Save the Children International works in partnership with COOPI, an Italian NGO operating a Child Friendly Space in Farafenni in the North Bank Region. The Child Friendly Space (CFS) is used by the project as a Transit Point where more in depth assessment of the needs of CYMs is conducted and accommodation provided while family tracing efforts are going on. Save the Children has also worked closely with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (with which an MoU was signed in June, 2020), in the identification of host families in Soma and Farafenni, through their respective Community Child Protection Committees. The identified families underwent police background and community reference checks, before being finally cleared by the Ministry to provide temporary placement services to CYMs. Since inception of this project to date, over 70 CYMs were placed in the host families in both project zones.

Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA) with funding from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been providing support to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers through cash vouchers to enable them meet some of their pressing needs such as rent, medical, educational cost and feeding of their families.

Objective 16: Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion

The Government of The Gambia has established the Women Enterprise Fund as part of efforts to promote gender equality by building on the achievements registered in the implementation of the National Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010-2020 through the new Gender Policy being developed. The Gambia Women Enterprise Fund is established to ensure that women owned MSMEs will have access to micro-credit services and training. Priority is given to women migrant returnees that are willing to take up entrepreneurship as a livelihood venture and are provided training before any fund disbursement.

With support of the UN Peacebuilding Fund, MOTIE, OVP, NYC, DCD and returnee associations in partnership with ITC and IOM have facilitated a number of community-based reintegration projects that provide economic opportunities for returnees and host communities

alike. For instance, this includes a bakery in Basse and Brikama, a banana plantation in Kaur, apoultry house in Pakalinding and e-tricycle initiative in Banjul.

The Gambia Red Cross in partnership with the WFP through the peacebuilding project, continues to promote peacebuilding initiatives to sustain peace and social cohesion in communities affected by climate-related migration/displacement due to conflict. Peace and conflict resolution activities with women have been conducted to ensure inclusion and non-discrimination of migrants including returnees and their host communities/communities of origin. This includes capacity building initiatives on peacebuilding and conflict resolution which have reunited communities affected by tensions. In collaboration with the NYC, communication and information activities have been conducted to shape perceptions and change narratives on migration.

Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA) with funding from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been supporting co-existence projects such as community vegetable gardens, community water points, and labor-saving devices in refugee host communities in the Fonis of the West Coast Region. These projects have helped to enhance inclusion and social cohesion of refugees and asylum seekers in The Gambia.

Objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions

In collaboration with partners including UNESCO-KOICA project and the International Trade Centre (ITC), the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MOHERST) is embarking on extensive nation-wide sensitization and awareness creation by developing communication campaigns to change the negative perceptions on TVET, conducting Radio and Television Talk shows, and designing billboards in all the administrative regions of the country.

IOM, MOICI and the Gambia Press Union (GPU) provide various capacity building trainings and sensitization programs to the media, government and civil society officials to improve reporting on migration issues, combatting misinformation around migration and promoting use of accurate terminology to support a more comprehensive and positive discourse on migration. To address stigma and discrimination of returnees in The Gambia, IOM has organized a series of awareness raising campaigns in migrant communities of return including establishing the Migrants as Messengers network. A group of 69 returnees who are engaging communities through community led initiatives including radio talk shows, community sensitizations, training of migrants on ways to combat stigma and promote social inclusion, and focus group discussions between migrants and communities, among others. These activities have supported migrants in the following ways: viewing themselves more positively and their contributions to national development, achieving more cohesion among themselves, sharing their stories with each other and their communities, and expanding their roles in de-escalating stigma and discrimination in their communities of return. The Gambia Red Cross also continues to raise awareness and fight

against xenophobia and discrimination through outreach activities in communities, transit areas and bus stations in order to foster social inclusion of all categories of migrants.

The ‘Tekki Fii’ Program in collaboration with MOTIE and other national stakeholders implemented awareness raising campaign related to irregular migration and opportunities for socio-economic development in The Gambia. The national campaign includes radio shows, TV broadcast, community outreach, school-based orientations, sport activities and other platforms.

Objective 18: Invest in Skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competence

The Gambia Songhai Initiative has currently improved on its curriculum to include education on entrepreneurship for its students. This provides them an entrepreneurial mindset that will be useful upon completion of their programme. The UNDP has also supported the expansion of the programme to now have a capacity to enroll 120 students per annum from its initial capacity of 60 per annum.

The Gambia Government is helping to improve capacity at the level of the Presidents International Awards (PIA) and National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS) to expand their services beyond the Greater Banjul Area. The PIA has opened a new Center in Kerewan, North Bank Region and investments are being intensified at the NYSS Centers Nyani Berry and Sappo. The Crab Island Upper Basic is now renovated and elevated to a TVET Center. Due to lack of resources and capacity, the NYSS is unable to implement the compulsory voluntary Services and the PIA is only able to open two (2) centres instead of having presence in all regions.

National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA) has developed Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) programs for migrants/returnees. The RPL programs are used to test the competence of previous skills of migrants/returnees they acquire through non-formal trainings, provide further trainings where necessary and then certify them as fit for employment in a formal setting as per the sector to which the skills are applied.

A TVET unit is also setup at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology under the Higher and Tertiary Education Directorate to develop and review curriculum of training programs for migrants/returnee and youth in general, and also develop the roadmap and implementation strategies for the revitalization of TVET in the Gambia.

MOTIE, MOHERST and NAQAA with support from ITC, rolled out the Skills for Youth Employment Fund that provide scholarships for approximately 1000 young Gambians every year.

In collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC), The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology is providing apprenticeship trainings to women and girls in horticulture and other gardening skills and also through the West African Science Service Centre

on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASSCAL), the Ministry is providing trainings to both youths and migrants/returnees on solar installation.

In partnership with the Ministry of Trade, the UNDP through the Entrepreneurship and Private Sector Development Project has supported over 120 beneficiaries to be provided with entrepreneurship training through business development services. 200 women have also been trained in e-commerce, and 120 youth in diverse marketable skills including electrical installation, video editing and production, CCTV control, biometric system, hair dressing, soap and detergent making.

The President's International Award (PIA) Skills Training Centre has in 2018 implemented for the National Youth Service and IOM training for twenty (20) returnees from Libya and Agadez in Niger. The 20 returnees were trained in auto-mechanic and carpentry and joinery. In 2021, they also concluded 12 months training of 90 trainees in the area of garment construction with support from the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP).

Objective 19: Create Conditions for migrants and diaspora to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries

The Gambia has been particularly proactive in seeking to harness and optimise the benefits of diaspora-development, in line with the GCM. This proactive approach is due to the fact that about 10 percent of the citizens live abroad, and their annual financial contributions through remittances account for over 60 percent of the country's GDP. The Gambia has undertaken a range of practical actions on all 10 action points of GCM Objective 19, in order to facilitate and optimize diaspora contributions to Gambian development.

a. SDG Framework:

The diaspora-development actions of the Government of The Gambia (GoTG) are anchored on two major initiatives launched in 2018, namely the adoption of the first ever Gambian Diaspora Strategy (GDS)⁷ with 14 specific commitments, and the establishment of the Gambian Diaspora and Migration Directorate (GDMD) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad (MoFA)⁸. These initiatives and other diaspora-related financing for development actions arose from the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia project (MSDG), which is a diaspora-led Technical Cooperation Programme, launched in 2017, as a partnerships between GK Partners, GoTG and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The Gambian diaspora-development experts who set up the MSDG project were also involved in the formulation of the migration, diaspora and development

⁷ See Link: <https://gambiandiaspora.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Gambian-Diaspora-Strategy-Jan-2018v2-1.pdf>

⁸ See GDMD website: <https://diaspora.gm/>

elements of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2015.

b. Policy Integration:

The Gambian Diaspora Strategy is fully incorporated in the Gambian National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21), with the aim of “Enhancing the role of the diaspora in Gambian development”. The government recognises the diaspora as the Eighth Region of The Gambia; the theme of “Diaspora in Development” was identified as the third of the seven ‘NDP Critical Enablers’; and the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia project (MSDG) was prioritised as an NDP flagship project. To further integrate and mainstream migration and diaspora into national development policy and practice, the Office of the President (OP) and MSDG convenes an annual Stake in the National Forum (SNF) as a comprehensive national policy forum involving the diaspora, all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), Non-State Actors and international development partners. The Fifth SNF was held on 8 January 2022.

Furthermore, IOM assisted in the setting up of the National Coordinating Mechanism on Migration (NCM) under the Office of the Vice President (OVP). NCM meets regularly to foster cross-sectoral policy coordination, and has a Thematic Working Group (TWG) on Migration and Development, with MoFA serving as the Secretariat. On 10 November 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnership with IOM convened a ‘Diaspora Roundtable Conference’ as part of its ongoing consultative engagement with the Gambian diaspora. GDMD will continue convening such engagements as a means of facilitating exchange, dialogue and diaspora participation in all aspects policy and implementation, and to strengthen the integration and mainstreaming of diaspora-development within the national policy frameworks.

c. Impact Research:

Both IOM and MSDG as technical partners of GoTG have undertaken initial diaspora-profile research covering Gambians in Italy, United Kingdom and United States. These seek to understand the demography, education, skills, development engagement, business participation, and cultural engagement of the Gambia-born migrants, and multigenerational diaspora. The comprehensive research on Gambians in the UK examined and documented their employment and income profiles, and their contributions to development within the UK and in The Gambia⁹. This study will be developed further and used as sample or template to study diaspora populations elsewhere. The impact research increases the knowledge and understanding of Gambian diaspora-development, and helps expand and enhance the positive and productive aspects of diaspora contributions, including non-financial development inputs.

⁹ Unpublished MSDG manuscript titled ‘Gambians in the United Kingdom 1940 to 2020: Population, Profile and Development Engagement’

d. Diaspora Offices:

The Gambian Diaspora Directorate within Ministry of Foreign Affairs was launched in 2018, with the vision “*For the Gambian diaspora to be the Eighth Region of The Gambia, fully integrated in all aspects of progressive national life*”, and the mission “*To promote, support and facilitate consultative, productive and purposeful engagement of the Gambian diaspora in national development*”¹⁰. It was also mandated “*to be the lead institution for the implementation, monitoring and review of the Diaspora Strategy*”¹¹. In 2021, the Directorate became fully operational, and was re-modelled as the Gambia Diaspora and Migration Directorate (GDMD), under the directorship of a Deputy Permanent Secretary, and a team of civil servants. It works closely with technical and development partners including MSDG and IOM. On 22 December 2021, with support from IOM, it launched the diaspora website and portal (diaspora.gm). In January 2022, with support from MSDG, it started the review, research and consultative process for an updated Gambian Diaspora Strategy (2024-27), and a Long Term Vision, to align with the new National Development Plan (2023-27) and the Vision 2050.

e. Diaspora Finance:

The GDS had specific targets for the issuance of Diaspora Bonds, facilitated Diaspora Direct Investments (DDIs) and creation of a Diaspora Development Fund (DDF). Partly due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, these targets were not achieved by the end of 2021 as scheduled. However, even during the pandemic, the Technical Roundtables (TR) on Diaspora Finance continued to be convened in partnership with MSDG, to develop frameworks, implement action points and maintain stakeholder consultations.

In November 2021, the Capital Market and Securities Act was passed by parliament, and this was the subject of the Seventh TR, held on 1 February 2022. Subsequently, in partnership with MSDG, the Ministry of Finance is finalising work on Diaspora Bonds for issuance in 2022/23; and the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) is setting up a dedicated Diaspora Desk to support diaspora investors and entrepreneurs. In 2020-21, MSDG implemented a pilot project whereby it provided co-finance of \$90,000 to 10 diaspora projects, which in turn generated a further \$860,000 of cash and in-kind resources. Five of the supported projects were on health and education, and addressed challenges and opportunities arising from the COVID19 pandemic¹². For the period 2021-24, the MSDG co-finance programme will be implemented as a form of Diaspora Development Fund of \$1.4 million, with co-investment and financial contributions from diaspora organisations and entrepreneurs, and development partners such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

¹⁰ Report of the First Stake in the Nation (SNF1) on 13 January 2018: <https://gambiandiaspora.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MSDG-BP-5-Stake-in-the-Nation-Forum-Jan-2018.pdf>

¹¹ Statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the launch of the Gambian Diaspora Directorate at SNF1, 13 Jan 2018

¹² See page 17 of MSDG Report 2017-21: <https://gambiandiaspora.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/MSDG-Report-2017-2021-Oct-2021-Update.pdf>

f. Accessible Information:

GDMD's newly launched diaspora portal and platform (diaspora.gm) shall be developed further as a main hub for the Gambian diaspora to access databases, links, guidance, briefings, policies and information on different aspects of diaspora-development. The GDMD Director and other government and public sector officials participate in different diaspora online and media platforms. These interactive sessions enhance engagement with diverse diaspora individuals and groups, and provide information and explanations on a range of policy and practical issues.

g. Political Participation:

During 22 years of dictatorship between 1994 and 2016, the population of the Gambian diaspora increased significantly partly due to political repression in the country. There was no space for participation in democratic politics. However, the diaspora and the increased number of political refugees contributed immensely to the defeat of dictatorship and restoration of democracy in The Gambia¹³. Although the 1997 Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia allows the diaspora to vote in presidential and parliamentary elections, they were never allowed to exercise their electoral rights. The Gambian Diaspora Strategy had a commitment to end the diaspora disenfranchisement. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), in partnership with MSDG undertook technical research and analysis on the logistics and operations of diaspora voting, and the Ministry of Finance provided required funding. It is regretted that all modalities were not completed in time for IEC to register the diaspora to enable them to vote in presidential elections in December 2021 and the parliamentary elections in April 2022.

In 2020/2021, MoFA, MSDG and a range of diaspora stakeholders also participated in consultations, gave evidence and made written submissions to the parliamentary Joint Committee examining the 'Elections Bill'. Furthermore, to remove all legal impediments regarding diaspora voting and representation, on 20 June 2021, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of the National Assembly (NA) presented to the Clerk of the NA, a 'Constitutional Amendment (Diaspora Representation) Bill'. This was not formally tabled before parliament was dissolved in March 2022. This and related matter will be pursued in the National Assembly after the parliamentary elections of 9 April 2022. The Constitutional Amendment Bill provides for: the demarcation of five Diaspora Constituencies which shall elect diaspora parliamentarians; and end the current provisions which bar Gambians with dual citizens from being elected to the National assembly or to be appointed as Cabinet Ministers.

¹³ See 2017 publication on 'The Politics of Migration Governance in The Gambia'; 2018 article by Foreign Policy Research Institute; and 2018 CS Monitor magazine article:
https://www.arnold-bergstraesser.de/sites/default/files/gambian_migration_politics_zankeraltrodge.pdf
<https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/08/the-case-of-the-gambia-a-template-for-democratic-transition/>
<https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2018/0129/Gambia-s-diaspora-helped-oust-a-dictator.-Now-they-re-asking-What-s-next>

h. Flexible Modalities:

The 1997 Constitution of The Gambia allowed dual citizenships for Gambians, having lifted the prohibition previously imposed by the 1972 Constitution. The Gambian embassies and missions have the capacity to issue Consular Cards to members of the diaspora at a minimal fee. With the introduction of biometric passports, applicants need to be physically present in order to have their passports renewed. In partnership with MSDG, options are being studied and explored about how the Gambia Immigration Department (GID) can simplify renewal and issuance of passports and Identity Cards to Gambians resident abroad. The solutions may involve use of technology, and/or 'registration visits' by GID officials to Gambian embassies and missions, to process passport and ID card applications, for migrants as well as second generation Gambians.

Regarding investment modalities, the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) Act 2015 provides incentives and tax reliefs for investors through Special Investment Certificates (SIC) and Domestic Investment Certificates (DICs). Foreign investors can only benefit from the SIC, but the Gambian diaspora have the flexibility to benefit from both SIC and DIC schemes. GIEPA has also reviewed its services to the diaspora and is introducing new services, including the creation of a dedicated 'Diaspora Desk'. In 2017, in partnership with MSDG, the government facilitated training of 70 senior officials on 'Optimising Actual, Virtual and Circular Diaspora Return'. This training programme will be updated and offered to new cohorts of public officials.

i. Diaspora Experts:

The Gambia Diaspora and Migration Directorate (GDMD), in partnership with IOM, implemented a Diaspora Mentorship Program in 2020 and 2021. A cohort of Gambian diaspora professionals with technical expertise and experience were recruited and deployed on short-term assignments at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Health. In 2020/21, MSDG also supported 10 diaspora experts and recent returnees, to run 3-6 month projects in Gambia, in partnerships with Ministry of Health, Labour Department, National Assembly, University of The Gambia, schools and civil society organisations.

One of the workshops at the Fifth SNF on 8 January 2022 was on 'Demand-Led Matching and Deployment of Diaspora Professionals' co-convened with the Gambia Diaspora Experts Initiative (GDEI) and the government's Personnel Management Office (PMO). Other Gambian diaspora experts have undertaken technical assignments and development projects in Gambia, through private arrangements they made with their employers and with the partner institutions and organisations in Gambia. GDMD will continue to provide support and endorsement to make the deployment of diaspora experts easier, and to expand the practice, especially to sectors with shortages in specific and specialist skills, expertise and disciplines.

j. Skills Mapping:

GDMD is working on a National Diaspora Database to document and profile highly-skilled and specialist Gambian diaspora professionals. This will serve as a ‘pool of diaspora experts’ to facilitate technical assignments, skills transfer, institutional cooperation and other forms of practical collaborations for community and national development, and to actualise brain-gain. GDMD will continue collaboration with other organisations and institutions working on skills mapping and knowledge transfer, including the Gambia Diaspora Experts Initiative (GDEI), IOM and the Personnel Management Office (PMO).

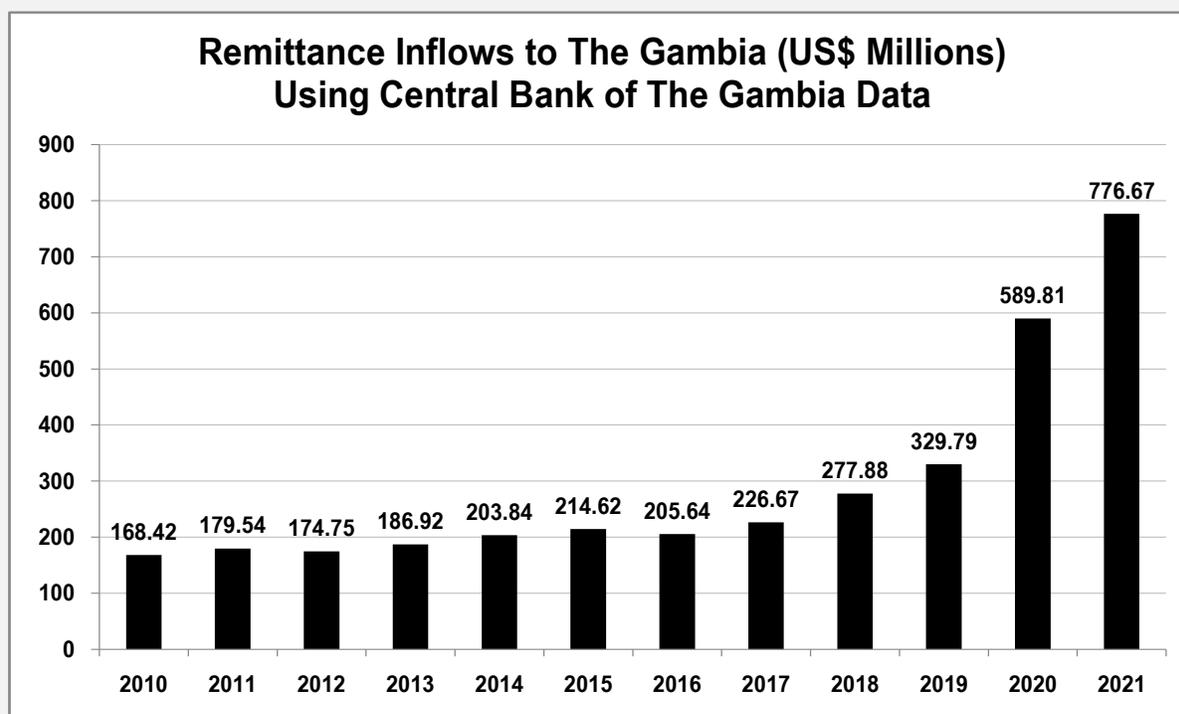
Objective 20: Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants

Migrant and diaspora remittances constitute one of the most important sources of hard currency and forms of development finance in The Gambia. Consequently, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MOFEA), Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG) and the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia Project (MSDG) Project team have been convening regular Technical Roundtables (TR) for stakeholders since January 2018. These roundtables discuss, analyse and implement improvements in policy and practice relating to remittances and diaspora finance.

a. Significance of Remittances to The Gambia:

At the Seventh TR on 1 February 2022, the CBG announced that the updated and verified remittance inflow to The Gambia through formal channels for 2021 was \$776.67 million, being about 62% of national GDP. In 2020, remittances to The Gambia increased by an unprecedented 79%, to the sum of \$589.81, from \$329.79 million in 2019. This is one of the highest annual rates of increase in the world. Although a previous upward trend was recorded since 2017, the dramatic increase in 2020 was a direct result of the COVID19 pandemic. With restrictions in international travel, and lockdowns which reduced cash transactions, Gambians in the diaspora who previously used informal channels for remittances were forced to use formal channels. The unprecedented increase in remittance inflow to The Gambia was one of the subjects of the Fifth TR held online on 3 February 2021, convened by CBG and MSDG, and reported by Bloomberg¹⁴. Participants included the Ministry of Finance, the IMF Resident Representative, the World Bank Lead Economist on Remittances, and the Co-Chair of KNOMAD’s Remittances and Diaspora committee.

¹⁴ Bloomberg report on Gambia’s 2020 remittance inflows: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-04/gambia-s-record-remittances-make-up-for-tourism-losses-imf-says>



© GKP (2022): Remittance Inflows to The Gambia 2010-2021 (Using data from Central Bank of The Gambia)

The further 32% increase in remittances in 2021 from \$589.81 million to \$776.67 million indicates that those who transferred from informal channels are continuing to use the regulated online, digital and formal remittance channels. The data also reveals that in The Gambia in the short-term, remittances are highly resilient and countercyclical. The Gambia is a signatory to the 2020 ‘Call to Action on Remittances’, in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, led by Switzerland, United Kingdom and the World Bank. The Central Bank of The Gambia was one of five countries (together with Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Jordan and Mexico) that spoke as respondents at the Stocktaking Meeting ‘From Crisis Response to Advancing the Development Case’ held on 25 June 2021. The government, together with its partners will continue to implement measures to maintain the resilience and sustainability of remittances and diaspora finance in general.

b. Gambian Remittance Data:

With the end of dictatorship in 2017 and the restoration of democracy and human rights in The Gambia, political and macroeconomic stability has improved. This has encouraged the diaspora to increase their remittances steadily, and more funds are being transferred to invest in real estate, and in Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs). In June 2020, CBG and MSDG agreed to undertake technical work to review and ensure compliance of remittance reporting in line with IMF’s Balance of Payment Manual (BPM6). This led to further research and analysis which were presented and discussed at the Fourth TR held online on 9 September 2020. The action points agreed included the development and implementation of methodologies

to identify: remittances by non-Gambians sent to Gambia (to be excluded from totals); non-MTO bank to bank transfers/remittances (to be included in totals); remittances used for Diaspora Direct Investments (DDI); and valuation and estimation of informal and in-kind remittances.

CBG has already developed and implemented a real-time platform for collecting and monitoring data from the over 150 registered Forex Bureaus that serve as remittance pay-out agents. Through ongoing engagement and support from CBG as the regulator, The Gambia has achieved a high level of compliance regarding the timely submission of monthly remittance reports by the Money Transfer Operators, Banks and other financial institutions operating the remittance market. The remittance data produced and published by CBG which tends to be higher than the amounts reported by the World Bank, is increasingly being referenced by different policymakers and development practitioners. CBG continues to work with IMF, World Bank, MSDG and other partners, to improve the quality and accessibility of remittance data in The Gambia.

c. Remittance Transaction Costs:

GCM incorporated Target 10.7c of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) to reduce the average cost of remittances to less than 3%, and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5% by 2030. The World Bank monitors the average remittance transaction cost (comprising transfer fees and forex costs) of sending \$200 to The Gambia. In the past five years, the costs as a percentage of the amount transferred are as follows¹⁵: 12.46% in 2016, 9.72% in 2017, 12.67% in 2018, 13.26% in 2019, and 9.16% in 2020. However, for some corridors such as UK-Gambia, some Money Transfer Operations (MTOs) have been offering remittance services at lower than 3% costs. RemitSCOPE reported that in the third quarter of 2020, the lowest remittance cost for the UK-Gambia corridor was 1%¹⁶.

Within the country, a structured, regular and consistent programme for monitoring and analysing disaggregated data on the cost of remittances to The Gambia is not yet in place. In response to this need, the current MSDG project (2021-024) includes activities on regular monitoring of transaction costs, as well as informal remittance inflows to The Gambia. These will be implemented in partnership with CBG, Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) and other development partners. Monitoring activities will concentrate on the countries with the highest Gambian migrant and diaspora populations, and the highest levels of remittances. About 60% of remittances to The Gambia originate from the USA and UK; about 25% from the rest of Europe and 15% from the rest of the world.

d. Remittance Sector Regulation:

The Government of The Gambia believes that open and fair competition in the remittance market is an effective means of reducing the cost of remittances. As such, the Central Bank of The

¹⁵ World Bank Remittance Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.RMT.COST.IB.ZS?locations=GM>

¹⁶ RemitSCOPE data on The Gambia: <https://remitscope.org/africa/gambia>

Gambia as an enabling regulator has continued to make it easy for new Money Transfer Operations (MTOs) to enter the Gambian remittance market. In 2020, The Gambia had the second highest RemitSCOPE ‘Openness to Operate’ score (95) in Africa, behind Kenya (score of 100) and ahead of Rwanda (score of 88). In 2022, about 40 MTOs are operating in The Gambia, the number having increased by about 60% since 2018. Of these, the MTO companies owned by Gambian diaspora entrepreneurs are increasing their share of the market, and independent surveys by the World Bank and RemitSCOPE show that these Gambian-owned MTOs offer the lowest transactions costs in the market. They have also led innovations in providing new services such as ‘remittance for goods’ whereby the remitter transfers cash to the MTO, and the recipient receives goods and services such as foodstuff, building materials, credit for electricity supply or mobile phone airtime. Some of them have also secured licenses to operate as Micro-Finance Institutions (MFI), thereby extending their portfolio of financial services.

Furthermore, the regulatory framework has also encouraged increases in the number of remittance pay-out agents. In 2021, remittance pay-out services were offered by: all the 12 commercial banks with their 80 branches; all the 5 registered MFIs with their 112 branches; the two Mobile Money Operators (MMOs); most of the 153 registered Forex Bureaus with their 833 branches; some of the 64 Credit Unions; and all the estimated 150 MTO-owned outlets and agents. CBG has also continued to facilitate improved interoperability for different financial services in The Gambia, through online services and platforms namely: Automated Clearing House (ACH), Real Time Gross Settlements (RTGS)¹⁷ and Gamswitch¹⁸.

e. Diaspora Investment in The Gambia:

Based on verified Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG) data, The Gambia is one of the most remittance-dependent countries in the world. This is recognised by the government and reflected in the priorities of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MOFEA). Diaspora finance and investment will be featured as a priority area in the new National Development Plan for 2023-27, covering Diaspora Bonds. Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI), tax reliefs, custom waivers and other incentives. MSDG has started consultations for a consolidated ‘Diaspora Investment Incentives Scheme (DIIS)’, reflecting amongst other things: diaspora under-utilisation of existing foreign and domestic investment incentives provided by the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA); the new Capital Market and Securities Act, enacted in November 2021; Gambia’s increasing dependence on diaspora financial resources; and the need to attract more diaspora savings into financial products and enterprise ventures in The Gambia.

The National Development Plan 2018-21 had a commitment for the issuance of two Diaspora Bonds by 2021. This has not happened partly due to the financial disruption and uncertainty

¹⁷ Central Bank of The Gambia website: <https://www.cbg.gm/real-time-gross-settlements-rtgs->

¹⁸ Gamswitch website: <https://gamswitch.com/>

caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Second Technical Roundtable convened by MOFEA, CBG and MSDG on 6 March 2019 explored frameworks for the issuance of a Gambian Diaspora Bonds. In 2022, MOFEA accelerated its collaboration with MSDG, and has taken a decision in principle to issue the first Gambian Diaspora Bond in 2022/23, using the fixed-rate Government Bond structure, which is already used to finance local and national infrastructure projects. In February 2022, the process started for identifying suitable public-benefit projects to be financed by Diaspora Bond funds. In 2021/22, The Gambia also took a leading role in championing the establishment of an African Diaspora Finance Corporation (ADFC) as an African Union Legacy Project on diaspora investment, which was formally endorsed at the AU summit in February 2022¹⁹.

f. Increasing Financial Inclusion in The Gambia:

The 2019 Finscope report indicated that financial inclusion in The Gambia has remained very low, with 69% of the adult population not accessing formal or informal financial services. Only 5% use banking products and services; 14% access other non-bank formal services, and 12% use informal financial services²⁰. In 2018, UNCDF opened an office in The Gambia, and had since been assisting the Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG) to formulate the country's first ever National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS). The process formally started in 2019, supported by Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) and the European Union. On 26 January 2022, The Gambia's NFIS was launched²¹, incorporating Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and an implementation Action Plan. The NFIS reflects the importance of remittances in household finances in The Gambia, and its role in increasing financial inclusion. Remittances are designated as one of the seven thematic Working Groups under the NFIS Governance Structure. There is a need for updated and regular financial inclusion surveys, to inform the implementation of the NFIS action points.

In 2020, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) commissioned DMA Global to undertake research on remittances in The Gambia under its Platform for Remittances, Investments and Migrants' Entrepreneurship (PRIME Africa) programme. IFAD and the consultants were assisted by MSDG and CBG, facilitating their participation in the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Technical Roundtable (TRs) on 9 January 2020, 9 September 2020 and 3 February 2021. With the TR being a network of the key players in the remittance market and the banking and financial institutions in The Gambia, the IFAD research team engaged with, and interviewed key informants from the remittance and finance sector. This led to the publication of the 2020 'RemitScope: The Gambia Country Diagnostics'²².

¹⁹ In February 2022, the African Union endorsed the establishments of ADFC: <https://au.int/ar/node/41664>

²⁰ Finscope Consumer Survey Highlights : The Gambia 2019 : https://finmark.org.za/system/documents/files/000/000/147/original/FinScope-Gambia_Pocket-guide-28-11-2019_Final.pdf?1594135120

²¹ UNCDF Press Statement on the Gambian NFIS: <https://mm4p.uncdf.org/article/7460/launching-gambias-nfis>

²² RemitSCOPE Gambia Report: https://remitscope.org/africa/pdfs/Gambia_Diagnostic_Remitscope_Africa.pdf

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IFAD set up a National Remittance Sector Network (NRSN) in The Gambia and convenes regular consultative meetings. In December 2020, it published a Call for Proposal to provide financial support for projects in The Gambia relating to: reducing remittance transaction costs, accelerating digitization of remittances and payments ecosystem; leveraging remittances to deepen financial inclusion; and expanding the formal channels for remittances. In 2022-24, IFAD will be co-financing major projects in The Gambia focusing on mobile money and digitalization.

Given the low level of financial inclusion and the potential to increase the impact of remittances, the diaspora-led MSDG Technical Cooperation Programme for 2021-24 has a number of project activities on remittances and financial inclusion aimed at both remittance senders and recipients. These will be implemented in partnership and collaboration with public, private, diaspora, civil society and international organisations. The remittance, investment and financial inclusion activities include: enhanced credibility of remittance data collection and monitoring; ascertaining and reducing transaction costs; understanding and estimating informal remittance flows; monitoring usage of formal and informal remittance funds; increasing usage of formal remittance channels; delivering financial planning skills training for remittance senders and receivers, with specific focus on women and rural areas; promoting access to low-cost digital remittance services; support banks and financial institutions to design and offer remittance-related financial products; technical coordination for the issuance of Diaspora Bonds for community assets/facilities; provide co-finance, business and project advice and support to diaspora investors, entrepreneurs and social enterprises; facilitate the creation of decent jobs in rural and urban areas through diaspora investment.

GCM Objective 21: Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration

The Gambia has in recent years been at the forefront of cooperation on return, readmission and reintegration. Following the Gambia's participation to the Africa-EU Valletta Summit on Migration in 2015 and its Action Plan and joint final declaration has seen thousands of Gambian citizens returning in a safe and dignified manner with the support of IOM. Since January 2017 until January 2022, IOM in collaboration with the Government of The Gambia has provided support to 6,647 stranded Gambians with their return to The Gambia with 4,696 being provided with reintegration assistance, including assistance to the communities in The Gambia where returnees have returned to. Since January 2019 to January 2022, the Government of The Gambia in collaboration with IOM has also provided support to 120 stranded migrants and victims of trafficking to return to their countries of origin. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services is also provided to sustain the holistic reintegration of migrants who went through traumatic and exploitative situations as part of their migratory journey.

The Gambia Red Cross equally continues to address the vulnerabilities of migrants especially those returning by providing first aid and family reunification services through phone calls during receptions for migrants to contact their families and loved ones, and to maintain their dignity at all stages of their migratory journey including during returns.

The Government of The Gambia has also under the framework of the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM) set up a Thematic Working Group on Return and Reintegration which is headed by the Ministry of Interior that provides technical advice in collaboration with key stakeholders through technical or thematic working group meetings. A TOR and a workplan have already been developed and the Ministry is also working on a return, readmission and reintegration strategy.

GCM Objective 22: Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits

The Gambia is a party to the Supplementary Act A/SA 5/07/13 Relating to the General Convention on Social Security of Member States of Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) 17-18 July 2013. The Convention guarantees portability of social security rights within ECOWAS and aims to extend social security coverage to migrants and their families. Additionally, non-national pensioners, including migrant workers and permanent residents, in The Gambia are provided with a Type A Residence Permit that allows for portability of social security benefits from any country that allows such portability, examples of which include the United Kingdom and Ghana. Pensioners are provided with a Type A Residence Permit as outlined in the Immigration Act Chapter 16:02 that allows for portability of social security benefits. The Permit further allows for residence rights but not the right to work.²³

Most documented Gambian migrants and diaspora in Europe and the United States are able to access their pension, social security and other earned benefits when they return to The Gambia. The challenges of access and portability of entitlements and earned benefits remains as regards undocumented Gambian migrants. The Government of The Gambia continues to seek the cooperation of other governments and development partners to address these challenges.

GCM Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration:

The Gambia having endorsed the GCM, which is rooted in the principle of international cooperation to manage migration, have signed cooperation in migration management with the Swiss Government on the 12th January 2021 in a multidimensional approach such as individual and institutional capacity building and training for the stakeholders in migration and a

²³ National Migration Governance Indicator (MGI), The Gambia, March 2021.

commitment to initiate contacts with potential partners to identify practical measures to support The Gambia in ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration.

The Ministry of Foreign affairs led a technical delegation from 31st July to 13th August 2021 to EU Members States to mobilize resources for the smooth reintegration of Gambian returnees and to explore opportunities for bilateral labour agreements. This was aimed to assist Gambians to travel legally to Europe and at the same time acquire skills as well as earn income to support their families in The Gambia. The mission also sought partnerships in supporting MSME development. The visit provided an opportunity for the Gambia to interact with related support institutions and in the process articulated local support for long-term sustainability in efforts geared towards a comprehensive migration management program.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, as the custodian of the country's national development planning is closely coordinating with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) of the Gambia to conduct a Common Country Analysis (CCA) which presents the status of the country's progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond. The analysis will help design the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) which aims to align with the priorities of the Green Recovery-Focused National Development Plan 2023-2027 and the Long Term Vision 2050. As part of the country's stakeholder consultation process, authorities both at national and regional level are being engaged in the identification of their needs and priorities and further integrate them into development strategies, programmes as well as plans. This among others, is to ensure good governance as well as policy coherence and further contribute to effective implementation of the Global Compact for Migration.

IV. Means of Implementation

The Gambia continues to be a country of origin, transit, and destination for migrants. As such the promotion of safe, orderly, and regular migration cannot be overemphasized. During the review process, while relative progress was noted, a plethora of challenges including financial, human, and other structural issues were identified as bottlenecks for successful implementation of GCM objectives. Moreover, improving the technical capacities of stakeholders, strengthened coordination, and increased financial input will support in the implementation of GCM strategies and objectives which are well captured in the NMP. Capacity building and education trainings should be provided to a broad spectrum of migration actors including policy makers, law enforcement agencies, and labor and social welfare officers. Efforts should be directed at ensuring that the collection and analysis of data is expanded beyond data currently available to identify key migration issues.

Current mechanisms, including the designation of focal persons, are relevant and seemingly effective, though it was suggested that focal persons be supported to ensure sustainability and

timely delivery of required information as well as support in the implementation of GCM objectives in their various departments and agencies to ensure their effective implementation and monitoring.

Additionally, all 23 objectives of the GCM have been distributed and are being addressed by the eight (8) Thematic Working Groups set up under the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM) (see **Annex A**). The Government of The Gambia under the leadership of the Office of the Vice President will continue to engage the NCM TWGs to monitor implementation progress of each targeted GCM objective.

V. Perspectives (Next steps)

The two rounds of voluntary review processes at the national level in 2021 and 2022 have given The Gambia an opportunity to engage and involve various stakeholders on the state of GCM implementation, articulate government, civil societies as well UN's positions on migration and also identify the challenges affecting the successful implementation of the GCM. The Gambia has come a long way in the implementation of the GCM since its adoption, such as the launch of a National Migration Policy (NMP) 2020- 2030 as well as setting up pivotal mechanisms such as the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM) to support the coordination of migration and migration-related policies and frameworks, including building synergy and complementarity among stakeholders.

From the review, it is evident that to successfully ensure that migration is conducted in a safe, orderly and regular fashion, it is important to strengthen existing institutions and mechanisms, through mainstreaming migration across all relevant policy domains as migration is a crosscutting topic.

In addition, the upcoming Green Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (NDP) as well as the Long - Term Development Vision (Vision 2050) should look into comprehensively covering issues surrounding migration by taking into account the development potential that migration holds for The Gambia. Generally, the NDP which will end in 2022 sets out a framework to “deliver good governance and accountability, social cohesion, and national reconciliation and a revitalized and transformed economy for the wellbeing of all Gambians,” however, it only highlighted the importance of diaspora engagement in national development by listing it as one of the seven critical enablers of the NDP, and lightly touched on the importance of protection of vulnerable migrants and facilitation of regular pathways. However it has been flagged in many forum for the inclusion of migration as priority in the next NDP and consultation have started to that effect.

It is also recommended that the migration data collection move away from the current approach by various institutions to include studies that will help track and monitor the implementation of key migration indicators and not be limited to the day-to-day internal data available. This

requires improving migration data collection as well as ensuring that all migration data collection efforts are well coordinated and properly disseminated among the various stakeholders and the public. One suggested strategy for timely data collection was the need to mainstream migration data into various periodic surveys that are conducted by the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS). Moreover, mainstreaming of migration into the upcoming Green Recovery-Focused National Development Plan 2023 – 2027 as well as Long-Term Development Vision (Vision 2050) that the country is currently working on, is critical to adequately respond to the various migration related challenges as well as harness and promote various migration related development potentials and opportunities, which will at the same time contribute to effective implementation of the NMP as well as SDGs.

This review has revealed that the Government of The Gambia has been implementing the entire 23 objectives of the GCM. In March 2022, The Gambia has been admitted as a GCM Champion Country being recognition of the tremendous and significant strides made through the NCM and various TWGs. Consequently, The Gambia recently participated at the Ministerial meeting of GCM Champion Countries in March 2022 where The Gambia made pledges for the forthcoming IMRF to achieve the following before the next IMRF in 2026 including cascading the NCM to Regional Coordination Mechanism levels (RCM), full implementation of all the GCM Objectives, enactment of anti-smuggling bill and ensuring whole-of-society approach to migration management and governance. This will include UN Networks on Migration, CSOs, Media, Red Cross Society amongst others.

Finally, since no implementation plan for the GCM was developed since its adoption, it was recommended that a plan be developed to guide the implementation of the 15 priority objectives selected by The Gambia, as well as define how to strengthen implementation efforts towards the remaining 8 objectives. It should also be noted that during the initial review process in November 2020, the review examined The Gambia's implementation progress on only selected GCM objectives which were considered key at the time of the review, and not specifically the 15 prioritized objectives. However, this current update has revealed implementation of all of the 23 objectives of the GCM.

The Government recognizes the fact that the practical implementation of many aspects of GCM will continue to involve multiple partners including international organizations, civil society, diaspora organizations, private sector and others. The government will strengthen its role as an enabler and facilitator for enhanced implementation of GCM.

The Gambia, in partnership with all stakeholders, will continue to strengthen its institutional setups and mechanisms to develop an actionable plan to share the updated review report as well as the recommendations received at the first International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in May 2022.

Annex A

National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM)

