The Political Economy of Migration Governance in the Gambia

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By Judith Altrogge and Franzisca Zanker[1]

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About the project

The Political Economy of West African Migration Governance project endeavors to highlight the *political dimension of migration governance* (i.e. what are the real [sometimes hidden] interests and power asymmetries) and the *multiple stakeholders* (including civil society and sub-national ones). To do this, the project considers how migration governance instruments and institutions are made and implemented, the stakes and stakeholders involved or excluded and the societal discourse that surrounds these interests. The qualitative study focuses on four case studies—the Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal—and is based on fieldwork including semi-structured interviews in the respective countries.

The project is based at the Arnold-Bergstraesser Institute (ABI) in Freiburg, Germany and coordinated by Dr Franzisca Zanker. It is funded by the Stiftung Mercator and is undertaken within the framework of the Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration (MEDAM). MEDAM is a research and consultation project that identifies and closes gaps in existing research and develops specific recommendations for policy makers.

This report builds on a previous pilot study from 2017. Judith Altrogge carried out additional fieldwork in the Gambia to update the study. This took place between April and June 2019 in the Greater Banjul area.

About the authors

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Migration is an important and contested societal issue in the Gambia, reflected in national politics. First and foremost, **irregular migration** is highly politically volatile. Many Gambians have left the country in the last decade, mainly in search of employment and learning opportunities in Europe. Many continue to do so, even after the political change. With migration towards Europe and staying there becoming increasingly difficult, the return of irregular migrants has become inevitable. However, returning too many too quickly will overburden the country's struggling government, risking its political stability. Secondly, **diaspora migration** is increasingly becoming a central policy field. Through direct diaspora engagement in policies, their economic and political influence is set to continue increasing. The government should however be attentive to the various interests of different migrant groups, which is particularly difficult due to the politicized nature of irregular migration.

This, thirdly, relates to the uncertain legal status of the many Gambian **asylum seekers** abroad that have only limited chances of success. The primary reason for political asylum has become obsolete with the regime change. However, not all reasons for asylum are bygone, making a case-by-case review of asylum applications necessary to ensure conformity with international norms on refugee protection.

Fourthly, the Gambia has one of the highest **immigration** rates in West Africa, but this remains a politically relatively neutral topic, in all likelihood due to the ECOWAS freedom of movement protocols. Yet, the government could more actively support regional mobility, e.g. by streamlining the bureaucratic governance for immigrants, or by counteracting harassment at its borders.

Finally, concerning **displaced people in the Gambia**, progressive refugee protection laws and practices exist, including the right to work and opportunities for self-settlement. The protection of refugees is, however, not prioritized by the new government, probably due to the fact that the refugee population has greatly reduced in the last years.

We find that:

1. **Migration governance** remains challenging due to the tricky balancing act between domestic (remittances from migration) and international interests (reducing migration). Without a bold state-lead approach to steer migration, the government circumvents confrontation of both these interests. However, it also gradually loses credibility of its own rhetoric towards both sides. Implementing the new national migration policy offers the chance to exchange with the society more pro-actively on possibilities of governing migration. Essential is also what happens beyond the continent matters; only with more access to legal pathways, can the urge for irregular migration be reduced.

2. The **political stakes of migration** in the Gambia are high, especially when it comes to the return of rejected asylum seekers. Aiming at longer-term reintegration and development is a right step from an individual perspective, especially since irregular

migration comes at grave humanitarian costs. Better reintegration programs do not make up for the political nature of return however, which is particularly evident for forced return. Large-scale return will risk the development and stability of the Gambia. Political interests from the Global North of reducing numbers of rejected asylum seekers should not prevail over achieving sustainable development.

3. The **societal discourse** around migration embraces the challenges implied in migration governance in the Gambia. The pull of Europe, tied to the strong tourism sector and long-established migrant networks, cannot be overestimated. This makes categories of regular and irregular migrants as well as asylum seekers blurry, leading to little relevance of their political and legal differences. A more pro-active communication from the government is necessary, but would need to be based on more realistic ambitions of return on the side of European countries. Lastly, it is vital not only to address *rhetorically* why people should not leave the country but also to create reasons to stay in a more comprehensive and thus inclusive way.

1 Introducing the socio-political context

This report analyses migration politics in the Gambia. After an unexpected regime change in January 2017 gave an impetus for political change, the country is currently reconfiguring their interests and political stakes, including those related to migration. Looking at different forms of migration—both emigration and immigration—the report considers their governance as well as the political stakes and societal discourse tied to it.

1.1 The context

Gaining independence from Great Britain in 1965, the Gambia was ruled for 32 years by President Dawda Jawara. A military coup in 1994 set an end to the relatively stable period of Gambia's 'first Republic', with army lieutenant Yaya Jammeh seizing power. Despite initial popularity, Jammeh became increasingly repressive and despotic, especially after an attempted coup attempt in 2014. He co-opted major businesses, with the economic sector suffering significantly.

In December 2016, an opposition coalition led by Adama Barrow won presidential elections, taking Gambians and the international community by surprise. The coalition included most opposition parties, and their campaign was heavily supported, both financially and strategically, by the Gambian diaspora. Jammeh refused to accept this result. It took the threat of regional troops from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to enforce the elections militarily—a striking move in the name of democracy (Hartmann 2017) which made Jammeh finally step down in January 2017, after 40 days of political impasse. The government that stepped in has inherited a bankrupt state, high unemployment rates—especially among the youth—and a dysfunctional labor market and educational sector. Moreover, the security sector is overblown and highly politicized. The new government set out to completely restructure Gambian politics in accordance with human rights, democracy and good governance practices.

In two major coalition re-shuffles, President Barrow dissolved the transition's coalition government and set the terms for his own future political ambitions. The re-shuffles created a loss of governmental power for the Gambia's biggest (long-time opposition) party, the United Democratic Party (UDP) and some former Ministers from the Jammeh government have been reappointed. Beyond the power shifts in the cabinet, there is ambiguity about how long President Barrow will remain in office. While the transition coalition had initially set itself a three-year period, the constitution foresees a term of five years. President Barrow has now opted to stay in power for a full-length term of five years, and is making preparations to run as presidential candidate again. This move is hotly contested. (*Foroyaa* 2019a)

The government launched a National Development Plan (NDP) as the basis of its policy-making in early 2018, which formulates ambitious objectives for the years from 2018 to 2021 across a broad spectrum of topics. The most visible achievements of the new government lie in the establishment of freedom of speech and press and the processing of crimes of the

former regime in the 'Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission' (TRRC), which is currently holding their hearings. The TRRC is particularly innovative in encouraging wide participation from the general public (Amnesty International 2019a). In addition, the 'Gambian Constitutional Review Commission' (CRC) is in the drafting stage of a new constitution. A widespread security sector reform remains to be implemented.

With an average population age of 17 (UNDP 2018), many Gambians have not yet experienced life in a democratic system. They have high expectations of the new government to deliver what it promised, and after initial enthusiasm, impatience for more visible changes is high. After two and a half years in office, the government's overall reform achievements and general implementation of the development plan remain low.

1.2 Migration in the Gambia

Migration and mobility is long embedded in the Gambia, not least due to its geographical position, its small size, the heterogeneous communities that live there[2] and the ensuing economic and political implications this holds.

Historically, the whole West African region was regarded as one economic space within which trade in goods and services flowed, and people moved freely for many reasons such as trade, fleeing from conflict and to search for new land (Adepoju 2009). Colonization, the slave trade and cash crops brought new political and economic structures that drew on this culture of regional migration (Colvin 1981). Up until today, borders continue to be porous and Gambians have extended lineages over large parts of West Africa (Saine et al. 2013). Since 1979, regional mobility is enshrined in a number of ECOWAS protocols establishing the freedom of movement.[3]

Moreover, since the 1970s, the Gambia has developed an expansive tourism sector that has been one of the most important economic sectors in the country. Mainly targeted at Europeans, it strengthens ties across continents on individual levels, the exchange with tourists adding to the pull of western countries. Day-to-day interactions with Europeans encourage Euro-African businesses, friendships, families and the inter-continental movements this brings with it.[4] While in the 1970s, 90% of Gambian migrants only went to neighboring Senegal (Hultin et al. 2017, 337), especially since the 1980s inter-continental migration has risen significantly in both numbers and social relevance.

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[2] Gambia's population is made up of around nine ethnic groups, the largest being Mandinka which accounts for around 40% of the population, followed by Fula (18,8%), Wolof (16,5%), Jola (10,6%) and Soninke (9%) (Kebbeh 2013).

[3] The 1979 Protocol A/P.1/5/79 relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment together with the 1985 Supplementary Protocol A/SP.1/7/85; the 1986 Supplementary Protocol A/SP.1/7/86; the 1989 Supplementary Protocol A/SP 1/6/89 and the 1990 Supplementary Protocol A/SP 2/5/90 are known as the 'free movement protocols.'

[4] The Gambia is also infamous for its sex tourism industry (see Nyanza et al. 2005).

Today, mobility within the region still accounts for most movements across the Gambian borders, matching the general fact that most mobility actually occurs within Africa (Flahaux and De Haas 2016). However, Gambian emigrants also opt for Europe as a destination more often than migrants from other West African countries (European Commission 2018). In the 2010s, Gambian emigration towards Europe through the so-called 'backway' (see below) has reached a dimension that is often referred to as a mass phenomenon. Thus, starting as a privilege for the very few, emigration towards Europe turned into a wide-spread strategy in coping with the slowly increasing economic hardship of the dictatorship and political restrictions (Kebbeh 2013, 3).

According to the UN, 87,532 Gambians lived abroad in 2017 (UN DESA 2017), making up around 4% of the Gambian population, though this number might in fact be significantly higher, with reasonable estimates up to 7%, or 140,000 (*The Standard* 2017).[5] The development impact is unquestionable: while remittances amounted to $245 million in 2018, Foreign Direct Investments only stood at $5.45 million in 2017 (World Bank 2019b).

More than 45,000 Gambians arrived in the EU by irregular means between 2009 and 2018, representing more than 2% of the entire country's population (Frontex 2019). Within the EU, Italy and Germany have become the top destination countries for Gambian migrants since 2012 (Eurostat 2019a), while numbers of Gambians in Great Britain have stagnated and even slightly reduced in Spain (Altrogge 2019).

1.3 Overview of Migration Governance in the Gambia

The issue of migration has no doubt become increasingly politically important to the Gambia. Some scholars even argue—and many Gambians agree with this—that the surprising election win can be accredited in parts to Barrow's promise to deal with the issue (e.g. Hultin et al. 2017).[6] The limited attempts to create a national migration strategy were superficial at best, marred like everything else by the despotic nature of Jammeh's regime.

After the change in government, the Ministry of Interior started the drafting of an overarching National Migration Policy. The policy, which is expected to be endorsed by the cabinet in 2019, will cover different areas of migration comprehensively, including for example internal migration, labor migration, diaspora migration, and return migration, and

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[5] First, the relatively comprehensive and much cited data on international migrant stock by the United Nations (UN DESA 2017), for example, does not include migrants with a pending or rejected asylum status, neglecting a majority of recent Gambian migrants and thus significantly diluting the Gambian migrant stock. Secondly, different ways to measure migration or to count migrants make a detailed interpretation necessary to avoid misinterpretation (e.g. flows vs. stocks, asylum applications as basis of tracking migrant stocks in Europe, etc.). Thirdly, especially in the ECOWAS region, the capacities to record emigrants or transit migrants are particularly low. For example, the Gambian Bureau of Statistics is severely underfunded—a census that was carried out in 2013 was only published in full length in 2017.

[6] Unless otherwise stated, the information and opinions in this report are based on our fieldwork data, see below.

leaves their implementation to various ministries. The drafting process has been delayed considerably, which may be due to administrative challenges especially prevalent for inter-ministerial portfolios, and frequent personnel changes. Another reason might be the political sensitivity of the issue of return that dragged down the overall process. According to one of our interlocutors, there was substantial hesitation among the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs over who should take the lead on the issue of irregular migration for some time due to this (Interview, anonymous, June 2019). The Ministry of Interior is in charge of dealing with irregular migration.

Parallel to the development of the migration policy, the Office of the Vice President is currently developing a National Coordination Mechanism on Migration which is supposed to function as a central platform to discuss migration matters and oversee the implementation of the National Migration Policy. The mechanism is supposed to bring relevant governmental and international stakeholders together in different thematic technical working groups that reflect the various sub-areas of the migration policy. The mechanism is, with all probability, going to be established under the Office of the Vice President instead of a singular Ministry, lifting the overall coordination of migration policy to a politically more high-profile platform than the ministerial level.

Beyond these two initiatives still under development, migration governance is divided between different ministries, in line with its crosscutting nature. For example, the political mandate for irregular migration lies with the Ministry of the Interior, whilst the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad oversee the diaspora portfolio. These two types of migration, arguably the most important, are approached quite differently in the country's NDP. Irregular migration is depicted as one central indicator for the crisis of the country (Republic of the Gambia 2018a, 25). However, there is no segment focusing on irregular migration, and no specific strategies, programs or indicators have been set with only vague references to youth employment. In contrast stands the diaspora who are given a central place in the NDP, with 13 specific objectives set to 'expand, enhance and optimize the role of the diaspora in national development, as valued partners' (ibd., 129). These goals include securing voter's rights for Gambians abroad, setting up a diaspora development fund, and reducing remittance transaction costs, among other things.

Apart from the Gambian government, a number of other actors have stakes when it comes to migration governance. These political interest groups include the international community, particularly the EU and its member states, but also the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the National Youth Council (NYC), among others.

The European Union (EU) is the largest financial supporter to the Gambian government, with almost €350 million confirmed support since 2017.[7] As the Gambia is not one of the EU's priority countries under the new EU Partnership Framework, this particularly high

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[7] Bilateral cooperation agreements between the Gambia and other destination countries regarding Gambian migrants pre-existed the change in government, e.g. with Spain (2006) and Italy (2010), Senegal, Taiwan (2012) and Qatar (2010) (Devillard et al. 2015). These bilateral agreements were implemented to varying degrees and it is not known whether they are being followed up by the new governments.

financial commitment is linked to the 'historic democratic transition' (European External Action Service 2018). Of this budget, around 10% is explicitly directed towards tackling irregular migration, financed through the European Union Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF) (European Union 2019).[8]

Migrant return and reintegration has become a field of activity in which Gambian governmental bodies cooperate substantially with international actors, both on a bilateral and multilateral level. The IOM, an organization related to the United Nations (UN) providing services and advice concerning migration to governments and migrants worldwide, opened a country office in June 2017. Mainly implementing a return and reintegration project, the IOM also supports the Gambian government in policy development, as facilitator to the drafting processes of both the National Migration Policy and the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (see above). Like elsewhere, the IOM therefore works towards better 'managing' migration comprehensively, both by creating structures on the policy level and as international implementing partner (Pécoud 2018).

A further important element of the governance of return is, in particular, a non-binding 'good practice' agreement on preferable conditions of forced return from EU member states. The agreement was developed between the EU and the Gambian government in May 2018 and started to be implemented in November 2018. The approach coincides with the general turn towards informal readmission politics between the EU and Sub-Saharan African states (Slagter 2019). However, since March 2019, a temporary moratorium declared by the Gambian government has halted forced return from the EU.

With the political focus on youth empowerment, the NYC as primary representative body of the young generation in the Gambia has developed a central role in youth-related policy-making and project implementation. The NYC is a public agency mandated to mobilize, coordinate and supervise youth organizations, implement national youth programs and advise government on youth matters.[9] The Council has a unique role between national politics, civil society representation and implementing international projects.

1.4 Methods and Structure of the Report

The report is a qualitative study based on expert interviews and one focus group conducted with Gambian returnees from Libya. Fieldwork took place in May/June 2017 and in April/May 2019 in the Greater Banjul area. Therefore, the information and opinions in this report are based on 31, plus 25 further interviews with policy makers, politicians, civil society activists, diaspora leaders and academic experts in the Gambia and in Germany (see Appendix 1), unless otherwise stated. The focus group was conducted in 2017 with a group of 15 young men who had all returned from Libya in the last 3 months assisted by the IOM. We analyzed

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[8] The largest share of the EU's support—almost 50%—goes into the area of governance/security/rule of law, followed by Infrastructure/ Energy/ Climate Change/ Transport (21%), rural development/agriculture/ food security (12%), and lastly employment/ sustainable growth/ trade (8%) (European Union 2018).
[9] The Gambia National Youth Council website: http://www.nyc.gm/

the interview and focus group transcripts using Max QDA Software. Due to the political nature of the questions, most of the direct references have been removed and some of the interview partners and all focus group participants chose to remain anonymous. We asked interviewees to state their opinions in their private capacity and thus will not necessarily be representative of their organization. To make the research more participatory, initial findings were presented and discussed at a dissemination event at the University of Banjul in June 2019.

Categorizing people on the move is highly politicized and often analytically blurry. We acknowledge the overlapping nature between, for example, refugees and other migrants, as well as the agency, choice and flexibility of individual journeys. For this project, however, we consider the political relevance of a type of migration journey which is not to be equated with individual forms of (im-)mobility, which are likely to take place across different categories.

Thus, we look at the political significance of refugees and asylum seekers from and in the Gambia, immigration to the Gambia, diaspora migration (emigration and return) as well as 'irregular' migration. We analyze these forms of migration on three levels—governance, political stakes and societal discourse, and compare their political relevance. Each of the following five sections deals with one central dimension of Gambian migration on all the three levels, namely (2) irregular migration, (3) diaspora migration, (4) refugees and asylum seekers from the Gambia, (5) Gambian immigration, and (6) refugees in the Gambia. The report concludes with some central findings (7).

2 Irregular migration

The high numbers of Gambians leaving the country in the past years stand in stark contrast to the small Gambian population of just over two million. Gambians made up the fifth-highest number of arrivals in Italy in 2016 and 2017 (IOM 2017). Roughly 38,500 Gambians left the Gambia by 'irregular' means between 2013 and 2017, according to the National Labour Force Survey of the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS 2018). Most of the migrants make the journey towards Europe via the so-called 'backway', through Senegal, Mali and Niger into Algeria or mostly Libya (see figure 1 below). From there, the journey continues on to Italy and the rest of Europe. On their way, many migrants work temporarily to raise funds for onward travels—sometimes for a number of years.[10]

The high numbers of Gambians arriving in Europe has greatly reduced in recent years, with only 15 arriving in the first half of 2019 (UNHCR 2019; see also Ebere 2018). Though hope in the new government may be one of the reasons, the change is more likely due to migrants getting stuck in Libya (where migrants are increasingly captured, tortured and

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[10] Problematically, no figures show how many migrants emigrate from the Gambia to its neighboring countries (both temporarily and permanently) or those who get stuck or die on the dangerous journey.

enslaved, see e.g. Human Rights Watch 2017), or being turned away in Niger as ECOWAS borders tighten in line with Europe's externalization policies (see also Jegen 2019).

Moreover this change is no indication of changed migration aspirations.[11] Alternative routes are beginning to replace the 'backway': The Western Mediterranean route through Mauretania and Morocco or Algeria towards Spain became the most frequented trans-Saharan route overall for all African migrants in 2018 (IOM 2018). Gambians made up 7% of sea arrivals to Spain in 2018, being the sixth highest nationality counted (UNHCR 2018a). As another alternative, the risky route by boat from the West African coast via the Canary Islands has seen revival since late 2017 (IOM 2018).[12]

Many of the Gambians who decide to migrate do so in order to advance their economic opportunities. This is because

'Men shoulder the financial obligations for their parents and households, and since households are in a chronic need of cash for basic consumption items, men are expected to go and find it' (Gaibazzi 2015, 94).[13]

These culturally embedded economic obligations are interwoven with personal motives and socio-cultural circumstances (Conrad Suso 2019). They are nurtured through the positive impact of personal remittances on household living standards that are visible everywhere in the country. Though societal pressures to migrate persist, by far not all families give their approval to taking the 'backway'. Some migrants leave on their own accord, sometimes even stealing from their family or employers to fund their travels.

The cultural obligations are founded in socio-economic political reality. Youth unemployment, for example, currently stands at 41.5% (GBOS 2018). As one returnee from Libya put it, 'Almost all of us are not working, there is no work for us, that's why we Gambians are taking the backway' (Group discussion, 1 June 2017). Despite some economic progress (World Bank 2019c), changes in macro-economic performance since the regime change have not translated to increased economic opportunities for large parts of society.

Beyond those leaving the country, there have been substantial numbers of returning migrants to the Gambia in recent years. As the situation in transit countries and Libya especially became increasingly dire from 2017 onwards, many Gambian as well as other West African migrants opted for an evacuation by the IOM. Between the beginning of 2017 and May 2019, a total of 4,253 migrants were returned to the Gambia.

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[11] Internal migration—often a predecessor to international emigration—is currently increasing (Ebere 2018). This is however not discussed in this report.

[12] The Canary route had been the most frequented route in the early 2000s, peaking in 2006, with more than 30,000 Africans arriving in the Canaries, an estimated 12% of which were Gambian nationals (Godenau 2014). The route had become negligible between 2006 and 2012.

[13] Female emigration from the Gambia of course also exists, but few of those we spoke to mentioned this specifically. Whether this is because the numbers are so low or a narrative of male emigration which dominates popular discourse is unclear, but experiences and impact are likely to be different. One particularly female type of migration from the Gambia is domestic labor migration to the Gulf States, as described further below.

2.1 Governance

Actually stopping people from leaving is not a feasible policy measure, not just for legal but also practical reasons. Firstly, Gambians have every right to move freely within the ECOWAS area, see figure 1 (and Immigration section), and thus leaving the country is not bound to any irregularity. Secondly, border management is carried out through sporadic patrolling and border posts. A new EU-Spanish funded project, Blue-Sahel, carried out in various West African coastal countries, has led to intensified patrols of coastal areas by the Gambia Immigration Department. Currently planned until 2020, an extension is likely. Nonetheless, the borders remain porous. Policies to govern irregular migration therefore focus on reasons to stay, managing return and reintegration and awareness-raising. These will be discussed next in turn.

Figure 1:

Source: Own elaboration based on Map No. 4350 Rev. 2 (© United Nations) from the United Nations Geospatial Information Section.

2.1.1 Tackling the 'root causes' of migration through youth empowerment

The 'root cause' approach has become a primary way of dealing with irregular migration by national and international stakeholders. The idea is to reduce migratory push factors such as poverty, presuming that development aid will decrease migration aspirations (see Carling and Talleraas 2016). Such territorially-bound development opportunities have become central to migration management in the EU since 2015 and make up most of the projects funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF)[14] (see Bartels 2019; Zanker 2019). In the Gambia, the primary focus lies on creating more economic opportunities for young people. The umbrella term 'youth empowerment', one of the eight strategic priorities in the NDP, includes job-oriented skills training, entrepreneurship training and self-employment support as well as job creation in the private sector.

International development projects are central in this field, and the landscape of involved actors has expanded and continues to diversify at a dramatic rate. The first and to date most recognized international intervention is the EUTF-funded 'Youth Empowerment Project' (YEP) launched in February 2017. In April 2019, the EU launched a wider program called 'Tekki Fii—You can make it in the Gambia', as an umbrella for YEP and three further interventions funded by the EUTF that are implemented by international development agencies from Germany, Belgium and Portugal. The 'Tekki Fii' projects total €32 million, with YEP funded with €11 million originally, topped up by a further €2 million, and the rest worth an overall additional €19 million over the course of three years (see table 1). The 'Tekki Fii' projects aim at creating job-oriented skills, entrepreneurship opportunities and other income opportunities in complementary sectors, regions and to some degree target groups.

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[14] Launched during the Valetta Summit in November 2015, the aim of the EUTF includes 'addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa'. A total of €3.7 billion have been pledged from the European Development Fund and the EU budget, while an additional €489.5 million were contributed by EU member states, Switzerland and Norway (December 2018).

Table 1:

Projects under the European Union Trust Fund 'Tekki Fii' Initiative

Name	Implementing Agency	Project duration	Funding amount
The Gambia Youth Empowerment Project	United Nations International Trade Center (ITC)	01/01/2017– 01/01/2022	13,000,000 €
Employment and employability through new technologies and renewable energies	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) International Services	12/11/2018 – 12/11/2021	7,000,000 €
Rural Infrastructure for Employment Creation in the Gambia (RIEC)	Enabel – Belgian Development Agency	07/01/2019 – 07/01/2022	7,000,000 €
Conducive socio-economic environment for a sustainable reintegration and improvement of attractiveness in rural areas	Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr, Fundação (IMVF)	10/01/2019 – 10/01/2022	5,000,000 €

Source: Own elaboration based on information by the European Commission (https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/european_union_ongoing_contracts.pdf).

As the first program targeting youth employment, YEP stood under societal and political pressure to deliver quickly visible results. Many of the offered services target young people directly.[15] By the end of 2018, the project facilitated entrepreneurship services and business advisory support to 1,764 individuals, and another 695 received technical or vocational training (YEP 2018). Using a compelling media strategy, the project has gained high visibility for their wide spectrum of activities and broad network of cooperation partners and is generally well received amongst its beneficiaries.

Nonetheless, YEP has been criticized for a number of reasons. First and foremost, like other EUTF projects, YEP is set up as a reactive, fast-paced instrument. Whilst promising quickly visible results, this can lead to challenges in local ownership and stands in contrast to development cooperation principles long established between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) in the Cotonou Agreement Framework.[16] Although collaborating with Ministries and other domestic institutions, the overall concept, management and technical coordination of YEP remains in the hands of the implementing agency, the International Trade Centre, a joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the UN. Secondly, a 'quick fix' through fast-paced approaches such as most EUTF projects may constrain a more long-term development orientation needed to overcome complex development challenges (see also Bartels 2019). Case in point, the YEP project's opportunities are highly selective. This includes a limited age bracket (15-35), in designated sectors, and—due to the competitiveness of many services—to people with a certain educational level. This selectiveness has led to disappointment and incomprehension among young people who

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[15] Beyond individual opportunities, YEP also undertakes market activation activities especially for small and medium enterprises, such as supporting companies in the YEP priority sectors to enhance their productive capacities.
[16] Development cooperation between the EU and the countries of the ACP has a long history of over 50 years and is based on principles including ownership, participation and dialogue and mutual obligations.

weren't eligible but felt particularly needy, with few alternatives available. It remains to be seen whether the expansion of YEP's approach through 'Tekki Fii' can reduce some of the existing gaps.

Box 1:

Types of return

Return migration occurs in a variety of different contexts, creating return types that differ both regarding the individual preconditions as well as their return and reintegration management. Three relevant types of return are transit return, 'voluntary' assisted return and forced return.

Transit return

Migrants headed towards Europe can opt for an evacuation by the IOM in a North African transit country due to dire conditions, conflict and other reasons. Also referred to as 'Voluntary Humanitarian Return', it is categorized an 'Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration' (AVRR) program by the West-African wide, EUTF-funded program 'EU-IOM Joint Initiative on Migrant Protection and Reintegration'. The project covers the transport of migrants back to their countries of origin and an extended reception period to receive check-ups and information on support opportunities after landing. The subsequent reintegration component offers in-kind assistance which migrants can apply for if interested. Voluntariness refers to the consent given by the migrant to be returned, noting however this is the only support option offered to them.

Voluntary' return

Migrants can return from a European destination country through 'Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration' (AVRR) programs. Such programs are offered by the destination country targeting migrants with little prospects for a successful asylum process or with rejected asylum claims. Facilitated by IOM, they cover the cost and administration of travel and vary regarding their (financial or non-financial) reintegration support options, depending on factors such as the country of departure, the point in time of decision within their asylum process, or the availability of supplementary reintegration components to the basic IOM-facilitated support. Voluntariness refers to the migrant opting for return in order not to risk being deported or remaining with an unclarified legal or illegal residence status.

Forced return

Migrants can be returned against their will through physical interventions by a European destination country following an order to leave after refusal of admission or termination of permission to remain. This is often referred to as 'deportation' or 'removal' (IOM 2019). Forced returns may be operated on scheduled or non-scheduled operations, organized by a destination country or coordinated by Frontex. Forced returnees can receive reintegration assistance through the IOM after their return through a 'Post-Arrival Reintegration Assistance' (PARA) that includes the same in-kind support as for transit returnees.

The implementers of YEP are well aware of these limitations, and see their individual packages as 'seed investment' to trigger further innovation potentials among their target groups. Moreover, the program creates stakeholder structures and cooperates with different national agencies on a technical level in order to increase local ownership. Nonetheless, more comprehensive government-led action towards employment creation and more focus on labor-intensive sectors, such as infrastructure or agriculture is necessary to increase income levels on a broader level (see also ActionAid 2019).

2.1.2 Managing return and reintegration

The return of migrants to the Gambia is a major policy field in governing and dealing with irregular migration, not least since the increase of humanitarian returns from transit countries from late 2016 onwards. By now, the return of failed asylum seekers from Europe has also moved into the center of attention. The question of responsibilities to deal with both returning failed asylum seekers and transit returnees between the Gambian and European actors has become integral to many governance processes and is complicated by different types of return (see text box).

The IOM provides the most comprehensive return and reintegration program in the Gambia. Launched in December 2016, the 'EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration', largely funded by the EUTF, provides assistance to transit returnees mainly from Libya but also Niger and all over West Africa.[17] By June 2019, 2,816 out of 4,253 returned transit migrants have made use of this reintegration support, with a vast majority of beneficiaries opting for microbusiness support for self-employment (90%), and only very few opting for education/training instead or additional psycho-social services, which are also offered (data provided by IOM Gambia).

Forced returns are facilitated on a bilateral basis between the returning state and the Gambia, with some, but not all, cases supported by the EU through Frontex.[18] The IOM is, thus, not formally involved. Notably, the IOM can, however, also offer reception and reintegration assistance to forced returnees in the framework of the IOM Joint Initiative ('Post-Arrival Reintegration Assistance'/PARA, instead of AVRR) in order not to discriminate against this particularly vulnerable group of migrants. In order to be able to reach out to these newly-arriving forced returnees, the IOM needs to be informed. In 2018 alone, 360 people were forcibly returned home. By May 2019, 110 forcibly returned migrants out of 187 that the IOM had registered received reintegration support through the IOM-EUTF project (see table 2). In order to improve the communication, a so-called 'referral mechanism' was recently introduced as a pilot project, through which returning states can inform the IOM prior to

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[17] The project is implemented in 14 West African countries. The Gambia component, worth € 4 million, was laid out to assist 1,500 return migrants over three years. This target number was quickly exceeded (https://migrationjointinitiative.org/about-eu-iom-joint-initiative).

[18] Frontex is the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, tasked to control the borders of the Schengen Area by the EU. Since 2005, it has been responsible for coordinating border control efforts by the member states. Since 2016, the agency has seen a successive expansion of its mandate, including its involvement in return management (cf. Gkliati 2019).

incoming returns. As the information sharing about returns varies between EU member states and return operations, not all forced returnees are effectively treated the same by the IOM, adding to the confusion about IOM's services and role in reintegrating forced returnees.

Table 2:

Overview of returns to the Gambia registered by the IOM between January 2017 and May 2019

Destination country	Number of returns
Libya	2985
Niger	992
Germany	133
Austria	46
Mali	42
Morocco	21
Tunisia	8
Mauritania	5
Algeria	3
Italy	2
Denmark	1
Finland	1
France	1
Slovakia	1
Sweden	1
Switzerland	1

Source: Statistics provided by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Gambian actors such as the Gambia Immigration Department, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare or the NYC, are also involved in different planning and implementation steps of return and reintegration, coordinated through a technical working group headed by the IOM. Again, creating national ownership under such a setup remains difficult. Some governmental bodies claim that they should be mandated with coordinating reintegration management, and are skeptical of the effectiveness and usefulness of the IOM's approaches. For example, some government officials see a need for constructing a reception center for a

broader range of migrants than those covered by IOM programs, such as migrants stranded in transit in the Gambia.

The EU is also seeking to set up a project to increase government ownership in migration management, making use of its 'European Return and Reintegration Network' (ERRIN). ERRIN is a joint initiative of 15 European countries implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development to facilitate return and reintegration for migrants with rejected asylum status from Europe to various countries worldwide.[19] By implementing a so-called 'government-to-government' approach, it aims at fostering exchange between EU member states and Gambian institutions covering the whole return process for both forced and assisted voluntary returns. So far it remains unclear if, when and how this approach is going to be implemented.

Parallel to the programs spearheaded by international actors, a few projects by Gambian civil society also offer reintegration opportunities to smaller numbers of individuals. Their work is a reaction to the critique that the IOM led-processes will remain ineffective due to the lack of local guidance and inclusion. For example, the Gambia Food and Nutrition Agency (GAFNA) runs an economic empowerment and reintegration project for 70 transit returnees, funded by the US Embassy. Another example is a campaign called #Iamnot4sale, which includes skills-training and entrepreneurship funding for seven transit returnees. An activist diaspora member in the United Kingdom started the campaign after the uncovering of enslavement practices in Libyan transit migration centers (*Aljazeera* 2017). Two further reintegration initiatives were started by returned transit migrants themselves through their civil society organizations. The two groups, 'Youth Against Irregular Migration' (YAIM) and the 'Gambian returnees from the Backway' (GRB) are both in the process of establishing farming projects as economic reintegration programs for some of their members. While the GRB was founded primarily to create such opportunities and their approach is financially based on the joint implementation of the individual IOM reintegration packages of their participants, YAIM is currently working without external funding using land that was donated to them. How the outcome of these projects will differ to those run by the IOM is yet to be seen, so far though they are quite limited in size, especially in comparison to the high numbers of returnees demanding reintegration assistance.

In May 2018, the Gambian government agreed to the non-binding 'good practice' agreement with the EU on preferable conditions of forced return from EU member states. After a few months of increased frequency and quantity of forced return operations from November onwards, the Gambian government declared a moratorium on deportations from the EU in March 2019 (though they already informed their European partners in February), which has temporarily stopped most forceful return until today.

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[19] The budget of €27.1 million (January 2018 to June 2020) is funded by the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and co-funded by participating member countries.

2.1.3 Sensitization and Awareness Raising Campaigns

Irregular migration is also addressed through sensitization and information campaigns on the dangerous journey through Libya or the 'horrors of the backway'. Though established actors such as the IOM or YEP run sensitization campaigns as well, a much more prominent role for local civil society is present here, especially returnees themselves. Campaigns are carried out in a variety of different formats, such as radio shows or 'caravan tours' throughout the country which combine personal testimonials of returnees, photo and film material. At the end of 2017, YAIM, the then newly formed civil society group of returnees, launched their first caravan tour, financed by the German embassy. Their outreach, and that of another returnee group, GRB, is high. According to their own analysis, audiences in particular trust the activities organized by returnees rather than international projects, and those presented directly rather than programs on social media, radio or TV, as they potentially contain propaganda of European actors. Whilst YAIM, in particular, are keen to stress their independence, most of these kinds of campaigns still depend on external funding and collaboration. Some sensitization work also reaches out to traditional and religious leaders to sensitize them to also advice on safe and regular migration, or pray for those who have stayed in the villages rather than only for migrants abroad. This is important since district chiefs and so-called Alkalos (Gambian village leaders) could be a 'missing link' to transform societal discourse on migration (Interview, Hassoum Ceesay, 7 June 2017).

Three migration information centers were also launched by the NYC together with the IOM in May 2019 in regions highly affected by irregular migration. Funded by the EU and integrated into existing NYC youth centers, they serve as an intermediary between youth and political actors, to offer information and guidance and collect data. The aim is to reduce irregular migration plans. Plans include providing information on job opportunities throughout the Gambia through an online job database, and on safe migration options, for example through technical support in visa application processes. Normally, service fees of agencies offering support in visa application represent a financial hurdle and a source for mistrust towards visa availability. This would represent one of the first technical approaches to make planned migration more feasible, in recognition of the normalcy of migration aspirations. The Executive Director of the NYC argues for the need of engaging in this field by saying that 'We cannot tell people to please use the alternative routes if we don't show them the alternative routes' (Interview, 19 May 2019). However, the outreach of the centers compared to what they are aiming is likely to be confined by the relatively small scale of the project. For example, the physical space of the new centers is limited to a simple office, limiting options to extend into multi-purpose structures to hold events for groups of people, such as orientation events, or additional psycho-social support for returned migrants in the future. NYC sees this as a considerable drawback.

2.2 Political stakes

Irregular migration as the most prominent form of migration in the Gambia also holds high political stakes. From the previous government who were 'only paying lip service to addressing irregular migration' (Interview, civil society member, 5 June 2017) to the current efforts supporting youth empowerment (see also ActionAid 2019), there has been a reversal regarding the political willingness to acknowledge the issue and in communicating the need to do something about it. This includes the plans for the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration, which will coordinate migration governance on a politically prominent level. According to the Vice President, whose office is planning to take the lead in the migration platform:

'We are now taking a systematic approach. … We are gradually building on systems, institutions and engaging in programmes to address this problem [of irregular migration]' (Interview, Isatou Touray, 15 May 2019).

There are three major political stakes, namely the link to development strategies that aim to reduce migration, the contested nature of return and the influx of actors. These will be discussed in turn.

2.2.1 The entanglement of the migration development-nexus

Migration is an important process in a globalized world with a high poverty reduction potential for developing countries in various ways (see Clemens 2014). For example, remittances can contribute to poverty reduction on a household level. In the Gambia, they make up a remarkable share of 15% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the third highest share on the continent (World Bank 2019a), and much higher than FDIs, for example.[20] By far the greatest national share is sent from Spain (World Bank Bilateral Remittance Matrix 2017), where most Gambian migrants arrived irregularly. Thus, remittances available through irregular migration make up an important economic factor for many households in the Gambia. Coupled with a focus on development projects that aim to deter future migration, an entanglement of the migration-development nexus ensues.

To start with, much of the current youth empowerment approach is based on individual packages, which is unlikely to have a larger transformative impact on the overall economy. Assistance on an individual level, be it to improve employability of potential or returning migrants, might only (temporarily) delay challenges of economic (re)integration if it is not linked to more structural reforms in the educational sector or on the labor market. With the positive example of a peaceful regime change through the ballot box, ECOWAS neighbors and the international community are determined for the Gambia to be a success story for reform.

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[20] This number is significantly lower than what has been stated in previous years, when the share was at 22%. This decrease occurred because the Gambian state updated the statistical international norm by which it calculates its GDP, changing from the international standard 'SNA 1993' to 'SNA 2008'. Thus, the difference doesn't signify a drastic drop in the absolute amount of personal remittances, nor a drastic boost in the de facto national economic performance.

More than anything, the Gambian state needs better development of the country. By leading the 'Tekki Fii' campaign that accompanies the 'Tekki Fii' program, for example, the Office of the Vice President can create a visible link between the international projects' work and governmental efforts. Yet, the government pursues this not necessarily in aid of 'tackling (irregular) migration' but to improve their domestic legitimacy, especially as the current coalition becomes increasingly shaky in the slow run-up to the next elections. If the current focus on development-to-stop (or reduce) (re-)migration will help them achieve this is debatable. Moreover, it is not only questionable whether increased development would generally reduce migration (see also de Haas 2007), but the perspective also masks the uncertainty of hampering economic conditions on a household level due to decreased (new) remittances, especially when new income opportunities in the Gambia are still, or might even remain, limited. Lastly, 'the million-dollar question' remains (interview, activist, 16 May 2019) whether the new government has signed a repatriation agreement on forced returns with European countries in return for development funds. These rumors have been rife since the beginning of the new government, and continue to be discredited. Either way, they highlight the politicized nature of new development projects on the one hand, and returns on the other.

2.2.2 Political contestation over return

Political contestation over return occurred when humanitarian evacuations from Libya began to gather pace in 2017. The IOM only extended their country office in June 2017, and hundreds of transit returnees were initially not eligible for comprehensive reintegration support, creating disappointment and anger among those 'early bird' transit returnees (see Zanker & Altrogge 2019). With 2,421 migrants returning in 2017 alone, a backlog of processing reintegration applications quickly built up.[21]

These circumstances caused widespread confusion and led to a significant loss of trust towards the IOM. Returnees also felt abandoned by the new government, with one 'early-bird' transit returnee, initially not eligible for return assistance, to note 'It's the old one [government] that made us run away, but [it is] the new one that isn't delivering to youths' (focus group discussion, 1 June 2017).[22] Another summarized the frustration levels, concluding 'if this happens to continue, then we can do something crazy' (focus group discussion, 1 June 2017). In October 2017, a group of returnees violently expressed their frustration by throwing stones at the IOM office. In response, some transit returnees managed to successfully call for both (better) reintegration opportunities and recognition from political actors, transforming themselves from mere receivers of public goods to politically recognized stakeholders (see Zanker and Altrogge 2019). Today these groups continue to be included in participatory policy processes.

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[21] The IOM slowly overcame this backlog by extending office staff and infrastructure during the course of 2018 and 2019. Meanwhile, returns have reduced on the whole, with only 299 migrants returning between January and May 2019, including forced returns from European countries (data provided by IOM).
[22] The return program was however launched independently of the regime change across the whole West African region.

Whilst the conflict potential due to an overburdened transit return management has passed, the general potential of political destabilization of return has not. It has rather consolidated towards the even more highly contested operations of forced return from destination countries. Though Gambians have been forcefully returned throughout the last decade (see e.g. table 3), the impetus has grown with the new government.[23]

Table 3:

Overview of Gambians returned from the EU following an order to leave

Country / Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
European Union	670	460	355	480	315	345	230	210	240	320	360
Germany	30	35	25	35	15	25	10	15	40	80	200
The Netherlands	15	20	15	10	15	15	10	10	30	60	55
United Kingdom	165	145	175	215	155	130	90	65	70	75	40
Austria	20	20	35	45	20	15			10	10	35
Finland		5	10	15	5	20	15	5	20	15	15
France	10	15	5	10	5	5	15	10	0	5	10
Spain	410	95	35	100	40	60	30	35	20	5	5
Sweden	15	45	15	25	20	20	30	30	20	35	
Italy	5	65	25	10	25	20	5	15	15	20	

Source: Eurostat 2019c.
Note: The numbers published in this table can only be read as an indicator of forced return. It is possible that there are inconsistencies regarding which returning migrants are counted, both between different countries and different reporting years. In comparison to national statistical data, numbers diverge and change in categorization over time, for example with regards to counting in assisted voluntary returns after an order to leave.

In the non-binding 'good practice' agreement with the EU from May 2018, the parties pinned down the conditions under which an increase in forced returns could be feasible for both sides. When European governments started increasing returns—after a six-month grace period—they did not sufficiently adapt their operations according to the standards agreed upon. This cumulated in a return operation on 25 February 2019 from Germany, about which the Gambian authorities were allegedly not informed well enough in advance and which was therefore first refused entry but later accepted. The confusion over this flight caused violent outbreaks between Gambian security authorities and the returning migrants. Around the

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[23] For example, the new government agreed to accept forced returns from the USA and in turn revoking a travel ban for Gambian government officials that had been in place since October 2016 (*Africanews* 2017). The amount of forced returns from the USA then slightly increased from 56 in 2017 to 111 in 2018 (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2018).

same time, in response to numerous such flight-related incidents and public outcry, the Gambian government declared a temporary moratorium against further forced returns from the EU.[24] Negotiations are on-going on how to proceed. The 'good practice' agreement indicates that the Gambia's reception capacities shall not be overstretched by the amount of returns. For the Gambian government, this means a reduction in chartered operations and lower overall return numbers. Most importantly, it demands more time to pave the way for a 'return with dignity' (see d'Orsi 2015), by setting up better reintegration opportunities also for forced returnees. As described previously, the referral mechanism, for example, is being used insufficiently, creating unequal access to reception and reintegration opportunities. The Vice President argues that

*'When the returnees come and … they are dumped like that without any comprehensive support or humane approach to their return, it can be volatile. So it requires … constructive engagement with partners, the government and the people and civil society to put in place programs that are going to respond because it's **a two-way business'** (emphasis added, Interview, 15 May 2019).*

For the European states, more technical support to better prepare the Gambian authorities for return operations is the way forward.

Communication about the issue of forced return, both towards the EU and the Gambian population, is an important steering mechanism that the Gambian government can use. So far it has countered the difficulty of satisfying both sides' demands with relative silence. Its efforts to publicly communicate on the return issue are negligible. At the same time, Gambian press, and especially social media regularly comment on this highly emotional issue. This leads to a communication imbalance in which, explains one civil servant, 'social media is taking the lead. There are people in the social media that are advocating against deportations. And they have their narrative (…). And there is no counter-narrative to this, and this is causing a lot of anger' (interview, 7 May 2019). As journalists and activists feel uninformed, the government's silence leaves space for speculation and rumors, with national and international state actors seeing them as a major source of misinformation on migration and return.

Public discussions dominated by voices criticizing the government have led to considerable civil unrest, despite the still relatively low return numbers. The return operations preceding the moratorium received widespread attention by journalists and social media activists. A few days before the government announced the moratorium publically, a demonstration against 'the recent trend of deportation happening from Europe especially Germany' took place with around 300-400 participants (*The Voice* 2019). According to non-Gambian interviewees mainly, the government's lack in more pro-active communication is central to this unrest, and better communication could deflate society's agitation with future forced return. However, for the Gambian government, (temporarily) delaying further forced return operations—beyond its technical function to gain time to prepare for further returns—also fulfils the symbolic

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[24] A small number of return operations are still carried out on scheduled flights. The moratorium was planned from February onwards, with European partners informed then, but became public knowledge in March.

function of showcasing the government's will and capability to favor its own peoples' interests against foreign national interests. This symbolic function would be undermined by a more pro-active communication about return. Gambians currently in Europe by and large do not (yet) want to return home, and neither do their families want them to. Thus, lifting the moratorium is politically risky and can undermine domestic legitimacy if this means a continuation of procedures as before. For the time being the risk of unrest or instability remains high.

2.2.3 Exclusion and co-optation through the Influx of actors

The diversification of actors and activities, as outlined so far, reflect how international, especially European, interests in reducing migration flows and managing return dominate the agenda of migration politics in the Gambia. This leads to the underrepresentation of issues not directly linked to their interests or policy approaches. Moreover, the high presence of international actors does not necessarily lead to more effective programs. According to some interviewees, it is in fact becoming increasingly difficult for newly arriving organizations to design meaningful engagements due to the existing density and the quickly changing dynamic situation. In the following, four challenges related to the exclusion and co-optation through the influx of actors are set out.

Firstly, international organizations risk being co-opted by politicized agendas or at least their political neutrality can be challenged. For the IOM, for example, increasing demands on the side of the Gambian government to support reception and reintegration for forced returnees narrows their technical and political distance towards this type of return, in which the organization does not see their mandate, however. As the information-sharing about returns varies between EU member states and has thus far not been standardized through the referral mechanism, the IOM cannot treat every forced returnee in the same manner, compounding the ambiguity perceived by other state actors and migrants about their involvement in forced return support.

Secondly, the multi-layered international interests lead to an increased fragmentation of different stakes and involvement. For example, due to a federal quota system for asylum cases in Germany, most Gambian asylum seekers are hosted in one particular federal state, Baden-Wuerttemberg. The state is also responsible for managing forced return from their territory, which has led to sub-regional interests on the Gambia, adding even more players to the crowded field. Civil society organizations from Baden-Wuerttemberg frequently visit the Gambia and speak to various actors, as did a delegation from local parliamentary members. The groups have different aims, ranging from informing themselves about return and reintegration challenges and opportunities, in order to better advise Gambian migrants in Germany, to communicating about the pressures on needing to return Gambians or potential economic cooperation opportunities. Though, on the whole, well-meaning, this increases the diversity of information channels and sources as well as negotiation partners, increasing ineffectiveness.

Thirdly, the high presence of well-funded international organizations may co-opt and reduce chances for a more diversified domestic actor landscape. Returnee groups, for example, felt that international initiatives had hijacked some of their concepts of awareness raising and even the 'Tekki Fii' term. Domestic actors should not function as mere implementers and facilitators of international projects, but need space to carve out their political representation on their own terms. An exception is NYC with its unique access to national politics, representing civil society and co-managing international projects; though there is a risk of monopolizing the domestic actor scene.

Fourthly, the high attention given to Europe-linked migration questions can lead to the exclusion of other migration-related topics. One example of this is the recent demand for support from female labor migrants that have returned from Arab Gulf States where they had become victims of human trafficking in search for work in the domestic sector. Some of these returnees founded the civil society group 'Network of Girls Against Human Trafficking' in 2018 for self-support and representation. The network currently comprises of around 80 persons. Albeit receiving considerable attention in social media and also by some political stakeholders, including the Gambian First lady herself, state authorities as well as international organizations have not brought forward any functional support. While the Gambian National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) is mandated to deal with human trafficking, NAATIP is highly ineffective and even worsening (U.S. Department of State 2019). The 'Network of Girls against Human Trafficking' claims that NAATIP did not only pay insufficient attention to their cases, but actually stigmatized them further. This stands in contradiction to the commitment against human trafficking that the government has devoted itself to in the NDP (Republic of the Gambia 2018a, 21).

Whilst more presence and funding opportunities are available in the field of migration, the interests of European member states dominate the agenda and risk undermining the diversity of domestic actors.

2.3 Societal relevance

Due to the large scale of irregular emigration, the topic holds a high societal interest amongst Gambians and frequently discussed in social media. For a large number of migrants, the backway embodies the very sense of hopelessness and desperation that young Gambians often feel. The global digital networks, which also played a role in voting Jammeh out of office, directly tie the societal discourse on irregular emigration to political results.

Though most of the Europe-bound emigration tends to be young, with 94% of Gambians asylum-seekers in the EU in 2016 under 34 years old (Eurostat 2019a), understanding irregular migration as a youth problem disengages from the economic effects for entire families. A functioning economy with employment opportunities is essential for all Gambians, including those who do not want to or cannot migrate. If there are too few or unattractive opportunities to earn a decent living, the only option is to leave the country.

Families often sell off their land, cattle or any other property or valuables in order to send members of the younger generation off to Europe.

The positive picture of remittances established over generations of migrants, starting at a time when labor migration to Europe was still more feasible and skilled migration held a greater share has changed. Today, the general perception is that 'those who travel are low-skilled' (Interview, Usain Yabo, 31 May 2017), and that they do at high risks. In the same vein, family pressure increasingly calls out against irregular emigration. This is also part of why some potential migrants have faced opposition from their families who advise them not to take the backway.

The general belief that a family can only get ahead if they have relatives outside the continent prevails, not only culturally however, but also due to the presence of remittances in everyday lives. Thus, the problem of return for many migrants is the prospect of losing face in front of their families and the serious financial consequences of returning empty-handed without being able to pay off their family's debts, let alone alleviate them from poverty (see also Conrad Suso 2019, 131). Thus, returnees face a significant social stigma on their return. As one returnee described it, they are transformed 'from heroes to zeros' (Focus group, 1 June 2017). The stigma is even higher for return from Europe.

2.4 Conclusion

Due to the high numbers of Gambians leaving the country in search of employment and learning opportunities in Europe, irregular emigration holds high political stakes and a pivotal role in the wider societal discourse. They are addressed in various governance fields, majorly designed to reduce the aspirations of migrants to leave and increase incentives to stay. A number of conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, returnees hold the most politicized stakes now and in the coming years. While return numbers slowly started to increase in 2018, societal unrest induced the Gambian government to temporarily withdraw from their acceptance of higher returns from the EU. From their perspective, returning higher numbers on a more regular basis can contribute to political destabilization. The present moratorium constitutes a lever for negotiation for them as well as a chance to improve their domestic legitimacy. International stakeholders want to urgently reinstate the return agreement, but substantial changes on the ground must be in place for the government to be likely to cooperate on lifting the moratorium. For the time being the risk of unrest or instability remains high.

Secondly, it remains to be seen whether the scaling-up of the EU's approach to tackle the 'root causes' of migration through the 'Tekki Fii' initiative will actually lead to a substantial change in migration aspirations of young Gambians. The longer-term successes in creating income opportunities are highly dependent on labor-market development on a broad scale. Even if this is achieved, the link to reducing migration aspirations is questionable and the

importance of remittances is likely to remain. This makes the creation of more legal migration pathways fundamental to tackling irregular migration.

Thirdly, whilst more presence and funding opportunities are available in the field of migration, the interests of European members dominate the agenda and risk undermining the diversity of domestic actors or politically instrumentalizing agencies like the IOM.

Fourthly, also due to the increasing amount of actors, a strong coordination mechanism for interaction and synergies is necessary. This doesn't only count for the multi-purpose large-scale programs, but need to more systematically include and encourage domestic initiatives. The question which actor is mandated to run such a coordination mechanism is vital, as all actors—international projects, state actors and the civil society—come with different interests, focus and long-term ownership implications. The increasing double roles of domestic civil society organizations, for example, risk reducing civil society to the mere functions of implementers and facilitators, but need space to carve out their political representation on their own terms.

3 Diaspora migration

The Gambian diaspora is not a homogenous body but is made up of persons in different destination regions, with different migration aspirations and histories and personal and professional backgrounds. There is a long tradition of Gambians going abroad to study or work, at first mainly to countries of the Commonwealth including the UK, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, and extended to the USA in the late 1980s (Kebbeh 2013). Today, big diaspora communities exist in places like Bristol (UK) or Chicago (USA). Though not limited to a certain skill level, out-migration was for a long time a prerequisite for tertiary education of Gambians, with the only university founded in 1998. Highly-educated Gambians often moved or stayed abroad because of the lack of job opportunities in the country or driven away by the prospect of having to work for an autocratic regime.

There are some pathways of legally emigrating beyond ECOWAS for Gambian nationals, such as the EU's Blue Card Scheme for skilled immigration or the Erasmus Mundus program. However, the numbers of education and work-based visas for Gambians to the EU are very low.[25] In 2017, only 172 Gambians received resident permits for education reasons, mainly to Great Britain (Eurostat 2019b), and merely 312 Gambians were granted entry on the basis of jobs, mainly to Spain (ibd.). Thus, even Gambians seeking education or with certain skills might choose to take the backway if they see no alternatives.

The high levels of out-migration have had mixed effects on the development of the country. On the one hand, the Gambia is a common example for the so-called 'brain drain' phenomenon. For example, for every Gambian professional nurse working in the Gambia,

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[25] Only one Gambian student participated in the educational Erasmus Mundus program which is designed to ease access to European Universities for foreign nationals since 2014.

about two live in a developed country overseas (Clemens and Petterson 2008). Moreover, the Gambia has the second-largest rate (63%) of tertiary-educated population emigrants in sub-Saharan Africa (Devillard et al. 2015). Though arguments of brain-drain influence on development are disputed amongst migration economists (cf. Rapoport 2016), the argument is that when technically and academically skilled people leave the country, this has a detrimental effect on the provision of public goods. On the other hand, however, these effects can potentially be outweighed by the impact of their remittances on education and poverty reduction, especially from highly-skilled migrants abroad (Bollard et al. 2011). As stated previously, remittances are around 50 times higher than FDIs.

3.1 Governance

Comprehensive migration laws have only recently started being developed in the Gambia (see above), and neither an emigration nor a diaspora policy exists, despite the large number of skilled professionals leaving the country. With the governmental change, development in this field did, however, gather substantive momentum. In the NDP, the Gambian diaspora is marked as one of seven critical enablers to realizing the plan, stating 'a need to end the suspicion and antagonism that the government had against the diaspora during the dictatorship, and establish effective and productive mechanisms for positive engagement' (Republic of the Gambia 2018a, 303). Heralding a new era of diaspora relations, Barrow furthermore declared the Gambian diaspora as the country's 'eighth region'. A 'Diaspora Strategy' was launched in January 2018, even before the NDP was published, and a 'Gambia Diaspora Directorate' established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as intermediary between the government and the diaspora and coordination hub for diaspora politics. It is planned that the diaspora strategy will be linked to the overarching national migration policy, which is yet to be developed.

The new pace in diaspora involvement is at least partly based on the engagement of one group of diaspora members, mainly based in the UK. At the center of the initiative stands Gibril Faal, a Gambian professor at the London School of Economics with long-standing consultancy expertise in the field of diaspora and development. The group officially launched a 'Migration and Sustainable Development in the Gambia Project' (MSDG) in August 2017 to implement their goals. Recognized as an international development cooperation partner, the initiative is funded mainly by the Swiss Development Agency, with some supplementary project-related funding from the EUTF. Since their start, they have, among other things, drafted the Diaspora Strategy, initiated the creation of the Diaspora Directorate and established an annual 'Diaspora Month', at which a 'Stake in the Nation Forum' brings together high-level politicians and Gambians from all over the world.

MSDG's engagement aims at strengthening the diaspora's contributions to national development beyond personal remittances, not only through lowering bureaucratic and financial hurdles but also creating new instruments for financial contributions to development from abroad (see also Newland and Patrick 2004).

In addition, legal forms of migration are a major interest for the Gambian government just as for Gambians themselves. Visa free travel has become increasingly restrictive—Gambia is 76 out of 109 countries on the Henley Passport Index—with visa-free access to only 68 countries worldwide.[26]

Independent of the chances to receive a visa, even the access to apply for one is minimal in the Gambia. No European destination country from the Schengen area runs an embassy in the Gambia, so applicants have to travel to Dakar, raising financial and time costs.

The Diaspora Strategy also includes approaches of shaping regular migration. It aims at setting up four Migration and Development bilateral agreements and facilitating circular migration contracts for 350 skilled migrant workers by 2021. Currently, the Gambian government is in the drafting stage of a bilateral migration agreement with the Swiss government.

3.2 Political stakes

Gambians in the diaspora played an important role for Jammeh's electoral defeat. They were not allowed to vote but influenced the elections by other means, such as financing parts of the opposition campaign and contributing to social media campaigns that advocated against Jammeh (see Taal 2016). With this role, they have carved out space for political involvement 'back home'. For example, declaring the diaspora the country's eighth region sets the stage for securing voters' rights for Gambians living abroad in future elections, which is also a goal in the Diaspora Strategy (Republic of the Gambia, 2018b). On the other hand, diaspora involvement in domestic politics can also become disputed. For example, the CRC, tasked with drafting the country's new constitution, has started diaspora consultation meetings all over the world (Bah 2019). Critics have lamented the high costs spent in the undertaking, which might be better invested in poverty reduction in the country, with online consultation process' a cheaper alternative likely to be just as effective (Bojang 2019).

After a period of euphoria amongst the diaspora, disillusionment towards the Barrow government started growing some months after the elections. Members did not feel adequately involved, despite previously acting as consultants and advisors. In fact, the new government is made up of people that largely remained in the country during the Jammeh era.[27] With the MSDG, some diaspora members created a platform for more systematic engagement and direct political influence (see Zanker and Altrogge 2019) that today sets the overall agenda of diaspora politics. In order to lower skepticism on both sides, their activities include large-scale sensitization workshops on the potential of diaspora engagement for civil servants and public online webinars between government personnel and the diaspora. Whilst they may ease access of diaspora engagement to the new government, the project-based

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[26] In comparison, Germany is at number 2 with visa-free access to 187 countries. See https://www.henleypassportindex.com.
[27] One prominent exception is President Barrow himself, who was forcefully returned from Germany in the 1990s and an economic migrant to Great Britain afterwards.

approach might not represent different diaspora voices who may have diverging interests or seek alternative forms of engagement, albeit from a weaker position. At the same time, the scope of the MSDG's approach was questioned by some of our interlocutors from international institutions.

3.3 Societal relevance

In the societal discourse on migration, the diaspora—meaning the whole heterogeneous range of Gambians living abroad—plays an important role, as the positive picture of migration is derived from what diaspora remittances can mean for migrant households. This explains where much of the family pressure to migrate comes from in the first place.

The Gambian diaspora also influences the societal discourse on political issues. This was shown clearly through the diaspora activism during the election and transition period. Importantly, the broad transnational communication networks were able to cross social barriers. For one, the activities included migrants across various generations, skill levels and legal resident statuses among the migrants. Secondly, the groups had a direct link back to the Gambia, providing information to people in the country who were encouraged to use the information to act. Working together, Gambians abroad were able to be freely critical of the Jammeh regime and those on the ground were able to turn this into action.

However, the Gambian diaspora is by no means a homogenous body with a unified stance regarding political developments, and social barriers hold different kinds of influences on the societal discourse as well. Whilst the MSDG may serve as an intermediary between the diaspora in general and Gambian politics, their role must not be regarded as representing the diaspora in its full terms. For example, some individuals abroad have established themselves as strong opinion leaders towards political happenings, but others rather withdraw from transnational activities (see also Taal 2016). Unsuccessful migrants in fact have only quite limited influence on domestic migration discourse and attached images of destination countries. This is, for example, because of distorted communication from asylum seekers about their situation abroad. In order not to admit (partial) failure, nor to risk shaming or upsetting their families, they often do not communicate about the hardship of their situation. Some try to uphold the impression of doing (fairly) well and profiting from the destination country's riches, for example by showcasing pictures of themselves with expensive cars in social media.

3.4 Conclusion

According to interviews, governing diaspora and shaping regular emigration has been much lower on the list of the new government's priorities than dealing with irregular migration. However, the diaspora was able to hold political influence and push the governance agenda forward nonetheless. A number of conclusions can be drawn from this.

First, the approaches of the Diaspora Strategy to increase the development potential of diaspora engagement can create effective channels to utilize the energy and interest of the diaspora to invest in the country—both in the private sector and in reforming the public sector. From the perspective of migration management, its goals to create more pathways for legal migration seem particularly important, as they represent the only concrete steps currently taken to address the missing access to regular intercontinental migration for Gambians.

Secondly, the setup of the MSDG project represents an innovative concept of diaspora engaging as development partner to the 'home' government. Interests of migrants that have an unsecured residence status due to their irregular immigration—also considered part of the diaspora but with decisively different interests—find comparatively limited access to political self-representation, but are mainly addressed by international development partners (for exceptions see Zanker and Altrogge 2019).

Third, the diaspora community has close networks back in the Gambia and has become a politically important community. How this will pan out in the future, especially if they are given a vote in future election remains to be seen.

4 Refugees and Asylum Seekers from the Gambia

Jammeh became increasingly repressive and despotic especially in the last years of his rule. Frequent arrests, tortures and disappearances under the former regime effectively undermined all freedom of expression (Amnesty International 2015).

Most Gambians who arrive in Europe, including those seeking asylum, do so by irregular means. Like immigration numbers, asylum claims rose until 2016 and then began to decline. While in 2012, 1,515 Gambians claimed asylum in the EU, there were 16,030 claims in 2016, which went down to 5,195 by 2018 (Eurostat 2019a). Italy and Germany receive by far the highest application numbers. The recognition rate is fairly low however, lying at 4% across the EU in 2017 (European Asylum Support Office 2019). Aside from fears of persecution under the former dictator, most Gambian applicants are considered to have migrated (mainly) for economic reasons and thus cannot be granted the status of political or humanitarian asylum. Consequently, most Gambian asylum seekers currently residing in the EU are requested to voluntarily leave, or risk being deported, as discussed above.

4.1 Governance

Since refugee protection is regulated by international law, there is not much that the Gambian government can do to regulate or govern its refugees and asylum seekers. Especially since Jammeh's defeat, calls for political asylum are now considered redundant in most cases.

According to anecdotal evidence, the regime change is even stated as a primary reason in rejections of asylum decisions in Germany.

International law obliges states to take back their citizens when they reside in a foreign country illegally. This was not contested and even highlighted by Gambian authorities we spoke to. Consular identification missions of Gambian government officials have been taking place to issue missing travel documents for Gambians abroad. The delegations are sent on invitation of the relevant destination country.[28]

4.2 Political stakes

The new government has a clear interest in distancing itself from the former government, which includes addressing Gambian refugees. Reconciliation is high on the agenda in order to come to terms with the human rights violations committed by the old regime, signified by the current proceedings of the TRRC to uncover human rights violations. This also means that the government has spent energy on welcoming all Gambians outside the country back when they took over—especially political refugees who, they argued, could safely return.

Some asylum seekers remain unsure about the government's stability and their security in the country. Notably, the ECOWAS Mission in the Gambia (ECOMIG) is still in the country, having already renewed its mandate several times. Their prolonged stay is linked to the still ongoing security sector reform (*Foroyaa* 2019b). In May 2019, Amnesty International raised several concerns regarding the success of the transition period so far. They noted persistent misuse of power by security forces and the police, including arbitrary arrests and detentions and even deadly shootings of protesters, as well as violations of the right to freedom of expression (2019b).

Jammeh had informants in all sectors of society. How they will use their knowledge and what this means for individuals who fled is still unclear. A lot will depend on the individual circumstances of the asylum seeker in question—a general answer cannot be given. The government is in a position where it wants to give the impression that it is politically safe to return, but they cannot vouch for the safety of each returning refugee.

Despite increased efforts by some European countries, Gambian asylum seekers on the whole do not choose to return voluntarily in any significant numbers, albeit being confronted with the risk of forced return (Altrogge 2019). Taking Germany as an example, only roughly 100 Gambian migrants have opted to return in programs of 'Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration' in 2017 and 2018 (ibd.). Such programs are specifically directed towards rejected asylum seekers as an option to agree to a return with financial support rather than risking being forcefully returned. For a comparison, during the same period, 280 Gambians were forcefully returned from Germany (Eurostat 2019c). This being said, reasons to decide

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[28] For example, in the German federal state of Baden Württemberg, where the vast majority of Gambian asylum seekers are based, 1,315 of them were interviewed in 82 sessions between October 2017 and May 2019 in order to try and verify their Gambian identity (Deutscher Bundestag 2019).

against leaving voluntarily are complex and do not necessarily include fear of political or humanitarian persecutions.

4.3 Societal relevance

There is a high public consent that there were obvious reasons to flee during Jammeh's regime, with people regularly 'disappearing overnight' when expressing their views publicly or defying the regime in other ways. Since the regime change, our interlocutors broadly agreed that things have vastly improved, especially regarding the freedom of expression. In addition to the political reasons for claiming asylum, some further reasons for claiming asylum continue to play a role. For one, violence towards women, especially through female genital mutilation, is widespread and socially accepted in the Gambia. Moreover, LBTQ+ Gambians continue to fear persecution, especially from non-state actors. They face such a strong social stigma and harassment that it prohibits them to live their sexual identity in both private and public, and gives reason to flee when they are detected. Though the new government has distanced itself from the Jammeh-era homophobic rhetoric, some of the most severe laws against homosexuality remain and look unlikely to be repealed anytime soon (Mendos 2019).

4.4 Conclusion

The primary reason for many Gambians to claim asylum abroad may have largely become obsolete with the removal of Jammeh. This is also evident in a government policy of welcoming refugees back home, a strategy which uses the return of former refugees as a tool for political legitimization. Nonetheless, not all reasons for asylum claims are resolved through the new government, making a case-by case review of refugee applications necessary in order to ensure conformity with well-established international norms on refugee protection.

Only time will tell what the Gambian society needs in order to overcome the traumatic experience of two decades of repressive dictatorship. However, returning those asylum seekers that have left the Gambia during times of broad political oppression of the society and the economy might add to the social trauma as the country recovers.

5 Immigration to the Gambia

The Gambia is now a country of emigration with a negative net migration rate. This is a change from historically being a net receiver of migration. According to the UN, an estimated 205,063 people, or 9.7% of the Gambian population in 2017 were born elsewhere (UN DESA 2017).[29] Though this has decreased from an even higher 12.9% foreign-born population in 1993, the Gambia remains one of the countries in the ECOWAS region with the highest share of immigrants per capita.[30]

The top origin country of immigration is neighboring Senegal, making up around half of the immigration population, followed by Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania and Sierra Leone (UN DESA 2017). Circular migration tied to seasonal labor is common in the Gambia like throughout the rest of West Africa. This stands in contrast to much of the European focus on migration, which lies on its South-North dimension. Beyond regional neighbors, other immigrant communities include in particular a long-standing Lebanese diaspora (many of whom are Gambian citizens) and increasingly Chinese and Indian nationals.

5.1 Governance

In line with free movement protocols, ECOWAS citizens have a freedom of movement within its fifteen member countries, granting rights to entry, establishment and residency. They are legally allowed to enter the country and stay visa-free for up to 90 days. The protocols reflect the region's culture of high mobility of people.

The bureaucratic governance of immigration is controlled by the Gambia Immigration Department under the Ministry of Interior. A residency permit is required for both ECOWAS and non-ECOWAS citizens if they stay longer than 90 days, with a difference in costs between the two and also with regard to the type of permit (student/retired person/work). In addition to the residency permit, non-ECOWAS citizens need to apply for a so-called 'alien permit' sometimes referred to as the 'alien levy'. All permits need to be renewed each year and evidenced with corresponding ID cards.

While the Free Movement Protocols are a comparatively well-developed regional mobility policy framework[31], the lack of implementation hampers the unfolding of its full potential (e.g. Devillard et al. 2015). As an attempt to further regularize ECOWAS mobility from and to the Gambia in accordance to the protocols, the IOM has become active in the field of cross-

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[29] The 2013 census estimates this number at around 110,000 immigrants, making up around 6% of the population (GBOS 2017a).
[30] The Gambia is also a transit country for other West African citizens on their way to Europe, though exact figures are hard to come by, including on how long they stay.
[31] The Protocols served as a template during the recent drafting of the African Union's Free Movement of Persons Protocol, for example.

border management. A pilot project, which ended in 2019, provided technical equipment, capacity training and the fostering of cross-border cooperation at a border post in Farafenni, where due to the recent construction of the Senegambia Bridge crossing the river Gambia, a lot more mobility is expected. An extension is planned.

To further reduce obstacles to regional mobility, a number of ECOWAS states have introduced common ECOWAS National Biometric Identity cards. The new ID cards are supposed to replace residence permits for ECOWAS-internal migrants. The Gambian government started to introduce a biometric passport in 2014 but the project came to a halt in January 2016 due to legal difficulties with the issuing contractor (*Fatu Network* 2018). From October 2018 onwards, the ID cards have started to be distributed again.

Immigrants in the country have a right to become naturalized Gambian citizens after they have legally resided in the country for a period of 15 years (or have been married to a Gambian for 7 years). Jammeh complicated these laws and especially dual nationality is difficult to gain. Consequently, the citizenship regulations are legally unclear—with a contradiction between the constitution and later legislation on it (Manby 2016).

With regard to employment, employers need to pay an annual fee if they employ non-Gambians including ECOWAS citizens, known as the expatriate work quota. This discourages the employment of non-Gambians, especially in low-skilled sectors. Overall, the differentiation between the various types of residency and alien permits are not well known, with many conflicting interpretations. Even ECOWAS residency permits were reportedly not issued for a number of years, due to the lack of correct paper to print ID documentation (see also Hultin 2008).

Beside the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, the ECOWAS 'Common Approach on Migration' represents a further governance framework for immigration. The non-binding document was ratified by ECOWAS states under the aegis of the IOM in 2008 as a 'strategic thinking process' towards a regional approach to migration. Merging two dimensions of intra-regional as well as Europe-bound migration, the 'Common Approach' foresees a higher commitment of ECOWAS states to 'manage' migration rather than reducing border hurdles for free movement as in the spirit of the Free Movement Protocols (cf. Idrissa 2019).

5.2 Political stakes

The ECOWAS as a governing body holds high symbolic stakes for the new Gambian government because of the role in helping to secure former President Jammeh's leave. Accordingly, the new government is committed to bring regional integration forward. The relationship with the Gambia's sole neighboring country, Senegal, stands in focus of this. This is expressed, for example, by pledges for a customs union between the two countries (Nyockeh 2018). As a symbolic milestone, the two countries launched an annual 'Senegambia

Free Movement Day' to raise awareness on the importance of free movement of both people and goods in March 2018. Adama Barrow and Senegalese President Macky Sall identified the strengthening of the Senegalese-Gambian border as one key area of collaboration (*The Economist* 2018).

Nevertheless, immigration—mainly ECOWAS-migration- isn't a high political stake. This may be because of the non-controversial nature of this type of migration in comparison to others—culturally embedded and theoretically well regulated under ECOWAS and generally positively received.

Border management—which includes increased monitoring but also stronger border controls—is pursued with different intentions. For ECOWAS members, including Gambia, harassment and corruption at border posts impedes the implementation of free movement. Almost two-thirds of Gambians find it difficult to cross international borders to work or do trade in other West African countries (Ebere 2018). Better border management is therefore considered as one way to advance regional integration and facilitate mobility. From the EU perspective, however, there is also the impetus to reduce mobility beyond the ECOWAS border. Thus, whilst improved border controls can reduce harassment, there is also an incentive to allow the current status of borders to remain. Gambian officials underlined the normalcy of porous borders, where citizens cross borders daily without passing by a checkpoint and no intention to stay longer than 90 days. To some degree, the informality better helps to upkeep the spirit of the ECOWAS protocols than their implementation would (see also Idrissa 2019). In the future, ECOWAS member states will need to develop their joint response to these juxtapositions and how to deal with the common external border to Algeria and Libya (see figure 1).

5.3 Societal relevance

Old immigrant communities are well established in the country, including, for example, the Creole Aku people from Sierra Leone who have been living in the country for decades, going back to joint colonial ties (Carpenter 2011). Generally, our respondents stressed that immigrants are welcomed in Gambian society and are well integrated. According to the British ambassador, in that respect, 'The Gambia is a role model of tolerance' (interview, 1 June 2017).

Though like elsewhere blaming crimes on immigrant population does exist (Hultin 2008), hospitality is an important cultural ideal in the Gambia. There is little evidence to the contrary, with few incidents reported of xenophobic attacks. Under Jammeh, the abuse and arbitrary killings also included immigrants, like the recent revealing in the TRRC process of the killing of around 56 ECOWAS migrants, mostly Ghanaians, in 2005 ordered by Jammeh personally, claiming they were trying to oust him (Human Rights Watch 2019).

ECOWAS mobility also means that low-skilled emigrants come from other West African countries in the hope of finding employment, or as one Gambian expressed it, 'we have poverty migrants from Guinea' (interview, Gambian diaspora member, 17 May 2017). For the first time in the last census, immigrants were asked why they had come to the country in the last population census: 29.6% came to look for employment (with 23% following families and 21 % immigrating because of marriage) (GBOS 2017b).

5.4 Conclusion

The Gambia is one of the most significant countries of immigration per capita in the region along with Cote d'Ivoire (e.g. Devillard et al. 2015). However, looking at absolute numbers, the Gambia does not come close to immigration figures in other ECOWAS countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, or even Senegal. On the whole, immigration remains a politically relatively neutral topic. A number of initial conclusions can be drawn, all related to the implementation of free movement in the region.

Firstly, the bureaucratic governance of immigration is quite complicated, and could do with some streamlining. If the distribution of ECOWAS ID cards in practice replaces residence permits for migration within ECOWAS zone and does actually simplify matters, this could be useful in this regard.

Secondly, actively supporting free movement enshrined in its protocols should be encouraged by the Gambian government, like the rest of region. With regard to the symbiotic nature with Senegal, steps to further integrate the Senegambia region point to this direction. However, to harness the potential that the protocols offer regarding intra-regional migration, political activities need to span beyond this. In particular, the costs of the focus on border management must be considered, which can juxtapose the ideals of easing mobility with reducing mobility beyond ECOWAS depending on who you ask. Such border projects carry the potential to reinforce state administrative sovereignty and thus challenge the normalcy of cross-border mobility (see also Dini 2017).

Lastly, the positive societal reception of immigrants is exemplary and should be highlighted as such. It also applies to refugees residing in the Gambia.

6 Refugees in the Gambia

During the 1990s, many refugees fleeing from civil war in Liberia (around 2,000) and Sierra Leone (around 7,000) sought protection in the Gambia. This relative influx of refugees reversed over time. In fact, the negative net migration rate (see above) can in part be accredited to the returns of many of the refugees after regional civil wars ended in the early 2000s (GBOS 2017b). Today, both rural and urban refugees remain in the country—each with their own sets of challenges. By April 2019, the UNHCR registered a total of 4,038 refugees in the Gambia, including 3,711 from Senegal, 138 from Cote d'Ivoire and 189 from other places including Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This indicates a significant drop to registered Senegalese refugees in end-2016, when the number was almost twice as high, at 7,940.

Most refugees in the Gambia today are from the Casamançe region in Senegal, where a low-intensity independence conflict has been ongoing since the 1980s, making it the longest running conflict in Africa (see Evans 2007). For many years, those refugees moved back and forth between Senegal and the Gambia depending on conflict waves. By 2006, a large number came to the Gambia permanently and were issued refugee identity cards for the first time (Hopkins 2015).

UNHCR has a small field office in the Gambia with the Gambia Immigration Department legally responsible for refugees. In 2008, the Gambia Commission for Refugees was established. The Commission coordinates and manages refugee affairs in the Gambia.

The Gambia has no internally displaced populations. During the transition period after Barrow had been elected, there was a large number of internally displaced Gambians who left their homes in fear of violence (Kora and Darboe 2017). They quickly returned home after Jammeh left the country.

6.1 Governance

The Gambian 2008 Refugee Act follows the 1969 Organisation of African Union Convention in its definition of a refugee and includes both prima facie recognition of persons belonging to a particular class as well as the possibility of deriving a refugee status from a family member whose refugee status has already been recognized.[32]

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[32] The 1969 Convention from the OAU expands the definition of refugees of the 1951 Geneva Convention (and the additional 1967 Protocol), also covering entire groups of people who have to flee their country (Article 2, Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa). This Convention offers a legal framework for a prima facie acceptance of refugee status on the basis of conflict in their country, rather than dealing with asylum cases individually.

Refugees in the Gambia have a number of rights. For example, they do not need to pay the annual residence fees (see Immigration above). The Refugee Act also gives refugees the right to 'engage in wage-earning employment or self-employment', freedom of movement and 'access to social amenities'. These rights are rather vague, however, and therefore open to competing or inconsistent interpretations (Hopkins 2015). For example, employment rules for refugees remain complicated. Though we were told that refugees can work—with many self-employed as tailors, petty traders or tilers or even as teachers—there are technocratic and communication hurdles on both the refugees and the employers' side. Refugees allegedly need to apply for the additional alien permit to work in the formal sector (Hopkins 2015), though employers don't need to pay the expatriate quota for hiring refugees, which is very expensive especially for non-ECOWAS citizens. Much like for immigration discussed previously, the information on employment is unclear and contradictory.

In terms of accessing healthcare and education, policies on these were continuously re-negotiated under Jammeh because officials changed frequently. For example, the UNHCR eventually signed an agreement with the Ministry of Health whereby refugees would pay local rates for healthcare. This applicability of the agreement was taken up the new Gambian Commissioner for Refugees after the change in government (interview, Hulay Jallow, 5 June 2017). Local tariffs for healthcare became increasingly important when refugees changed from camps to self-settlement.

6.1.1 From camps to self-settlement

In the early 2000s, there were five refugee camps in the Gambia, in Kwinella, Bambali, Sifoe, Kitti and Basse. The prima facie refugee status for Liberians (in 2012) and Sierra Leoneans (in 2008) ended with the tripartite cessation agreements (between UNHCR, the Gambia and the country of origin) and along with it the entitlement to protection and assistance. This made the camps obsolete and by 2005, all camps were closed. Even prior to this, many refugees voluntarily repatriated or chose to live in urban areas instead of the camps.

The newly arriving refugees from the Casamançe region in 2006 were not placed in refugee camps. The former camps in Sifoe and Kitti were too close to the border, encouraging incursions from rebels and would not have adequately protected refugees under international norms (Hopkins 2015). Other camps on the North Bank of the Gambia River were located far away from the border, however, with refugees refusing to go there since this hindered their mobility and cultural integration. For the Casamançais, settlement in the southern areas makes sense in light of ethnic and cultural homogeneity in the region. The ensuing self-settlement was therefore partly a result of the behavior of the refugees themselves but is also considered to be the best option for both refugee and host populations.

Most Casamançais refugees live in a cluster of 86 border villages up to today. Though food and material assistance has been downscaled since 2010, other opportunities such as skills

training are still available through the Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA), an NGO which provides much of the support to the refugee population. Due to the cultural similarities and common livelihood strategies of both the host and the refugee population, the refugees are on the whole well integrated.

In addition, the local governance structure is highly involved in dealing with these refugees—predominantly through village chiefs or Alkalos. The Alkalos register the refugees and act as a go between the refugees themselves and the support institutions. In return for their work, they are given compensation including, for example, donkey carts. The refugees also receive a plot of land to live on and to farm, and GAFNA is now working on the transfer of ownership. Refugees can become involved in the political structures of their village (as elders), though they cannot become an Alkalo (in any case a predominantly male prerogative) (see also Ray 2017).

The urban refugees are self-settled and much harder to govern. They have the same basic rights as all refugees (access to healthcare and education) but do not receive systematic aid like the rural refugees. They have to find their own accommodation and pay their own rent, but also have more opportunities to gain employment (Hopkins 2015). On the whole, according to the Head of GAFNA, they are particularly vulnerable since they have to 'fend for themselves' (interview, 31 May 2017).

6.1.2 Integration as a durable 'solution'

Durable 'solutions' for refugees in the Gambia, like elsewhere, focus on the triad of voluntary repatriation, integration or resettlement. Very few refugees have the opportunity to resettle in a third country, though this is a preferred option of many. Some Liberian and Sierra Leoneans chose to return to their countries of origin and received formal assistance for this.

A large number of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees, however, decided to locally integrate in the Gambia after the cessation agreements. The Sierra Leonean community, in fact, has quite a long history of settlement in the Gambia, dating back to colonial times. An ECOWAS memorandum on refugees from 2007 eased the local integration process, giving refugees from other member countries the right of residence, establishment and work in the whole region. Additionally, UNHCR carried out a local integration initiative all over West Africa for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees (Boulton 2009).

The Casamançais refugee population cannot (yet) return home, due to the protracted conflict, land mines, and destroyed livelihoods. Policy efforts therefore focus on their long-term residency permits and naturalization. Refugee-rights negotiations in the past focused on loosening the hard citizenship criteria for naturalization, for which 15 years of residency permit were needed. According to UNHCR, Gambian authorities have eased pathways for both options, by counting the years of refugee status into the time required to become

naturalized, and by reducing cost for and prolonging the validity of residence permits for Senegalese refugees (UNHCR 2018b).

Casamançais refugees often have little interest in giving up their Senegalese nationality, however. This is similar for Liberians and Sierra Leoneans—who, despite the offer for naturalization in the Gambia just as in other West African countries, declined this, preferring to keep their own nationality (Boulton 2009). Loosing certain rights from refugee status can further hinder mobility and also means becoming independent from material assistance, which is especially difficult for urban refugees whose expenses are much higher.

6.2 Political stakes

Due to the relatively low number of refugees (2.1% of the immigrant population according to GBOS 2017b, 25), their protection is not politically contested. Even under Jammeh, a new Refugee Act was enacted in 2008 and the government-led Gambia Commission for Refugees set up as a result.

There are, however, several areas in the protection regime of the remaining 4,000 refugees in the country that may create obstacles. First, there is a low reliability of data. On the one hand, there are indicators for shadow numbers of many more refugees than those formally registered (e.g. Hopkins 2015; Carpenter 2011). On the other hand, the large reduction of registered Senegalese refugees between 2016 and 2019 is based on a nationwide verification mission which revealed that some refugees had also returned without informing UNHCR. Another reason for the high drop was also, according to our reports, that refugees (falsely) feared they would be repatriated and therefore did not participate in the registration exercise). Second, Jammeh is widely accused of having (indirectly) supported Casamançais independence fighters. Consequently, his support of refugees is interpreted as instrumentalizing them to beef up his own political support. Casamançais refugees might be used as political pawns again if the conflict heats up. For the time being, the Casamançe conflict shows no sign of resolution, with renewed threats from one rebel leader in May 2019 (Darboe 2019), but there are no indications yet how the government will react.

6.3 Societal relevance

The refugee population is on the whole well integrated, raising little societal tension. In urban areas, any conflicts are standard ones like arguments with landlords over the payment of rent. The immigration police have received training on the status of refugee identity cards so as to treat the population respectfully. Due to the societal acceptance and the rights for refugees, the Head of the UNHCR field office noted that 'the Gambia is heaven for refugees' (interview, 30 May 2017).

The Casamançe population, largely based in the rural areas, are well integrated due to a shared cultural and ethnic heritage. Conflict with a poor host community has been largely avoided through joint and separate aid provisions that also target the local community.

The former President Jammeh is widely purported to have supported both the Casamançais rebels and the refugees in his own country, who are of the same ethnic group as him, the Jola. His home village Kanilai is close to the border (Ray 2017). There are also accusations that he freely gave out naturalisation certificates and voter cards to increase his own popularity. Whilst such claims are difficult to prove, they are embedded in popular discourse. Since the regime change, no widespread backlash against the Jola/Casamançais refugees have happened, though it remains to be seen if this part of his legacy will be included in the proceedings of the TRRC.

6.4 Conclusion

The Gambia has very progressive refugee protection laws and practice, including opportunities for self-settlement in urban and rural areas and the right to work as well as— albeit increasingly restrictively—access to education and healthcare. The country has a Refugee Act, which sets up a Commission for Refugees. Despite some technical shortcomings, the act is a success for refugee protection. The strong protection is also tied to the ECOWAS protocols on the freedom of movement. A number of conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, the local integration of Casamançais refugees at the southern border of the Gambia to Senegal is working well with the involvement of the local governance structure and especially the Alkalo system. Though Alkalos are traditionally based on family lineages, post-independence they started being elected in an effort to democratize this traditional form of authority. Under Jammeh, some of the elected Alkalos were replaced by political appointees, new elections remain outstanding. More could be learnt from this governance structure, with implications also for other forms of migration. In a completely different setting—in a German asylum seeker center—an elected Alkalo system was put into place with great success of hugely reducing conflict and allowing for forms of self-organization and empowerment.

Secondly, the concentration on local integration and the cessation agreements with Liberia and Sierra Leone, and more recently those from the Casamançe meant that the refugee numbers continue to decrease. Organizations like GAFNA have thus partly redefined themselves also focusing on other vulnerable populations like returnees or those who are stateless. Nevertheless, refugee populations from protracted conflicts like the Casamançe must be provided with real alternatives such as livelihood strategies, if naturalization is not an option for them.

7 Major findings

Migration is a culturally embedded societal phenomenon in the Gambia. Prior to the change in government in 2017, the levels of Gambians leaving rose to extreme levels. Migration governance remains a topic for the new Gambia in different ways. First, the politically most decisive form of migration in the Gambia even since 2017 remains irregular migration. Governance on this issue pertains not only to the reduction of irregular migration but also the return of migrants that have travelled on irregular means. These factors count for both the new government and its international supporters, but in different ways. While the reduction of new irregular migration is a more long-term process, migrant return is currently one of the most pressing issues between the Gambian government and its European partners.

Second, diaspora migration has been successfully established in the political arena. The openness of the new government towards its citizens abroad has been complemented by pro-active self-organization among the diaspora. While this enables policy processes which can heighten the development influence of the diaspora, it also carries some drawbacks. Critical diaspora voices in particular, not part of the government initiatives, may be left out.

Third, the high number of Gambian refugees and asylum seekers is directly linked to return. In the 'new Gambia', much basis for new asylum claims have been cleared, but some persist, so that claims continue to depend on individual cases. While the government pursues a policy of welcoming back former refugees to legitimize their democratic stance, the issue of large-scale return of rejected asylum seekers is seen as a threat to political stability.

Fourth, whilst the considerable amount of immigrants in the country does not stand in the center of political attention, the change in government has created avenues of stronger regional integration that also touch upon ECOWAS migration. So far, it is however unclear what effects these measures will have on regional as well as Europe-bound migration.

Finally, whilst the Gambia has very progressive refugee protection laws and practice, their management is not prioritized at all. The numbers of refugees have greatly reduced in the last years with the exception of refugees from Casamançe in Southern Senegal. Their situation is only slowly being resolved.

In terms of the governance, stakes and societal discourse on migration, several conclusions can be drawn, discussed below.

7.1 Migration governance

Whilst migration is an important societal phenomenon, this does not translate into a priority in state policy design. This is, for one, expressed in the little attention that migration and especially irregular migration receives in the National Development Plan. It is also displayed

in the dragged process of designing and launching the National Migration Policy. The notable exception is the diaspora policy, which is well developed in the NDP. The new National Migration Policy will be comprehensive to all forms of migration, making it difficult to design in a well-balanced way. The issue of return continues to dominate all political discussions with regards to migration. The National Coordination Mechanism on Migration, once activated, is supposed to play an important role in the implementation of the new migration policy. Pushed by the IOM and established at the highest political level, it remains to be seen how the mechanism's nature influences the agenda-setting and the actor landscape involved in implementing the different policy areas, in particular with regards to diverse domestic actors and decentralized approaches.

Complementary to the slow national policy development, international development partners create programs to govern irregular migration more indirectly, especially through the EUTF's focus on 'tackling root causes of migration'. By creating better economic conditions and opportunities on the individual level mainly, 'staying put' is to become more attractive and thus lead to a reduction in out-migration. Although the need for creating better prospects for youth in the country is acknowledged by all interlocutors, the central role of international programs therein risks lacking long-term orientation and structural change. Thus, leaving as much responsibility and technical ownership as possible to domestic public institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations, is of utmost importance.

The increased activity of the international community to deal with irregular migration also shows in their measures to return rejected asylum seekers. However, returning a large number of Gambians can carry detrimental consequences for the stability of the country's young democracy. Civil unrest is, among other things, created by the unequal treatment of returnees due to legal differences of returnees and complex transnational management procedures. Innovative approaches to reduce the problem of migrants without a residence permit in the EU therefore should include opening pathways of legal migration and remigration after return. Without legal opportunities to access education and labor markets abroad, irregular travel routes will continue, as seen in the shift of migratory routes since 2017.

For the Gambia, with up to 7% of its population living outside the country, a strong diaspora policy strategy carries large potential for the small nation. Contrary to irregular migration governance, the development of a diaspora strategy bespeaks high ownership of migrants themselves. It establishes Gambian diaspora members as players in the Gambia's development sector and as a political voice, when voters' rights for nationals abroad can be secured in the future. Aiming at creating better avenues for development contributions from abroad, the strategy builds on the economic resources that Gambian migrants contribute through remittances. This includes remittances from migrants that have travelled irregularly, as these make up a considerable share. In this vein, the diaspora strategy should aim at

bridging divides between established migrants and those with an unstable residency status in order to meet the interests of the different important diaspora segments.

Gambian migration management also stands in a regional context, for example with regard to ECOWAS regional migration and the relation this has to migration beyond ECOWAS borders, either to North Africa, Europe or elsewhere. Regionally, especially ECOWAS offers some potentially sophisticated instruments for governing migration. The free movement protocols are generally not well implemented in the region, however, and there is no strong political debate around them. The cost of improving border management, seemingly a technical matter, must be considered, as it can juxtapose the ideals of eased mobility within the region with reduced mobility *beyond* ECOWAS.

7.2 The political stakes of migration

Without a doubt, forceful return of migrants from Europe carries the highest political stakes in the Gambia and it is likely that it will continue to do so. These high stakes come into play for the Gambian state vis-à-vis the EU and its member states, as well as for international organizations and civil society. For the Gambian government, trying to assert its domestic legitimacy in the case of this socially critical issue is essential. Cooperating with the EU member states is perceived as a betrayal by migrants and their families. At the same time, the government in its efforts to be recognized as a legitimate partner by the international community cannot withdraw from its responsibility to cooperate in return. Thus far, it has encountered this balancing act with relative silence. By setting a temporary moratorium on forced returns from the EU, they are playing for time.

The prospect of forceful return brings a high degree of frustration to migrants and their families, and so does the government's silence towards the issue. But statements by international actors about extremely high prospective forced return numbers do so just as much. For the government, agreeing to such high numbers when lifting the moratorium would be too high a price to pay, losing the symbolic impact of the stay in forced returns to safeguard their citizens' interests. Thus, by aiming at returning such high numbers, international actors impede the ability for the Gambian government to accept returns generally.

The Gambian government as well as civil society actors see a way to resolve the moratorium impasse by creating more reintegration opportunities for forced returnees with international support. This would mean linking forced return closer to sustainable reintegration, as found in development approaches. International development funds are increasingly also directed towards forced returnees, in order not to discriminate towards this particularly vulnerable group. Yet, developmental efforts towards the Gambia should not be undermined or co-opted by political interests of donor countries regarding return.

When it comes to future (irregular) migration, the EUTF programs might lead to economic empowerment of young people in the country, a success in its own right regardless whether this actually reduces out-migration. Addressing irregular migration will depend more than ever on regular migration opportunities rather than the development programs in the country.

The Gambian diaspora has become a political stakeholder in its own regard. They are not merely addressed by national policy but some diaspora members have become policy designers and implementers. Acknowledging the heterogeneity of the diaspora, the structures and strategic positions established by those actors must do justice to the various needs of Gambians abroad. This includes continuing to expand their efforts to include vulnerable migrants abroad in order to remain a legitimate diaspora representation in the country.

7.3 Societal discourse on migration

The overall positive societal reception of immigrants is exemplary and also applies to refugees residing in the Gambia. Beyond this, the stakes and governance of migration are intricately embedded into the broader societal discourses on migration. The pull of Europe as "Babylon" embedded to the strong tourism sector in the country cannot be overestimated. For many Gambians, therefore, conceptual categories like refugees or migrants are socially fluid— despite their political and legal differences. This also relates to the issue of return. While the number of returnees continues to grow, the fragmented governance of different types of return based on destination country (coming back from North Africa or from a certain European country) and legal status which create a diversity of return experiences and reintegration opportunities that is difficult to comprehend. Such differences might hinder the reduction of social stigma of forced returnees from Europe to some degree, as they are deemed as particularly 'failed'. Considering the de-stigmatization work that returned transit migrants have done in the last years, their efforts should be supported to cover forced returnees as well to make their shame in returning empty-handed from 'Babylon' easier to deal with.

With regard to future migration, many interviewees were convinced that peoples' mind-set needs to adapt to the given reality of little chances for successful migration. Accordingly, many projects now have a focus on establishing a discourse around opportunities of 'making it in the Gambia'. Such initiatives can only prove successful in the longer run if said opportunities are actually created, not only for selected groups but for a broad range of young people, where the pull of Europe is particularly present. Parallel to this, narratives and initiatives have to include options for more regular migration, as otherwise they ring hollow,

disregarding societal realities in which migration will in all likelihood continue to play an important role as a central strategy to get ahead in life.

In line with this, it is especially the government that needs to continue improving their communication strategies. Young people, making up a considerable amount of Gambian society, are currently developing a strong collective voice, after having been collectively silenced by the former regime. These ambitions to change the culture of public communication and critique need to be welcomed and even nourished, as freedom of expression is a central cornerstone of democracy. Therefore, direct communication and exchange in all forms of media—including radios, TVs, newspapers and digital social media—needs to be fostered by the new government as pro-actively as possible to build trust and accountability. Communication on migration also demands for more diverse exchange on reasons for and consequences of forced return.

Abbreviations

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific region
CRC	The Gambian Constitutional Review Commission
ECOMIG	ECOWAS Mission in the Gambia
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EUTF	Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
GAFNA	The Gambia Food and Nutrition Association
GBOS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ITC	International Trade Centre
NAATIP	National Agency against Trafficking in Persons
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NYC	National Youth Council
OAU	The Organization of African Union (now African Union)
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
TRRC	Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission

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Appendix

List of interviews and focus group, on the Gambia's migration policy (conducted in 2019 for the second edition of the report)		
Date	**Interviewee**	**Organization/profession**
17.04.2019	Manfred Haehnel	European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN)
26.04.2019	Andrew Sylva	National Authorising Officer Support Unit (NAOSU) to the European Commission
28.04.2019	Raimund Moser	Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)
29.04.2019	Bakary Fadera	ActionAid
29.04.2019	Alhagie Nyang, Omar Danso	Activista the Gambia, ActionAid Youth Group
30.04.2019	Fumiko Nagano, Etienne Micallef, Aron Tekelegzi	International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
02.05.2019	Yusufa Gomez	Gambia Food and Nutrition Agency (GAFNA)
02.05.2019	Yahya Samateh	National Office of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
05.05.2019	Mustapha Sallah, Karamo Keita	Youth Against Irregular Migration (YAIM)
06.05.2019	European Member State Representative	Head of the Embassy of the European Union (EU)
07.05.2019	Ousman Ceesay	Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Interior
07.05.2019	Foday Gassama	Gambia Immigration Department - Migration Unit (GID)
07.05.2019	Civil servant	Civil servant
08.05.2019	Representative	Spanish Embassy
08.05.2019	Saiba T. Suso	Gambian Returnees from the Backway (GRB)
13.05.2019	Representative	Embassy of the European Union (EU)
13.05.2019	Abdoul Secka	Migration and Sustainable Development in the Gambia (MSDG)
15.05.2019	Isatou Touray	Vice-President
16.05.2019	Yousef Taylor	#Iamnot4sale Campaign
16.05.2019	Activist	Activist
19.05.2019	Lamin Darboe	National Youth Council (NYC)
19.05.2019	Journalist	Journalist
08.06.2019	Fatou Jagne	Network of Girls Against Human Trafficking
12.06.2019	Francis Mendy	CaDO, Catholic Development Office (Caritas International)
13.06.2019	Omar Saibo Camara	Concerned Citizens on Deportation
14.06.2019	Journalist	Journalist

List of interviews and focus group, on the Gambia's migration policy (conducted in 2017 for the first edition of the report)		
Date	**Interviewee**	**Organization/profession**
17.05.2017	Kawsu Drammeh	Diaspora
23.05.2017	Kalilu Banja	Diaspora
24.05.2017	Gambian refugee	Youth and women's rights activist
29.05.2017	Andrew Sylva	National Authorising Officer Support Unit (NAOSU) to the European Commission
30.05.2017	Bashirou Garba-Jaump	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
30.05.2017	Sekou Saho	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
30.05.2017	European Member State Representative	Head of a European Embassy
31.05.2017	Usain Yabo	The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Gambia (TANGO)
31.05.2017	Legal Officer	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
31.05.2017	Yusufa Gomez	The Gambia Food and Nutrition Association (GAFNA)
31.05.2017	Lamin Darboe	National Youth Council (NYC)
01.06.2017	Attila Lajos	EU Ambassador to the Gambia
01.06.2017	Focus Group	Returnees from Libya
01.06.2017	Colin Crorkin	British Ambassador
01.06.2017	Halifah Sallah	Public Intellectual
02.06.2017	Edrissa Sanyang	Diaspora Opposition leader
05.06.2017	John Gomez	Minister of Youth and Sports
05.06.2017	Hulay Jallow	Gambia Commission on Refugees
05.06.2017	Civil society member	Human Rights NGO
06.06.2017	Abdou Touray	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
06.06.2017	Sanna Camara	Journalist
07.06.2017	Hassoum Ceesay	National Museum of Gambia
07.06.2017	Fatoumata Jallow-Tambajang	Acting Vice-President
05.07.2017	Richard Danziger	Regional Director International Organization for Migration (IOM)
14.07.2017	Mbemba Jabbi	Diaspora leader
18.07.2017	Haddy Sarr	Academic

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The Political Economy of West African Migration Governance (WAMiG)
The WAMiG project highlights the political dimension of migration governance and the multiple stakeholders. To do this, the project considers how migration governance instruments and institutions are made and implemented, the stakes and stakeholders involved or excluded and the societal discourse that surrounds these interests. The qualitative study focuses on four case studies—the Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

The project is based at the Arnold-Bergstraesser Institute (ABI) in Freiburg. It is funded by the Stiftung Mercator and undertaken within the framework of the Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration (MEDAM). MEDAM is a research and consultation project that identifies and closes gaps in existing research and develops specific recommendations for policy makers.