



NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE THE GAMBIA



A Gambian women's rights activist speaking on electoral reform during a meeting organized by NDI partner Peace Ambassadors

Political Background

After 22 years of authoritarian rule, Adama Barrow led a unified opposition coalition to unseat President Yahya Jammeh in the 2016 presidential election. Following Barrow's inauguration in January 2017, The Gambia took crucial steps towards democratization; it opened its economy, released numerous political prisoners, and allowed exiles to return home. The Gambian government has put forth an ambitious reform agenda that includes drafting a new constitution, reforming election laws, and undertaking a truth and reconciliation process. NDI is working with government and civil society actors to ensure that the government is transparent and accountable. In addition, the Institute is supporting Gambian civil society organizations (CSOs) and political parties to engage in the election process as the country prepares for presidential elections in 2021.

Communication and Transparency for Accountability

Citizens are more likely to trust their democratic institutions when they can hold elected officials accountable. Governments can improve transparency, and therefore accountability, through effective communication. NDI is working with the Office of the President in The Gambia to better inform citizens about its priorities, policies, and actions. This includes developing internal structures that are better able to coordinate on communication strategies and working with members of the government on how to better use technology and media tools to ensure that information reaches the public. In addition, NDI is working to connect government and civil society actors on identifying reforms needed to increase government openness and transparency and on creating working groups to pursue these reforms.

Strengthening Civil Society Capacity to Observe Elections

As The Gambia prepares for competitive presidential elections in December 2021, civil society has an important role to play. CSOs ensure that citizens' voices and interests are reflected in developing election laws and processes. Moreover, CSOs are important actors in ensuring the public is informed about election preparations and has confidence in the election process. NDI is supporting Gambian CSOs as they coordinate efforts to participate in the election process. Drawing on NDI's experience working with citizen observer groups to monitor elections around the world, as well as expertise from regional and global networks including the [West Africa Election Observers Network \(WAEON\)](#) and the [Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors \(GNDEM\)](#), the Institute is helping Gambian CSOs to observe the upcoming election process using best practices and innovative tools.

Facilitating Peaceful Political Engagement

To ensure that Gambian political actors institutionalize governing practices that protect fundamental freedoms, NDI is supporting the Gambia's Inter-Party Committee (IPC) to facilitate inter-party dialogue on critical constitutional and electoral reforms. As well, NDI will work with the IPC to build the knowledge and skills of member political parties to engage in issue-based campaigns, participate in candidate debates, and encourage commitments to a peaceful 2021 presidential election.

West Africa Political Party Strengthening Academy

NDI works with political party leaders from 14 West African countries to promote their ability to strengthen and/or create internal mechanisms for policymaking. Three Gambian political parties are engaged in program activities that build skills for successful policy development including internal and external communication, the use of information and communications technology tools, and constituent relations.

Past Programs

NDI first worked in The Gambia in 1995, when the Institute supported the former Constitutional Review Commission, the Electoral Law Review Committee, and CSOs to assist in the country's political transition. In 2004, NDI implemented a program to assess and strengthen the National Assembly's information technology capacity by providing targeted skills training for legislative staff and elected officials. In 2006, NDI trained pollwatchers from the three main political coalitions. This helped to strengthen Gambian political parties' ability to monitor the 2006 electoral process and assisted political leaders in identifying and advocating for electoral reforms. Following the 2017 transition, NDI worked with the President's office to improve its messaging to the Gambian public on its policy positions. In March 2018, NDI conducted a nationwide [public opinion survey](#) to gather citizen views on The Gambian Constitution and other aspects of governance under the new, democratically-elected government. NDI presented the findings of the survey to key government officials, members of the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), and CSOs in order to amplify and incorporate citizen voices during the constitutional reform process. The 2017 technical assistance and the 2018 public opinion survey provide the basis for NDI's current support to the Office of the President and to CSOs.

Stay connected!

For more information on these programs,
contact:




Banjul, The Gambia

Raymond Esebagbon, Resident Director
resebagbon@ndi.org

Washington, D.C.

Courtney Creek, Program Director
ccreek@ndi.org

455 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2621
p: 202.728.5500 | f: 888.875.2887
www.ndi.org

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 /NDITheGambia
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