



NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE THE GAMBIA



EWC presidential election observers monitor the voting process at a polling station on December 4, 2021

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The election of Adama Barrow as president of The Gambia in 2016 ended 22 years of authoritarian rule and created an opening for democratic reforms. While President Barrow laid out an ambitious constitutional and electoral reform agenda, progress

to implement reforms has been slow. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is supporting the advancement of democratic institution building in The Gambia by working with government and civil society actors to ensure that the government is transparent, accountable, and communicates with Gambian citizens. As well, in collaboration with Gambian civil society organizations (CSOs) and other electoral stakeholders, the Institute is helping to promote the integrity of electoral processes before, during, and after election day.

CURRENT NDI PROGRAMS

Supporting Effective Implementation of the Access to Information Act

Following a five-year right-to-know campaign led by the Gambia Press Union (GPU), President Adama Barrow signed the Access to Information (ATI) Act into law in August 2021. If effectively implemented, the law could advance significantly media actors' ability to hold the government to account. NDI is supporting the Ministry of Information to develop a framework for implementation of the ATI law, and to strengthen the capacities of government, media, and civil society actors to effectively work within the structures of the law.

Communication and Transparency for Accountability

Citizens are more likely to trust their democratic institutions when they can hold elected officials accountable and when governments prioritize transparency through effective communication. NDI is working with The Gambia's executive branch to develop and implement strategies to enhance intra-government coordination, information sharing, and to improve communication efforts between institutions and the general public. Enhanced internal and external communication strategies will help the government to keep the public engaged and informed, ensuring citizens have the information they need to make informed decisions, promoting transparency, and better aligning expectations. To further ensure Gambians are involved in the process of improving government transparency and accountability, NDI is also providing a platform for government and civil society actors to collectively identify and strategically advocate for priority open governance reforms.

Strengthening Civil Society Capacity To Engage In Electoral Processes

In February 2021, NDI partnered with The Gambia's first systematic, long-term citizen observation group, the Elections Watch Committee (EWC), to observe and report on electoral processes and release recommendations to improve future processes. To capitalize on and sustain the momentum stemming from civil society's increased engagement in electoral processes in The Gambia, NDI is assisting the EWC to consolidate its network and plan for future election cycles. As well, NDI is working with the EWC and other civic groups to build consensus and spark action amongst a broad range of stakeholders on needed electoral reforms.

PAST NDI PROGRAMS

NDI first worked in The Gambia in 1995, supporting the former Constitutional Review Commission, the Electoral Law Review Committee, and CSOs to contribute to the country's political transition. In 2004, NDI worked 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 to strengthen Gambian political parties' ability to monitor the 2006 electoral process and identify and advocate 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 and presented the findings 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. In 2020, three Gambian political parties took part in NDI's regional political party strengthening

academy to build skills for successful policy development including internal and external communication, the use of information and communications technology tools, and constituent relations. From 2021 to 2022, NDI supported The Gambia's Inter-party Committee (IPC) to facilitate inter-party dialogue, promote peaceful elections, and mainstream diversity within both the IPC and political parties. NDI also worked with the Commission on Political Debates to hold the country's first presidential candidate debate as well as a series of national assembly candidate debates. During this time, NDI also partnered with the EWC to observe electoral processes, including: the 2021 voter registration update, December 2021 presidential elections, April 2022 National Assembly elections, and May 2022 local government by-elections. NDI's work with the EWC provides the basis for NDI's current support to civil society to advocate for electoral reforms and monitor the 2023 local government elections.



IPC members meet to discuss and commit to peaceful elections and combating hate speech ahead of the 2021 residential elections

Contact Information

For more information about these programs, contact:

Banjul, The Gambia

Artan Alijaj, Senior Resident Director
aalijaj@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

 @ndi
 /NDITheGambia
 @ndigambia