

Context for Gambian Diaspora Voting

- **Internationally Managed OCV:** In 1994, the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) was set up in the UK as a pioneering diaspora-development organisation. Amongst its many innovative activities was to support diaspora voting in countries of origin as a mechanism for expanding and enhancing diaspora contribution to development. The MSDG Programme Director Prof. Gibril Faal was a long-term chairman of AFFORD who led a review of Out of Country Voting (OCV) in 2006, after the Iraq OCV in December 2005. In collaboration with the Election Support Unit of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the review analysed the applicability of the IOM OCV model¹ to African countries. Concerned about the high costs and relative detachment of the OCV schemes from diaspora communities and electorates, another review was undertaken on nationally managed diaspora voting.
- **Nationally Managed Diaspora Voting:** In Africa, Senegal is one country that has a long history of OCV for its diaspora, codified in 1992. In Senegal, the successful OCV is not managed by international organisations, but by the national electoral commission, namely Commission Electorale Nationale Autonome (CENA)². The process engages with the diaspora communities through the appointment of diasporans as CENA electoral representatives, and engages with political parties through pre-voting modalities briefings and representation at polling stations abroad³.
- **Senegal Case Study:** On 20 March 2016, a constitutional referendum in Senegal approved amongst other things, the election of diaspora parliamentarians. Of the 165 seats in the National Assembly, 15 were allocated to external/diaspora Deputies representing diaspora constituencies across the world. This made Senegal a world leader in political inclusion of diasporas. In the lead to the legislative elections in 2017, Prof. Gibril Faal as Director of Africa-Europe Diaspora Development Platform (ADEPT) co-convened an international workshop on 'Roadmap for Effective Diaspora Representation in the Senegalese National Assembly'. It was held in Barcelona on 7-9 April 2017, with participants from across Europe and officials from Senegal, including the Chair of the National Assembly Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad. Guidance on selecting prospective diaspora parliamentarians was prepared for all political parties. The parliamentary elections were held on 30 July 2017. The pioneering 'roadmap workshop' of April 2017 was followed up after the elections with a Diaspora Development Dialogue (DDD) on 'Diaspora Participation in Formal Institutions in Africa and Europe' in Brussels on 9 November 2017. The DDD was organised in partnership with the Government of Senegal⁴. MSDG was an observer at the London polling stations of the Senegalese Presidential elections on 24 February 2019. It also advised the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to observe Senegalese voting in The Gambia. 2019 was the first time that Senegalese Voter's Card was incorporated in the National Identity Card (the pocket card was one side an ID card and the other side a voter's card). MSDG observed the entire voting process, interviewed CENA officials, party representatives and voters. MSDG also noted queries and challenges relating to Senegal Voter Registration and Polling Station designation in the United Kingdom.
- **NDP and Gambian Diaspora Voting:** The Gambian Diaspora Strategy (GDS) as incorporated in the National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21) states: ***"Section 39 of the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia gives every Gambian citizen the right to vote in Presidential and National Assembly, irrespective of residency in The Gambia. Due to the undemocratic nature of the previous dictatorship, the diaspora were never given their constitutional right to vote. The diaspora continued to play an active and crucial political role in restoring democracy in The Gambia. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) will work with partners to facilitate diaspora voter registration and voting in future Presidential and National Assembly elections.....MOFA, working with the Ministry of Interior and other partners will create and issue a renewable Consular Card to every member of the Gambian diaspora who wants one.....The Consular Card database can also be the basis for the diaspora electoral register"***⁵.

- MSDG and IEC Liaison:** The Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia (MSDG) project was initiated in August 2017 as a Technical Cooperation Programme between GK Partners and the Office of The President. MSDG consulted and drafted the Gambian Diaspora Strategy (GDS) as incorporated in the National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21). As part of the GDS/NDP consultations, MSDG started liaising with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in October 2017. Apart from consultative meetings, MSDG liaises with the IEC on technical and logistical matters. The IEC chairman was a panelist on the 'Face the Nation' session at the First Stake in the Nation Forum (SNF1) on 13 January 2018 (SNF was initiated as an annual policy and consultative forum, now mandated in the NDP). MSDG facilitated for the IEC chairman to attend and deliver a keynote speech at a Diaspora Development Dialogue (DDD) on 'Expanding and Enhancing the Role of Diaspora Parliamentarians', held in Dakar on 26 April 2018. The DDD programme included induction training for the 15 Senegalese elected diaspora parliamentarians, as designed by the MSDG Programme Director. Subsequently, the IEC in their submission to the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) recommended that beyond diaspora voting, the constitution should allow for the diaspora to be elected to the Gambian National Assembly⁶.
- Implementation of Gambian Diaspora Voting:** In December 2018, the Office of the President stated: *"Two decades of dictatorship has degraded the capacity, spirit and effectiveness of the public sector institutions in The Gambia. Through the MSDG2 Technical Cooperation Programme, we expect GK Partners to facilitate the implementation of the Gambia Diaspora Strategy"*⁷. MSDG is already co-financed by GK Partners and the Swiss Government and is keen to cooperate and collaborate with other institutions on Gambian diaspora voting and representation, addressing policy and practical issues including:
 - Legal and regulatory framework for diaspora voting and diaspora National Assembly Members
 - Designation of diaspora/external constituencies and polling stations
 - Diaspora voter registration, Consular Cards and IEC coordination of diaspora voting
 - Diaspora voting options, logistics, transparency, credibility, challenges, opportunities and budgets
 - Voter education, awareness raising and diaspora community engagement.



¹ See summary of Out of Country Voting schemes managed by International Organization for Migration (IOM) from 1996 to 2007. https://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/activities/mepmm/op_support/esu_ocv_080107.pdf

² IDEA and IFE (2007), *Voting from Abroad: The International IDEA Handbook*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance and The Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico, Stockholm. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/voting-from-abroad-the-international-idea-handbook.pdf>

³ Personal discussions in February 2019 between Prof. Gibril Faal and officials of CENA and Directorate General of Senegalese Abroad (DGSE), CENA appointed agents in the United Kingdom, and representatives of Senegalese political parties in the UK.

⁴ See DDD Declaration: <https://www.diasporadiologue.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/DDD7-Declaration.pdf>

⁵ See NDP pp.117-118: <http://gambiandiaspora.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Gambia-National-Development-Plan-NDP-2018-21.pdf>

⁶ The IEC recommendation for diaspora representation in the Gambian National Assembly was reported in the media and referred to by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Gambians Abroad in June 2019: <https://foroyaa.gm/crc-engages-gambian-diaspora-on-constitution-review-process/>

⁷ The statement on GDS implementation is from an Office of the President letter to the MSDG Programme, dated 28 December 2018.

<p>MSDG is a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), co-financed by: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and GK Partners:</p>	<p>The TCP was designed by GK Partners, implemented by GKP, in partnership with the Government of The Gambia (GOTG):</p>
 <p>Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra</p> <p>Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC</p>	  <p>GK Partners advisers to socially responsible business</p>

Contact: Mr Abdoul Salaam Secka – Technical Director, MSDG Project

Mob: (+220) 928 8666 Email: asecka@gkpartners.co.uk www.gambiandiaspora.net