

## The Fourth Stake in the Nation Forum (SNF4) Went Online: Reaching a Wider Global Audience

### President Barrow Thanks the Diaspora for 30 Billion Dalasis (US\$579m) of Remittances



VP H.E. Dr Isatou Touray



Elizabeth Sosseh Sisay



Sona Jobarteh



Prof. Gibril Faal OBE

Despite the COVID 19 pandemic, the Fourth Stake in the Nation Forum (SNF4) was held – as an online event on 8 and 9 January 2021. The advantage of the online edition of the forum was that the proceedings were live-streamed, thereby reaching thousands of Gambians across the world. As in previous years, there was an SNF Presidential Statement, this year delivered by H.E. Vice President Dr. Isatou Touray on behalf of H.E. President Adama Barrow. The President thanked the diaspora for their **“patriotism, immense financial input and other development contributions.”**

Earlier in the proceedings, Dr. Seeku Jaabi, the First Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of The Gambia, representing the recently appointed Governor, Mr. Buah Saïdy announced that the interim data for 2020 is that Gambians in the diaspora sent remittances of US\$578.5 Million, which is equivalent to 29.6 Billion Dalasis, representing a staggering 48.1% of GDP. In 2020, despite the difficulties faced by the diaspora due to COVID19, remittances increased by nearly a quarter of a Billion US Dollars, from the 2019 figure of US\$329.79 Million.

The President in his statement acknowledged that despite their contributions, the diaspora face difficulties in acquiring relevant documentation from agents of government in pursuing ventures, projects and programmes, but gave the reassurance that: **“Through the Office of the President, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Ministries, Departments and Agencies, we will redouble our efforts to resolve implementation bottlenecks and operational challenges.”** He further stated: **“I renew the government’s commitment to work closely with the MSDG project and others, to facilitate expanded and enhanced diaspora contributions.”**

The forum was organised by the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia project (MSDG) led by Professor Gibril Faal of the London School of Economics (LSE), in partnership with the Office of the President. Stake in the Nation Forum is mandated as an annual consultative event in the Gambia National Development Plan (NDP) as a forum to enable the Gambian diaspora, which is the Eighth Region of the country, to engage with government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, as well as NGOs and CSOs, on a wide range of developmental matters.

## Formal Statements and Interactive Thematic Workshops

Formal keynote statements were given by the Ambassador of Switzerland to The Gambia, H.E. Dr. Marion Weichelt Krupski, who applauded the strengthening of Swiss-Gambia development cooperation and renewed Switzerland's commitment and partnership with GK Partners, the initiators and implementers of the MSDG Project. The Diaspora Keynote Speaker, Ms. Elizabeth Sosseh Sisay, gave a comprehensive analysis of diaspora-development in the past three years, and made practical and positive suggestions on how to improve future cooperation and development. On his part, the Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission, Alhaji Alieu Momarr Njai reassured the diaspora, stating that: ***“Although we have recently announced a delay in the start of voter registration in Gambia, the dates of Out-of-Country diaspora voter registration remains July 2021”***.

Honourable Mambury Njie, the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, gave a review of economic policies and priorities of the past three years, highlighting challenges and successes, whilst identifying options to enhance diaspora input. There were 36 keynote speakers and expert discussants and moderators, including the internationally acclaimed award winning musician Ms. Sona Jobarteh, the academic, writer and publisher Dr. Momodou Sallah, and the Vice-Chair of the Democratic Union of Gambian Activists (DUGA), Mr. Pa Samba Jow. The Special Guest Speaker was Honourable Aboubacry Diallo, Diaspora Member of the Thirteenth Legislature, National Assembly of Senegal, Representing the Diaspora Constituency of 'The Americas and Oceania'. The three interactive workshops were on: 'Appreciating and Advancing Gambian Culture in a Changing World'; Development Review: Lessons, Actions and Diaspora Input'; and 'Gambian Diaspora Voting and Representation: Actions and Logistics'.

## Recording of Traditional Lullabies for Diaspora Families

On the first day of SNF4 on Friday, 8 January 2021, the MSDG project in partnership with the UK-based social enterprise Yaram Arts, led by Mr Njok Malik Jeng, launched a collection of recordings of traditional Gambian Lullabies, available to be downloaded free of charge. The songs were recorded by diaspora singers Amie Cherry and Kumba Kuyateh. They can be used especially by families in the diaspora to introduce children to Gambian languages and culture, whilst enjoying what Mr James Jeggan Bahoum referred to as: ***“the lyrical whimsy of Mba Nyaling Woo; the melodious yearnings of Bul Joy Sama Neneh; the rhythmic ditty of Sona Mariama; and the soothing charm of Ayo Neneh”***.

**ENDS**

[www.gambiandiaspora.net](http://www.gambiandiaspora.net)

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## Highlights of the Fourth Stake in the Nation Forum (SNF4) (Friday, 8 and Saturday, 9 January 2021)

- **Presidential Assurance:** The President of The Gambia acknowledged the bureaucratic difficulties faced by the diaspora in acquiring relevant documentation to enable them to implement ventures, projects and programmes, and gave reassurance that Office of the President, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other Ministries, Departments and Agencies will redouble efforts to resolve implementation bottlenecks and operational challenges.
- **Development Review:** The Minister of Finance and the Diaspora Keynote Speaker presented substantive and introspective reviews of 2017-2020 development policy and practice; stimulated productive dialogue and exchange; and provided suggestions and options for enhanced diaspora development engagement.
- **Remittance Inflows:** The Governor of the Central Bank announced the interim remittance inflow data for 2020 of US\$578.5 Million, equivalent to 29.6 Billion Dalasis, representing a staggering 48.1% of GDP – in the year of COVID19 pandemic.
- **Schedule for Diaspora Voting:** The Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission reassured the diaspora that despite the recently announced delay in the start of voter registration in Gambia, the July 2021 dates of Out-of-Country diaspora voter registration remains unchanged.
- **Enhancing Diaspora Input:** MSDG announced the piloting of the ‘Gambia Diaspora Technical Support’ (GDTS) scheme, through which one beneficiary the Ida Bass Kidney Foundation (IBKF) was able to secure a consignment of 1.6 million face masks (worth £0.5 Million, equivalent to 34 Million Dalasis) for distribution in Gambia.
- **Lullabies for Diaspora Families:** MSDG launched recordings of a collection of traditional Gambian lullabies, as a cultural artefact and resource which diaspora families can use to introduce second generation children to Gambian languages and culture.
- **Diversity and Reach:** A total of 36 presentations were made by 13 women and 23 men, of whom 18 are based in the diaspora; and proceedings were live-streamed on GRTS and on about a dozen online media platforms, with tens of thousands of views.

### **About the MSDG Project**

*The ‘Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia’ project (MSDG) was initiated in 2017 by GK Partners (GKP), a long established UK-based social enterprise led by Professor Gibril Faal, a Gambian who is an internationally recognised expert on migration and international development. The pilot phase of the MSDG project was implemented from August 2017 to December 2018, building on the initial ‘Induction and Training Workshop for Cabinet Ministers’ conducted by GKP on 11 February 2017 in The Gambia, and the subsequent one-to-one briefings with the President, Ministers, and senior officials of the new coalition government, and development partners. Further to consultative research, the project developed the Gambian Diaspora Strategy (GDS) as incorporated in the Gambia National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21). The overall goal of the MSDG project is: “to enhance the role of the Gambian diaspora in national development, as the Eighth Region of the country”. The current MSDG project activities include: technical input to facilitate diaspora voting and representation; diaspora input through Gambian Diaspora Technical Support (GDTS) scheme; research, analysis and actions on reducing the cost of remittance transfers, and the development of Diaspora Bonds; convening of the annual Stake in the Nation Forum and other forms of dialogue; improving understanding and development of Gambian diaspora populations and development organisations. MSDG is co-financed by GK Partners and the Swiss Government, implemented in partnership with the Government of The Gambia.*

## Summary of SNF4 Programme & List of Speakers

**Friday, 8 January 2021: 6PM to 9PM GMT (Gambia Time)**

- Cultural Launch:** 'Recordings of Gambian Lullabies for Diaspora Families'
- Speakers:** Ms. Neneh Bojang – Vice Chair, Gambia House & Presenter, Mamos Media (Norway)  
Mr. Njok Malik Jeng – Music Promoter & Director of Yaram Arts (UK)  
Ms. Amie Cherry – Gambian Traditional Singer and Artist (UK)  
Ms. Kumba Kuyateh – Gambian Traditional Singer and Artist (UK)
- Workshop 1; 8 Jan 2021: 'Appreciating and Advancing Gambian Culture in a Changing World'**
- Moderator:** Prof. Pierre Gomez, Deputy Vice Chancellor Academics, University of The Gambia
- Keynote:** Ms. Sona Jobarteh – International Award Winning Musician (UK)  
Dr. Momodou Sallah – Academic, Writer & Publisher, De Montfort University (UK)
- Discussants:** Dr. Chernoo Omar Barry – President, Writers' Association of The Gambia  
Ms. Kadija George Sesay MBE – Writer, Publisher & Co-Founder of Mboka Festival (UK)  
Mr. Hassoum Ceesay – Director General, National Council for Arts and Culture  
Mr. Njok Malik Jeng – Music Promoter & Director of Yaram Arts (UK)  
Mr. Abdou Karim Waagan Fye – Co-Founder, Open Mic Festival  
Prof. Bala Saho – Department of History, University of Oklahoma (USA)

**Saturday, 9 January 2021: 1PM to 7PM GMT (Gambia Time)**

- Formal Statements:** 'SNF4 Theme of Looking Backwards, Moving Forward'
- Forum Moderator:** Ms. Neneh Bojang – Vice Chair, Gambia House & Presenter, Mamos Media (Norway)
- Opening Prayers:** Imam Alhaji Basiru Drammeh and Rev. Pierre Thomas Bass
- SNF4 Statements:** Mr. Buah Saïdy – Governor of the Central Bank of The Gambia (CBG)  
*Represented by First Deputy Governor, Dr. Seeku Jaabi*  
H.E. Dr. Marion Weichelt Krupski – Switzerland Ambassador to The Gambia  
Ms. Elizabeth Sosseh Sisay-Banya – Accountant and Company Director (UK)  
Alh. Alieu Momarr Njai – Chairman, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)  
Prof. Gibril Faal – Director of GK Partners & MSDG Project (UK)
- SNF4 Presidential Address by H.E. President Adama Barrow  
Delivered by the Vice President, H.E. Dr. Isatou Touray**
- Workshop 2; 9 Jan 2021: 'Development Review: Lessons, Actions and Diaspora Input'**
- Moderator:** Dr. Amina Sillah – Assistant Professor, Towson University (USA)
- Keynote:** Hon. Mambury Njie – Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs  
Mr. Pa Samba Jow – Vice-Chair, DUGA & Co-Host of 'For the People, By the People' Show (USA)
- Discussants:** Mr. Edrissa Mass Jobe – President, Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI)  
Ms. Musu Komma-Bah – Country Director, ChildFund International (Gambia)  
Mr. Marr Nyang – Executive Director, Gambia Participates  
Mr. Amadou Gaye – Development Practitioner & International Development Specialist  
Ms. Elizabeth Sosseh Sisay-Banya, Accountant and Company Director (UK)
- Workshop 3; 9 Jan 2021: 'Gambian Diaspora Voting and Representation: Actions and Logistics'**
- Moderator:** Ms. Fatou Muloshi – Presenter, Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS)
- Keynote:** Mr. James Jeggan Bahoum – MSDG Project Adviser (UK)  
Hon. Aboubacry Diallo – Diaspora Member of the 13<sup>th</sup> Legislature, National Assembly of Senegal  
*Diaspora Constituency of 'The Americas and Oceania' (USA)*
- Discussants:** Mr. Samboujang Njie, Chief Electoral Officer, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)  
Mr. Chernoo Omar Kebbeh – Government Economist and Researcher (USA)  
Dr. Satang Nabaneh – Founder and Director, Law Hub Gambia (USA)  
Ms. Soffie Ceesay – Executive, African Immigrant Caucus & Founding Member of DUGA (USA)  
Mr. Joseph Joey Goswell – Gambian Elections Analyst (UK)

***(The MSDG Project expresses thanks and gratitude to all the speakers, moderators & partners, and to the media houses & online platforms, especially Mamos Media, Kerr Fatou & GRTS)***