

# Gambia

## MIGRATION PROFILE

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*Study on Migration Routes  
in West and Central Africa*



*October 2017*



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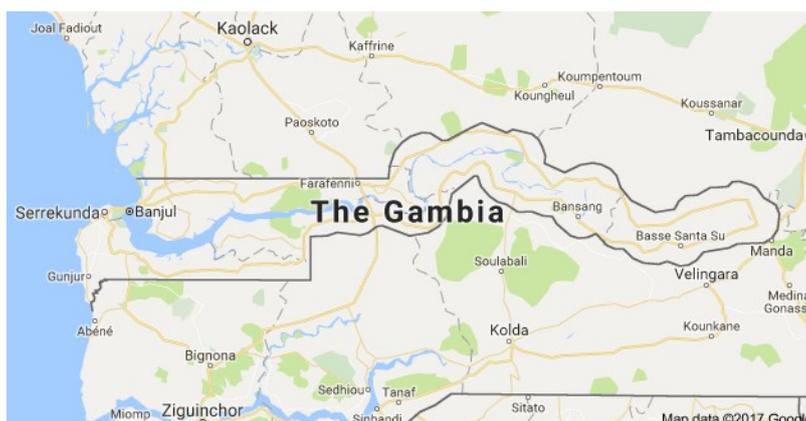
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# 1. Introduction

The Republic of Gambia is located in West Africa, has a total area of 11,300 sq. kilometres, and is geographically surrounded by Senegal. The country has an estimated population of 2 million, the majority of which live along the Gambia River and in urban areas; Gambia's capital (Banjul) and largest city (Serekunda), for example, are located where the Gambia River meets



the Atlantic coast. The official language is English, although Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, and other indigenous dialects are also spoken (CIA, 2017; UN Data, 2017). The country has a low Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.452, giving it a rank of number 173 among 188 countries. Moreover, the unemployment level is high (54%), especially among young population (44.4%) (UNDP, 2016). According to UNDP (2016), as of 2016, Gambia's per capita income was \$1,700 per year.

**Table 1: Gambia - Key Demographic and Development Indicators**

Indicator	Gambia
Total area, in sq km <sup>a</sup>	11, 300
Population (2016), in million <sup>b</sup>	2,055,000
Urban Population (2014), % of total <sup>c</sup>	59.0
Population Growth Rate, annual % <sup>c</sup>	3%
Ethnic Groups (2017) <sup>a</sup>	Mandinka/Jahanka 33.8% Fulani/Tukulur/Lorobo 22.1% Wolof 12.2% Jola/Karoninka 10.9% Serahuleh 7% Serer 3.2% Manjago 2.1% Bambara 1% Creole/Aku Marabout 0.8% other 0.9% non-Gambian 5.2%
Human Development Index (2015), country rank out of 188 <sup>e</sup>	0.452 173
GDP Based on PPP per Capita, current international dollars per capita (2017) <sup>f</sup>	1,700
Life Expectancy at Birth (2015), years <sup>e</sup>	60.5
Unemployment (2015), % of labour force <sup>e</sup>	30.1
Youth Unemployment (2015), % ages 15-24 <sup>e</sup>	44.4
Multidimensional Poverty Headcount (2013), % <sup>e</sup>	57.2
Gini Coefficient (2003) <sup>d</sup>	47.3

Foreign Direct Investment (net inflows, 2015), <i>current USD millions</i> <sup>d</sup>	10.595
Net Official Development Assistance Received (2013), <i>current USD millions</i> <sup>d</sup>	107.85
Personal Remittances Received (2016), <i>current USD thousand</i> <sup>d</sup>	181.057

<sup>a</sup> CIA, 2017; <sup>b</sup> UN DESA, 2017; <sup>c</sup> UN DESA, 2013; <sup>d</sup> World Bank, 2017; <sup>e</sup> UNDP, 2016; <sup>f</sup> IMF, 2017.

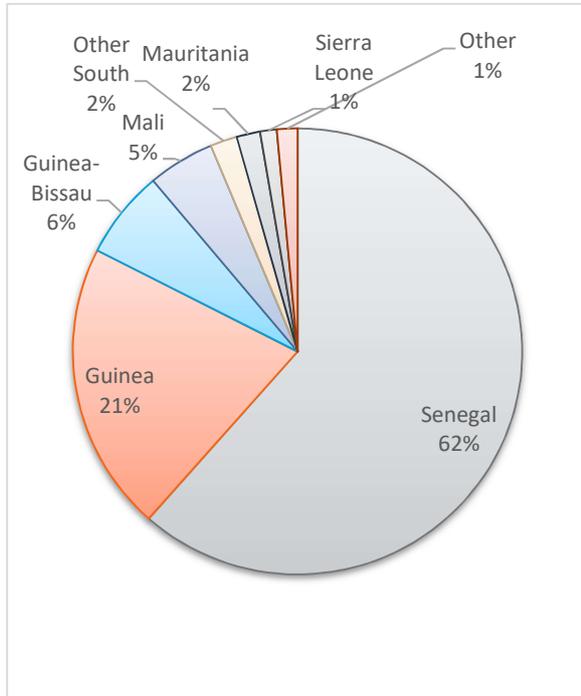
Gambia has had a long history of both internal and international migration, largely due to its location in West Africa. As of 2013, for instance, the country's net migration was the tenth highest in all of Africa. The country gained independence from Britain in 1965, and the following economic crisis significantly increased migration flows. The crisis hit the agricultural sector, a major pillar of Gambia's economy; in addition to this, scarcity of land for the agricultural sector also greatly impacted rural areas. As a result, the population in rural areas was left unemployed and many moved to urban areas to find jobs between 1993 and 2010 (Kebbeh, 2013). Still, the country's unemployment rates remain high (UNDP, 2016).

As for external migration, Gambia has largely been a country of emigration. According to UN DESA (2015), Gambia's total stock of emigrants amounted to 89,639 in 2015. As seen in Figure 2, the main destination countries of emigrants from Gambia include the United States (23%), Spain (19%), the UK and Northern Ireland (14%), Senegal (6%), Sweden (5%), Sierra Leone (5%), Mali (5%), Germany (5%), and Guinea (4%) (UN DESA, 2015).<sup>1</sup> Also noteworthy is that Gambia is among the top five nationalities for individuals crossing the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy (Hunt, 2017). Mass emigration of Gambians due to economic instability has included all population segments; the country's skilled emigration rate – 63% in 2000 – has been ranked second highest among African countries and among the top 20 worldwide (Kebbeh, 2013).

To a lesser extent, Gambia is also a destination and transit country. Gambia has hosted refugees from other African states during conflicts (including, for example, civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia as well as military coups in Guinea-Bissau and Guinea) (Kebbeh, 2013). The country has also been the destination for a small number of skilled migrants from West African states. In addition, Gambia is a transit country for (mostly irregular) migrants travelling through northern Africa to Europe (Kebbeh, 2013). According to UN DESA (2015), Gambia's total stock of immigrants amounted to 192,540 in 2015. As seen in Figure 1, most immigrants to Gambia arrived from Senegal (62%), Guinea (21%), Guinea-Bissau (6%), and Mali (5%) (UN DESA, 2015).

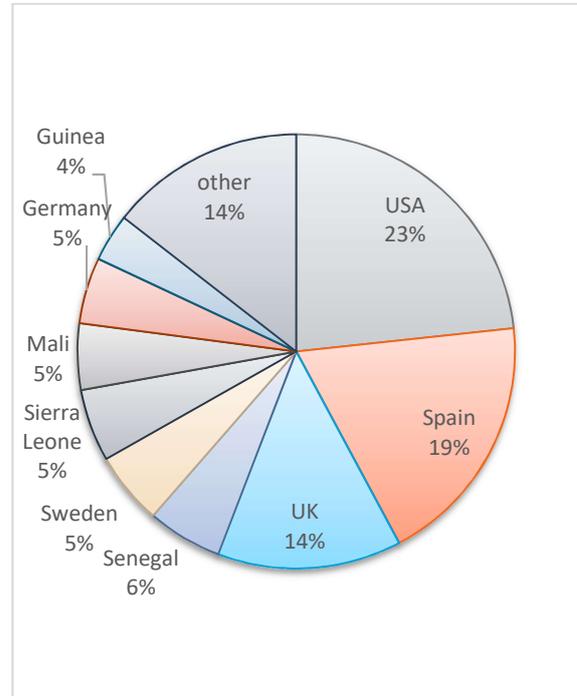
<sup>1</sup> Note that migration statistics from UN DESA (2015) illustrate mixed migration stocks and may include some, but not all, of refugees in/from a given country. For further information visit: <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates15.shtml>

**Figure 1: Origin Countries of Migrants to Gambia**



Source: UN DESA, 2015

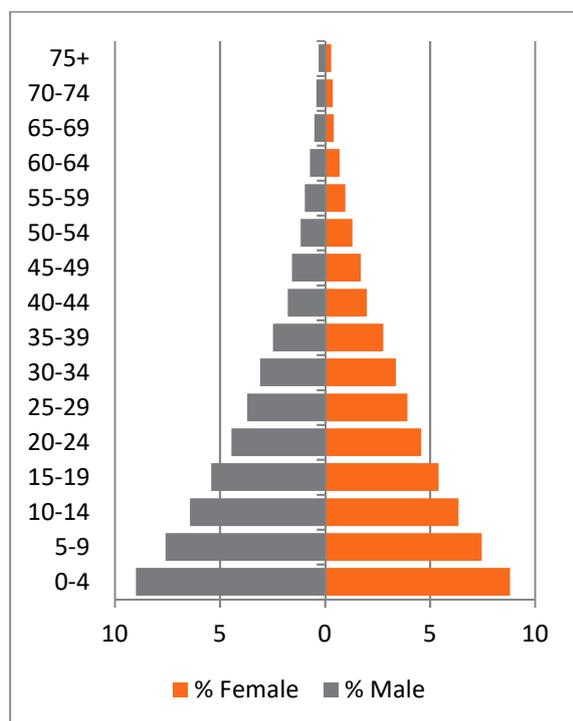
**Figure 2: Destination Countries of Migrants from Gambia**



Source: UN DESA, 2015

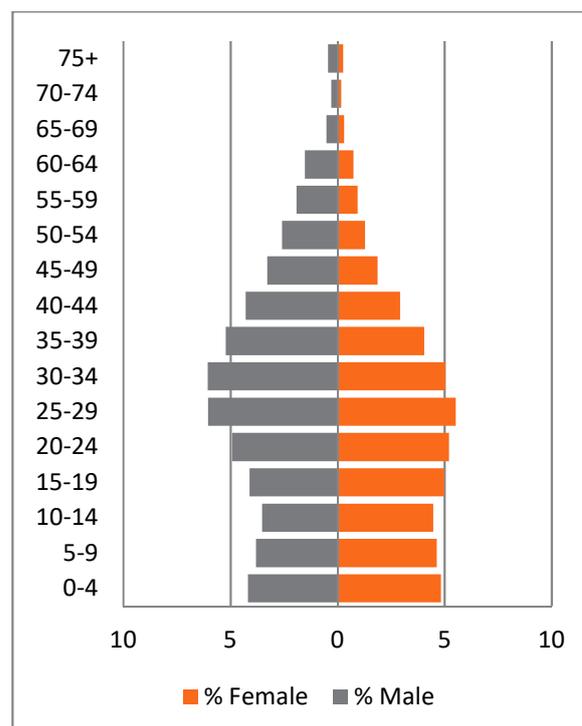
Comparing the population pyramids of the total population of Gambia and of the migrant stock (Figure 3 and Figure 4, respectively), it appears that while the total population follows the usual pyramid form, the migrant stock is relatively evenly spread across age groups, with a slight concentration on the 25-34 age group. This could be explained by the fact that the immigrant population in Gambia mainly includes refugees who fled from neighbouring countries in times of conflict, as well as a smaller portion of skilled young workers employed in education and information technology spheres.

**Figure 3: Total Population in Gambia by Age Group, 2015**



Source: UN DESA, 2015

**Figure 4: Total Migrant Stock in Gambia by Age Group, 2015**



Source: UN DESA, 2015

## 2. Forced Migration/ Displacement

### 2.1. Refugees in Gambia

According to UNHCR Population Statistics (2017), by the end of 2016, there were 7,940 refugees and persons in refugee-like situations in Gambia (see Table 2). This number mostly includes refugees arriving from Senegal (7,470), as well as those from Ivory Coast (192), Sierra Leone (120), Liberia (68), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (41) (UNHCR Population Statistics, 2017).

**Table 2: Origin Countries of Refugees living in Gambia, 2016**

Country of Origin	Refugees
Senegal	7,470
Ivory Coast	192
Sierra Leone	120
Liberia	68
Dem. Rep. of Congo	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,940</b>

Source: UNHCR Population Statistics, 2017.

The first major inflow of refugees in Gambia dates back to 1982, when conflicts erupted in a number of West African countries. After gaining independence from Britain, Gambia maintained English as its state language, therefore motivating refugees from English-speaking West African countries to choose Gambia as their destination. Most notably, refugees fled to Gambia from Senegal after the

conflict in Casamance region (Conway, 2004). People in the Casamance region of Senegal (which is located in the south and separated by Gambia from the capital Dakar) had long been striving for independence (Hopkins, 2011). The resulting tension led to an eruption of conflict, the longest continuing one in Africa, until 2014 (Dubinsky, 2017). Intermittent fights forced much of the local population in the Casamance region to flee to Gambia. According to Hopkins (2001), the Casamance refugees in Gambia exemplify a protracted refugee situation, as defined by Crisp (2003), since these groups have lived in exile for more than 5 years, cannot return to their country of origin without fear, and the level of integration in the host country remains low. In addition to such Senegalese refugees, Gambia has also hosted refugees from Côte d'Ivoire

, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, who fled their countries due to civil wars. Considering high poverty and unemployment levels in the country (see Table 1), as well as the fact that the income of the Gambian population largely depends on unstable and unpredictable gains from the agricultural sector, refugee families face often increased poverty and vulnerability within their host villages (Hopkins, 2011).

Characterized as a “refugee-friendly” country (Conway 2004), Gambia grants all refugees the right to live and work in Gambia. The county is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. In addition, Gambia is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which means that nationals of other ECOWAS states have economic rights in Gambia; citizens of ECOWAS states are also granted residence and free movement in other member states. However, the full enjoyment of the mentioned rights is impeded by several challenges. One major challenge is the mobility of refugees. Refugee camps in Gambia were closed around 2006, and most refugees currently live in an approximate eighty-three villages along the Senegal-Gambia border. On one hand, the resulting mobility has allowed refugees to seek self-integration strategies and has been assessed as favourable by refugees themselves (Hopkins, 2011). However, increased mobility has also rendered refugees largely invisible and untraceable to the government and donor organizations (Hopkins, 2011). Another major challenge, partly related to the mobility issue, is the lack of information on services available to refugees in Gambia. UNHCR and other donor organizations have provided for healthcare and education allowances for refugees (e.g. UNHCR pays up to approximately \$180 per year to refugee children to go to school). However, most refugees report lack of access to these facilities, due to inadequate information, confusion, or transportation issues (Hopkins, 2011).

## **2.2. Refugees from Gambia**

The total number of refugees from Gambia has been rising for the past years. From 2013 to 2014 alone, the number of asylum applications from Gambian nationals in Europe has increased by 198% (Embiricos 2016). As of 2016, there were an estimated 11,569 Gambian refugees and 18,869 asylum seekers living outside of the country. In the recent years, the major destination for Gambian refugees is Italy (Gambians accounted for 10% of all asylum applications in Italy in 2015). As also seen in Table 3, other countries of destination for Gambian refugees, though to a lesser extent, include the UK and the US, along with several other European and African countries (Embiricos 2017; UNHCR Population Statistics, 2017). The high number of asylum seekers (9,773, as opposed to the 227 refugees) in Germany may be due to the fact that these individuals have applied for asylum but are not (yet) formally recognized as refugees in Germany. Moreover, the number of Gambian refugees & asylum seekers in Italy might, at least partially, be due to the high number of minors arriving and receiving

protection until they turn 18. During 2016, 28,223 children arrived to Italy, of which 25,846 (92%) were unaccompanied or separated. Of these unaccompanied and separated children arriving to Italy in 2016, 92% were between the ages of 15 and 17, while only 8% were between the ages of 5 and 14. The majority of these children originated from countries North, East, and West Africa, with Eritrea, Gambia, Nigeria, Egypt, and Guinea being the most common countries of origin. A breakdown of the numbers of arrivals by country of origin, however, is unavailable. Of these arrivals, 61% received humanitarian status, 4% refugee status, and 1% subsidiary protection. The remaining 34% of the child asylum applications were rejected (UNHCR, UNICEF & IOM, 2016).

**Table 3: Host Countries of Gambian Refugees & Asylum Seekers, 2016**

<b>Destination country</b>	<b>Refugees</b>	<b>Asylum seekers</b>
Italy	7,723	6,302
US	1,425	931
UK	1,308	197
Germany	227	9,773
France	210	197
Sweden	139	152
Austria	124	254
Other	413	1,063
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,569</b>	<b>18,869</b>

Source: UNHCR, 2017.

These figures must be taken into account carefully, though, as around 76,000 Gambians were recently forced to flee their country as a result of political turmoil starting at the end of 2016. Former president Yahya Jammeh, who had been ruling the country for 22 years, refused to admit defeat to opposition leader Adama Barrow in the presidential elections of December 2016. His refusal triggered a regional crisis, leading to mass emigration of Gambians to the neighbouring countries of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau (Caux, 2017). For several weeks during this period of unrest, Gambian refugees were hosted by families in bordering villages. By the end of January, mediation efforts by ECOWAS countries succeeded and former president Jammeh ceded power (IRIN, 2017). After the crisis, thousands of Gambian families were reported to have returned to their homes in Gambia (IDMC, 2017a).

### 2.3. Internal Displacement in Gambia

Information about internal displacement in Gambia is limited. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), until recently, internal displacement in Gambia had been associated with natural disasters, such floods, droughts, wildfires, and landslides (CIA, 2017; Shout-Africa, 2011). Specifically, large waves of displacement occurred in 2010 and 2012 due to such natural disasters (IDMC, 2017b). According to Gambia’s Minister for Interior and NGO Affairs, Honorable Ousman Sonko, “Internal displacement in The Gambia has also been mainly due to natural disasters such as floods [...] for instance, in the year 2010, floods were the reason for many displacements, and when such natural disasters occur, governments must act as we have done here in The Gambia and protect as well as come to the aid of victims” (cited in Shout-Africa, 2011). By 2016, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Gambia amounted to 4,600 (IDMC, 2017b).

The most recent wave of internal migration resulted from political upheaval and violence from December 2016 through the first months of 2017 as previously discussed (Caux, 2017; IRIN, 2017).

During this period of unrest, large parts of the population were displaced and fled the capital. The number of new displacements in 2017 was estimated to be around 162,000. In total, a report number of 200,000 IDPs fled the capital, with around 40,000 crossing international borders and fleeing Gambia. However, most IDPs reportedly returned to their homes after the crisis was resolved in January 2017 (IDMC, 2017a).

## 3. Regular/ Labour Migration

### 3.1. Immigration

According to UN DESA (2015), Gambia's total stock of immigrants amounted to 192,540 in 2015. As seen in Figure 1, most immigrants to Gambia arrived from Senegal (62%), Guinea (21%), Guinea-Bissau (6%), and Mali (5%) (UN DESA, 2015). Most of Gambia's migrants are settled in the country's urban and coastal areas (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). Moreover, as estimated by the 2003 and 2010 Household Poverty Surveys, Gambia's immigrants are 57% male and 43% female. Labour migrants living in Gambia are also employed in different economic sectors than Gambian nationals. Specifically, migrants living in Gambia typically find jobs in retail, wholesale, and tourism (43% together); other important sectors include agriculture, mining, and fishing (16%), manufacturing (10%), and finance or business (5%). Interestingly, Gambian nationals are less likely to be employed in business sectors than migrants and are also less likely to own their own businesses (ICMPD & IOM, 2015).

A small portion of immigrants to Gambia also includes skilled workers from other West African states, specifically Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Ghana. These migrants arrive as students or workers in the education or information technology sectors (Kebbeh, 2013). Overall, these migrants and Gambian nationals have similar skill levels. Migrant workers in Gambia, though, tend to have lower education levels than Gambia nationals (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). According to ICMPD & IOM (2015), "a high proportion of Senegalese immigrants work as petty traders, Lebanese immigrants tend to work in the business sector and in the service industries, and many Nigerian and Indian immigrants own supermarkets and export cashew nuts" from Gambia (pp. 149). Estimates by the World Bank (2011) suggest that, in 2009, outward remittances sent by immigrants in Gambia were at an estimated US\$3 million.

### 3.2. Emigration

Emigration for economic and labour-related reasons is very relevant in the context of Gambia. As mentioned previously, the post-independence economic crisis left many Gambians either unemployed or with low-paying jobs and poor working conditions, motivating many to move abroad in search of better financial opportunities. According to UN DESA (2015), Gambia's total stock of emigrants amounted to 89,639 in 2015. As seen in Figure 2, the main destination countries of emigrants from Gambia include the United States (23%), Spain (19%), the UK and Northern Ireland (14%), Senegal (6%), Sweden (5%), Sierra Leone (5%), Mali (5%), Germany (5%), and Guinea (4%) (UN DESA, 2015). Mass emigration of Gambians due to economic instability has included all population segments; the country's skilled emigration rate – 63% in 2000 – has been ranked second highest among African countries and among the top 20 worldwide (Kebbeh, 2013). It should be noted that,

based on 2009 data, an estimated 78% of Gambian emigrants was male and an estimated 22% female. Moreover, a significant proportion (approximately 30%) of Gambian emigrants left the country between the ages of 20 and 24 (ICMPD & IOM, 2015).

Many Gambian migrants travel to Spain in search of work. Most of these migrants are less educated, when compared to Gambians migrating to the UK or the US. The majority of Gambian emigrants live in poor conditions and have low-paying jobs (Kebbeh, 2013). Within Spain, Gambian emigrants mostly live in Catalonia. Following high emigration from Gambia to Spain between 2000 and 2009, these rates have since decreased due to economic decline in Spain (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). Detailed information regarding these emigrants is unavailable, however, and it is estimated that a large number of Gambians may be in irregular situations in Spain, especially after overstaying regular visas. Many irregular migrants from Gambia, as will be discussed in Section 5, also reach Spain by boat (Kebbeh, 2013). In spite of this, the most popular destination country for Gambian emigrants is the United States. Most of Gambian migrants currently living in the US migrated after the 1994 military coup in Gambia. Unlike the migrant workers living in Spain, Gambians in the US are more educated, with secondary and tertiary education degrees (Kebbeh, 2013). According to ICMPD & IOM (2015), however, it is estimated that there could be as many as twice the reported number of Gambian emigrants living in the US.

The impact of inward remittances sent by Gambia emigrants is relevant, considering that remittances as a share of GDP has been among the highest in Africa (Kebbeh, 2013). In 2016, incoming remittances amounted to \$181 million (World Bank, 2017). Although remittances may have a positive impact on Gambian economy, mass emigration of skilled workers may also have long-term development consequences on Gambia. In this regard, the effects of a potential brain drain, though, are not yet known. In addition, skilled workers migrating to Western countries may face difficulties in having their Gambia diplomas recognized and may, therefore, experience deskilling (Kebbeh, 2013).

## **4. Internal Migration**

Internal migration is a significant phenomenon in Gambia, and it has been an area of government focus in the past. Despite the data points provided by the 2013 Gambian census which will now be outlined, more detailed information regarding internal migration within Gambia is scarce. As noted previously, Gambia has faced economic problems for the past few decades. Since the economy largely depends on the agricultural sector (which is unstable and unpredictable due to natural disasters, erosion, and poor rainfall), migration from rural to urban areas has long been common. People especially migrate to cities in search of new socio-economic opportunities, particularly in terms of market access, housing prospects, employment opportunities (Kebbeh, 2013; The Republic of Gambia, 2013). Between 1993 and 2010, the urban population in Gambia increased from 37% to 58% (Kebbeh 2013). According to Gambia's Population and Housing Census (2013), 140,761 migrants engaged in rural-urban migration, with the majority traveling to either Kanifing or Brikama, in 2013. These migrants were 49.4% male and 50.6% female; this large percentage of female migrants is likely made up of married women from rural areas migrating to join their husbands in urban areas (The Republic of Gambia, 2013).

Urban-urban migration is also a phenomenon, though to a more limited extent, in Gambia. Again according to Gambia's Population and Housing Census (2013), 86,891 people who had been born in urban areas changed their residence to another urban. This migration, suggests the census, occurred especially between Brikama and Kanifing. What is noted, however, is whether this figure refers to migrant stocks or flows (The Republic of Gambia, 2013). Finally, the census also provides statistics on urban-rural migration. In fact, it is suggested that urban-rural migration in Gambia increased by 43.6% between 2003 and 2013. The phenomenon involved 24,298 individuals in 2003 and 35,124 in 2013. In 2013, the majority of these migrants were female, were employed as civil servants or NGO staff, and went to rural areas of Brikama (The Republic of Gambia, 2013). According to Gambia's Population and Housing Census (2013), this upward trend "could be attributed to an increase in the provision of social services and infrastructural developments within the rural areas as well as the positive response to the President's 'back to the land' call. [...] A possible explanation for [... the move to rural Brikama] is the proximity of these places to Banjul and Kanifing, which are totally urban with better economic opportunities and more social amenities" (pg. 20).

## 5. Irregular Migration

There are few recent data on irregular migration into and out of Gambia, largely limiting the extent of this review. Some conclusions, though, can be made. In 2014 alone, approximately 60,000 undocumented nationals of sub-Saharan African states (half of which included West Africans) arrived at Europe's external borders (Carling, 2016). In recent years, poverty and economic downturn, also in Gambia, has been the main driver of irregular migration to North Africa and Europe. In this context, Gambia is both an origin and a transit country for irregular migrants (Kebbeh, 2013). Noteworthy is that Gambia is among the top five nationalities for individuals crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Italy or Spain (Hunt, 2017). En route to Europe, Gambian migrants travel through Senegal and other West African States, eventually passing from Libya to Italy through the Mediterranean. Until 2010, irregular migrants from Gambia had the alternative to travel via coastal towns in Senegal to the Canary Islands. However, FRONTEX, Europe's border control agency, strengthened border patrols in the western parts of the Mediterranean as a result of the bilateral agreement between Senegal and Spain. Therefore, the risky journey through the Saharan desert is often the only passage to Europe for Gambian refugees. This so-called "back way" journey takes irregular migrants along the Western Saharan route through Senegal and then along the Central Mediterranean route (Embiricos, 2017).

As previously discussed, it is estimated that a large number of Gambians may be in irregular situations in Spain, especially after overstaying regular visas. Many irregular migrants from Gambia also reach Spain by boat; risky journeys on wooden boats have also been a common occurrence. According to the Spanish Statistical Office, however, the Gambian population in Spain has slightly decreased since 2012, largely due to the economic problems Spain has been facing since the global financial crisis (Kebbeh, 2013). Because the definition of a refugee (as outlined by the 1951 Convention) is narrow in nature, it often becomes difficult to distinguish between refugees and irregular migrants, particularly with regards to mixed migration flows; this is especially also the case in Gambia (Embiricos, 2017).

Gambia's so-called Illegal Migration Unit, part of the country's Immigration Department, is dedicated to investigating irregular migration, particularly the routes and harbours used by migrants. Internally, irregular stay in Gambia is typically a result of visa overstays (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). Citing an article in the *Gambia News Community*, the Gambian government warned "all landlords in the Gambia not to allow any foreigner to stay in the premises [...] without a valid passport, visa, visitors pass (laissez passé), Alien Card, or residential permit" (ICMPD & IOM, 2015, pp. 155). Despite such strict warnings, the situation is largely managed through the payment of fines by irregular migrants and by the subsequent regularization of such migrants; migrants are rarely forced to return to their home countries if their irregular status is discovered (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). Moreover, the Spain/ECOWAS Fund on Migration and Development, a project to prevent irregular migration and help returned migrants re-integrate, was established: "The initiative aimed to reduce youth irregular migration through apprenticeship training, skills development, employment creation, and counselling for returned or in risk youth" (ICMPD & IOM, 2015, pp. 157).

### 5.1. Human Smuggling

According to UNDOC (2017), migrant smuggling is defined as "a crime involving the procurement for financial or other material benefit of illegal entry of a person into a State of which the person is not a national or a resident." Smuggling differs from human trafficking in three main ways having to do with consent, exploitation, and transnationality. More specifically, this means that migrants engage with their smugglers in a consensual manner; smuggling also occurs transnationally and ends upon arrival at the destination. Victims of trafficking, however, are typically trafficked against their will or have been coerced into giving consent and must endure ongoing exploitation. Moreover, trafficking can occur both internally and internationally across borders (UNDOC, 2017).

Gambia has ratified the 2000 UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). Data on human smuggling in Gambia remains very scarce, however, and smuggling in the West African region is especially elusive. This is particularly the case since West African states (including Gambia) are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which implies free movement of citizens of member states within the region. The external borders of ECOWAS states pass through insecure, less populated areas; this implies limited state control and, therefore, relatively easy smuggling. Moreover, lack of state presence also increases the vulnerability of smuggled migrants and decreases their protections (Carling, 2016).

With the help of smugglers, borders are crossed in a variety of ways, including visa-free entry (within ECOWAS) with an ECOWAS passport obtained from smugglers; entry with short-term visa, often obtained from smugglers; unauthorized crossing (e.g. with trucks in Saharan desert); entry through bribery; and unauthorized boat crossing. The approximate cost of smuggling from West and Central Africa to the North African coast can range between \$100 and \$1000. Throughout the journeys, as mentioned above, migrants are extremely vulnerable, due to high risks of robberies, injuries, fatalities, lack of adequate nutrition and water, etc. (Carling, 2016).

## 5.2. Trafficking in Human Beings

Throughout recent years, Gambia has been reported to be a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. The country is ranked on the Tier 2 Watch List by the US Department of State (2017), because it does not meet the minimum requirements for the elimination of trafficking in persons. Internally within Gambia, individuals (especially women and girls) are trafficked into instances of forced labour and begging as well as sex exploitation (US Department of State, 2017; ICMPD & IOM, 2015). When seeing Gambia as a destination country, victims of trafficking (VoTs) mostly include women and girls from countries in West Africa, who are subjected for forced labour and sex trafficking in the country; in this case, origin countries include Sierra Leone, Senegal, Liberia, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and Benin (ICMPD & IOM, 2015).

The US Department of State's most recent Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report (2017) also reports the prevalence of child sex tourism, where children from poor families are often exploited. Notably, many of these children are exploited by child sex tourists from the UK, Germany, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Canada; these sex tourism activities mostly take place outside of urban centres, so they are more difficult for authorities to detect (US Department of State, 2017). According to the TIP Report, "observers believe organized sex trafficking networks use European and Gambian travel agencies to promote child sex tourism" (US Department of State, 2017, pp. 177). Other common trafficking practices in Gambia include forced begging (specifically in Quranic schools), street vending, and domestic labour. Internationally, Gambian children and women have been reported to be subject to sex trafficking and forced labour in West African countries, Finland, and the Middle East, specifically in Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait (US Department of State, 2017). Other destination countries for victims trafficked from Gambia include the Netherlands and Italy; children from Gambia are also often forced into forced begging and domestic servitude in Senegal (ICMPD & IOM, 2015).

The Gambian government has been trying to take action to eliminate trafficking; as a result, from 2016 to 2017, the country was upgraded from Tier 3 to Tier 2 Watch List. As previously mentioned, Gambia has ratified the 2000 UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. In 2010, Gambia amended its 2007 Trafficking in Persons Act, which criminalizes trafficking in all forms and outlines between fifteen-year and life-long prison sentences for the trafficking of children and adults. This legislation is administered by the country's National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, the agency which also reports trafficking activities and protects victim rights. Moreover, the Gambian Department of Social Welfare assists child VoTs, and the National Task Force against Trafficking in Persons is aimed at fighting trafficking more generally (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). To discourage forced begging, the Ministry of Education provides monthly assistance to Quranic schools that have been verified not to be using forced begging (US Department of State, 2017). Child trafficking is prohibited under the 2005 Children's Act; however, this act does not cover forced labour. In addition to the Children's Act, the 2003 Tourism Offenses Act criminalizes child sex trafficking as well as child sex tourism and outlines prison sentences of up to ten years. Neighbourhood watch groups have also been enacted in this regard, monitoring tourist areas for unattended children or possible cases of abuse or exploitation (US Department of State, 2017).

Regardless of the mentioned legislative acts, however, enforcement remains a challenge. Largely due to inadequate training on human trafficking issues, authorities often consider alleged sex trafficking cases as rape and investigate them as such. Corruption of law enforcement agencies also remains a problem. Moreover, there is no legislation on domestic labour, leaving domestic workers largely invisible to the authorities and therefore vulnerable to exploitation (US Department of State, 2017).

## **6. Migrant's Vulnerabilities and Protection Issues**

Detailed information on specific vulnerabilities and protection issues of Gambian migrants remains scarce. However, from the sources discussed above, the following points can be emphasized. As noted above, refugees in Gambia mostly live in villages along the Senegal-Gambia border or in urban areas. As refugee camps have been closed, refugees are virtually untraceable by the government as well as by donor and aid organizations (IRIN, 2017; Hopkins, 2011). This is related to another problem – lack of information on services available to refugees, especially healthcare and education services provided by international organizations (Hopkins, 2011). Considering that Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world (UNDP, 2016), refugee families further increase the vulnerabilities faced by host villages (Hopkins, 2011).

Moreover, Gambia is a major origin and transit country for irregular migrants travelling to North Africa and Europe (Kebbeh, 2013). Noteworthy is that Gambia is among the top five nationalities for individuals crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya to Italy or Spain (Hunt, 2017). During the journey through the desert and the Mediterranean, migrants are extremely vulnerable to armed robberies, injuries, fatalities, lack of water and food, etc. (Embircos, 2017; Kebbeh, 2013). Women and children, especially young girls, often become subject to sex trafficking, forced labour and begging, sex tourism, as well as domestic servitude. Despite legislative acts regulating human smuggling and trafficking, law enforcement agencies lack adequate training, rendering proper investigation of such cases extremely rare (US Department of State, 2017; ICMPD & IOM, 2015).

## **7. Relevant National Policies and Stakeholders**

Though Gambia lacks a comprehensive national migration framework, the government has passed a number of policies and created significant plans related to migration. The country's National Development Agenda includes a section that links migration and development. Relevant governmental stakeholders include the Gambia Immigration Department (issues visas and passport, manages naturalization); the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (publishes migration statistics); the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons (investigates trafficking); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, and Gambians Abroad (provides consular assistance, manages international migration agreements); the Department of Social Welfare (assists child VoTs); the Department of Labour Employment Unit (manages the foreign workforce); the Ministry of Youth and Sports (raises awareness of risks of irregular migration, runs youth programs); as well as the Central Bank of Gambia (publishes statistics on remittances) (ICMPD & IOM, 2015).

As seen in Table 4, Gambia's national legal framework for migration includes the Immigration Act, the Nationality & Citizenship Act, the Payroll and Labour Acts, the Trafficking in Persons Act, the

Refugee Act, the Children’s Act, and the Tourism Offences Act. In terms of international agreements, Gambia is party to ECOWAS regulations and its 1975 Treaty. The country has also signed the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol as well as the 2000 UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. The country has also ratified the 1966 International Convention on Civil and Political Rights; the 1966 International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; as well as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICMPD & IOM, 2015). Additionally, Gambia is party to a number of bilateral agreements:

- With Spain (2006), on irregular migration and protection of irregular migrants
- With Italy (2010), on irregular migration and protection of irregular migrants
- With Qatar (2010), on regulating employment, the provision of labour-related information, and the sending of remittances
- With Senegal, on fighting instances of cross-border trafficking
- And with Taiwan (2012), on the prevention of trafficking in persons (ICMPD & IOM, 2015).

**Table 4: Gambia's Key Migration Response**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Labour Act (2007)</b>	Define legislation for labour immigration and the migrant workforce.
<b>Payroll Act</b>	Determines the tax rate (and additional yearly tax) for employers of migrant workers; employers are largely forbidden from hiring more than 20% non-Gambians.
<b>Trafficking in Persons Act (2007)</b>	Defines and criminalizes trafficking in persons. Trafficking of a person under 18 is punished by life in prison, while that of an adult is punished by at least 15 years in prison. Includes provisions for the protection and support of VoTs.
<b>Refugee Act (2008)</b>	Creates provisions for managing refugees; established The Gambia Commission for Refugees
<b>Children’s Act (2004)</b>	Prohibits and criminalizes the trafficking of children
<b>Tourism Offences Act (2003)</b>	Prohibits the trafficking of children and criminalizes sexual offences made by tourists to Gambia
<b>Immigration Act</b>	Creates Gambia’s legal framework for immigration. Describes the various provisions related to entry and residence permits for ECOWAS and non-ECOWAS nationals. Specifically discusses visas, Residence Permit A (for students and retired civil servants), Residence Permit B (for skilled workers), and Residence Permit B Gratis (for foreigners invited by the Gambian government). Also has various provisions for the acquisition of citizenship through naturalization.
<b>Nationality &amp; Citizenship Act</b>	Creates provisions for acquiring Gambian citizenship. Regulates the naturalization of aliens as Gambian citizens as well as the deprivation and renouncement of citizenship by Gambians.

Sources: ICMPD & IOM, 2015.

**Gaps**

The analysis of migration-related situations in Gambia demonstrates a lack of detailed information and research, especially in areas such as internal migration, internal displacement, and irregular migration. This could negatively impact the prospects of evidence-based policymaking for Gambia. In addition to this, a review of existing policies and laws related to migration reveals significant gaps in Gambia's migration management. Since human trafficking remains a serious problem, the US Department of State (2017) recommends that Gambia investigate and prosecute traffickers with severe sentences. This would require adequate trainings for law enforcement officials. In addition, Gambia should amend its labour laws, extending it to also include domestic workers (US Department of State, 2017). Finally, the country lacks clear policies related to the protection of migrant workers, the criminalization of forced labour, the regulation of domestic labour, or the diaspora relations. The IOM also recommends that policymakers coordinate with researchers in order to ensure that migration policies are oriented at migrant wellbeing (Carling, 2016).

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