

Strengthening the police in The Gambia

Support to the reform process of national police structures

What is the initial situation?

Since Adama Barrow became president of The Gambia in 2017, the country has been undergoing a **comprehensive democratic transformation process based** on the rule of law. This especially applies to the security sector, which under the Jammeh regime did not primarily serve to focus on the protection of its own population.

The relationship of trust between citizens and state institutions has to be re-established. To this end, the government has developed a basic *National Security Policy*, which provides for efficient, accountable, reliable, and effective security agencies. Since the change of power, the mandate to ensure internal security has mainly been with the national police, the *Gambia Police Force*. However, the latter had not much time to adapt to this. It lacks **sufficient infrastructure, equipment and personnel capacities**. The police currently does not have the necessary resources for planning, training, and administration to deploy their personnel efficiently. However, transparent and professional human resource management is particularly important in The Gambia in the light of the general transition process, as the previous regime was accused of office patronage and clientelism when filling job vacancies.

Moreover, **poor working conditions and inadequate police stations affect the quality of police work**, notably in rural areas. As a result, the police does not always succeed in protecting the population from dangers and preventing crimes, especially when it comes to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

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| Programme title | Programme to build and strengthen the police structures in selected partner countries in Africa |
| Country component | Joint EU-German Support to The Gambia Police Force |
| Commissioned by | Federal Foreign Office |
| Cofinancing partner | European Union |
| Lead executing agency | The Gambia Ministry of the Interior |
| Overall term | January 2023 – June 2026 |
| Budget (2023-2026) | Approx. EUR 8.1 million, incl. EUR 4 million EU contribution |

This reduces the population's trust in the security sector and impairs the government's claim to the state's monopoly on the use of force.

What is the goal?

The Gambian police counters violence and crime effectively and based on the rule of law. As a law enforcement agency, it helps to prevent and prosecute SGBV and improves its relationship with the population.

The police is able to perform its tasks outside urban centres in adequately equipped police stations staffed by trained personnel.



Pictures from left to right:
Planning workshop of the country component in The Gambia
Handover of COVID-19 protective equipment to The Gambian police

Both pictures:
Opening of the model police station in Serrakunda

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How do we work?

GIZ has been supporting police reform processes in Africa on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office since 2009. To date, it has cooperated with 27 national and regional partners. The current "Programme to build and strengthen police structures in selected partner countries in Africa" comprises **three country components in Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Kenya and a regional African Union component.**

The **country component Gambia** has been in place since 2019 and has been co-financed by the EU since the end of 2020. The project "Joint EU-German support to The Gambia Police Force" advises the Gambian police on internal organisational processes and on the development of a community-oriented approach to combating gender-based violence.

Another goal is to improve the police infrastructure in rural areas. As the previous phase of the programme mainly set up and equipped police stations in the urban area around the capital Banjul, the focus is now on the more remote places. This is particularly important because government services are rarely available, and the security needs of the population cannot always be met.

What have we achieved so far?

The inauguration of four model police stations in September 2023 set an example for human rights-compliant policing in The Gambia. These were built and equipped according to international standards and the deployed staff was trained in the prevention and investigation of cases of SGBV.

The police officers also received further training in the basics of forensics, writing reports, searches of persons, interview techniques and community-based policing, and are thus well prepared for their future tasks.

With a "Community Policing Caravan" throughout The Gambia, broad sections of the population and a large public were informed about the topic as such, but also learned about the role of the police and the community in raising awareness and preventing cases of gender-based violence.

What more do we want to do?

The country component in The Gambia contributes to the reform of police prevention and victim protection, especially in the area of sexual and gender-based violence. This strengthens the population's trust in the police.

The work of law enforcement authorities has improved through the standardisation of procedures for securing crime scenes and collecting evidence. This allows for more effective prosecution.

In addition, national and regional cooperation between law enforcement authorities is institutionalised. This enables more consistent measures to be taken against serious and transnational organised crime.

Finally, the police infrastructure and equipment are also modernised outside the capital region. Better working environments and human rights-compliant (pre-trial) detention conditions, especially for women, children or victims of SGBV, lead to a positive perception of police services in the more remote parts of the country.

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