



# EVALUATION REPORT

An ITC, IOM, UNDP and UNICEF joint evaluation

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## Addressing the Drivers and Causes of Vulnerability in Migration among Border Communities along the Trans-Gambia Transport Corridor in The Gambia

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A Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) joint project  
Thematic Area 2: Protecting the human rights, safety and well-being of migrants

October 2025

This evaluation report refers to the following SDGs:



## EVALUATION OF THE MIGRATION MPTF – THE GAMBIA

This evaluation was commissioned by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) as consultative mechanism.

Evaluation is a key instrument for all the UN interventions, ensuring accountability against expected results and supporting organizational learning. Evaluations inform UN agencies decision-making in policy, programme, and project management, with the purpose of improving performance and enhancing their contributions towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ITC Independent Evaluation Unit has commissioned this evaluation under its 2025 Work Programme and is responsible for this publication.

This evaluation was conducted by an external evaluation team (Per Wilhelm Myhre as team leader, and Masanneh Landing Ceesay as national evaluator). It was managed and quality assured by the ITC's Evaluation Officer (Iván Touza Montero), with the Evaluation Review Group (ERG) providing decision—making inputs and oversight.

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# Acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfriLabs	African Network of Incubators and Innovation Hubs
BM	Border Management
BMIC	Border Management & Identity Conference
BP	Border Post
BSO	Business Support Organisations
CBT	Cross-border Trader
CBTA	Cross-border Trade Association
CCPC	Community Child Protection Committee
CFA	<i>Coopération Financière en Afrique Centrale</i> , i.e. Financial Cooperation in Central Africa
COMESA	Common Market for East and South Africa
CRR	Central River Region
CSCG	Cruise Ship Crew Gambia
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
C&V	Communication and Visibility
DoA	Description of Action
DLAG	Drug Law Enforcement Agency-Gambia
DMA	Displaced Moving Average
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ENABLE	Enhancing Access to Benefits while Lowering Emissions
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
EUETFA	European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GAF	Gambia Armed Forces
GALGA	Gambia Association of Local Government Authorities
GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCCI	Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GGC	Gulf of Guinea Commission
GIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPF	Gambia Police Forces
GSI	Gambia Songhai Initiative
GTHI	Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute
GWCC	Gambia Women Chamber of Commerce
GYCC	Gambia Youth Chamber of Commerce
HR	Human Resources
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HT	Human Trafficking
IABCCC	Inter-Agency Border Coordination Committee
iARMS	Illicit Arms Records and Tracing Management System
IMP	Irregular Migration Process
IN	Inception Note
INTERPOL	The International Criminal Police Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LAC	Local Area Councils
LFM	Log-frame Matrix
LPC	Local Programme Committee
LRR	Lower River Region
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoH	Ministry of Health
MIDAS	Migration Information and Data Analysis System (IOM)
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MOC	Maritime Operations Centre (national)
MoFEA	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
MoGCSW	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare
MMCC	Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre

MoTAC	Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture
MoTIE	Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
MRRRC	Migrant Resource and Response Centre
MSME	Micro Small and Medium Enterprises
NAATIP	National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons
NBR	North Bank Region
NCB	National Central Bureau (INTERPOL)
NCM	National Coordination Mechanism on Migration
NCE	No-cost Extension
NEC	National Consultant
NMP	National Migration Policy
NRM	National Referral Mechanism for the protection of Vulnerable Migrants, including Victims of Trafficking in The Gambia
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
OC	Outcome
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OP	Output
OSSEC	One Stop Shop Entrepreneurship Centre / GBV Farafenni
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicators
PAPPS	Pan-African Payment and Settlement System
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PUNO	Participating United Nations Organisation
RACER	Relevant, Accepted, Credible, Easy, Robust
REC	Regional Economic Community
RF-NDP	Recovery Focus National Development Plan
SC	Steering Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIS	State Intelligence Services
SLTD	Stolen and Lost Travel Documents
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
SSI	Semi-structured Interview
STR	Simplified Trade Regime
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threat
SWR	Single Window Registry
TAG	Technical Advisory Groups
Tekki Fii	'Make it Here' project
ToC	Theory of Change
TOC	Transnational Organised Crime
TIDO	Trade Information Desk Officer
TIO	Trade Information Officer
TL	Team Leader
TiP	Trafficking in Persons
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
TRTA	Trade-Related Technical Assistance
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Thematic Working Group
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UN	United Nations
UN80	United Nations 80 Initiative
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHSTF	United Nations Human Security Trust Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRCS	United Nations Resident Coordinator System
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
VC	Value Chain
WAMZ	West African Monetary Zone
YA	Yaoundé Architecture
YEP	Youth Empowerment Project

# Evaluation of the Migration MPTF Joint Project

Independent Evaluation Unit, International Trade Centre

## Executive summary

### 1. Introduction

**Context.** Sub-Saharan Africa faces a complex web of challenges, including geopolitical shifts, political instability, ongoing conflicts, socio-economic disruptions from COVID-19, coups d'état, and escalating climate change. These factors deepen persistent issues such as poverty, unemployment, migration, and human insecurity. Despite these obstacles, the region holds vast potential—abundant natural resources and a dynamic, entrepreneurial youth population. This duality underscores the critical role of initiatives like the Migration MPTF strategy and associated GCM objectives, which provide a constructive partnership framework aligned with UNSDG, Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, while being mindful of the UN80 reform.

In The Gambia, human trafficking (HT) and irregular migration (IMP) pose significant challenges due to economic hardship and limited opportunities for youth. Many young Gambians, in search of better prospects, fall prey to traffickers or take dangerous irregular migration routes. The government, with international partners, has prioritized initiatives like the National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Persons and programmes under the Migration MPTF, focusing on prevention, victim protection, and stronger border management to promote safer migration pathways.

**The intervention.** The pilot project, titled “Addressing the Drivers and Causes of Migration-Related Vulnerabilities among Border Communities along the Trans-Gambia Transport Corridor,” is a joint UN pilot initiative aimed at mitigating migration challenges and enhancing socio-economic opportunities in communities along the Trans-Gambia Corridor, spanning The Gambia and Senegal. Funded by the migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) with a budget of USD 2.35 million, it was jointly implemented by ITC, UNDP, IOM, and UNICEF from January 2022 to September 2025.

**Purpose of the evaluation.** This joint evaluation assesses how relevant, coherent, effectively, efficiently, and sustainably the project has met its objectives, serving the accountability and learning needs of the Participating United Nations Organizations (PUNOs)—ITC, UNDP, IOM, and UNICEF—in consultation with the funder. It provides insights on project performance for transparency and accountability, and shares lessons and recommendations for improving similar future initiatives.

**Key questions and methodology.** The evaluation is structured around six evaluation questions (EQs) aligned with OECD/DAC criteria. Each question includes sub-questions supported by assessment indicators. The evaluation team adapted findings to reflect evolving evidence gathered during fieldwork.

**Scope and phases.** Conducted from February to May 2025 and in a second phase in October by two consultants, the evaluation reviewed activities since project start in January 2022. Fieldwork in targeted communities across The Gambia enabled in-depth data collection. The evaluation reviewed over 60 documents and held more than 70 interviews and focus group discussions with the funder, PUNOs, beneficiaries, and stakeholders. A survey of 200 respondents (85% response rate) informed a comprehensive analysis. The draft report underwent quality review and stakeholder feedback, with key findings and recommendations validated in an online workshop (28 October 2025).

### 2. Findings

#### *EQ1. Was the project addressing the right needs and priorities? – Relevance*

**Alignment with national and international priorities.** The MPTF project's design and Theory of Change (ToC) demonstrate strong alignment with host country priorities, the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), The Gambia's RF-NDP 2023-2027, the National Migration Policy, and Joint Programme (JP) strategies. This alignment has resulted in effective integration of target group needs

and capacities, leading to high beneficiary satisfaction through increased capacity and income generation. Government partners, particularly the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE), Ministry of Interior (Mol), and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MoGCSW), have shown strong support for initiatives related to income generation for Cross-Border Traders (CBTs), improved border management, gender equality (with a focus on women and youth), and child protection; and improved capacity to border management.

**Impact of regional dynamics on ECOWAS agreements.** While project activities align with ECOWAS free movement and trade agreements, the withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger (AES) raises questions about the future relevance of these agreements. This geopolitical shift may influence future policies and regional relations concerning Human Trafficking (HT) and Irregular Migration (IMP). The Gambian government is increasingly exploring bilateral trade solutions, especially with Senegal, to adapt to these changes. AES has formally withdrawn from ECOWAS, nevertheless, the three countries are honouring the AfCFTA.

**Design reliance on assumptions regarding HT and IMP.** The project's design and ToC are primarily informed by well-established assumptions regarding HT and IMP, and to a less extent by comprehensive sectoral expertise, data, or evidence-based findings directly related to HT and IMP. This approach may lead to potentially inconsistent causal linkages and programmatic strategies. The reliance on such assumptions can be attributed to government priorities, weak data availability, and conventional program design practices by international partners. Significant remittances from the Gambian diaspora (30% to 60% of GDP) may also influence the chosen approach. The high dependence on remittances creates a bias towards migration and IMP, which may be deliberate or not. The reality is, independent of the mechanics of migration, the diaspora economic contribution is of significant importance to The Gambia and thus may affect the policy and enforcement environment in both positive and negative ways.

**Cost of regular migration influencing irregular migration.** The high cost and rejection rates of Schengen visas (90 Euros, ~50% rejection for Gambians) and increasing biometric passport costs (currently 45 Euros, expected to rise to 67 Euros) are likely to influence decisions and behaviours related to irregular migration, limiting accessible pathways for regular migration.

**Ambiguity in GCM objective 10 affecting project design.** Challenges in the project's design are partly due to a possible ambiguity in GCM Objective 10, which conflates human trafficking and migration. These two phenomena require distinct programmatic approaches, leading to design issues within the project. An area for improvement is to ensure sufficient inclusion of critical agencies such as the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) and INTERPOL as key stakeholders in implementation and consultations. Despite some engagement with NAATIP in awareness-raising activities, operational response weaknesses within the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) persist.

**Targeting gaps for vulnerable groups.** While Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) principles are adequately addressed with correctly applied MPTF markers in design and reporting (including for children on the move), the design, as noted, meant that young men—a key target beneficiary group for irregular migration - although sufficiently engaged in TVET, entrepreneurship and internship activities, could have more substantial follow up in the context of career pathways and IMP with collection of employment data and changes in their socio-economic situation.

## *EQ2. Was it aligned and compatible with other frameworks and interventions? – Coherence*

**MPTF as a cornerstone of GCM Implementation.** The Migration MPTF serves as a cornerstone for realizing the GCM's vision of safe, orderly, and regular migration by providing financial, programmatic, and governance support. It effectively bridges global commitments with localized actions, although challenges such as long-term funding and implementation gaps persist. GCM markers for Human Rights, Gender, and Child Sensitivity are adequately reflected in line with GCM requirements.

**Synergies with existing youth and community development programs.** The project complements and generates significant synergies with various past and ongoing programs, including youth engagement initiatives, community development efforts, protection and reintegration programs, migration-related initiatives under the UN Peacebuilding Fund (IOM, ITC, UNFPA), the Children on the Move program (UNICEF, ongoing), and job skills and finance projects like SheTrades, The Hub

Gambia, and Tekki Fii (ITC). Its alignment with the UNDP Programme for Accelerated Community Development and ongoing IOM programs for improved border controls (e.g., the new border post at Keir Alli, Farafenni) demonstrates effective complementarity without duplication.

**Strategic alignment with international organizational frameworks.** The project aligns well with other international organizations, particularly the EU's Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for 2021-2027, which prioritizes migration and forced displacement, combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking, and promoting protection and reintegration. In The Gambia, this coherence is reinforced by the EU-The Gambia partnership under the Global Gateway strategy, which supports initiatives like the Migrant Protection, Return and Reintegration Programme for Sub-Saharan Africa (MPRR-SSA). These efforts are crucial given The Gambia's ongoing challenges with IMP and HT and weak governmental capacities.

### *EQ3. To what extent has the MPTF project achieved its results? – Effectiveness*

**Timely output delivery with construction delays.** The project generally delivered required outputs in a timely fashion, with the exception of significant delays in construction activities, leading to two no-cost extensions totalling eight months. The targeted number of beneficiaries received adequate TVETs, capacity building, awareness campaigns, entrepreneurship, and business management training. Livelihood support, financial literacy, and grant support for targeted CBT Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) successfully increased income and opportunities. Improvements in border management capacities are visible at targeted locations, and child protection and awareness regarding HT and IMP have been addressed, though the child-friendly space activity was relocated. As of field visits in October the construction of the Lumo Market Phase I is completed, a Phase II has commenced but is not completed. The hygiene facility is not completed and estimated time of completion for both activities is December 2025. The activities will be completed by mobilising funds other than project funds, which closed in September.

**Success of women CBT grant recipients.** The beneficiaries most capacitated and benefiting were the women CBTs receiving grants, who successfully developed investment schemes to expand, diversify, or add value to products within their value chains. This included women (15) in North Bank Region (NBR) and (15) Lower River Region (LRR) groups, representing diverse skills such as food processing, perfume production, fisheries, and construction. Other beneficiaries, particularly young men and women without prior business experience, received TVET and business management training.

**Impact of internal PUNO processes on project results.** Key internal factors that influenced project outcomes include the diverse internal processes of the Participating United Nations Organizations (PUNOs) and the unique structural opportunities presented by the project's joint nature. The four implementing agencies collaborated effectively in many areas while identifying room for greater synergy in the "Delivering as One" approach, particularly in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), and operational support (e.g., procurement). The varying legal statuses of PUNOs in-country, such as UNDP's full country presence complementing the lead agency ITC's role, provided valuable insights for enhancing operational efficiencies and budget management. Moreover, the project successfully delivered several collaborative programmatic activities, including the joint construction of the market or Lumo in Farafenni by ITC and UNDP, as well as empowering CBT women through capacity building and business management training.

**External limitations due to project scope and resources.** External factors, largely beyond the project's control, limited the achievement of results, including the international nature of IMP and HT with strong links to transnational organized crime (TOC), which falls outside the scope and limited resources of this pilot initiative, as well as the project's pilot status that inherently constrained its budget and outreach potential. Additionally, structural socio-economic factors such as weak enforcement of labour laws, low minimum wages in the hospitality industry, and the strong influence of a few powerful business groups (e.g., through the Gambian Chamber of Commerce (GCC)) shape the perceptions and career pathways of young professionals.

**Lack of coherent policy approach to irregular migration.** The lack of clarity in establishing a coherent and policy-driven approach to resolving IMP underpins both the project's design and its collaboration with government partners. This suggests a complex scenario where the government simultaneously benefits from foreign remittances due to migration while facing severe challenges related to international obligations, weak development, trade, and crime, leading to a significant societal crisis concerning its youth population.

**EQ4. To what extent and how well were activities implemented and coordinated, synergies produced among UN implementing partners, and resources efficiently used? – Efficiency**

**Opportunities for enhanced project structure and collaborative PUNO operations.** The project structure, methodology, and business processes offer valuable potential for greater alignment with the joint nature of the initiative and the empowering principles of "Delivering as One." PUNOs demonstrated strong individual capabilities, while identifying avenues for deeper collaboration, particularly by further systematizing, harmonizing, and integrating key functions such as Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), data, document and archive systems, Communication and Visibility (C&V), and operational and back-stopping support. Budget allocations were distributed to each PUNO to enable focused implementation, highlighting opportunities to strengthen centralized oversight and comprehensive reporting on financial and budgetary matters. However, this is not an operational practice recommended under the "Delivery as One", which highlights a central budget management scheme.

**Insufficient outcomes-level data collection and decentralized M&E systems regarding IMP and HT related data.** While monitoring mechanisms were in place in tracking activities implementation and outputs, the project and government partners lack adequately strong and accurate data collection mechanisms on how the project contributed to reducing IMP/ HT, and reduced risk and hardship for migration in general. This, combined with a decentralized M&E system, represents a challenge in data management at outcomes and impact levels. Such systems are crucial for effective program design, implementation, and impact assessment, as reliable data provides evidence-based insights for informed decisions and efficient resource allocation. The project also lacks a centralized archiving system for documents, beneficiary information, and other project-related materials. While the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) has shortcomings in reflecting donor requirements, consolidated annual progress reports are provided. Nevertheless, the PUNOs have conducted joint monitoring field visits and activity related M&E data has been collected and collated.

**Insufficient UN Resident Coordinator system engagement.** The UN Resident Coordinator System (UNRCS) has not been adequately operationalized or sufficiently engaged to provide coordination and support for this project. Although UNSDG, through the UNRCS, coordinates various funding instruments to foster a "Delivering as One" culture, the MPTF does not fall under this oversight system in The Gambia. Funding is provided directly to agencies after approval by the 12-member MPTF steering committee, partly due to the project's structure and scope. Being a pilot and aiming for scalability and replication, it is important to consider stronger governance and strategic leverage.

**Limited law enforcement capacity due to inadequate NAATIP and INTERPOL involvement.** Inadequate NAATIP involvement and the exclusion of the National Central Bureau (NCB) INTERPOL office regarding HT have negated crucial investigative and prosecutorial powers and capacities. The project has not sufficiently linked these operational capacities through the NRM process. The Border Management Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) capacity is limited, as important cross-border and international law enforcement capacities are not fully exploited. It is essential to be realistic about national capacities to address the international nature of HT and IMP, which extends beyond fixed border posts to include maritime pathways (e.g., Banjul port facilities, routes to Cape Verde and the Canary Islands-Spain).

**EQ5. To what extent has the project generated changes (positive or negative, intended or unintended) at the beneficiaries, communities and local and national entities levels? – Impact**

**Lasting behavioural and mindset changes in Women CBTs.** Lasting and tangible changes are noted in key areas such as the behaviour and mindset of women CBTs who received tutoring and support under the grants scheme. There is ample evidence that these women have had and will continue to have a significant impact on their communities, creating opportunities for future similar MPTF Joint Programme initiatives. Much of this impact is reflected in intangible, societal, and psychosocial tendencies and impulses that extend beyond typical activity-based project perspectives.

**Wage structure influencing youth migration decisions.** The volatile and unpredictable wage structure in The Gambia, characterized by a low worker protection system, affects educational and employment pathways. The official minimum wage is estimated at under USD 1.20 per day (around USD 26 per month, as March 2024). This influences the thinking and behaviour of young people

undergoing TVET activities, as vocational training is often perceived merely as a springboard for migration or irregular migration.

#### **EQ6. Are the benefits and effects likely to continue and be sustained? – Sustainability**

**Varying sustainability prospects and lack of project-level exit strategy.** Prospects for sustainability vary across the project, depending on the partner institution, beneficiary, and handover modalities. While several centres and partners institutions have developed their own exit or continuity strategies, the project-established capacities are primarily output-driven, and the project as a whole did not include a consolidated exit strategy to guide these efforts. Government partner agencies exhibit varied capacities, institutional strength, resource allocation, and management capabilities. These differences were not fully captured in the project's stakeholder mapping and engagement strategies, which, combined with the absence of a project-level exit plan, may weaken sustainability prospects.

**Inconsistent handover and need for realistic assessment of Government capacity.** Handover of project outputs is not consistently conducted with clear commitment and budget allocations from the relevant government line ministries. The project engaged government partners based on their mandates and institutional capacities; however, the assessment on their operational coherence, resource availability, and ability to ensure business continuity after project completion—particularly regarding resource and budget allocation—was not systematic across all institutions. This is reflected in the absence of targeted project exit plans and integrated facility handover frameworks. Nevertheless, successful continuation of benefits is evident in two specific cases: the OSSEC in Farafenni under GiEPA management, and the hospitality training centre in Mansakonko under local council management.

**Policy framework gaps and donor dependency.** While the government's policy framework is adequate, there are compelling issues regarding implementation, sustainability, and budgetary allocations required for effective handover of project outputs. Clear action plans across the policy environment with allocated funding, timelines, and responsibilities are insufficient. Donor dependency remains a major obstacle to national ownership. Despite this, GiEPA has assumed operational and management responsibility for the OSSEC GBV in Farafenni, and the city council in Suma is operating the hospitality centre in Mansakonko. GiEPA has hired a centre manager, Trade Information Officer (TIO), and receptionist, allocating funds for its continuation. The MoGCSW recently assigned one staff to the centre, which, while positive, may be inadequate given the GBV unit's significant space and capacities. The engagement of the GBV staff is on a voluntary basis and ended in October. This is not only the case for OSSEC but is affecting all GBV centres in the country. A solution is being developed by the MoGCSW and being monitored by ITC. Significantly, the MoJ has not yet deployed any staff for business support, limiting services such as business registration and renewal. Nevertheless, the centre is operating a service to assist business owners in this regard.

**Varying beneficiary capacity for sustained benefits.** Beneficiaries' capacity to maintain and continue benefits varies depending on their previous business experience. This is particularly true for CBT women enrolled in the grant scheme activities, where a notable mindset change has occurred. These women feel empowered and confident, leading to significant positive impacts on their families and communities, representing a lasting and generational shift. However, younger TVET beneficiaries, often lacking prior business experience, may struggle to sustain benefits without continued support, affecting the sustainability prospects for this target group. The JP has been seeking active links to other ongoing and future similar projects to address this concern.

**High potential for replication and upscaling of joint programmes.** The MPTF JP has unequivocally demonstrated a significant need to address HT and IMP, with high potential for upscaled project replication. Despite some operational differences, PUNOs have effectively addressed the pilot project's key objective by demonstrating alignment, added value, synergies, and a willingness to collaborate across diverse agency cultures and operational structures. This evaluation provides findings that will help shape a scaled-up project. The project demonstrates that Joint Programmes enhance value for money and promote a "Delivery as One" approach, operationally and structurally, to fully exploit programmatic advantages. This will ultimately improve sustainability prospects and deliver higher value for donors in terms of results. Fundamentally, effectively addressing the challenges linked to HT and IMP is a necessity, not an option.

### 3. Conclusions

**C1. The project aligned strongly with national strategies and addressed relevant needs, though design assumptions constrained effectiveness.** The Joint Programme (JP) supported government priorities and key policies such as the RF-NDP 2023–2027 and the National Migration Policy. The Theory of Change addressed priority concerns—particularly for women and youth in border communities—and government engagement was strong in several areas. However, project design leaned heavily on assumptions around the drivers of migration, especially irregular migration and trafficking, without sufficient grounding in data or differentiated programming approaches related to IMP and HT.

**C2. Conceptual ambiguity around migration and trafficking limited effective targeting and stakeholder engagement.** The project was weakened by the conflation of two distinct issues—human trafficking (HT) and irregular migration (IMP)—particularly in relation to GCM Objective 10. These phenomena require distinct strategies, but the project treated them under a single framework. This design issue led to insufficient engagement with critical enforcement actors such as NAATIP and INTERPOL and hampered effective use of the NRM. Consequently, the key demographic driving IMP— young men—was inadequately targeted.

**C3. The project effectively reached beneficiaries and delivered most outputs, though infrastructure delays hindered full implementation.** Despite logistical challenges, most planned outputs—training, livelihood support, awareness campaigns—were delivered, and beneficiary targets were met. Women-led community-based traders (CBTs) benefitted significantly from tailored grants and business skills development. However, delays in construction activities due to seasonal weather and extended consultations affected timelines and required no-cost extensions. The SWR at the OSSEC is not fully operational and the GBV component at the centre has challenges in securing continuation of staff. Nevertheless, the functions of SWR is managed by the OSSEC and the MoGCSW is working to find solution to the GBV staff coverage, which affecting all GBV centres nationwide.

**C4. Coordination with other UN and donor-funded programmes added strong value and avoided duplication.** The project complemented a range of relevant initiatives, including SheTrades, Tekki Fii/YEP, The Hub Gambia, and the Children on the Move programme. This coherence with existing interventions added programmatic depth, avoided redundancy, and strengthened the overall ecosystem of migration and youth empowerment support. At the regional level, alignment with the EU's SSA-MIP and the Global Gateway strategy offered strategic positioning—though this could be better leveraged through more active cooperation with operational actors.

**C5. While the joint programme established joint structures and activities, operational challenges in this multi-agency pilot highlighted areas where harmonization across agencies could be strengthened.** The JP was intended to model the “Delivering as One” approach, but its operational reality fell short. Each PUNO retained agency-specific procedures, challenging an unified approach to budget management, procurement, M&E, communications, and financial reporting. These inefficiencies reduced cost-effectiveness and affects the promise of added value from multi-agency implementation. Structural differences—such as ITC’s lack of in-country budget authority—affected operational efficiency and underscored the need for stronger engagement from the Resident Coordinator to realize the full potential of multi-agency collaboration as envisioned by the UN “Delivery as One”. There are unrealised potential in a synergetic partnership between the GBoS, GiEPA and CBTAs in capturing informal trade volumes, use of enumerators along informal trade routes in collaboration with the CBTAs.

**C6. Gaps in M&E systems and weak data practices hindered evidence-based decision-making and adaptive learning.** The lack of a centralised M&E framework and data coordination among agencies restricted the project’s ability to measure progress—particularly at outcomes and impact levels—, learn from implementation, and inform future programming. The logframe lacked clear baselines and outcome tracking, while data collection systems varied by agency and were not integrated. Although reporting met donor expectations, there was little strategic use of evidence to adjust programming or share learning across partners.

**C7. Regional uncertainty, especially regarding ECOWAS integration, may impact future programming around mobility and trade.** The project aligned with ECOWAS free movement and trade agreements, but the recent withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger from the REC casts doubt on the future utility of these frameworks. In response, The Gambia is increasingly exploring bilateral solutions with Senegal. While this does not immediately invalidate the project's regional assumptions, it suggests that future designs will need to account for a less predictable regional integration context.

**C8. Institutional sustainability is mixed due to the absence of structured exit planning and inconsistent government ownership.** Institutional sustainability shows encouraging progress, with notable advancements in handover processes in several instances, such as GiEPA's successful management of the OSSEC in Farafenni and the Mansakonko hospitality centre. These examples demonstrate growing government ownership and the potential for long-term integration of project outcomes. To further strengthen this foundation, opportunities exist to enhance structured exit planning, formalize strategies across all outputs, and secure budgeted commitments from government agencies. By shifting from an output-driven approach to one that more comprehensively incorporates institutional mapping and capacity assessments, projects can better support sustained services, especially when this is considered in targeted exit plans. With adequate transition planning and financing, the lasting benefits of the initiative can be fully realized and amplified beyond project closure.

**C9. CBT women grantees demonstrated transformative impact, while young TVET trainees remain economically vulnerable.** Women CBTs demonstrated remarkable advancements in personal agency, income generation, and innovative business practices. Their enhanced capacity and confidence have sparked ripple effects at the community level, fostering opportunities for intergenerational progress and empowerment. For young TVET participants, the training has equipped them with valuable skills that hold great promise for future employment. By building on a national minimum wage of approximately \$1.20 per day and strengthening labour protections, the JP has further positioned TVET as a robust pathway to sustainable livelihoods, encouraging youth to envision and pursue fulfilling careers locally and nationally rather than as a bridge to migration and perilous opportunities abroad. The CBTA can provide important input in shaping programmatic design that addresses positive aspects of informal trade among MSMEs.

**C10. The importance of a formal Cross-Border Trade Association (CBTA) affects collective advocacy and long-term economic integration.** The JP has directly supported establishing two structured CBTAs, one in LRR and one in NBR. Small-scale and informal traders previously lacked a platform to voice needs, access legal migration information, or advocate for policy reform. This left a critical gap in the JP's ability to institutionalise trade mobility and protect informal traders, especially women. The absence of such a body also hindered collaboration with national statistics offices, limited policy influence, and constrained sustainability of benefits for the cross-border trading community. The CBTA is collaborating closely with the OSSEC and have been officially recognised with GiEPA ID cards. CBT has improved and the OSSEC TIO is present at BPs to ensure orderly and correct CBT.

**C11. Internal and external constraints significantly limited the project's transformative potential.** While the JP achieved meaningful outputs, several internal and external factors curtailed its ability to achieve higher-level outcomes. These include limited strategic support to the management structures, insufficient engagement of law enforcement and regulatory actors, and modest influence over migration policy. The project's pilot nature and budget constrains further restricted its geographic and institutional reach. Many of these limitations stem from systemic design and operational decisions rather than isolated implementation issues.

**C12. The pilot demonstrated strong potential for replication, if future phases address coordination, data, and sustainability gaps.** Despite its constraints, the JP validated the need for multi-agency approaches to HT and IMP in The Gambia. The project showcased scalable practices, particularly in support to CBT women and coordinated delivery with other UN programmes. Future interventions should incorporate these lessons by establishing robust monitoring systems, investing in sustainability planning, and strengthening engagement with both national institutions and regional frameworks. A scaled-up JP, if well-coordinated, can offer donors and stakeholders improved returns on investment and meaningful migration governance outcomes.

## 4. Recommendations

**R1. Clarify the conceptual distinction between human trafficking (HT) and irregular migration (IMP) to improve programme design.** Future joint programming—especially if scaled or replicated—should explicitly distinguish between HT and IMP in both the Theory of Change (ToC) and operational approaches. This includes commissioning targeted research—led by experts in psycho-social and anthropological disciplines—to validate assumptions around the root causes of HT and IMP and assess drivers across gender and age groups. Better distinction will enhance engagement with enforcement actors such as NAATIP, UNODC and INTERPOL and allow for more tailored programming. (Conclusions 1, 2, 11)

**R2. Strengthen strategic and operational coordination across UN agencies to Delivering as One.** For future phases or replicated joint programmes, a prominent role by the UN Resident Coordinator (RC) is recommended to reinforce inter-agency collaboration and strategic alignment with national and UN frameworks. The RC or alternate should participate in all Project Steering Committees (PSCs), facilitate joint resource mobilization, and strengthen synergies with initiatives such as the EU SSA-MIP. Building on the mapping of each PUNO's comparative advantage—which considered mandate, in-country presence, and technical expertise—, future joint programming should expand this analysis to inform activity allocation, budget decisions, and each agency's readiness to assume responsibilities post-project. Joint budget management, procurement, shared MEAL functions, and reinforced integrated reporting mechanisms should be further encouraged to ensure that multi-agency implementation translates into added value. (Conclusions 4, 5, 11, 12)

**R3. Institutionalize inter-agency cooperation to combat HT and IMP.** Future programming should support the establishment of a multi-agency task force involving UNODC, INTERPOL, NAATIP, the Youth Agency, and other key national stakeholders with relevant intelligence, investigative and prosecutorial powers. This task force should facilitate real-time information sharing, joint enforcement planning, and cross-border cooperation. Embedding such a structure in national systems will help ensure programme sustainability and strategic alignment with international cooperation frameworks. As of October, NAATIP confirm the existence of a newly formed task force focusing on operational coordination. (Conclusions 2, 11, 12)

**R4. Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) systems with a dedicated multi-agency expert.** Future phases should embed a robust MEAL framework with clear mechanisms for evidence-based programming and adaptive management. A dedicated MEAL specialist—ideally seconded from one of the PUNOs—should coordinate harmonized indicator tracking, baseline development, and data quality assurance. This specialist should also support efforts to capture behavioural changes and outcome-level progress, in line with GCM Objective 1 on disaggregated data. The logframe should be revised based on the 2022 baseline to include realistic and measurable targets, clear indicators, and robust verification mechanisms. Agency-specific responsibilities for monitoring and reporting should be clarified, and all project staff should receive training on MEAL systems to support accurate data collection and use. (Conclusions 3, 6, 12)

**R5. Consolidate existing data into an accessible knowledge base to inform future programming.** All existing M&E data—surveys, tracking systems, qualitative assessments—should be analysed and compiled into a findings report to guide donors, policymakers, and implementing partners. This report should highlight changes in access to WATSAN, education, economic empowerment, and reintegration outcomes. It should also support updates to national referral systems and strategic frameworks. (Conclusions 3, 6, 11)

**R6. Accelerate the completion of remaining outputs under the current no-cost extension.** Outstanding construction activities and pending handovers should be completed as soon as possible to maximise the JP's impact. This includes the Lumo market Phase II and the hygiene facility in Farafenni, NBR. The relevant PUNOs report that completion will be complete by December 2025 under the existing contracts with the construction companies. (Conclusion 3)

**R7. Develop clear, activity-specific exit strategies to improve sustainability.** In future phases or scaling efforts, all interventions—particularly infrastructure, capacity development, and community-

based services—should include detailed exit plans with timely, clearly assigned institutional responsibility, and resource commitments. For instance, the TIO at the OSSEC does not have sufficient transport capacity to cover both BPs adequately. Continued engagements and support to OSSEC/GiEPA and the CBTA are encouraged. (Conclusions 8, 11)

**R8. Establish and operationalize a Cross-Border Trade Association (CBTA) to institutionalize informal trader representation.** Future replication or expansion should formalize a CBTA for CBTs operating in the Trans-Gambia corridor (NBR and LRR). This body—linked to the IABCC and supported by GiEPA—should strengthen informal traders' voice, especially women's, and provide training on legal migration, trade advocacy, and data collection. The model can draw from ITC's experience under COMESA in Zambia. As of October, two CBTA has been formed in NBR and LRR with the support from the OSSEC and the JP. Continued future support by similar projects is highly encouraged. (Conclusions 9, 10, 12)

**R9. Strengthen data partnerships to validate informal trade and improve national statistics.** A formal partnership between GiEPA's Trade Information Office (TIO) and GBoS should be developed to institutionalize the collection and validation of informal trade data. Disaggregated data should inform national accounts and policy decisions and improve the visibility of women-led MSMEs. This approach replicates best practices from ITC's work with COMESA and Zambia. (Conclusions 10, 12)

**R10. Develop public-private partnerships (PPPs) to support returnees and informal traders.** Future programming should mobilize private-sector partners like HERICO and CSCG to improve job readiness and reintegration outcomes for returnees and CBTs. A professional credit union for returning cruise workers—modelled on the teachers' credit union—could incentivize safe return, promote savings, and create pathways to sustainable livelihoods. (Conclusions 9, 12)

**R11. Conduct structured capacity assessments of government and civil society partners to inform sustainability planning.** Before scaling or expanding efforts, a systematic assessment (e.g., SWOT or capacity needs analysis) of implementing partners should be conducted to ensure institutional alignment and realistic sustainability strategies. (Conclusions 8, 11)

**R12. Enhance national engagement in policy and governance frameworks for migration.** Future joint programmes should provide structured support to the Government of The Gambia in engaging with policy issues around visa regimes, enforcement cooperation, and travel documentation. This includes capacity-building to address transnational crime and to strengthen regional policy engagement. (Conclusions 2, 7, 11)

### Mapping of Conclusions to Recommendations

Conclusion	Linked Recommendation(s)
C1. The project aligned strongly with national strategies and addressed relevant needs, though design assumptions constrained effectiveness.	Clarify the conceptual distinction between human trafficking (HT) and irregular migration (IMP) to improve programme design (R1).
C2. Conceptual ambiguity around migration and trafficking limited effective targeting and stakeholder engagement.	Clarify the conceptual distinction between HT and IMP (R1), and institutionalize inter-agency cooperation (R3), while enhancing national engagement in migration policy frameworks (R12).
C3. The project effectively reached beneficiaries and delivered most outputs, though infrastructure delays hindered full implementation.	Accelerate completion of remaining outputs (R6), strengthen MEAL systems (R4), revise and operationalize the logframe (R5)
C4. Coordination with other UN and donor-funded programmes added strong value and avoided duplication.	Strengthen strategic and operational coordination across UN agencies (R2).
C5. Fragmented implementation and siloed systems limited the joint programme's collaborative potential.	Strengthen strategic and operational coordination across UN agencies in accordance with "Delivery as One" mechanisms (R2).
C6. Gaps in M&E systems and weak data practices hindered evidence-based decision-making and adaptive learning.	Strengthen MEAL systems (R4), revise and operationalize the logframe, and consolidate M&E data (R5).
C7. Regional uncertainty, especially regarding ECOWAS integration, may impact future programming around mobility and trade.	Enhance national engagement in migration policy and governance frameworks (R12).
C8. Institutional sustainability is mixed due to the lack of structured exit planning and inconsistent government ownership.	Develop activity-specific exit strategies (R7), conduct capacity assessments to inform sustainability planning (R11).
C9. CBT women grantees demonstrated transformative impact, while young TVET trainees remain economically vulnerable.	Establish and ensure continued support for the two Cross-Border Trade Associations (R8), develop PPPs for reintegration and economic development (R10).
C10. The establishment formal Cross-Border Trade Association (CBTA) has strengthened collective advocacy and long-term economic integration.	Continue support and collaboration with the Cross-Border Trade Associations (R8), strengthen data partnerships to validate informal trade coordinated between GiEPA and GBoS (R9).
C11. Structural and operational constraints significantly limited the project's transformative potential.	Conduct structured capacity assessments of government and civil society partners (R11), enhance national engagement in migration policy and governance frameworks (R12).
C12. The pilot demonstrated strong potential for replication, if future phases address coordination, data, and sustainability gaps.	Clarify HT vs. IMP (R1), strengthen coordination (R2), institutionalize inter-agency cooperation (R3), strengthen MEAL (R4), consolidate M&E data (R5), strengthen CBTA's (R8), strengthen trade data systems (R9), develop PPPs (R10).

# 1. Introduction

1. ITC, in collaboration with the IOM, the UNICEF, and the UNDP, has commissioned this joint evaluation. The partnership involves shared decision-making and resource allocation to ensure a comprehensive assessment of the joint project.
2. The evaluation focuses on the "Addressing the drivers and causes of vulnerability in migration among border communities along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor" project, funded by the MPTF (USD 2.35 million). Implemented in The Gambia since January 2022, the project is set to conclude in August 2025 following two NCE<sup>1</sup>. It is coordinated through an ERG comprising members from ITC, IOM, UNICEF, and UNDP, and technically managed by ITC's IEU.
3. ITC holds overall management and coordination responsibility for the joint project, with IOM, UNDP, and UNICEF as participating UN organizations (PUNOs). Key national partners include the MoTIE, the MoI, and MoGCSW, alongside over ten other national and local entities with varying roles. The stakeholders represent a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach.
4. The evaluation aims to determine the project's effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, coherence, impact, and sustainability in meeting its objectives. It provides evidence for transparency and accountability, offering lessons learned and recommendations to improve future initiatives or similar projects.
5. The evaluation commenced in mid-February 2025, and the assessment includes the results delivered by the project's closure, following two NCEs, on September 30, 2025, ensuring timely insights into the project's performance and outcomes.

## 2. The project

### 2.1. Origin and context

6. The project titled "Addressing the Drivers and Causes of Migration-Related Vulnerabilities among Border Communities along the Trans-Gambia Transport Corridor" is a UN joint initiative launched in June 2022 to mitigate migration challenges and enhance socio-economic opportunities for communities along the Trans-Gambia Corridor, spanning The Gambia and Senegal. Funded by the MMPTF with a budget of USD 2.35 million, it is jointly implemented by the ITC, UNDP, IOM, and UNICEF.
7. In the JP, ITC serves as the convening agent and lead PUNO, primarily responsible for Outcome 3 on economic empowerment and cross-border trade, including providing entrepreneurship and skills training to women and youth, distributing small grants to cross-border traders, facilitating market access and business exhibitions, upgrading trade infrastructure like the Farafenni Lumo Market and establishing a One-Stop Shop for entrepreneurship support, and collaborating on agricultural and hospitality training initiatives with partners like the GSI.
8. UNDP focuses on supporting infrastructure development, such as constructing storage and hygiene facilities at markets using sustainable methods, co-funding equipment for the Hospitality Training Centre, and participating in joint monitoring and evaluation to ensure project outcomes
9. IOM leads Outcomes 1 and 2 on migration management and human rights, handling capacity-building for border officials through trainings on systems like MIDAS and fraud detection, strengthening inter-agency coordination via committees and working groups, promoting awareness on safe migration and anti-trafficking via events, moot courts, and community sensitizations.
10. UNICEF spearheads child protection efforts under Outcomes 1 and 2, including training shelter staff and local authorities on case management and response mechanisms for children on the move, sensitizing communities and caregivers on risks of violence and exploitation, empowering youth champions for peer education on trafficking and free movement protocols, running radio programs and

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<sup>1</sup> First NCE Jan to May 2025 (5 months) and second June to Sept 2025 (3 months)

media engagements for ethical reporting, and supporting the creation of safe spaces and reporting helplines for vulnerable children and GBV victims.

11. The MPTF was established to support the implementation of the GCM in 2019 and plays a critical operational role in mobilizing resources and coordinating efforts among stakeholders to address migration challenges. Administered by the UN, the MPTF pools contributions from donor governments, UN agencies, and other partners to finance projects that align with the GCM's 23 objectives, some of which include the improvement of migration governance, protection of migrants' rights, and enhancing pathways for regular migration.
12. The MMPTF supports initiatives aligned with the GCM. To receive funding, projects are required to be innovative, adopt a whole-of-society and government approach, emphasize consultations and community inclusion to ensure a people-centered approach, and demonstrate alignment with the UNSDG system. Other requirements include the following:
  - a) Alignment with GCM Objectives: Projects must support the GCM's 23 objectives, grouped under thematic areas such as facilitating regular migration, enhancing migrant protection, and improving migration governance.
  - b) Joint Programme Design: Projects must be collaborative, involving multiple stakeholders including UN organizations, national governments, local authorities, civil society, migrant organizations, and host communities.
  - c) Eligibility of Applicants: Funding is typically channeled through PUNOs in the UN Network on Migration. Non-UN entities, such as governments or civil society organizations, can participate as implementing partners but generally access funds via PUNOs. Each organization is programmatically and financially accountable for the resources it receives.
  - d) Focus on Results and Sustainability: Proposals must follow the Fund's Results Framework, emphasizing alignment with the SDGs, sustainability, and measurable outcomes. Projects should include robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and impact.
  - e) Human Rights and Inclusivity: Initiatives must prioritize human rights, gender sensitivity, and the best interests of vulnerable groups, including children and marginalized migrants. Projects should mitigate vulnerabilities and promote inclusive development.
  - f) Geographic and Thematic Relevance: Projects can be national, regional, or global but must address specific migration challenges or opportunities in countries of origin, transit, or destination. Priority is given to innovative, evidence-based initiatives that foster cross-border partnerships or address issues such as climate-driven migration or trafficking.
13. MPTF is thus the operational arm of the GCM and structurally and formally linked, through the GCM mandate, to the UNRCS in-country. Currently, the operational modality does not place the funding instrument under the oversight and coordination of the RC, as is the case with the UN Peacebuilding Fund. Instead, the MPTF funds are distributed directly to PUNOs to be managed by each agency.

## 2.2. Results framework and Theory of Change

14. MPTF JP Theory of Change (ToC) is based on the GCM objectives as the overarching objective focusing on the following elements, i) capacitated and stronger border management facilitating safe and orderly migration, ii) women and youth can confidently claim their rights with raised awareness of their rights, available protection services and reporting mechanism, and iii) women and youth acquire access to livelihood opportunities for informal CBT, life skills, safe space and increased linkages to national networks and digital opportunities. See [Annex 2](#) for rebuilt ToC.
15. While the project has an overall focus on migration, the PUNOs bring advantages that encompass technical expertise and experience which bring synergies and stakeholder partnerships involving a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, maximising results. The approach ensures alignments with GCM objectives, which are: 2 "Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin", 10 "Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration", 11 "Manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated

manner” and 122 “Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral”. In accordance with MPTF’s donor requirements, these objectives are embedded in the design, while maintaining a focus on human rights, gender and child protection issues. GCM objective 1 “Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies” was not included as a key project objective. The consolidated approach looks as follows, based on each PUNOs unique partnership and expertise:

- a) ITC. Lead agency with expertise on MSMEs, income generation, TVET capacities linking training and educational pathways to market and employability. Market and Lumo construction.
  - b) IOM. Expertise on migration and trafficking, with technical knowledge and operationalisation of the MIDAS system.
  - c) UNDP. Development agency dedicated to inclusive economic growth private sector development, empowering business, entrepreneurs, business management and development. Hygiene and cold storage, market and Lumo construction.
  - d) UNICEF: Experience in addressing children on the move, protection and psychosocial counselling.
16. The project has invested considerable efforts in ensuring that a consultative process informs the design, identification of stakeholders and beneficiaries. To further validate and ensure an evidence-based approach, a rapid assessment study was conducted in April to May 2022 that provided important data and analysis. In addition, three priority issues were identified affecting the border communities in NBR and LRR, with a focus on women: i) high rates in irregular migration of young people, ii) human trafficking, smuggling of migrants (IMP) and other forms of organised immigration crimes, and iii) harassment of women at border posts, in-particular of women informal cross border-traders.

### 2.3. Target groups, partners and geographical scope

17. The MPTF JP targets groups that are highly vulnerable to migration-related human rights abuses, including women (predominantly CBTs), men (mostly irregular migrants), unaccompanied and separated children, and others at risk of human trafficking or affected by trans-national criminal networks, with at least 70% of these beneficiaries being young people. These groups are direct beneficiaries under outcomes 2 and 3 and indirect beneficiaries under outcome 1. Border officials, with a focus on encouraging female participation, are the primary direct beneficiaries under outcome 1, while border authorities and civil society networks benefit from institutional strengthening. The JP aims to directly benefit at least 600 people and indirectly benefit at least 8,000, focusing on regions contributing to The Gambia’s 2,500 daily travellers, particularly the around 600 daily travellers passing through Farafenni (NBR) at Keur Ali BP due to northern location of Dakar, Senegal.
18. The JP involves two distinct categories of partnerships to ensure its success. Firstly, strategic partners play a critical role in high-level decision-making, providing oversight through the PSC and LPC, and facilitating coordination with other related initiatives to align efforts and maximize impact. Secondly, implementing partners and direct beneficiaries, such as those involved in institutional strengthening activities, actively participate in executing the project’s objectives and directly benefit from its outcomes. Certain stakeholders bridge both roles, contributing to strategic oversight while also engaging in implementation or benefiting from capacity-building efforts, thereby fostering a cohesive and integrated approach to the project’s governance and delivery. The project embraces a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, and key government partners include MoTIE, Mol and MoGCSW.
19. The MPTF JP targets Jarra West and Upper Baddibou districts, encompassing the towns of Jarra Jenoi, Pakalinding, Soma, and Mansakonko in Jarra West, and Farafenni and Bretto in Upper Baddibou, along with numerous smaller villages. Special emphasis is placed on key border crossing points at Keur Ali and Misera, as well as on the communities directly along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor and those in close proximity to the border. These districts were chosen in line with the consultations held with government and civil society stakeholders, including the NCM on migration, IABCCs, and discussions in Farafenni, Misera, and Jenoi with individuals directly impacted by the Senegambia Bridge. The

<sup>2</sup> <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/gcm-guidance>

selection reflects the districts' strategic importance, as they host several critical border posts and are traversed by the transport corridor, making them central to addressing migration-related vulnerabilities.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Evaluation purpose, questions and criteria

20. According to the evaluation ToR and the Inception Note framing this exercise (March 2025), the evaluation's purpose is to assess the MPTF's quality and to what extent the project has met its objectives in a relevant, effective, efficient, coherent, impact-oriented, and sustainable manner. The evaluation provides insights and evidence on the project performance for transparency and accountability purposes and discusses lessons learned and recommendations with the organizations involved on how to do things better under similar circumstances or in future phases.
21. The evaluation aims to foster accountability toward key partners and the donor by conducting a review of the JP's performance, value, and effects, which encompass elements such as accountability mechanisms and opportunities for institutional learning. Furthermore, it seeks to deliver actionable and realistic recommendations aimed at reinforcing the MPTF's existing achievements, addressing any gaps, and paving the way for potential scaling up of similar projects in the future to address long-term impact and sustainability.
22. The evaluation focuses on six main EQs, which were broken down into 18 sub-questions associated with six evaluation criteria and related to the specific indicators generated for each sub-question to assess MPTF's JP objectives' current situation and progress (see [Annex 3.1 Evaluation Matrix](#))<sup>3</sup>. The six key EQs are presented in Table 1 below.

*Table 1. Evaluation questions and associated criteria*

<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
EQ1: To what extent does the MPTF programme address the right needs and priorities?	Relevance
EQ2: To what extent is the MPTF project aligned and compatible with other frameworks and interventions?	Coherence
EQ3: To what extent is the MPTF project achieving its results?	Effectiveness
EQ4: To what extent and how well were the activities coordinated and implemented, synergies produced among UN partners, and available resources efficiently used?	Efficiency
EQ5: To what extent has the project generated changes (positive or negative, intended or unintended) at the beneficiaries, communities and local and national entities levels?	Impact
EQ6. To what extent are the benefits and effects likely to continue and be sustained?	Sustainability

23. Relevance - 1st EQ aims to assess whether the migration MPTF initiative is in line with national strategies and priorities, including the GCM, JPs/donors' strategies and the needs of the target groups/beneficiaries, particularly poor workers/cross-border traders in the marginalised/vulnerable communities. The EQ also aims to assess the quality of the design and theory of change of the project. Given the new geopolitical situation affecting ECOWAS and fall-out from changes in donor operations, especially USAID, the evaluation reviews some of the possible consequences of these developments.
24. Coherence - 2nd EQ aims to assess the logical consistency, clarity, and integration of various components within the project ecosystem, including governance and engagement with similar initiatives, sectoral objectives and alignment with government activities and priorities. More importantly,

<sup>3</sup>Reflecting the methodological pathway for assessment, the Evaluation Matrix links the six key EQs, the 18 sub-questions and associated evaluation criteria to analytical dimensions or indicators, and triangulated sources of information. Those elements were subject to updates during the evaluation in line with the evaluability conditions, the extent of information collected, and an added strategic dimension.

the evaluation examines if project design, functionality, and team efforts—work together harmoniously toward project objectives in a practical manner.

25. Effectiveness - 3rd EQ aims to measure the progress of the migration MPTF objectives, specifically assessing the outcome on creating positive and sustainable change for beneficiaries and their families. It examines how the project outputs contribute to enhancing the capacities, safety, knowledge of and application of rights by right-holders, transition from informal to formal commercial operations, increased trade income generation of target groups. As a starting point, the project reporting collected data is compared against the rapid assessment report to quantitatively inform effectiveness to the extent possible. The collection of primary data focused on beneficiaries' increased knowledge and technical skills, which varies across regions, countries, and age-gender/experience groups due to influencing variables. Political, cultural, and economic conditions could have either positive or negative effects on progress towards improved capacity and increased income for beneficiaries.
26. The JP's success in enhancing decent work opportunities for vulnerable workers, SMEs, and cross border traders is evaluated by measuring the quality and extent of knowledge/skill transfer, as well as the impact on income, livelihoods, and living standards. Additionally, the evaluation considers intangible outcomes such as social resilience and empowerment of women and youth. Long-term impacts and broader results achieved so far are also assessed. Finally, the evaluation explores the relationship between the JPs theory of change (ToC) and long-term changes, particularly those driven by the enhanced security and income opportunities directly linked to the project activities.
27. Efficiency - 4th EQ aims to assess whether the project is delivering planned outputs in a cost-efficient and coordinated manner, regularly monitoring/reporting their progress, particularly with a focus on capacity-building activities, security and income generation. The synergies between the JPs and other partners working towards similar objectives are assessed, with a view to identify (potential) overlaps/synergies and future needs in programming. The EQ also looks into the sectoral coordination mechanisms. Funding, staffing, appropriate supervision, risk management, coordination structures between the HQ and field levels, legal framework, time, resource-related issues and administrative requirements directly affect the delivery of good-quality outputs. Coordination and efficient communication among the team members and between the project, JP, donors, and the target groups are crucial to success. These aspects were also examined.
28. Impact - 5th EQ Specific political/institutional/cultural/economic conditions might create positive or negative influences on the progress towards the increased capacity, income and safe trading conditions of the beneficiaries. The project's success in improving decent work prospects for poor workers/SMEs/cross-border traders in vulnerable communities is assessed. To this end, the evaluation relates the quality and level of knowledge/skill transfer to the beneficiaries (measured under 'effectiveness') and the context aiming at prospects for increased income/livelihoods and improved living standards. Intangible effects such as social resilience and women/youth empowerment are also analysed. Long-term impacts, as well as noticeable broader results to date are assessed. The EQ analyses the links between the ToC and long-term changes it introduced, mainly triggered by creating the links between security, freedom of movement of goods and people, and income generation. The evaluation tries to identify success stories and change makers in communities that can transmit powerful stories to support efforts for scalability and replicability.
29. Sustainability - 6th EQ focuses on ensuring the long-term continuation of the project's benefits through strengthened individual and institutional capacity building and networking support. A key aspect is embedding these efforts within the internal financial and human resources of the final target groups, including poor workers, SMEs, and cross-border traders. This evaluation assesses whether activities were effectively integrated into relevant institutional structures with enhanced capacities and whether stakeholders and donors have concrete plans to build on the created capacity. Sustained national commitment and political ownership are crucial for maintaining these efforts, requiring adequate financial allocations for continued capacity building. Additionally, the potential for scalability and replicability is examined, including possible managerial restructuring, decentralization of functions to training centres, and the development of women- and youth-friendly trade infrastructure. Key elements such as the Trade Information and Border Management Desk, as well as community-based committees are also be analysed to ensure long-term impact and sustainability.

### 3.2. Data collection

30. The evaluation methodology enabled evidence-based analysis of achievements based on indicators at each EQ and sub-question levels. It used an applied theory-based approach based on the reconstructed ToC ([Annex 2](#)). As the evaluation went forward it became necessary to adjust the approach to better balance effect strategic and operational considerations of the donor, key stakeholders and multi-country and multi-agency requirements of future and similar interventions. The evaluation consistently ensured extensive stakeholder engagement to triangulate available data. Data collection involved a field visit to The Gambia, where a National Evaluation Consultant (NEC) partnered in the team.
31. Phases of the exercise were the following:<sup>4</sup>
32. **Inception.** A desk review analysed the project documents, reports, legal frameworks and strategies (see [Annex 3.2](#)), and helped identify key stakeholders and informants. Preliminary interviews with core informants helped better understand the evaluand, reconstruct the ToC, as well as to identify additional data and shape the data collection work plan.
33. **Data collection.** After the Inception Note approval, the consultants conducted data collection through online interviews, key informant interviews (KIIs), semi-structured interviews (SSIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) with the project partners and stakeholders. The Evaluation Expert travelled to The Gambia in April 2025 and was supported by the ITC team in country for logistics. The NEC facilitated data collection in April 2025 during and after the field visit. The NEC conducted a survey informed by findings and gaps in the data collection (details to be found in [Annex 7](#)). An additional NCE was approved in June and extended the project by three months to 30 September 2025. A second phase of the evaluation and field visits to place in late October as part of a verification process linked to the NCEs and validation workshop. The evaluation workplan and contract was amended accordingly.
34. The evaluation emphasized the effectiveness of the project drawing causal links between outputs and outcomes, with insights from the JPs and project teams, including the UN RC, contributing to conclusions on efficiency and effectiveness.
35. Universal principles (e.g., respectfulness, confidentiality) guided the interviews, and a "Do No Harm" approach was adopted, especially with vulnerable groups with a special focus on women and youth.
36. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with beneficiaries and stakeholders to gather qualitative, in-depth information on the specific evaluation questions (EQs). Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) collected beneficiaries' stories of change through open-ended questions. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were organized with target and beneficiary groups to explore their experiences and the benefits derived from the project. A total of over 70 interviews were conducted, exceeding the planned 60, which allowed for a thorough analysis of key issues. Table 2 below categorizes the meetings by country and informant group, while a complete list of informants is presented in [Annex 3.3](#).

*Table 2. Informants' coverage*

Informant	KII	SSI	FGD
ITC HQ	4		
PUNOs	2		
NBR, LRR		49	12
Private sector partners		4	
Funder	2		
<b>TOTAL [73]</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>12</b>

37. A survey was conducted with a sampling of 200 respondents, with 85% response rate. The survey questions focused on changes in behaviour, improved income generation, changes in perceptions and awareness related to IMP (see [Annex 7](#) for full survey).

<sup>4</sup> The evaluation workplan is presented in [Annex 4](#).

38. **Data Analysis.** This phase involved analysing qualitative and quantitative data collected during the document review and field phases, leading to evidence-based findings for the EQ responses. Continued exchanges between the lead evaluator, the national consultant, the PUNO Coordinator, and the ITC Evaluation Manager enabled a factual review of the first draft, which included preliminary findings, conclusions, and initial recommendations.
39. **Reporting.** A synthesis of collected data was reflected in the first draft of evaluation report, structured according to the six EQs, addressing sub-questions, drawing conclusions, and making future recommendations, per the agreed report template with ERG/IEU. The draft was quality assured by the ERG and the IEU, and subsequently circulated among key stakeholders for final comments. Feedback and inputs were collected both in writing and during a validation workshop held in October 2025 and were considered in finalizing the report and refining the recommendations.

### 3.3. Boundaries and limitations

40. Boundaries and limitations to the evaluation were related to the three points explained below:
41. Scope. The evaluation focused initially on MPTF specific project results, however, after the preliminary interviews and analysis during this phase, it was realised that a more strategic component was needed, including a review of the assumptions related to HT, IMP and regular migration and how these elements informed the project's design and ToC. The review includes findings and analysis of the UNRCS / UNSDG business model and relation to the MPTF / GCM funding structure and requirements.
42. Questions' coverage. Part of the evaluation focused on assumptions linked to drivers and push factors for IMP and migration. The questions included clarification on the "migration versus HT" concepts and how this informed the project design and approach.
43. An in-depth cost-benefit analysis was not possible due to insufficient financial data and information. Nevertheless, a rudimentary 'value-for-money' assessment has been provided based on available financial data.
44. Data collection challenges. The project is a pilot, budget disbursements are not significant in size and scope, and this may have affected the partners' priorities related to sharing information, data and scheduling of meetings. The NEC was instrumental in organising and facilitating access to the key stakeholders. ITC provided logistical support with a driver and vehicle for the duration of the evaluation's field phase. This greatly facilitated travel to the field and logistics. Documents such as the budget, financial reports and an M&E report provided by the IP 'The Hub' to IOM and funded by the project has not been shared with the evaluation consultants. The mentioned documents have been requested several times by the evaluation team and the ERG. The PUNOs operated according to their mandates and operational systems with various data management and beneficiary lists in place. For example, UNICEF operated mainly through their IPs which were the custodians of the data, and ITC had complete lists of beneficiaries centrally managed, of which both data sets was shared with the evaluation.
45. A survey was conducted with beneficiaries, providing valuable and important data. The data was collected targeting beneficiaries that had received trainings on TVET, awareness, and protection related issues. This has provided a realistic sampling of the beneficiaries with a quantitative analysis on the income increase, satisfaction rates and some other results. The information was gathered through SSI (in person), enriching the quantitative data from MPTF performance indicators ([Annex 7](#) for full survey).

## 4. Analysis and Findings<sup>5</sup>

### 4.1. Did the MPTF project address the right needs? [Relevance]

#### 4.1.1. Has the project responded to the needs of right holders, especially the most vulnerable?

46. The MPTF project addresses the needs of disadvantaged communities along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor by creating sustainable employment, business environment and income opportunities. It strengthens border management, raising awareness for rights holders regarding HT, IMP, and important aspects of HRBA, gender and child protection. Key aspects related to the creation of socio-economic opportunities are addressed through TVET training in agriculture, and hospitality sectors. The project thus addresses some of the key push factors related to irregular migration or IMP, with adequate alignment with GCM objectives<sup>6</sup> 10, 11, and 12 with some weaknesses linked to objective 2. Adverse drivers to IMP are not entirely captured by the project. This is a complex issue, and many factors are outside the control of the project scope. These may include low salaries, limited professional mobility, complex business environment, and inadequate policies targeting informal MSMEs and weak implementation of simplified trade regimes. Another aspect which is not well captured is the psycho-social conditioning which has taken place in the society affecting the mindset – a lack of hope. This has affected young people in particular and has had significant impact on the way young people perceive their prospects and commitment to a future in their communities and nation. The JP has been mindful of this and included counselling support which was integrated in the TVET activities lead by UNICEF.
47. Insufficient availability of data for target groups under the thematic areas of HT and IMP is due to weak M&E systems and post-training tracing of target beneficiaries, especially young men which are the major group using IMP. The project is planning to address this gap as part of the closure procedures of the project. The lack of validated data is not specific only to the project and is a general issue for government specialised agencies. One such example is the MoGCSW which are not able to provide user and tracing data related to the use of the GMIS 199 hotline. There is no substantial data available from the ministry to trace GBV, response, investigation or convictions, as well as severity, hospitalisation, demographic data, or other data management activities. The OSS GBV in Farafenni does not have data collection protocols in place and it is not known if the other OSS may have data sets available to support data management of GBV victims. In this regard the new government National Gender Policy 2025-34 may be a foundation for future considerations.
48. The project leverages the unique expertise and technical know-how of each PUNO, embracing a whole-of-government<sup>7</sup> and whole-of-society<sup>8</sup> approach with a development agenda focused on women's rights, marginalized communities and youth. MPTF's objectives and methodology address the needs of the workers in marginalized communities, with an adaptive management approach across all parties involved. Within the confines of the project's overall objective, the needs of rights holders are adequately addressed, however, the formulation may not be adequate to effectively encompass IMP.
49. The problem definition in the DoA<sup>9</sup> identifies three priorities, one of which is related to the high rates of irregular migration, a second speaks of human trafficking and organised crime and the third priority focuses on harassment at BPs, especially among women CBTs. The target group is identified generically "as women and men", without further specification; unaccompanied and separated children, and persons at risk of HT and / or subjected to impact of transnational criminal networks. The activities and outputs address the defined target groups and identified priorities within the limited scope and budget of the pilot project. However, the DoA does not clearly separate activities and stakeholders addressing HT versus IMP, and non-aggregated M&E data makes it challenging to evaluate the actual effectiveness of the activities and OPs at OC level. The challenges linked to identification of satisfactory

<sup>5</sup> See also [Annex 5 Summary of Findings by evaluation criteria](#).

<sup>6</sup> <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/minisite/gcm-tools/gcm/gcmobjectives.html>

<sup>7</sup> A collaborative approach where multiple government agencies and departments work together across sectors to address complex issues, ensuring coordinated policies, resources, and actions for greater efficiency and impact

<sup>8</sup> An inclusive strategy that extends beyond government to engage all societal stakeholders—private sector, civil society, communities, and individuals

<sup>9</sup> Description of Action and Joint Programme Document 'ProDoc\_Gtw\_211225'

stakeholder partnerships and capacities are illustrated below in table 3. This affects relevance because it sets out conditions in which stakeholders, capacities and resources may not be accurately allocated.

50. The GCM framework sometimes intermingles terms and definitions for human trafficking (HT) and irregular migration processes (IMP), using them as if they mean the same thing. For example, GCM's objective 10 says, "Prevent, combat, and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration." This can cause problems because it blends the two ideas in policies and programs. Human trafficking is a serious crime involving international organized crime, while international migration is a different issue. When migration turns into trafficking, it needs a different group of people and resources to handle it properly. Definitions of these concepts are briefly outlined in the Table 3.

*Table 3. Human Trafficking and Migration, definitions and operating conditions.*

**Human Trafficking** is the illegal exploitation of individuals through force, fraud, or coercion for purposes such as forced labour, sexual exploitation, or involuntary servitude. It involves the recruitment, transportation, or harbouring of people, often across borders, by means of threats, deception, or abuse of power, stripping victims of their autonomy and dignity. This global crime disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including women, children, and marginalized groups, and is driven by profit motives in industries like agriculture, construction, and sex trade. Governments and organizations combat it through laws, awareness campaigns, and victim support, but its clandestine nature makes eradication challenging.

**Irregular Migration or IMP** refers to the movement of individuals across international borders or within a country without proper authorization or documentation, often in violation of immigration laws. This can include entering a country without a valid visa, overstaying a visa, or crossing borders clandestinely to seek better economic opportunities, escape persecution, or flee conflict. Irregular migrants may face risks such as exploitation, detention, or deportation and often lack access to legal protections or services. While driven by diverse factors like poverty, violence, or environmental crises, irregular migration poses challenges for governments balancing border control with humanitarian obligations.

52. The concepts of HT and IMP are sometimes tackled in similar ways causing programmatic designs and policies to be misguided, consecutively leading to misallocation of resources and inadequate response mechanisms. This is illustrated by the GCM and objective 10 statement mentioned above. The GCM objective statement is mixing two different concepts leading to potential challenges in programmatic design processes. HT is a criminal offense and is linked to serious trans-national organised crime, exploitation and human suffering, which require intelligence, investigation and prosecutorial capacities and relevant stakeholders. Some of the stakeholders with these capacities are different from those with mandates in IMP and migration areas. IMP requires BM capacities and coordination, links with HRBA and often psychosocial support and socioeconomic initiatives and development approaches. The project attempts to have an integrated and innovative approach to these issues; however, the capacities and focus of key government agencies are inadequate and the roles and responsibilities of each of the stakeholders are not clear. The NRM may play an increasingly important role and trainings and capacity building based on the NRM may mitigate inadequacies and ensure clarity in roles and responsibilities.
53. NAATIP is the lead agency for HT in The Gambia and has both investigative and prosecutorial powers through its partnerships with other law enforcement agencies. However, it lacks physical presence along the BPs and trafficking pathways and does not have the necessary intelligence capacities. This is a systemic and structural weakness in the HT approach reflecting government policies and priorities, and project design. Furthermore, INTERPOL is not engaged by the project and is not effectively linked up to agencies through its i24/7 secure global police communications system which enables access to 19 databases, such as color-coded notices, SLTD database, International Child Sexual Exploitation database, iAMRS, stolen motor vehicles and vessels and others such as artifacts which is relevant for The Gambia to protect historical heritage. The databases are available for mobile patrol units through devices that connect to these capacities in real time and can be carried with border patrols and random check-points and not only fixed-point BPs. Currently only migration is linked up through the signing of an MoU with the NCB, and only at the airport for SLTD and notices.

#### 4.1.2. Did the project address the needs and priorities of national and local implementing partners in relation to the drivers and causes of migration-related vulnerabilities in the border communities along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor (Upper Baddibu and Jarra West Districts)?

54. The geographic selection of the Trans-Gambia transport corridor was made after systematic consultations with the Gambian Government and CSOs, including the NCM. Other government stakeholders consulted in the process included MoTIE, MoI, MoGCSW, and the IABCC, which includes immigration authorities at both BPs along the corridor. NAATIP is consulted and engaged and IOM, as the lead PUNO in this area, attend the IABCC meetings held every three months in Misera, Keur Ali, and Amdala BPs. Nevertheless, continued and close coordination with key agencies, such as NAATIP is imperative. CSOs and BSOs were also consulted such as GWCC, GYCC, LACs as well as individuals with relevant knowledge and experience. The geographic selection process also took into consideration the negative impact of the construction of Senegambia Bridge on the communities in terms of decreased trade and income generation.
55. The project has adopted a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach underpinned by methodical consultations and alignment with government priorities, based on the significant experience and operational knowledge held by the PUNOs involved in the JP. The PUNOs have prior knowledge of stakeholder needs/priorities and have long lasting and good relationships with key government partners. The evaluation survey confirms that the majority of beneficiaries (both government and target beneficiaries) are satisfied with the project from an income generation, skills improvement and awareness building perspective.
56. The underlying assumptions guiding established push factors such as poverty, crime and inadequate opportunities may hold partially true, however, they do not tell the whole story. Data, interviews, individual stories and the results of the survey tell a more complex story. The overall findings point to the reality that people will attempt IMP or the “backway” even if provided with training, opportunities, awareness and employment. This finding is confirmed consistently during interviews as an overwhelming majority (89.4%) reported being aware of dangers and risks associated with irregular migration, however, perceptions of the evolution of irregular migration over the past two to three years shows that a majority (65.8%) of respondents believe irregular migration has increased. These findings suggest that most individuals are well-informed about the dangers of irregular migration, which may reflect the impact of awareness-raising efforts. However, awareness alone may not be sufficient to deter migration if underlying push factors remain unaddressed.
57. Based on these findings it is possible to recognise the contours of a different operational paradigm, one aligned with realities on the ground, as indicated in the above paragraph, and supported by evidence provided by accurate data and supported by psychosocial and anthropological studies. Programmes using combined operational capacities such as intelligence, investigation and prosecution, to disrupt IMP logistical and operational capacities, while designing interventions targeting selected individuals and / or groups defined as “change-makers” to transform communities and thus mindsets, may be more effective. Change makers include the CBT women in the target group which received grants by the project.
58. The project aligns closely with government policies, particularly the MSME strategy to promote a diversified and competitive MSME sector and informal trade focusing on MSMEs as an important tax base and developing food processing and agriculture.<sup>10</sup> The project aims to leverage the business model with a multi-stakeholder approach and foster a more inclusive society for women and youth. Hence, it is aligned with the UN’s SDGs 5.2, 10.7, and 16.2 (gender equality, reducing inequality, and promote peaceful and inclusive societies).
59. MPTF donor priorities are aligned with, and have significantly informed, the project design and objectives. The Migration MPTF, established to support the implementation of the GCM, has clear priorities as a donor, focusing on fostering safe, orderly, and regular migration while addressing migration challenges and opportunities. The Migration MPTF’s priorities as a donor are: i) Implementing the GCM, ii) Promoting Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, iii) Protecting Migrant Rights and Well-

<sup>10</sup> The Gambia economy is dominated by MSMEs (95%), informal sector (60% of GDP), informal employment (80%)

Being, iv) Fostering Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration, v) Advancing Evidence-Based Migration Governance, vi) Supporting SDGs, and vii) Learning, Transparency and Accountability. These priorities are reflected in the Migration MPTF's support for 20 joint programs across regions (as of recent updates), with USD 42 million disbursed and 31 additional programs awaiting funding in the pipeline. The fund's governance, led by a SC chaired by IOM, ensures a consensus-driven resource allocation.

#### 4.1.3. Consistency of the Theory of Change. Were activities, outputs, assumptions and risks well identified and consistent with the needs identification and intended outcomes, and the mainstreaming dimensions (gender equality, inclusion of youth, and human rights) considered in the design?

60. A baseline/rapid assessment was conducted between April – May 2022 and provided important baseline data. Key findings of this study include the following: i) CBTs are mostly mothers with no formal education, ii) goods consist of variety of raw material and manufactured products, iii) average value per consignment is 100 to 500 USD, iv) the border environment is mostly benign for CBTs, v) biggest challenge is formal<sup>11</sup> and informal payments to customs at BPs, vi) harassment at target BPs is not as prevalent as at the other BPs (few numbers reported). The project activities are well aligned with the baseline findings and some key recommendations of the study, such as investing in gender-sensitive infrastructure, combatting corruption through right-holders awareness and capacity, and training on CBT related issues. On the other hand, two other important recommendations of this study have not been sufficiently addressed in project design: i) introduction of STR on basis of pre-established criteria, and ii) strengthening of CBT representative institution an improved public-private dialogue.
61. The project is aligned with GCM objectives, and its design reflects this alignment in activities, OPs, OCs and assumptions driving the implementation. However, there is insufficient data validating and confirming that underlying assumptions will reduce IMP. Assumptions include established definitions of push factors<sup>12</sup> related to IMP. Push factors are conditions or circumstances in a migrant's country of origin that compel or drive them to leave, often through irregular or undocumented means, due to the lack of safe, legal migration pathways. These conditions include: i) socio-economic pressure from family and community, ii) conflict and violence, iii) economic hardship / poverty, iv) political instability, v) climate change, vi) human rights abuse, vii) inadequate access to basic services and viii) systemic corruption. These push factors often work in tandem and synergically to create conditions triggering IMP.
62. However, established assumptions and the prevailing understanding of push factors may not be adequate to understand the complexities and psycho-social rational behind the decisions people make to revert to IMP. The underlying analysis guiding the project design is based on insufficient access to data, which is not sufficiently aligned to GCM objective 1, stating "Collect and utilise accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies". Nevertheless, findings are informed and supported by the results of the survey conducted as part of this evaluation, and other surveys such as AfroBarometer<sup>13</sup>. One key finding is that 68% of Gambians consider leaving the country, representing a 12% increase compared to 2018 results. The evaluation survey also found that, despite the fact that 93,5% of the targeted beneficiaries reported improved life skills and income, 57% of them still reported actual IMP attempts in their households. This indicate that factors contributing to IMP are complex and often not well defined.
63. Even though the established push factors to IMP cannot be disregarded, it is also essential to re-consider some of the established truths. For example, the evaluation interviews consistently point to one element in the decision-making process of the beneficiaries, leading to IMP. This is related to the mindset. A majority of the peoples' mindset is fixed on moving to a European country, to create the circumstances for better opportunities and income. They do not think these opportunities exist in The Gambia. Narrative stories are consistent with this finding and examples abound. For example; a young person receives TVET and a full diploma, the project links the education

"I have a job, but my salary cannot change anything in my life. There is no hope for the future. I will go 'backway' as soon as I get a chance".

*Young girl, 25 years old, employed in 4-star hotel, Banjul*

<sup>11</sup> Formal payments is a challenge because of the arbitrary nature and inconsistent levies that are charged

<sup>12</sup> GCM under General Assembly resolution of 19 December 2018 describing Objective 2

<sup>13</sup> Donor Briefing: Highlights from Afrobarometer Round 10 survey in The Gambia 27/Feb/2025

pathway to employment, and the person finds employment. However, the salary is around 60 USD per month, barely more than the minimum wage, which is the poverty income average set by the UN<sup>14</sup>.

64. The project is well aligned in design and implementation of the MPTF markers on HRBA, gender equality and child protection. The DoA clearly identifies the anticipated engagement level, and the project has adequately addressed this in the implementation of activities. The project does not clearly identify risks or assumptions in the LFM, nevertheless, needs and priorities are in line with GCM, government policy and strategies, and agency priorities. The project takes care to align activities to other relevant projects across the PUNOs' portfolios and highlights the comparative advantages in the partnership. Women, youth and children are mainly targeted beneficiaries, and the focus is maintained throughout the project on these target groups. Under OC1, the main target group is border authorities with CBTs and travellers including youth and children (unaccompanied and separated) being mainly indirect beneficiaries. UNICEF being the lead agency on child protection had to shift the activities focusing on children from the Sene-Gambia transport corridor and two BPs to SOS Children Village known as Bakoteh Centre for Children and the Elderly, under MoGCSW, authorised by the PSC. The reason for this was lack of child-friendly space along the Sene-Gambia corridor. The DoA accurately describes the project activities under OC 2 and OC 3, targeting women, youth and persons exposed to HT and 70% of activities are focused on these groups.

## 4.2. Was the MPTF project aligned and compatible with other frameworks and interventions? [Coherence]

### 4.2.1. Was the project consistent with relevant frameworks, particularly the Global Compact for Migration (CGM) guiding principles and markers?

65. The MPTF JP has consistently and adequately integrated key elements of the GCM into its design and approach. The DoA assigns GCM markers relating to human rights as 'A' indicating that the marker has largely been achieved, and for the gender marker, the project is marked as 'B', as it significantly contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment. The child sensitivity marker is 'B', as the project addresses upholding the rights and needs of boys and girls under 18.
66. The project has placed significant attention to the GCM markers, and the implementation has sufficiently addressed the practical OPs fulfilling these obligations accordingly. It is important to note that the project is intended as a pilot intervention, and the individual budgets allocated to the PUNOs are not significant (e.g. the total budget for UNICEF for the three-year period was 250,000 USD and for UNDP 400,000 USD only). The PUNOs have addressed the budgetary limitations by aligning and complementing activities with other programmes they are implementing. However, these efforts have not been comprehensively addressed by the evaluation, except under sub question 4.2.2.
67. Generally, there is insufficient data on HT and IMP available, and the general awareness on validated data related to migration in The Gambia seems outdated. The most recent report, as indicated by IOM, is the 'Migration in The Gambia – a Country Profile 2017'. This effect reporting, especially related to the LFM, where key baseline data has not been included (see EQ 4 Efficiency for more details). Reporting can be improved related to tracing of beneficiaries, especially TVET students, IMP target beneficiaries which are mostly young men, victims of HT mostly being women and young girls<sup>15</sup>, and children on the move and children living in the border communities. This makes it challenging to understand OC related changes resulting from OPs.
68. The project has not sufficiently addressed and prioritised GCM objective 1 which states "collect and utilise accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies". In the case of the project this indicates weak M&E and MEAL practices. The project has adequate M&E systems in place addressing trade, trainings and other project activities, however, the data collection and M&E systems related to IMP and HT could improve, as is the case regarding capture of best practice and learning considering the pilot nature of the project.

<sup>14</sup> UN, through SDGs, uses the International Poverty Line set by the World Bank to define extreme poverty. As of September 2022, this is \$2.15 per person per day at 2017 purchasing power parity (PPP) prices.

<sup>15</sup> <https://borgenproject.org/human-trafficking-in-the-gambia/>

#### 4.2.2. Did the project complement and generate synergies with other ongoing UN and national/provincial governments' programmes in the country; and how could these be scaled up in a future follow up phase?

69. The MPTF JP adequately compliments and generates synergies with other ongoing UN and national and provincial programmes. The PUNOS have various programmes<sup>16</sup> that are implemented by the individual agencies that enhances the effects of the JP. ITC implements the Tekki Fi Youth Empowerment Project and SheTrades, UNDP Programme for Accelerated Community Development IOM UN Peace Building Fund project on migration, UNICEF Children on the Move, as well as other initiatives. The EU<sup>17</sup> has several programmes such as the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, the Jobs, Skills, and Finance for Women and Youth implemented by UNCDF and more. The project activities align well with a significant number of other programmes without generating duplications thus the project leverages the use of resources in an effective manner in terms of programmatic considerations. There are challenges related to operational efficiency and structural matters which are described more in detail in EQ 4 Efficiency.
70. To precisely identify opportunities for upscaling for a future phase, it will be necessary to consider the OO formulation in its relation to HT and IMP, clarify, separate and define roles of key stakeholders (including conducting a SWOT), targeting of resources and responsibilities in a precise manner related to the areas of HT and IMP. Nevertheless, the MPTF JP in its role as a pilot project represents an opportunity for a meaningful continuation and escalation of efforts tin this regard, and it has shed important findings in this regard.
71. In considering a scaled-up continuation of the project it will be necessary to adequately include capacities considering the international character of HT and IMP, *and* the need for intelligence, investigative and prosecutorial capacities. The NRM provides some operational guidance, yet it is not effective and does not enable engagements at a sufficient level. This is mostly stemming from the under-utilisation of agencies such as NAATIP, UNODC and NCB INTERPOL. The DoA is clear and accurate in its problem statements when identifying 1) 'high rates of IMP among young people', and 2) 'HT, smuggling of migrants and other forms of organised immigration crime' as priority issues for the project, in addition to 3) 'harassment of women at BPs, in particular informal CBTs. However, the project does not sufficiently take this into account in its activities. Nevertheless, there are very useful elements in the project design that can be utilised and built on, including activities related to problem statement 3) 'harassment of women at BP, ...'. The project represents a model which can be expanded and refined to ensure an efficient and effective basis for collaboration with UN and government, including the EU and other international organisations.
72. To enhance the effectiveness of the EUs Sub-Saharan Africa Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (SSA-MIP), it is recommended to strengthen alignment with the UNRC office to foster collaboration (for JPs), optimize resource allocation, and maximize synergies with the programme's objectives. The SSA-MIP, part of the EU's Global Europe programming for 2021–2027, prioritizes inclusive development through dialogue with partner countries, civil society, and other stakeholders to address regional challenges such as transnational organised crime (TOC), including illicit trafficking and HT. By aligning strategically with programmes through the RC office, the SSA-MIP can ensure more efficient use of indicative financial allocations and enhance coordination with operational and tactical agencies like INTERPOL's National Central Bureaus (NCBs), and UN capacities through UNODC. This collaboration is critical to improving inter-agency operational capabilities, enabling information exchange, and aligning with the international scope of the EU's Integrated Migration Policy (IMP) and efforts to combat human trafficking. Such alignment will leverage INTERPOL's global network and the SSA-MIP's regional focus to drive evidence-based interventions, strengthening the programme's impact on migration management.
73. Evidence suggests that the preferred IMP pathways are shifting from the Northern route through the desert towards the sea, using maritime means. This finding is supported by the evaluation survey which finds that 78,6% of the respondents prefer the maritime route for IMP. MPTF encourages a multi-country

<sup>16</sup> Details of programmes can be found in the Executive Summary and under EQ 3 Effectiveness in this report

<sup>17</sup> Frontex, the EU BM agency reported 394 IMP from Gambia in 2025

approach and engagement along IMP pathways to effectively address IMP. However, the project has not currently engaged with any maritime capacities/stakeholders, such as the Gambia Navy. The Gambia is integrated within the Yaoundé Architecture which addresses maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea. It is also part of the MMCC centre hosted by Cabo Verde. The structure links institutionally to ECCAS, GGC and ECOWAS at the governance level. Operationally it links directly from the Multinational Maritime Coordination Centres (MMCC) to the National Maritime Operations Centres (MOC) in each of the 19 coastal countries of the Yaoundé Architecture.

74. The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) play a critical role in enhancing the country's capacity to collect and validate data on informal cross-border trade, which is vital for informed policymaking and economic development. Informal trade, often unrecorded and significant in volume, impacts The Gambia's economy through revenue generation, employment, and regional integration. Accurate data collection by GBoS would enable the government to quantify the scale of these activities, assess their contribution to GDP, and identify key trade corridors and commodities. Validated data supports evidence-based policies to formalize trade, improve border management, and enhance revenue collection, while also fostering regional cooperation under frameworks like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Strengthening GBoS's capacity as a key stakeholder in a scaled up future project would ensure reliable statistics, empowering stakeholders to address challenges like smuggling and trade imbalances effectively. Validated informal CBT data can be entered on the national accounts thus greatly improve The Gambia economic standing and rating.

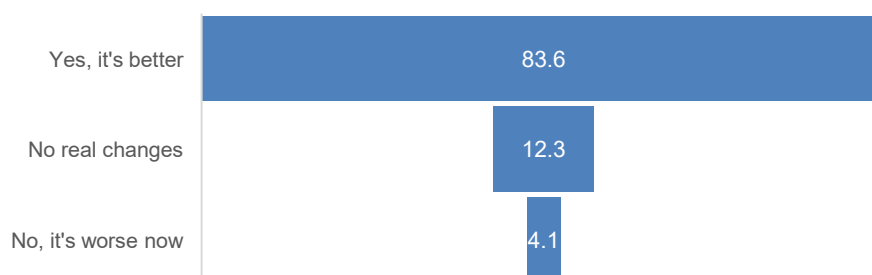
### 4.3. To what extent is the MPTF project achieving its results? [Effectiveness]

4.3.1. Has the project achieved the intended outcomes for the target beneficiaries: (a) claiming their rights and utilizing appropriate protection services and mechanisms, and (b) demonstrating effective life skills and access to livelihood opportunities?

75. The project has mostly achieved its intended outcomes. However, there are significant delays in the construction of the Lumo, hygiene facilities in Farafenni. As of October, phase I of the Lumo market has been completed, with a phase II to be rolled out shortly. The hygiene facility is not completed with an estimated time of completion end of December 2025. The operational status of the OSSEC in Farafenni is completed, including the conference hall, which is fully furnished with a 65' TV, speakers. The hospitality training centre in Masa Konko is currently in use by GTHI and their "TVET on Wheels" programme with 17 students enrolled in a nine-month certificate programme (completes June 2026).
76. Some delays have been noted in the handover of the hygiene facility at the Misera BP, nevertheless, the facility was handed over and opened in July and as of October it is in full use. The October field visit confirmed that all four MIDAS stations are in use and that internet and power are stable through the installed solar panels. Additionally, outside the scope of this project, a new immigration facility is in full operation at the Keur Ali BP greatly improving conditions for travellers. There are challenges establishing safe spaces for children along the transport corridor, which has led to the activity being diverted to the Bakoteh Centre outside Banjul. The mentioned delays have resulted in two NCEs to the contract, extending the project's implementation duration for eight months in total, first one from January 2025 to May 2025, and the second one from June 2025 to September 2025.
77. Under **Outcome 1** "Border authorities at key border posts of the Trans-Gambia transport corridor effectively facilitate safe and orderly migration for women and youth", the project has resulted in significant improvements in the behaviour of border officials, mainly immigration, with the evaluation survey reporting over 60% of respondents noting improvements. Issues linked to harassment are predominantly directed towards customs by the interviewees. There is considerable push-back against paying taxes because of the arbitrary nature of collection and the customs inspection protocols, which are weak on The Gambia side of the border compared to Senegal. Inter-agency patrols are conducted; however, customs authorities normally conduct separate border patrols where they target informal CBT and impose harsh penalties in an irregular manner. CBT are also reporting that customs fees are not standardised/ subject to negotiation and consignments are sometimes left at the BPs until a settlement on the fees is reached. This poses a challenge for the agricultural consignments which cannot be left for long, being consumables.

78. Support and capacity building of the IABCCs have been implemented according to project plans and IABCCs are established at both BPs and are meeting on a regular basis. In 2024, they met quarterly, and meetings are seen as useful by participants and oriented towards finding practical and local solutions to facilitate orderly border management operations. HRBA, child protection and combatting GBV training has been well integrated. Key agencies are Gambia Immigration Department, Gambia Police Force, State Intelligence Service, Gambia National Army, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, The Gambia and customs, however, NAATIP is not permanently present at the IABCCs as it does not have national coverage. This is also true for CSOs and BSOs which are not represented at these meetings. Nevertheless, recently an operational coordination group or Interagency Task Force (ITF) has been established to focus on operational issues, coordination and capacities. The ITF include NAATIP, customs, National Police Services, immigration, intelligence capacities and the Drug Law Enforcement Agency.
79. The IOM, in collaboration with the GID, which chairs the TWG on BM under the NCM, organized IABCC meetings in November 2024. These quarterly meetings brought together 91 officials (79 male, 12 female) from border posts in Misera, Amdallai, Farafenni (Keur Ali), Sabi, Nyamanarr, Tabanding, Giboro, Darsilami, Kartong, and Dimbaya, representing agencies such as GID, GPF, GRA Customs Department, SIS, DLEAG, Food Safety Authority, Planned Protection Services (MoH), GAF, Department of Forestry, and The Gambia Red Cross Society. The IABCC meetings serve as a platform for stakeholders to address border management challenges, share best practices, and develop coordinated responses, with November 2024 sessions enhanced by the inclusion of regional governance authorities and structures like Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs), promoting a more integrated and participatory approach.
80. MIDAS system is currently installed on eight BPs out of 10 in The Gambia all provided with support from IOM. The project is specifically supporting the installation at Misera BP in LRR, which includes material provisions delivered and functional. All four MIDAS stations are currently (October) in operation and previous issues linked to power and internet stability has been resolved with support from IOM. CCTV systems have also been restored and operate as intended. However, individual screening is at times limited, and ECOWAS ID card holders are occasionally rushed through. This was previously also an issue at Keur Ali BP in NBR diminishing individual screenings. This is now fully resolved with the new immigration operation centre in full operation.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 1: Impact of Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) (in %)



81. Figure 1 illustrates the survey respondents' perceptions on the impact of the MIDAS on border activities. The results show that a large majority (83.6%) of respondents reported that conditions at the border are now better since the introduction of MIDAS. This is followed by 12.3 percent who indicated that there has been no real change, while a small minority (4.1%) reported that conditions have worsened. These findings suggest that MIDAS has had a positive perceived impact on border operations, contributing to improved efficiency or management, although a small portion of the population remains unconvinced or unaffected. This may be due to ECOWAS ID card holders not being screened by the system due to ECOWAS free movement protocols.

<sup>18</sup> Please see [Annex 5. INTERPOL I-24/7 and IOM MIDAS](#) from a Human Trafficking Perspective and Capacity for a detailed description and comparative analysis between MIDAS and INTERPOL i24/7 system.

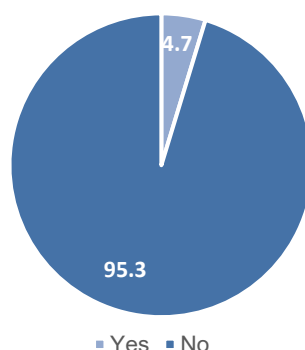
82. Trainings on MIDAS for frontline and secondary migration staff were conducted in 2023 and 2024: including training on the use of MIDAS for frontline and secondary line (63 M, 21 F), and ToT (11M) on the installation and advanced use of MIDAS. A total of 150 GID officers received training on child protection issues, and 50 border officials were trained on document security.
83. The training includes MIDAS use, document security, fraud detection & protection of vulnerable migrants and child protection measures and importantly included ToT which has been effective and ensured the necessary capacity at BPs to cover basic maintenance and continuation of on-the-job training schemes. The ToTs also typically have the responsibility for first line maintenance of servers, ICT and other technical equipment linked to MIDAS. Training also covers aspects of document examination and fraud detection. IOM has conducted an assessment on key elements related to The Gambia's strategy for Digital Transformation and Digital Identity. The assessment is in line with IOM's institutional strategy on legal identity.
84. Contrary to the initial plans, no child friendly space has been established along the border supported by the project. The budget allocated for this activity (USD 34,000) was re-allocated to the Bakoteh Shelter (see text box). This decision has left a gap in the project objective which included important interventions targeting street children and children on the move.
85. Nevertheless, the evaluation survey indicates that, among the survey respondents, child protection violations have been rarely experienced. This demonstrates the need for a more comprehensive needs assessment and clarification and validation of previously held assumptions regarding the needs of children in the transport corridor. Whilst this point from the survey is noted care should be made reading sensitive social norms and societal behaviour not drawing unwarranted conclusions.
86. Figure 2 below presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their experiences with child protection issues at border crossings. The results reveal that a vast majority of respondents (95.3%) did not report experiencing any child protection violations at the border, while only 4.7 percent indicated that they had encountered such violations. These findings suggest that reported incidents of child protection violations at border points are currently relatively low. Similar patterns were observed across both districts, reinforcing the overall trend. It is not clear if this is due to project activities or other reasons which is linked to, generally, weak data availability.

"The idea from the project was to support safe spaces that were already established in the targeted regions. However, the site (in North Bank Region) that was targeted closed down due to end of project and government could not sustain it.

We raised this issue at the Project Steering Committee meeting on 21st February 2024 and proposed to support the Bakoteh Shelter (SOS village Banjul) as it is also a child friendly space. Approval was given and we have since then trained the Shelter staff as reported in the Annual progress report, bought play materials for the shelter (currently waiting on the Ministry to clear this from the Port)".

*UNICEF's informant*

Figure 2: Experience of child protection violations at border crossings (in %)



87. As mentioned above, the data suggest that initial priorities and assumptions linked to child protection issues made during the project's design stage may not hold true. This could potentially have consequences for future programming. The observations and interviews made by the evaluation team supports the survey findings.

88. The Alkalo at Keur Ali is not part of the Inter-Agency Border Committee, nevertheless, he attends on an ad hoc basis and has attended training (described as discussion that takes place every 3-4 months) conducted by IOM on free-movement and trafficking – last one took place in January 2025. He has not heard of the concept “safe space”. Notably, half his family lives in Senegal which is common in the border communities. The majority of interviewees confirm family relation independent of formal borders. As Chair of the CCPC, he is contacted if there are a problem and this practice which is captured and described in the NRM<sup>19</sup>.
89. The Alkalo is the Chair of the CCPC. Children referred by agencies and individuals to the Alkalo are mostly street children linked to begging operations run by Majalis<sup>20</sup> and are found in Farafenni town. The majority of the children are not from Farafenni but from surrounding villages and pastoral communities. The pastoral tribes are traditional and encourage polygamic marriage between older men and girls/women at childbearing age, which increases the number of children which cannot be supported. The children are sent to Majalis or Madrassas that do not charge money from the families. Instead, they send the children to the streets to fend for themselves, and they must collect minimum 50 Dalasi per day to bring back to the Majalis. Additionally, the children need to feed themselves when out on the street. There are about 80 such Majalis in Farafenni. As UNICEF points out, precise data is not available and enrolment figures for Majalis Quranic schools vary according to source. The Education Management Information System (EMIS) does not track these non-formal schools, nevertheless, according to EMIS the total number for 2024 estimates anywhere from 26,000 to 39,500 children enrolled in 700 schools<sup>21</sup>.
90. **Under Outcome 2 “Women and youth along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor claim their rights and utilise appropriate services and mechanisms”**, the progress is as follows.
91. Trainings related to GBV, and trafficking were organised with NAATIP and MoGCSW in the first year (2022) and continued throughout the project. The trainings targeted border officials, civil society, local government, and the CCPCs. The training included an NRM for the protection and assistance of vulnerable migrants. The NRM includes the access to hotlines for referral purposes, for NAATIP it is 1123 and for GBV it is 199. The 199 number is the GIMS telephone hotline that opened in March 2023. However, the data on the number of callers and follow-up actions could not be provided by the relevant agencies. According to UNFPA, as of March 2023, the GIMS in The Gambia (accessible via 199 helpline), had registered a total of 91 cases. These cases included rape, sexual assault, physical violence, and early/forced marriage. Data regarding NRM leading to investigations and prosecution is not available to the evaluation team.
92. The NRM is a framework launched on August 17, 2021, to identify, protect, and assist vulnerable migrants, including victims of human trafficking. It outlines clear roles for state and non-state actors to ensure coordinated, multidisciplinary support through the identification, referral, family tracing, return, and reintegration stages. The NRM was developed through the EU-IOM JifMPR<sup>22</sup>, joint initiative funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, and the U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The NRM takes a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to challenges of trafficking and irregular migration. The system is slated for revision to make it more operational and simplified, however, key agencies such as NAATIP and the INTERPOL NCB have not currently been sufficiently engaged in this process<sup>23</sup>. This finding was reiterated in meetings held in October, which also highlighted the need to differentiate between NRM, requirements and capacities regarding essential differences between IMP and HT.
93. A safe space for women has been constructed outside Farafenni, about five km from the BP. The centre was formally handed over to GiEPA in September 2024. The location will be included in the planned

An Alkalo is the village leader or chief who has the role and responsibilities of making decisions which may affect the whole village. They also take care of the finances and welfare of the villagers.

<sup>19</sup> NRM page 25; *III. Community: Alkalos, Seyfos, village development committees (VDCs) Local government bodies or agencies. Community based child protection committees (CCPCs), the general public*128

<sup>20</sup> The information from Child Hope (18,000 children) is disputed by UNICEF which use EMIS data

<sup>21</sup> 2024 numbers from Amaanah and a 2017 UNICEF study

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.migrationjointinitiative.org/>

<sup>23</sup> Information provided by the NAATIP Executive Director

free-trade zone to be managed by GiEPA. The centre includes designated capacities for entrepreneurship, MoJ business registration<sup>24</sup> and services, GBV under MoGCSW, and is managed by GiEPA, with hired staff (a centre manager, a TIO, and receptionist). The GBV capacity has not been operational until recently when a designated officer was assigned by MoGCSW (see para 92 and 93 for updated information). The centre is the only GBV centre in The Gambia (10 in total) that is located outside an existing health facility or hospital and would thus require additional health staff to be assigned to the OSSEC. MoJ, has not assigned a staff to operate the business registration capacity and as a result eight women were turned away when trying to use this service. Nevertheless, the centre currently accepts registrations and renewals and has assisted 31 women (including the eight) by forwarding paperwork and facilitating support to the MoJ centre in Kambo.

94. The centre includes two conference halls that are fully equipped for trainings and conferences. On 7<sup>th</sup> August the centre received furniture, a 65" television set, speakers and three air condition units were installed. On 1<sup>st</sup> October the centre facilitated a major event attended by the UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Coordinator, EU Ambassadors, UNFPA, IOM and distinguished members of the Government of Gambia. Presentations were made and the CBTAs were provided an opportunity to give testimonies of the positive impact of the MPTF JP.
95. The GBV operations commenced at the centre on 6<sup>th</sup> June with a volunteer and none-permanent staff from the CSO "GBV Network. The staff divides the work at the centre with presence at the nearby hospital to attend to victims of GBV that require hospitalisation. At present the staff has provided service to 16 women. The MoGCSW is charged with providing this service, however, the service of the volunteer will reportedly end in October due to funding not being available.
96. Significant efforts were made to create awareness regarding ECOWAS and AfCFTA and several trainings and awareness activities have been completed to address the issues linked to the protocols on the rights and responsibilities of CBTs and authorities. However, there is no permanent trade information office on location at the BPs. The GiEPA TIO assigned to the OSSEC is not located at the border but stationed at the OSS GBV centre outside Farafenni about five km from the BP. It is relevant to consider the new IOM/GID facility which is built at the BP and consider a re-location of the TIO to that facility. The centre has one TIO staff that is supposed to cover both Keur Ali and Misera BPs. Challenges related to coverage include mobility and ability to respond and maintain presence. Nevertheless, the TIO and centre management coordinates with the BP to anticipate CBT traffic such as movement of traders to Dakar, Senegal. In such cases the TIO is present at the Keur Ali BP to assist CBTs, and to ensure agency compliance by customs and immigration, and to assist as needed.
97. **Under Outcome 3 "Women and youth along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor demonstrate effective life skills and access to livelihood opportunities"**, the progress is as follows.
98. The project provided life skills training on practical business management capacities such as financial management and digital proficiencies. The training on financial management has been effective especially for the CBT women receiving grants. Interviews confirm that all interviewees are applying their new skills such as book-keeping, separation of accounts, re-investment in business, and separation of personal and business expenditures. The digital component of the training was conducted by the The Hub, a national BSO focusing on digital transformation. However, this was short ~~and only touched on rudimentary fragments of digital / online business capacities~~ and a longer more comprehensive training could have been considered.
99. The OSSEC in Farafenni was completed in September 2024 and formally handed over to GIEPA with full operational and management responsibilities. The centre currently employs Centre Manager (assigned in April 2025), a TIO and a receptionist. The three staff are GIEPA staff and salaries are paid by GIEPA. The OSSEC is located in what is planned to become a Special Economic Zone and Trade Area. The GBV protection/safe space aspects of the centre were addressed above in paragraph 93. In addition, the centre intends to support MSMEs, especially women led CBT and include capacities for entrepreneurship, training halls, access to computers and online facilities. The MoJ has not yet assigned staff or capacities to operate the Single Window Registration (SWR) enabling business registrations

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.moj.gm/companies-division>

and renewals. The Innovation Hub has not yet been utilised, and a room designated the “Innovation Room” is used for storage of cleaning and office materials. Nevertheless, the centre conference hall is finished as of 7<sup>th</sup> August and can be used free of charge by CBT, their associations and other businesses.

100. The OSSEC under the leadership of GiEPA has demonstrated (October findings) that the centre is relevant and supportive of CBTs. The centre has actively supported the establishment of two associations for CBT, one in NBR with over 80 members and one in LRR with over 50 members. Examples of interventions have been the Soma City Council introducing an tax increase of 7,000 Dalasi, which was adjusted back to 4,000 Dalasi after the CBTA contacted the OSSEC and the centre intervened. The centre has facilitated an arrangement with migration and customs at Keur Ali BP when there is major CBT movement from Dakar, Senegal. The TIO is then located from the centre to the BP to ensure that the correct customs fees are charged and that goods are cleared efficiently. The centre has also issued an official GiEPA ID card for the association that formally recognises the associations. The CBTA's plan to issue formal individual ID cards shortly which also confirms the formal status of the CBT business owners.
101. Other construction related activities include the building of the Farafenni Lumo with 150 stalls, with office facilities and security services (ITC led), and hygiene facilities (UNDP led)<sup>25</sup>. The construction contracts are managed separately. The Lumo location attracts around 500 traders that gather every Sunday at the Lumo. The construction is not yet finalised, and especially the cold storage and hygiene facility are experiencing delays. It is not clear how the division of stalls for the Lumo will be organised as the number of stalls are not sufficient to provide for all traders. As of October month, the Lumo construction is currently divided into two phases. Phase I being completed (3 blocks with 18 stalls each servicing 2 vendors each) totalling 108 vendors. Phase II is underway and bidding by seven contractors have tendered. This phase includes a superstructure and stalls for a total of 144 vendors (96 stalls pending). The hygiene facility being built under UNPD management is reported as 56% complete and estimated time of completion is December 2025.
102. The project conducted and engaged in the refurbishment of the Farafenni and Jarra Soma youth centres. The Jarra Soma centre provides psychosocial counselling to the youth supported by UNICEF. The majority of funds was provided by the ENABLE and Tekki Fii projects<sup>26</sup>. The Tekki Fii ("Make it Here") project in The Gambia, funded by the EUETFA and implemented by ITC, GIZ and ENABLE, aims to curb irregular migration by fostering economic opportunities for youth and returning migrants. Partnerships have been developed with GWCC and GYCC to engage in market access and participating in trade fairs. The feedback from the interviewees have been mixed. Some interviewees stated that the trade fair events were useful, while others have said that sales did not meet expectations. There is also considerable tension between the GCCI, the GWCC and GYCC that is causing operational concerns and have led to GWCC being denied presence by the GCCI at the trade fair facility at Brusubi, close to Banjul. This issue is affecting the ability of GWCC and GYCC to effectively represent their target groups.
103. To support the analysis of the project's performance, the table below summarizes the project's objectives, targets, and actual results as of 31 August 2025. It provides a consolidated overview of key performance indicators across all outputs and outcomes, serving as a reference for the evaluation findings presented in the subsequent sections.

104. *Legend*

Green	Light Green	Yellow	Red
Surpassed Target	Target Achieved	Approaching Target	Target Insufficiently Achieved

<sup>25</sup> According to Annual Report 2024 (page 4) the storage facility will be covered by another project and funds was re-allocated to a phase II expanded Lumo market

<sup>26</sup> The ENABLE project in The Gambia, partly implemented by the ITC and funded by the UNFCCC, aims to promote sustainable agricultural practices and improve livelihoods in rural communities.

Table Project Targets and Results as of October 2025

Objectives and Project Indicators	Target	Achieved	Variance	Remarks
<b>Impact: Increased safety and prosperity of youth and women in the border community along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor</b>				
N/A	--	--	--	Validated data not available from project or authorities.
<b>Outcome 1: Border authorities are more effective and facilitates orderly and safe migration for women and youth</b>				
Women and youth report improvements on conduct	70%	90%	20%	Result includes "highly satisfactory 3,55% and satisfactory 86,78%"
Women and youth report improved CBT facilitation	70%	90%	20%	Approximated from evaluation survey
<b>Output 1: Better equipped border posts, improved knowledge of border authorities, and increased awareness among rights holders</b>				
Number of BPs provided better infrastructure	1	1	0	MIDAS and hygiene facility established at Misera BP. Hygiene facility handed over and in use
Number of border officials trained on MIDAS	150	134 (21W)	16	MIDAS systems are used at 8 out of 10 land BPs and ToT are present at all these locations. 50 officials training on document security.
Number of border officials with increased knowledge and understanding of protection issues	150	150 (XXW)	0	Sex disaggregation not available
<b>Outcome 2: Increased awareness among rights holders</b>				
Women and youth ready and willing to claim rights and protection services	70%	90%	20%	Approximate numbers taken from evaluation survey
<b>Output 2:</b>				
Women and youth reporting increased knowledge of rules, risks and rights relating to movement of people and goods.	200	326 (76W)	126	The results affect improvements of duty bearers' behavior
Stronger protection and reporting mechanisms related to media	N/A	100 (39W)	100	Media training conducted in local languages and outlets
People trained on the NRM, protection issues and migration options	200	298	98	Participants include Majali's and security actors
Reporting mechanism on non-tariff measures and/or harassment established	1	1	0	Gender Management Information Centre (GMIS) supported, and phone hotline established
<b>Outcome 3: Women and youth along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor demonstrate effective life skills and access to livelihood opportunities</b>				
Women and youth demonstrate life skills and livelihood opportunities	30%	1,250%	1,220%	The data was taken from sample 12 CBT (total 24) grants recipients. Around 90% of survey respondents state improvements – both CBT and TVET students
<b>Output 3:</b>				
Female informal CBT benefitting from entrepreneurship support	40	74 (20)	34 (20)	24 CBT women received cash grants. Additional 20 food vendors received professional training which was not initially targeted
Community members (mainly youth) supported with TVET and entrepreneurship support	60	116	56	TVET Hospitality Center and GSI (Shonghai)
Women and youth friendly training centers and market	3	3	0	OSS GBV and Lumo market in Farafenni, and Hospitality training center in Mansa Konko
Women and young people linked to national networks and digital opportunities	100	125	25	Digital training was included in business related training supported by GWCC.

105. Below is a detailed lay out based on the LFM with OC and OP specific targets, baseline and results.

**a) The MPTF Joint Project has three Outcomes (OC) (the formulation “Results” is used in the logframe). The results are cumulative.**

**Outcome 1:** “Border authorities at key border posts of the Trans-Gambia transport corridor effectively facilitate safe and orderly migration for women and youth”.

106. Indicator 1a: “% of targeted women, youth and children in Gambian border communities along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor reporting an improvement in conduct of duty bearers”, (T 70%) baseline “highly satisfactory 3,55%, satisfactory 86,78%, unsatisfactory 9,68%” current value<sup>27</sup> “highly satisfactory 13,9%, satisfactory 84,2%, unsatisfactory 1,9%”.

107. Indicator 1b: “% of trained border management personnel demonstrating an improved capacity on matters of cross border trade, migration and human rights”, (T 70%) baseline “38%” current value “approximately 90% (from survey)”.

**Outcome 2:** “Women and youth along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor claim their rights and utilise appropriate protection services and mechanisms”.

108. Indicator 2a: “% of targeted women, youth and children in Gambian border communities along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor reporting readiness to utilise appropriate protection services and mechanisms”, (T 70%) baseline “16,10% (9,70% W<sup>28</sup>)” current value “approximately 94% (from survey)”.

**Outcome 3:** “Women and youth along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor demonstrate effective life skills and access to livelihood opportunities”.

109. Indicator 3a: “% increase in income reported by supported women and youth”, (T 30%) baseline “Male 7,394 GMD<sup>29</sup> and Women 3,860 GMD” current value “70,402 GMD<sup>30</sup>”

**b) The MPTF Joint Project has four Outputs (OP) (the formulation “Results” is used in the logframe). The results are cumulative.**

**Output 1.1:** “Better equipped border posts”.

110. Indicator 1.1a: “Number of border crossing points with enhanced infrastructure and border equipment facilities to facilitate safe and orderly flows of travellers in project region”, (T<sup>31</sup> 1) baseline “0” current value “1”.

**Output 1.2:** “Improved knowledge and capacity of border authorities”.

111. Indicator 1.2a: “Number of border officials trained in MIDAS data management, document examination and protection of vulnerable migrants”, (T 150) baseline “0” current value “102 (21 W)”.

112. Indicator 1.2b: “Number of border officials with increased knowledge and understanding of child protection measures”, (T 150) baseline “0” current value “150 (XX W)”

**Output 2.1:** “Increased awareness among rights holders”.

113. Indicator 2.1a: “Number of community members (disaggregated by gender, age and district) with increased knowledge of rules, risks and rights relating to the movement of people and goods”, (T 200) baseline “0” current value “326 (76 W)”.

**Output 2.2:** “Strengthened protection and reporting mechanisms. NOTE: Total of 100 media (39 W) participated”.

<sup>27</sup> Results taken from the Evaluation survey

<sup>28</sup> Disaggregation for women (W), XX indicates unknown

<sup>29</sup> GMB – Gambian Dalasi as per 18 July the exchange rate for 1 USD to GMD is 74,50 GMD

<sup>30</sup> Average improved income among 24 CBT grant recipients. Data from field interviews.

<sup>31</sup> T describes Target followed by baseline and current cumulative value. Taken from Annual Report 2024. The original DoA LFM indicates T 2.

114. Indicator 2.2a: “Number of people trained/informed on the National Referral Mechanism and/or child protection services and safe migration options”, (T 200) baseline “0” current value “298 (60 Majali, 100 Security actors on GBV)”.

115. Indicator 2.2b: “Reporting mechanisms on NTMs and/or harassment established”, (T 1) baseline “0” current value “1”.

**Output 3.1: “Improved livelihood opportunities of informal cross-border traders. NOTE: Professional food vendor training provided to 20 vendors”.**

116. Indicator 3.1a: “Number of female informal cross border traders benefitting from entrepreneurship support”, (T 40) baseline “0” current value “74 and 24 W given cash grants”

**Output 3.2: “Enhanced livelihood opportunities in agriculture and agribusiness”.**

117. Indicator 3.2a: “Number of community members (disaggregated by gender, age, and district) supported through skills training and entrepreneurship support”, (T 60) baseline “0” current value “116 youth and W”.

118. Indicator 3.2b: “Number of women- and youth-friendly trade-related infrastructure (incl. storage, hygiene facilities) established”, (T 3) baseline “0” current value “3<sup>32</sup>”.

**Output 3.3: “Improved life skills and network access”.**

119. Indicator 3.3a: “Number of youth-focused infrastructure (improved/established)”, (T 4<sup>33</sup>) baseline “0” current value “1 youth centre”.

120. Indicator 3.3b: “Number of women and young people (disaggregated by gender, age, and district) connected to national networks and digital opportunities”, (T 100) baseline “0” current value “125<sup>34</sup>”.

**4.3.2. To what extent were the relevant stakeholders reached as expected, and to what extent were they satisfied with the results of the intervention?**

121. The income generating activities have been particularly successful. The engagement with initially 30 CBTs in NBR and LRR managed by ITC and IOM components under income generation and capacity building is one such example. The CBT women report a high degree of satisfaction as they have benefitted from the grants and training, they received. One element which has been largely reported by the CBTs is the capacity they gained for financial management; separation of private and business finances, book-keeping, and management of accounts they have created. Typically, they now divide their incomes between salaries, operational costs and re-investment in business. The majority of CBTs reported that they have concrete plans for re-investment and expansion of their business and that their accounts and financial planning reflect these plans effectively. In general, there is a visible change in mindset and a genuine hope for the future.

122. Table 4 below shows the changes in the average monthly income per CBT grant recipient from 2022 to 2024 in two years, all demonstrating a significant increase:

*Table 4. CBT grant receiver, average net income 2022 versus 2024 (in USD)*

Individual CBT Grant Recipient	2022	2024
Adama Forfana, store owner clothes and apparel	35	70
Oumle Cham, market stall owner	30	625
Binto Danso, agriculture and gardening	0	320
Haddy Secka, Ndey Ngalla, Kura Nying, food processing cooperative	150	1,250
Jabou Kinteh, handy craft, tie & dye, batik	60	1,200

<sup>32</sup> OSS GBV in Farafenni, Hospitality Training Centre in Mansakonko, Lumo market and hygiene facility Farafenni

<sup>33</sup> Target 2 youth centres and 2 playing fields

<sup>34</sup> 10 Cross border Traders Participated in the GCCI Trade Fair and another 7 in the Women Boss organized pop up market in Banjul.

<b>Individual CBT Grant Recipient</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2024</b>
Ndey Fatou Ceesay, store owner	1,200	3,000
Ramatoulie Bah, market stall owner	69	140
Jontang Barrow, store owner	100	380
Ya Haddy Saidyba, shop owner, construction material	280	3,000
Mariama Jawo, shop owner	170	250
Kadijatou Suso, clothing and gardening	70	280
Aminata Conteh, fisheries	65	830
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,229</b>	<b>11,345</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>945</b>

123. The average income data shown above was collected from 12 CBT grant recipients located in NBR and LRR through SSI. Average income varies based on skills, quality, and quantity, ranging from 70 to 3,000 USD per month per CBT. The official minimum wage in The Gambia is around 30 USD per month. There is no officially calculated living wage and can be approximated to around 170 USD per month based on available estimates<sup>35</sup>.
124. The selection process of the women CBT grants recipients was not clear, and attendance was sometimes by women which were not part of the initial selection process. This finding was verified in two cases. The PM at the time managed this well and the attendance and benefits were fully utilised and had significant impact on the women. Other communities that had taken part in the needs assessment mapping process, such as the village of Bereto, NBR, was not included. The village has about 100 inhabitants and was severely affected when the SeneGambia bridge was built. The village had been fully engaged in the business linked to the ferry crossing. Young men are seeking to go the 'backway' and 16 young men have attempted IMP in 2024-25, 10 of which have returned and six which are still unaccounted for. In general, stakeholders were of the opinion that the grant selection process was not transparent enough and that critical feedback and reasons for not being selected were not adequately shared and understood.
125. The One-Stop-Shop centre outside Farafenni (OSSEC) was delivered within OC 3 with a focus on support for MSMEs underpinned by the MoTIE / GiEPA priority to implement decentralised economic, business, finance and support services. The NBR Governor and local area council donated land on which the centre stands. It is of considerable interest that GiEPA is planning to establish a special economic zone in the same area. This may contribute to economic development with positive prospects for traders and community development. The centre is fully handed over and managed by GiEPA, which include budgetary allocations supporting salaries and overhead costs. The centre is fully operational from GiEPA side with a full-time centre manager, TIO, and receptionist in place. Their salaries are covered by GiEPA. As mentioned, the GBV and business registration components are operational as of September 2025. This has affected the reputation of the centre among CBT women and communities which attempted to use the business services but were rejected. The entrepreneurship and innovation facilities are currently used as storage for cleaning supplies, and the main conference hall has been completed.
126. Despite the shortcomings and delays mentioned, the newly hired centre manager is a dynamic individual with initiative and energy and has initiated engagement with women groups in both NBR and LRR organising and formally establishing CBTA (Association of Women in Cross Border Trade of Farafenni and Cross Border Traders LRR Chapter). The associations already have a total of 100 members and are likely to become an important CSOs in terms of engagement and future mobilisation. The OSS centre has a water borehole constructed with ITC's support and GiEPA's finance department purchased a power unit costing 50,000 Dalasi (700 USD) including solar power. These concrete and tangible engagements indicate a strong commitment and ownership from the government side, especially GiEPA.

<sup>35</sup> <https://wagecentre.com/salary/africa/the-gambia>

127. The GSI initiative under MoYS is a flagship project for The Government of Gambia and was launched in February 2015 through the support of UNDP and in partnership with the Songhai Regional Centre and MoYS. The MPTF project activities included trainings on agricultural skills and entrepreneurship that include technical skills such as brooding, feed formulation, incubation, and disease control to support egg and meat production, in addition to business management skills.
128. A hygiene facility was constructed by the project at Misera BP for the purpose of improving the safety, sanitation and gender considerations along the Trans-Gambia corridor. The facility was reported completed in the 2024 project annual report; however, it has not yet been handed-over to authorities and currently remains closed. UNDP reports that there are some finishing details to be completed to facilitate the hand-over. Interviews revealed that some authorities found the consultations and coordination to be weak, and the new migration commissioner (on duty since February 2025) had not been informed of the progress or status of the facility. As of the October field visit the hygiene facility was handed over in July and is now in full use.
129. The MPTF JP support HRBA, gender mainstreaming and child protection in accordance with GCM markers and MPTF donor requirements. By integrating these elements into its design, the project helped to promote HR, gender equality and the empowerment of women, also improving protection measures for children on the move, leading to more inclusive outcomes. The project has an impact working with women CBTs that goes beyond just business and income generation. It includes a change in mindset, confidence building, and realising that opportunities are built, and they need to be acted upon. This is change that is generational in that children and family see women in new and strong roles, communities are transformed and positively affected. One tangible effect is that children of the women CBTs under the project are all attending school, the mothers are highly protective and adamant that the children will have a better future. The business is seen by many as a gateway to create opportunities for their children.
130. Another key construction project under OC 3 is the hospitality training centre in Masakonko, officially launched in September 2024<sup>36</sup>. The centre was built in conjunction with an existing facility already under the management of the local area council. The partnership with the council was coordinated by GALGA, and GTHI and has provided a modern and appropriate facility for hospitality and catering TVET for young people in the region. Training of 60 youth was completed in 2024. However, the last training to be conducted at the centre was in November 2024 organised by GWCC for food processors. GTHI manages an initiative called 'TVET on Wheels' where teachers and equipment are launched on mobile units in the locations of Janjanbureh (CRR) and Farafenni (NBR). The hospitality centre is currently in full use, as reported during the October field visit, and 17 students are enrolled under the "TVET on Wheels" programme to be full certified in June 2026. The planned trainings are in accordance and aligned with the GTHI regular training scheduling.

#### 4.3.3. What were the major factors, internal and external, influencing the MPTF project results?

"My husband has taken a second wife, and it is a good thing. He is happy with the attention he gets, and I can focus my time on the children and the business".

*CBT woman project grant recipient*

131. Although not specifically mentioned in the project the cost of regular migration very high for many people because of the high passport/visa fees and high rejection rate for Schengen visa applications from The Gambia. The cost of obtaining a bio-metric passport is around 50 USD and expected to rise to 70 USD shortly. The total cost of a Schengen visa application is around 100 USD<sup>37</sup>, which is not affordable, and visa rejections are among Africa's highest, around 50%<sup>38</sup> (estimate). The high rejection rates may contribute to choosing the "backway" or IMP.
132. The RF-NDP lays out several policy objectives related to regular migration which is highly beneficial for The Gambia in terms of remittances from the diaspora, which include remittances from diaspora utilising

<sup>36</sup> The facility was jointly funded by the UNHSTF project with MPTF funding 75% managed by the ITC component in partnership with UNFPA.

<sup>37</sup> <https://smithstonewalters.com/news/european-union-schengen-visa-updates>

<sup>38</sup> <https://euobserver.com/eu-and-the-world/ar1aabb08b>

IMP. Remittances' ratio to national GDP varies from 30% to 65% depending on the source and depending on if both formal and informal transfers are registered and is a significant source of income for the government. Income and remittance from the US and European diaspora account for around 60% of GDP. The NDP 2023-2027 aligns with the GCM in encouraging and providing for regular migration which demonstrates some of the challenges international actors and The Gambia government face. On the one hand there are significant benefits to the government to seek increased migration, and on the other hand, there are significant downsides to this approach, such as IMP, risk to persons, trafficking, and organised crime to mention some.

133. Challenging conditions for migration to Europe, driven by tightened border controls, stricter asylum policies, and rising anti-immigration sentiment, are creating significant challenges and reluctance for regular migration from The Gambia. Public concerns in the European countries about economic pressures and cultural integration have fuelled the opposition to migration, amplifying fears and leading to policies that prioritize deterrence over legal pathways. This climate has reduced the opportunities for Gambian migrants seeking regular routes, such as work or study visas, as European nations impose more restrictive quotas and complex bureaucratic requirements. Consequently, these dynamics increase the obstacles for Gambians, pushing some toward irregular and dangerous migration routes. The EU-supported programs in The Gambia, like those under the SSA MIP priority 6<sup>39</sup>, strive to counter these challenges by promoting safe migration and reintegration, yet face growing pressure to address the root causes of migration amidst this adverse environment.
134. National priorities are defined in the RF-NDP 2023-2027, laying out a set of action points to address IMP, regular migration and HT. The language in the RF-NDP suggests government's high support to facilitate migration in general. This aligns with the GCM; however, it also creates an environment that encourages migration. This is mostly due to the volume of remittances from the diaspora which account for almost half of Gambia's GDP.
135. The national currency's (Dalasi) depreciation against the CFA is highlighted as a major trading impediment by all interviewees, creating challenges for CBTs. The currency has depreciated around 11% since May 2024 and there are also other issues such as having to carry large amounts of cash; informal market operations on the Senegalese side of the border, and high fees charged for currency conversion. CBTs do not have access to international banking operations and must carry all cash with them to facilitate payments in Senegal. This increases their exposure to criminal acts and is also preventing them from engaging in commercial contracts and agreements that facilitate improved movement of goods across the border, and the transition from informal to formal business status.

#### **4.4. To what extent and how well were activities coordinated and implemented, synergies produced among UN implementing partners, and available resources efficiently used? [Efficiency]**

##### **4.4.1. To what extent was the project efficiently managed and coordinated among UN partners involved, and how it contributed to increase the UN coherence (Delivery as One) under the Residence Coordinator (RC) leadership in Gambia?**

136. The MPTF JP is a pilot project and aims to manage and provide operational experience and best practice in order to review and provide guidance and best practice for potential future similar JP projects. The review considers the JP joint characteristics which include close integration and coordination between the four PUNOs to 'deliver as one'. The project has provided valuable insight in many aspects of management, such as applying an innovative whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach supported by the four specialised agencies.
137. A key observation is that the PUNOs have cooperated and coordinated well on the delivery of programmatic activities such as TVET, business development, and income generation, and technical issues linked to MIDAS and BM have been managed well. However, the PUNOs have not sufficiently cooperated on operational issues such as procurement and financial management. The reason for this

<sup>39</sup> The EU's Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027, under Priority 6, focuses on migration and forced displacement.

can be traced to two main factors: i) weak strategic management and guidance at PSC level, and ii) disbursement and management of the project budget to each PUNO according to individual PUNO procedures. The PUNOs operate on different legal status. For example, ITC does not have a country office status in the Gambia, and all ITC staff are employed as project staff. However, according to the UN's financial management rules, the budget approvals need to be given by a permanent staff. As ITC only has the certifying officer capacity at the HQ level in Geneva, the budget approval process can be lengthy.

138. The UN RC office was not involved sufficiently throughout implementation and thus was not able to provide important oversight and guidance to the JP. The RC or designated representative did not attend the PSC meetings. The project has not sufficiently taken advantage and leveraged the innovative character and joint nature of the project to seek out common operational support functions to minimise cost and efficient operational methods. This is reflected in procurement actions that correspond to the work division between the PUNOs such as the construction of the Lumo, hygiene and cold storage facility in Farafenni. In this case ITC is managing the Lumo, and UNDP is managing the hygiene and cold storage construction. The use of different contractors and management facilities have contributed to the delays and weak oversight.
139. The efficiency of budget management over the project portfolios was not specifically addressed by the evaluation, partly because the financial reports, disbursement and expenditure rates were not shared by the PUNOs. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified no major issues regarding spending and financial management. The total budget amount received is 2,3 M USD and was distributed between the PUNOs as follows: ITC 1,0 M, IOM 0,7 M, UNDP 0,4 M, and UNICEF 0.250 M. The budget allocations are based on performance and clearly indicate the disaggregated activities and spending per each PUNO.
140. The segregated budget disbursement and absence of a central management structure have contributed to the PUNOs operating in a dispersed manner with each agency using its own management and operational structures. The UNRC does not have any management authority on budget issue and the management of budgets reflect each agency legal status and delegation authorities. ITC operates with a project-based field team which require that the budget authority is located centrally at the Geneva HQ. The UNDP office is a full Country Office headed by a Resident Representative, who oversees the day-to-day management and assumes overall responsibility for UNDP programs and operations. The position is supported by a Deputy Resident Representative for Programmes and Operations, and a Senior Economist. The office includes various staff roles, such as a Programme Analyst for Inclusive Growth and an Operations Specialist to lead operations teams, indicating a structured team with diverse functions like program management, human resources, procurement, and administration.

#### 4.4.2. How well were the main activities implemented, and outputs delivered and/or properly adapted to emerging needs, and quality of the implementation perceived by key stakeholders?

141. The planned activities are concluded on time, reaching the targeted beneficiaries and stakeholders, with the exception of construction works. One significant construction work that has been finalised and handed over is the OSS in Farafenni, with only minor finishings pending for the main conference hall. This will be addressed and completed by GiEPA which formally took over the management and operations of the centre in September 2024. In the same month, the hospitality training centre in Mansakonko was handed over to the area council providing an important improvement in training facilities.
142. The JPs have not aligned themselves and adopted a unified approach to operational support functions. Each PUNO operates separately and primarily utilises their internal structures for functions such as procurement, M&E, C&V, and financial management. The limitations in M&E are related to reporting and data availability. The rapid assessment study conducted in April-May 2022 enabled the generation of significant baseline data, however these baseline values have not been effectively monitored during implementation, as the project does not have a central M&E function and/or archiving system. The post-TVET data and young people prone to IMP have been monitored weakly. Information on beneficiaries is largely kept by local partners and IPs (such as the NYC) and was not made available to the evaluation team directly by the PUNOs. An M&E report has been reported to be generated by The Hub, a local

BSO, for IOM, however this report – despite numerous requests - has not been made available to the evaluation team either.

143. A detailed financial analysis is not within the scope of the evaluation. Nevertheless, overall, the financial management is adequate even though the expenditure rates have not been in line with the project timeline. Budget has been disbursed directly from MPTF to each PUNO and the most recent financial online report was made available by the donor, dated December 2024<sup>40</sup>. Expenditure rates by each agency are as follows: IOM 89,70%, ITC 73,77%, UNDP 66,30% and UNICEF 94,98% giving an average of 81,20% expenditure (1,868,322 USD). ITC on behalf of the project requested a five-month NCE which was approved in September 2024. The extension was requested due to the delays reported to be stemming from “extended stakeholder consultation” and “impact of seasonal weather conditions”. An additional three-month NCE is in the process of approval, which will extend the project further to August 2025. It is worth noting that even though the term “NCE” is used, the project will need to extend all operational costs to the two NCEs, totalling 19,500 USD per month, and total for eight months NCE is 155,900 USD. These funds will need to be absorbed from the programme expenditures in order to be able to cover the expenses. In addition, the 7% indirect support cost will be applied equally with a total cost of 34,200 USD for the two NCEs. Indirect support costs refer to expenses not directly tied to specific project activities but necessary for overall project management and administration. These costs, often capped as a percentage of direct costs (e.g., 7-13%).
144. The brief cost-efficiency analysis detailed in the Table 5 below for the project is based on a non-systematic method. This calculation can be tailored to the specific development context, value chain (VC) if relevant, socio-economic conditions, and other applicable factors. While several parameters could be applied, the example below does not incorporate any of the PUNO’s standard analytical approach or unit-cost-of-output<sup>41</sup> if one exists.

Table 5. Cost-efficiency analysis (investment by beneficiary)

An estimation of the cost per beneficiary for MPTF over the project period provides the following result: **8 USD per month per beneficiary (including the indirect beneficiaries)**.

Estimation process - Initially, 600 beneficiaries<sup>42</sup> were targeted in The Gambia, with the main target group being CBTs and persons at risk of IMP. According to the LFM, the cumulative number of beneficiaries are 789 across all OPs, which is most likely caused by double counting of some beneficiaries. This analysis uses 600 as an average mean. This results in a displaced moving average (DMA) of approximately 200 direct beneficiaries reached per year over three years.

Based on a rudimentary DMA, the return on invested development funding is calculated as follows:

Total funding: 2,300,000 USD over 3 years = 730,000 USD per annum.

Divided by the number of direct beneficiaries per annum (DMA): 730,000 USD / 200 = 3,650 USD per annum or 304 USD per month per direct beneficiary.

This calculation does not account for the extended network of beneficiaries,

When considering the indirect beneficiaries, the cost-benefit ratio is as follows:

730,000 USD / 8,000 beneficiaries<sup>43</sup> = 91 USD per annum, or 8 USD per month per beneficiary.

#### 4.4.3. To what extent were the activities implemented in the most efficient way (time and fund) and risks efficiently mitigated?

145. The interviews with PUNOs staff reveal that there are delays in the procurement and spending processes. Each PUNO receives their portion of the budget and there is no central management function. The budget indicates the allocations linked to each activity and PUNO. The absence of a centrally managed expenditure process leads to each agency using the organisational structure which

<sup>40</sup> <https://mptf.undp.org/project/00129729#>

<sup>41</sup> <https://blog-pfm.imf.org/en/pfmblog/2010/04/unit-costs-and-performance-budgeting>

<sup>42</sup> Numbers are approximate according to the DoA and LFM

<sup>43</sup> According to DoA. Not evidence based and speculative due to weak M&E and data availability

they belong. For example, the construction of the Lumo in Farafenni is done by ITC and UNDP in partnership. However, the contracting and procurement were done separately, missing out on consolidated cost savings and construction management. ITC is using a more direct management model, while UNDP works through a consulting firm overseeing that part of the construction.

146. The JP budget is results-based on breaks down cost according to agency and activity. The budget format is well structured and transparent. The budget also includes a column for “direct action on gender equality” which provides an important indicator regarding focus on gender related activities. However, the financial reports made available to the evaluation team are generic and not activity specific. The most update reports are dated December 2024 with total expenditure reported as 1,868,322 USD leaving a balance of 481,678 USD (20%). According to budget operational and indirect support cost for the NCEs; operational cost 155,864 USD, and indirect support cost 34,160 USD, total 190,024 USD. The amount for programmatic activities during the NCEs is 325,814 USD.
- Youth Empowerment Project (YEP, 2017-2023)**

  - **Budget:** \$15 million.
  - **Outputs:** Trained 5,000 entrepreneurs, provided microfinance to 2,000 businesses.
  - **Benchmarks:** \$3,000 per entrepreneur, \$7,500 per business financed.
  - **Impact:** 30% income increase for 60% of participants; 70% of businesses sustained after 2 years.
147. A comprehensive analysis of the average cost per output compared to industry benchmarks is challenging due to the general character of the financial reports available, the general economic and structural constraints, and weak data availability. An example of a useful output-based cost analysis would be the grants scheme for the CBT women. This analysis would most likely demonstrate considerable socio-economic benefits and high return-on-investment. The absence of reliable government data and analysis also weakens efforts related to policy work affecting efficiency in the areas of informal trade and the economic importance and output of MSMEs, especially connected to CBT women. Another target group for this category of analysis could be TVET students where the development benchmark cost is around 600 USD for education, and around 2,500 USD when infrastructure is included, per student. The average annual cost for government provided education is around 150 USD per student. A simplified example can be generated for the YEP programme (2017 to 2023):
148. The project has in place a sufficient risk management plan, with some weaknesses, which include well defined and sequenced risk with associated mitigation measures. However, the risk table does not include risks related to weather related incidents. This affected the poultry house at GIS and was also stated as partly the reason for delays related to construction activities. The plan does not include an exit strategy to address risks associated with sustainability and stakeholder capacities to continue and institutionally ensure project benefits. Nevertheless, the project has effectively embraced the benefits of the JP character of the project and recognised the value of the UN convening power to resolve issues. However, in the case of “cross-border flows and cooperation” affecting Senegal mitigation using the AfCFTA may not be relevant for the project needs due to political inertia and the IABCCs may be of better utility by finding and facilitating local solutions.
149. The risk management plan is adequately reflected in the LFM as assumptions. Some risks such as “high turnover of main public-sector stakeholders” remain outside the project scope and capacity as this would imply activities targeting human resource operations and capacities at stakeholder institutions. This is correctly included in the risk management plan and qualified as “to the extent possible”.

#### 4.4.4. How well the on-going monitoring mechanisms were enabling a proper project steering, supporting decisions on any adjustment, and meeting accountability needs?

150. As the most important tool of project management, including monitoring, the overall quality of the intervention logic is not sufficient to allow reporting of the results' achievements. The log-frame is not adequate to demonstrate how the main results will be achieved, to support implementation, monitoring and reporting efficiency, as it does not have a coherent and consistent structure. This has affected the project steering and adequate support actions could not be provided in a timely manner. One example is the diverting of the child safe space activities from the transport corridor location to a child centre

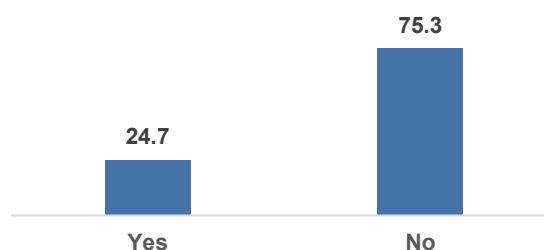
located outside Banjul. This was approved during the 4<sup>th</sup> PSC, yet, not adequately anticipated early in the implementation. Procurements of child friendly equipment has cleared customs and is confirmed delivered to the child centre as of October by UNICEF.

151. **Vertical logic (what is needed to get the results done and contribute to change).** Three outcomes are formulated clearly, and they all contribute to the formulated Overall Objective (OO). However, even though the OO is clearly defined in the project planning documents (as “increased safety and prosperity for the target groups”); the log-frame does not include the OO in its result chain, only in its heading. While the first two outcomes contribute to the “safety” aspect of the OO, the third one is directly linked to “prosperity”. The outputs are formulated clearly under each outcome level (two outputs under outcome 1, two outputs under outcome 2 and three outputs under outcome 3), and they are all clearly linked to their corresponding outcome.
152. The **outcome** statements imply a change of behaviour for the target groups and **output** statements imply the services directly provided by the project; hence they are appropriately formulated.
153. **Horizontal logic (how to measure results).** The log-frame is consistent with the official MPTF template. However, this template format is not practical enough to demonstrate the different result levels and corresponding indicators/values clearly. Besides, the template does not include any column for the sources of verification (for each indicator) and assumptions. The lack of these elements weakens the structure of the log-frame as a practical tool for monitoring and reporting.
154. There is an overall log-frame for the project, yet four different UN agencies have responsibilities for various outcomes and outputs levels. As there are no separate log-frames for each PUNO and the current log-frame does not define the responsibilities, it is not clear which agency is responsible to report for which indicator(s).
155. On the other hand, the LFM's horizontal logic is not adequate. There are a total of 16 indicators formulated; four for the outcome levels and 12 for the outputs. As a weakness, most of the indicators are quantitative, formulated as “number of ...”, or “percentage of...”, hence the indicators do not sufficiently refer to the quality aspect. This is particularly limiting the monitoring and reporting of capacity building efforts extended by the project to the target groups. Furthermore, as there are no sources of verification defined for the indicators, it is not clear how to check the values for the indicators.
156. Measurable outcomes, which makes them difficult to assess. For example, outcome indicator 1.b (“...% of border personnel demonstrating an improved capacity...”) and output indicator 2.1a (“...No. of community members with increased knowledge...”) lack clarity on how changes in behaviour, capacity, or knowledge will be measured. This contradicts the core function of an indicator: to operationalize expected results into clearly defined, observable variables in a way that facilitates the design and use of appropriate data collection tools.
157. The LFM includes indicators under each result level and baselines and targets for all indicators at each level. However, at the outcome and output levels, most of the baseline values are indicated as zero, and some baseline and target values are confusing (e.g. outcome indicator 1.a. has a baseline of 87%-satisfactory, while the target is set as 70%).
158. Even though there is a micro-grant scheme (Outcome 3 – entrepreneurship support for women) in the project, the LFM falls short in measuring the achievements of the small grant beneficiaries (reaching out to the second/wider sphere of end-beneficiaries), as there is no such indicator.
159. In general, the indicators are not sufficiently capturing the identified outcomes from a "safety and prosperity" perspective in relation to the final beneficiaries. The intervention has a direct focus on the cross-border traders and border authorities as final beneficiaries, who face capacity problems for various reasons. This is an important element that needs to be analysed in order to arrive at a clear assessment of the intervention's added value for the improvement of safety and prosperity for those groups.

#### 4.4.5. To what extent were mainstreaming dimensions (gender equality, inclusion of youth, and human rights) considered in the implementation of activities and services provided?

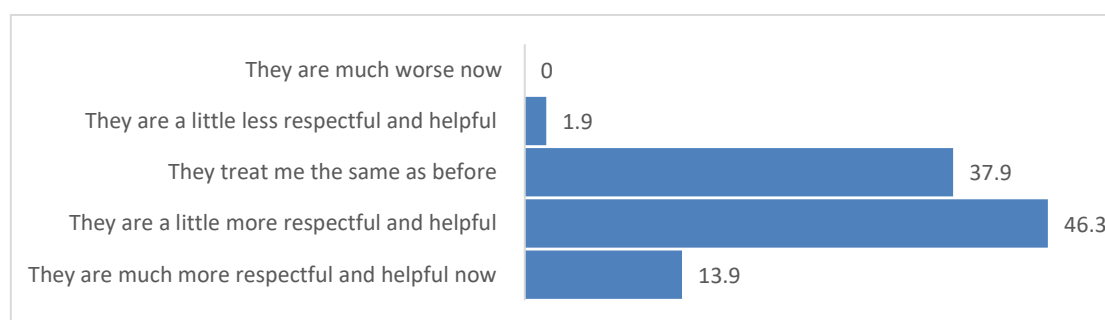
160. The project design has a significant focus on HRBA, Gender and Child sensitivity with the MPTF marker system indicating that these concepts has been achieved and considered in the proposal, contributing to gender and child sensitivity and mainstreaming. Project activities are consistently designed and implemented with gender equality, youth inclusion and HRBA components. All trainings include these components and especially duty bearers such as immigration officers have been targeted during these trainings. Beneficiaries, CBT women and youth undergoing TVET have also been trained and given practical information regarding their rights and what their expectations should be in dealing with officials.
161. The majority of project beneficiaries are women, and activities are designed to mainstream human rights, targeting both beneficiaries and duty bearers—such as immigration authorities, local organizations, and community leaders—directly engaged with vulnerable populations. Under OP 1, which primarily involves immigration authorities, activities include comprehensive training and awareness-raising on HRBA principles, referral mechanisms, GBV prevention, and child protection. These efforts aim to ensure that human rights are systematically integrated into migration management processes, fostering inclusive and equitable service delivery. The project has significantly enhanced service capacity at BPs, as evidenced by the results of the evaluation survey, which highlight improved operational efficiency and better protection for migrants, particularly women and children, aligning with The Gambia's broader goals of addressing IMP and HT while upholding human rights standards.
162. The project has had an impact related to children in the target geography of the TransGambia transport corridor and the area of the SeneGambia bridge. However, as noted in EQ 3 UNICEF moved some activities from the initially targeted area changed the location to the Bakoteh Centre for Children and the Elderly. The centre is located outside Banjul. The budget (34,000 USD) was re-allocated after approval of the 4<sup>th</sup> PSC held in February 2024. Nevertheless, the project delivered a number of trainings on HRBA, gender and child protection and these trainings seem to have yielded positive results. Interviews suggest that the main problem at the border is not children on the move, or unaccompanied children. Issues related to child protection is more dominant in the cities of Farafenni, and to some degree in Soma in terms of street children begging and looking for food and not attending school.
163. The evaluation survey findings do indicate that the awareness level among travellers is not sufficient. This finding was verified through interviews with beneficiaries and authorities. One interviewee is the main point of contact in the community and child protection committee at the Keur Ali BP is the Alkalo, which is the village chief. He reported no interaction with UNICEF and only some interaction with IOM related to child protection. He further stated that he had no knowledge of the OSS GBV centre in Farafenni and said that the location, five km from the BP was problematic as there were no means of transport to go there.
164. Figure 3 below represents responses from informal CBTs, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their awareness of child protection services at border areas. The results indicate that a majority of respondents (75,3%) are not aware of such services, while only 24,7 % reported being aware. A similar trend is observed at the district level. In Upper Badibu, 79,4 % of respondents are unaware of these services, compared to 20,6 % who indicated awareness. Likewise, in Jarra West, 72,2 % reported a lack of awareness, while only 27,8 % were aware. These findings reveal a significant gap in awareness levels of target groups of the child protection services available at the border point.

Figure 3: Awareness of Child Protection Services at the Border (in %)



165. There has been a significant improvement in the behaviour of border officials as revealed by the findings of the evaluation survey. This is also reflected in findings linked to the installation of the MIDAS BM system (see EQ 3) at Misera BP which indicate a significant improvement in how people experience the border crossing. This suggests that the combination of technological and infrastructure improvement, with training and capacity building yields results. There is a connection between improved service levels and improved HRBA and awareness which follows from the training and capacity building of border officials.
166. Figure 4 illustrates the survey respondents' perceptions of the behaviour of border officials since the introduction of the project. The results indicate that a high proportion of the respondents (46.3%) observed that officials are now a little more respectful. This is followed by 37.9% who reported no change, stating that officials treat them the same as before. Additionally, 13.92% indicated that officers are much more respectful, while a small proportion (1.9%) felt that officials are a little less respectful.

Figure 4: Perception on the behaviour of border officials (in%)



#### 4.5. To what extent has the project generated changes (positive or negative, intended or unintended) at the beneficiaries, communities and local and national entities levels? [Impact]

4.5.1. To what extent has the project contributed to higher outcomes results in terms of: i) the enjoyment of human rights by impacted rights-holders; ii) the advancement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls; and iii) the advancement of children's rights and meeting their needs?

167. It is early in the project cycle to measure impact, especially considering its character as a pilot project and high-stated lasting changes expected. There are also challenges in observing prospective impact, generally due to insufficient data available in HT, IMP and child protection areas. Data availability is a challenge, especially considering the key government stakeholders. Other components of the project impact are more tangible, as reflected in the evaluation findings and supported by the survey. These components include increased income generation for CBT women grants recipients, activity and OPs based TVET, HRBA training and improved BM and service delivery, which has had a positive impact on protection related issues for women CBTs. Other results include improved hygiene conditions at BPs, significant improvements in income for CBT grants recipients. The project is well integrated with other similar interventions which contributes to impact prospects.

Children in West and Central Africa are moving in greater numbers than ever before, many in search of safety or a better life. Yet the majority of these children are moving within Africa, not to Europe or elsewhere. We must broaden the discussion on migration to encompass the vulnerabilities of all children on the move and expand systems to protect them, in all their intended destinations."

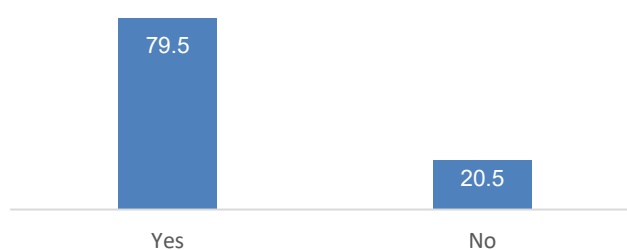
*UNICEF Regional Director Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF 2017 report*

168. **Protection of the children** is an area which there should be considerable focus. The need is significant especially, as observed by the evaluation, in cities like Farafenni and Soma regarding street children. These children are vulnerable to HT. Currently; it is challenging to find tangible or measurable changes that can be reported in relation to the status of children in the targeted areas. The lack of verifiable data creates difficulties to generate evidence and guidance in terms of programmatic approaches, and most information regarding street children and children on the move remains anecdotal. The most recent

report was published by UNICEF in 2017 and show that nearly 6,000 Gambian migrants arrived in Italy by sea, 24% of whom (approximately 1,440) are unaccompanied and separated (UASC). Gambian children represented the highest nationality of UASC, making up 14.7% of the total UASC arriving in Italy.

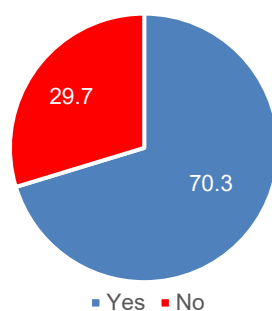
169. The evaluation survey results reveal that a majority of survey respondents (95.3%) did not report experiencing any child protection violations at the border, while only 4.7 percent indicated that they had encountered such violations. Results show that a majority of respondents (61.1%) reported that they know how to report such incidents, while a significant proportion (38.9%) indicated that they are not knowledgeable of the reporting procedures. Among those who reported having knowledge, 61.2 percent stated that incidents are typically reported to the nearest police station, border immigration officers, the Alkalo (village head), or the district chief.
170. Figure 5 presents the project's impact on the income levels of informal border traders and young people. Survey results indicate that 79.5% agree the project helped boost their income, while 20.5% disagree.

*Figure 5: Project's impact on beneficiaries' income level (in%)*



171. **Human rights and gender issues** have improved significantly because of the project. Positive impact is measurable and directly linked to income generation and improved business management capacity. Underpinning these improvements are the construction of markets, and hygiene facilities. The cold storage facility is removed from the project scope. The survey results suggest that improved market and storage accessibility are positive and permanent improvements that had a good impact on sales. The project is constructing a Lumo market in Farafenni, with access to new hygiene and cold storage facilities. This is expected to further strengthen this aspect.
172. Figure 6 The survey results highlight the improved accessibility of storage and market facilities for informal CBTs and young people not engaged in cross-border activities. Almost two-third of the respondents (70.2%) reported access to these facilities due to the project.

*Figure 6: Improved storage/market accessibility (in %)*

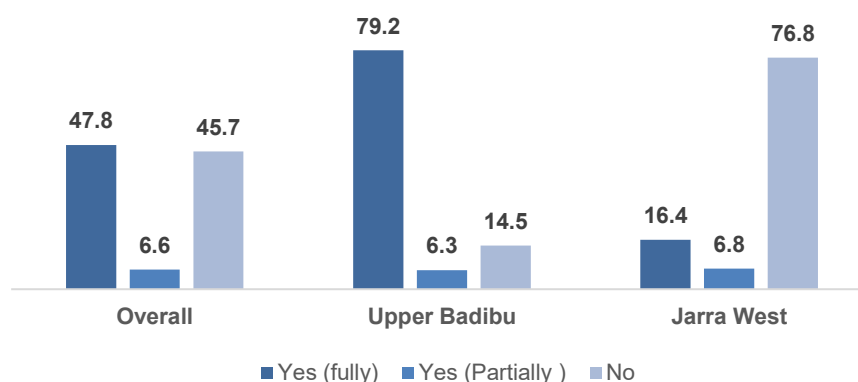


173. At the district level, in Upper Badibu (NBR), 79.2 percent of survey respondents reported access to these facilities, while in Jarra West (LRR), 64.4 percent indicated access. These findings suggest that Upper Badibu has higher accessibility compared to Jarra West.
174. In addition to the positive impact noted above, lasting and tangible changes are noted in **behaviour and mindset of women** that were tutored and supported under the grants scheme. There is ample evidence to suggest that these women have and will continue to have a significant impact on the

communities they live in and continue to provide opportunities for future programs of similar nature as the MPTF JP. It is important to realise that much of the impact is represented by intangible issues, such as tendencies and impulses that are societal and psycho-social in nature, and they reach beyond the scope of activity-based project perspectives. The changes are normative, with an impact on the goalpost for what a society should look like. The empowerment of these women by the project has provided hope for the future. These women now see a better future for the children, and they invest considerable resources and time to achieve that.

175. These findings are confirmed by the final M&E report produced by The Hub<sup>44</sup>. The report focuses on 24 CBTs receiving grants via the project. Under the impact section, it notes that business expansion was reported by 80% of respondents including bulk buying, product diversification and increased employment opportunities. It reports increased business confidence among respondents, visibility and access, and improved financial habits.
176. Figure 7 illustrates how respondents from different districts perceive the impact of the project's livelihood programme on irregular migration. Overall, 47.8 percent of respondents reported that the programme fully contributed to reducing migration, while 6.6 percent indicated a partial contribution, and 45.7 percent reported no impact. This indicates a nearly even split in overall perception, with a slight tilt toward a positive impact.

*Figure 7: Perceived impact of livelihood programme on irregular migration by district (in %)*



177. Issues of aid dependency<sup>45</sup> intersect, in the context of the project, at impact and sustainability. This evaluation finds that concerns linked to impact are more strategic in nature and issues linked to sustainability are more tactical or linked directly to project activities and outputs. Based on this assumption aid dependency may be understood and measured as a process linked to the stakeholder mapping process and becomes an assumption or risk that can be managed affecting the sustainability of the project. This observation may contribute to programme designs becoming more attentive to the issue of aid dependency in design, stakeholder management and implementation.
178. Findings suggest that government capacities and available resources, staff and budgets, vary across different ministries and sectors. As positive examples, GiEPA has demonstrated commitment and allocated significant resources to ensure adequate management, and a budget have been allocated for the operation of the OSS GBV in Farafenni. Clear commitment has also been the case for the hospitality centre in Mansakonko where the city council has assumed management responsibility.

<sup>44</sup> MPTF Final Report IOM/MPTF April 2025 submitted by The Hub

<sup>45</sup> The Gambia's reliance on foreign aid underscores a complex dynamic where external assistance both supports and challenges sustainable development. The UN agencies in Gambia focus on capacity development for inclusive growth, governance, human rights, and sustainable energy, indicating significant aid-driven initiatives to bolster resilience and accountability. However, prolonged dependence on foreign aid risks fostering a dependency syndrome, which can discourage self-reliance, weaken governance, and allow mismanagement to persist, with African nations like Gambia historically struggling to diversify revenue streams. UN efforts target critical areas like health, education, and gender equality, yet the high aid dependency ratio (86.85% in 2020) and economic vulnerabilities, exacerbated by climate challenges and a tourism-dependent economy, suggest that aid remains a lifeline for addressing immediate needs. While UN programs aim to empower communities and build institutional frameworks, the challenge lies in transitioning from aid-driven survival to self-sustaining growth, requiring stronger local policies and economic diversification to reduce long-term dependency.

179. Nevertheless, the transformation from aid dependency to independent income generation and life improvement, as supported by the project, is now emerging in more organic and self-sustaining ways with the women CBT grants recipients. The CBTs have gained financial literacy, and most are operating with bank accounts, although the bank services are limited in the region. The impact of this transformation can be seen in increased awareness, improvements in socio-economic indicators, and importantly, change in mindset.
180. This assumption is supported by the M&E report submitted by The Hub. It shows improvements in social impact including gender empowerment by women becoming breadwinners and improving income, some improvements in youth employment as businesses are slowly employing youth, and increased community influence supported by a “sense of collective growth and solidarity” among the women CBTs. The survey conducted by the evaluation shows that among women CBT, an overwhelming 80.4% reported that the programme positively impacted reducing migration, while 3.5% indicated a partial effect, and 15.2% stated it had no impact. This suggests that the programme was particularly effective for this target group, most likely due to its good alignment with their livelihood needs.

#### 4.5.2. To what extent has the MPTF project brought significant change on the GCM implementation?

181. The project is aligned with those GCM objectives noted in the DoA: Objective 2 ‘minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin’; Objective 10 ‘prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration’; Objective 11 ‘manage borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner’; and Objective 12 ‘strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment and referral’ are adequately addressed. In general, stakeholders report awareness of the GCM objectives and related government obligations. The GCM is well embedded in government policy frameworks, especially the NRM. On the other hand, Objective 1 ‘collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies’ is not sufficiently addressed and integrated by the project. The objective is not mentioned in the DoA either. This indicates a gap in the project's alignment with this goal.
182. The project is aligned with SDG targets 5.2 ‘elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual, and other types of exploitation’, SDG 10.7 ‘to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies’, and SDG 16.2 ‘to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against and torture of children’. The project has not sufficiently contributed or considered SDG 17, which under the UNSDG, focuses on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. SDG 17 encompasses 19 specific targets to enhance global cooperation, resource mobilization, and systemic improvements to achieve the 2030 Agenda.
183. The SDG 17 relevant targets include: Financing (17.1–17.5): Funding programs for gender equality, safe migration, and child protection. Technology (17.6–17.8): Using data systems to track violence or trafficking and tech for safer migration processes. Capacity-Building (17.9): Training local institutions to enforce laws and policies. Partnerships (17.16–17.17): Collaborating across sectors to address systemic issues like gender-based violence or child exploitation. Data (17.18–17.19): Improving data collection to monitor vulnerable populations. These are strategic considerations that is in part reflected by GCM objective 1. related to data collection and evidence based approached. SDG 17 thus becomes an enabler to enhance coherence and operational alignment across UN agencies. The MPTF JP has not sufficiently aligned its operational approach, nevertheless, as a pilot it has generated a number of important lessons which is consolidated as recommendations in this evaluation.

#### 4.5.3. Is there any other intended or unintended remarkable result or effect?

184. High staff turnover with little or no strategic consideration is a challenge at key government agencies. This issue not only affects sustainability but project implementation, which is unpredictable and challenging to manage. The high staff turn-over is an issue that is emphasized by the interviewed GID staff and managers, both at HQ and field stations. The turnover is especially problematic as it reveals that Human Resource policies do not consider essential capacities which are critical to operational

needs such as MIDAS trained staff and trainers. These officers are often also in charge of ICT maintenance. Training needs are high at the institutions, and new recruits need 3-4 weeks of on-the-job training to be able to use the MIDAS systems effectively. When MIDAS trained officers are rotated out without replacement of similar capacity, the utility of the MIDAS system quickly degenerates. Nevertheless, awareness and operational adaptation capacities are evident among immigration officers, in both lower and higher ranks, that enable informal modifications to the assignment of critical staff. Although limited in formal scope, this has so far helped in alleviating the damage caused by excessive staff turnover of e.g. MIDAS ToTs and ICT staff. These efforts have so far ensured that the operational levels on the use of MIDAS have been obtained.

185. The project's work with women has led to effects beyond job creation, including contribution to the reduction of IMP. This is owing to the project's success in empowering women in the communities. An interesting aspect of this is unintended social effects noted by the evaluation, such as effects of polygamy on women's emancipation related to income generation. Although speculative in nature, the interview findings support this fact. The CBT women are often first wives and because husbands take a second wife their time and capacities to spend more time to attend to the business is enabled. Additionally, for the CBTs women receiving grants they have become more economically independent, they are extremely protective of their children and ensure that they attend school, both boys and girls. This has had effects beyond the project scope and is creating lasting and tangible effects on the communities where the women live. The question of gender roles is being challenged, and it has been done in an organic manner, through positive change.

#### **4.6. To what extent the benefits and effects are likely to continue and being sustained? [Sustainability]**

##### **4.6.1. Did the project contribute to strength the capacities of the Government of The Gambia and its departments at national and local level to continue making use of the services/products produced?**

186. National and local government authorities have enhanced their capacities to manage and sustain the project's benefits to some extent. Government stakeholders' potential to continue the benefits vary depending on their existing internal capacities and resources. The project has conducted stakeholder assessments; however, these assessments may not capture all aspects of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the target institutions. The current assessments are focused mostly on financial management capacities and do not carefully consider the capacities of partner government agencies to align sustainability prospects, especially in cases where the continuation of a benefit is depending on the government's allocation of funds and resources. Nevertheless, the project took care in including sustainability aspects and considerations into their criteria when selecting partner institutions, the assessment process may benefit from clear exit strategies and SWOT analysis that place human and institutional capacities and resources into firm commitments to ensure the continuation of benefits.
187. The project has not had any measurable effect on policy development in The Gambia. This is partly due to weak data availability, and the absence of clearly formulated OPs and OCs in the LFM addressing the policy environment. The DoA makes no reference to policy-level engagement between the project and relevant government stakeholders, other than the project's alignment with the existing national and international agreements and strategies. The government has sufficient policy and action documents in place, yet, does not link these to an efficient policy environment. Hence, the activities, experiences and realities on the ground are not feeding sufficiently into the policy processes. This also holds true for migration and child protection related issues, stemming from weak data collection and information management by the project. The government has initiated a review of the NRM to be coordinated by an external consultant. This presents an important opportunity to improve the operational environment dealing with HT and IMP.
188. The GID has benefitted from the installation of the MIDAS system, training and enhanced staff capacities. However, high and unpredictable staff turnover is a challenge especially for MIDAS trainers deployed to the BPs. The trainers often have ICT-related responsibilities that include maintenance on IT equipment, the MIDAS system and power systems. They are also tasked with training the newly deployed staff on MIDAS which may last 4-6 weeks. Staff re-deployments seem non-strategic, and they

pose a potential risk in terms of tactical and operational considerations. The GID has signed an MoU with IOM that places maintenance, internet and power provision responsibilities strictly with MoI/GID. However, the overall budget allocation to technical support and maintenance is inadequate and is highly donor dependent.

189. GiEPA under MoTIE is the primary agency responsible for promoting foreign direct investment, private sector, civil society engagement and partnership. The agency has assumed management responsibility for the OSSEC in Farafenni in September 2024 and has successfully deployed a centre manager, a TIO, and a receptionist to the centre. The centre is located in a planned free economic zone which may greatly enhance its relevance.
190. NAATIP is the agency responsible for HT and has both investigative and prosecutorial capacities. It operates under the AG Chambers and MoJ. The agency operates and manages a hotline (1123) where alleged HT can be reported. However, there is inadequate data available as to traceability, quantitative data and accountability in terms of actionable responses, investigations, prosecutions and convictions of reported cases. NAATIP is a prominent actor in the NRM as the primary agency for aspects related to HT and IMP. However, the agency has not been adequately consulted on or involved in issues related to HT, IMP and the upcoming revision of the NRM. In 2024, NAATIP conducted 22 investigations which resulted in three convictions. Nine other cases are currently on-going. According to NAATIP, 95% of their HT cases involve Nigerian nationals linked to organised crime. The agency places special emphasis on awareness and cultural context such as the "Maslaha syndrome".<sup>46</sup>
191. Emergency Travel Certificates issued by foreign embassies is closely related to HT and IMP. This travel document allows crossing international borders; however, it has limited security features and is commonly used to facilitate smuggling and in HT operations. The efficiency of the border agent verification process is negatively affected by the Maslaha syndrome and/or corrupt practices. The majority of families and communities have members of close or extended family on both sides of the border between The Gambia and Senegal. Although the official languages differ (English/French) the local languages remain the same. The concept of international borders is therefore diffused and in practical terms, have little consequence for how communities see this matter.
192. IABCC may face some sustainability issues as participation food / drinks provision for the committee meetings will be discontinued after the project and this is likely to have a negative effect on participation. The sustainability prospects are further weakened by the absence of exit strategies/plans, which could have helped mitigate this concern. The IABCC committees have been effective throughout the project and contributed to resolving issues at the local level. On the other hand, CSOs and NAATIP have not been represented in IABCC. As noted by the project, the IABCCs together with TWGs have addressed shared challenges related to BM. The BM TWG is especially important as it links institutionally with the NCM on migration, a government-led inter-agency platform. The TWG conducts meetings supported by IOM, the latest one held in November 2024. The active and direct participation of CSO and civil society may have a positive impact on sustainability prospects because it will improve accountability and transparency.

#### 4.6.2. Which activities or components of the project proved to enhance sustainability and should be scaled up, and which ones should be reinforced?

193. The most promising behavioural changes triggered by the project are with the women CBT grantees. The target group has consistently demonstrated sustainable and concrete improvements on a number of measurable indicators such as income level, business management capacity, financial literacy and, most importantly, in the view of the evaluation, a positive change in social behaviour and mindset. The project has effectively created primary points of continued and future engagement for societal change

<sup>46</sup> In The Gambia, "Maslaha syndrome" refers to a cultural practice of resolving disputes or violations, particularly those involving serious issues like GBV, female genital mutilation, or environmental infractions, through communal agreement rather than formal legal enforcement. This approach, rooted in the Islamic principle of "public interest" and adopted across Gambia's major languages, prioritizes reconciliation and social harmony over punitive justice, often leading to perpetrators avoiding the legal consequences of their acts. This undermines justice by sweeping issues under the carpet, perpetuating harmful practices like FGM, despite the legal bans, and weakening environmental protections, as seen in cases of illegal dumping. While some Gambians view it as a culturally unique strength fostering peaceful co-existence, others, including activists and officials, call for its critical examination to ensure accountability and protect vulnerable groups.

which can be exploited by interventions and projects. This opportunity can be considered both by development partners and government agencies, such as GiEPA which has a strong mandate for business development and entrepreneurship capacity support. Such is the case with the OSS in Farafenni. The agency demonstrates positive engagement in this regard and has committed itself to the centre both with human resources and budget allocation, including equipment. This demonstrates commitment, persistence and determination. However, government commitment varies, and the project has not prepared individual exit plans to fully take advantage of these opportunities.

194. The MIDAS by IOM in Misera BP, as part of the MPTF JP, strengthens BM by improving data collection and migration monitoring. However, MIDAS alone is insufficient to comprehensively address HT, a complex transnational crime requiring robust intelligence, investigative, and prosecutorial capacities. The Gambia's NAATIP, tasked with combating HT, would benefit from more comprehensive integration with INTERPOL's i24/7 system, which enables real-time access to global criminal databases, enhancing the ability to track and intercept traffickers. Currently the integration is conducted with one agency, the immigration, and on a limited scale. The INTERPOL NCB currently has limited capacities in place to manage the wide array of coordination, data, and intelligence that can be made available to security and customs agencies if properly implemented.
195. To effectively tackle the transnational nature of organized crime and HT, a potential future project should establish a multi-country, regional, and international network, fostering cross-border collaboration among law enforcement agencies, including joint patrols involving NAATIP, the GID, and customs services, with embedded human rights officers to ensure victim-centred approaches and compliance with international standards.
196. Building on this, the project could incorporate advanced technologies beyond MIDAS and i24/7, such as drones and mobile units equipped with real-time connectivity to MIDAS and INTERPOL's databases (the two can be integrated), to enhance surveillance and rapid response in remote border areas. These tools would enable proactive identification of trafficking routes and swift coordination with regional partners. Including a human rights officer or rapporteur in the framework would ensure that operations prioritize victim protection, addressing vulnerabilities and upholding rights during investigations and prosecutions. By integrating these capacities—technology, regional cooperation, and human rights oversight—the project would create a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach to dismantle trafficking networks while safeguarding migrants and victims in The Gambia and the broader West African region. The INTERPOL systems are supported through the NCBs and already in place and operating. The sustainability prospects will thus be enhanced due to established institutional anchoring. Currently only GID has signed an MoU with INTERPOL connecting the combined capacities of the MIDAS and i24/7 systems. The experiences from the airport operation may be valuable.
197. Sustainability prospects could be improved with improved PPP coordination and engagement. Despite the Gambian government's recognition of PPPs as critical for leveraging resources to address infrastructure deficits and drive socio-economic development, as outlined in the NDP, coordination remains weak, mainly due to inadequate institutional frameworks, limited private sector capacity, and insufficient stakeholder engagement. The MoFEA has established a PPP Directorate to streamline the processes, yet operational guidelines and accountability mechanisms are not fully optimized and integrated in design by the project. Inadequate attention to PPP weakens the potential of MPTF JP initiatives to effectively mobilize private sector engagement and achieve transformative and sustainable outcomes. Nevertheless, the MoFEA PPP guideline provides important procedural models, focusing with insights on relevant models to address challenges in PPP coordination and engagement, such as that observed in the current MPTF JP.
198. The scope of project design lacks facilitating the establishment of a formal CBTA, which limits its ability to address migration-related challenges and facilitate legal cross-border mobility, in contrast to the model provided by Zambia's CBTA. In Zambia, the CBTA, established in 1999 with approximately 37,000 members, serves as a voice for small-scale traders, advocating for simplified trade, reduced trade barriers, and gender-sensitive policies, particularly for women who dominate informal cross-border trade (70% of traders). The CBTA collaborates with the Zambian government and COMESA to implement initiatives like the STR, which streamlines trade for goods worth up to US\$2,000, and provides TIDOs at BPs like Mwami/Mchinji and Chirundu to support traders with customs procedures

and export standards. This structured advocacy enhances policy engagement, improves access to affordable travel documents, and strengthens efforts to combat HT and organized crime by formalizing trade processes. Conversely, the absence of a similar association in the Gambia/project scope results in a fragmented stakeholder coordination structure, limited policy-level influence, and inadequate support for visa arrangements with the EU or affordable passport issuance. This gap exacerbates the existing vulnerabilities to IMP and HT, as the current collective mechanisms in place remain weak to negotiate with authorities or provide traders/migrants with critical information and protections. The lack of such an association also hinders resource allocation to agencies combatting international crime, as seen in Zambia's CBTA-driven advocacy for better-funded border agencies.

199. It is conducive to future project objectives and sustainability prospects to institutionalise and link the GiEPA's TIO capacity and presence to GBoS's requirements to collect and validate informal trade data. This could create a potentially ground-breaking partnership potential with an innovative and transformative approach to informal CBT and the importance of women led MSMEs. The suggested approach is based on ITC's partnership with COMESA and its experience in supporting similar agencies in Zambia. The replicability potential is considered substantial for the future interventions in Gambia.
200. The partnership between COMESA, Zambia business support organisations, the TIDO system involves enumerators collecting informal trade data along known informal routes, and a data validation mechanism supported by the statistics unit at COMESA. No such integrated partnership structure is currently in place in Gambia, yet, all the necessary agencies/units/structures, as well as willingness are in place and can be engaged as necessary.
201. The GWCC is an implementing partner and was instrumental in the selection process for the CBT women grantees. GWCC is hailed as an important BSO with a national outreach to engage women businesses. However, it faces both internal and external challenges, posing limits on the effectiveness of the organisation. A key challenge is its problematic relation to the GCCi, which limits its reach and potential. GCCi is organised by male-dominant businesses and exert significant control and power of the business environment in The Gambia. The nature of GCCi operations resembles a monopolistic approach that is significantly apprehensive of accepting operating space for GWCC and GYCC. This is placing substantial limitations on these two emerging CSOs.

## 5. Conclusions

202. The following conclusions are derived from the analysis and findings section above. The conclusions are organised and consolidated according to thematic areas, namely; i) strategic alignment and relevance, ii) design and targeting challenges, iii) project results, iv) implementational and operational challenges, v) sustainability prospects, and vi) policy engagement and scaling potential.

### 5.1. Strategic alignment and relevance

203. **Conclusion 1. Strategic alignment with national and international priorities.** The MPTF project's design and Theory of Change (ToC) are directly aligned with the priorities of the host country, the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), The Gambia's RF-NDP 2023-2027, the National Migration Policy, and the strategies of the Joint Programmes (JPs). These strategic alignments informed a project design that integrates the needs and capacities of selected target groups, with strong engagement throughout implementation. Beneficiaries reported satisfaction with the increase in their capacities and income levels. The Government, particularly the Ministries of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MoTIE), Interior (Mol), and Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MoGCSW), demonstrated active support for project objectives related to income generation, border management, and gender equality. The project also complements and synergizes with ongoing UN programmes led by IOM, ITC, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNDP, effectively avoiding duplication. These programs cover youth engagement, community development, migration, job skills, and improved border controls.
204. **Conclusion 2. Risks to ECOWAS-based mobility amid regional political shifts.** While the project includes activities supporting ECOWAS free movement and trade agreements, the withdrawal of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger from ECOWAS raises concerns about the regional body's continued relevance. These developments, though not yet fully defined, may impact the project's regional mobility objectives. Meanwhile, The Gambia is increasingly exploring bilateral trade arrangements, especially with Senegal, reflecting a broader regional trend also visible in countries such as Chad and Togo. These shifts may reshape regional policies and relationships tied to irregular migration patterns (IMP).

### 5.2. Design and targeting challenges

205. **Conclusion 3. Conceptual ambiguity limits effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts.** A key design challenge lies in the conceptual ambiguity of GCM Objective 10, which blurs the lines between human trafficking (HT) and irregular migration (IMP). This has led to insufficient engagement of critical actors such as the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) and INTERPOL. While NAATIP was involved in awareness-raising activities, the operational response through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) can be improved. Agencies with investigative and prosecutorial mandates were not adequately integrated, and the project has not fully leverage the BM MIDAS system for cross-border cooperation and international law enforcement. Additionally, synergies with the EU SSA-MIP programme were not pursued. This limits the ability to address HT and IMP holistically, especially in maritime routes from Banjul to Cape Verde and the Gulf of Guinea, as well as toward the Canary Islands.
206. **Conclusion 4. Strong HRBA and gender focus, but gaps in targeting young men.** The project effectively integrates Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) principles and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention, applying MPTF markers appropriately in design, implementation, and reporting. It tackles gender equality, youth inclusion, and human rights. However, the key demographic affected by irregular migration — young men — has not been sufficiently targeted. This gap may be due to the project's geographical limited focus, being a pilot project with a limited budget, which does not include key IMP multi-national pathways, which currently goes through Banjul Port and uses maritime logistics, partly limiting the reach of the JP.
207. **Conclusion 5. Lack of CBTA weakens trade, advocacy, and protection mechanisms.** The absence of a formalized Cross-Border Trade Association (CBTA) component limits the project's ability to support legal mobility and policy advocacy. Without a CBTA, small-scale traders and migrants lack a unified voice, weakening their influence over policy reforms such as streamlined visa arrangements and

passport affordability. This structural gap also affects coordination among stakeholders, restricts information dissemination on legal pathways, and reduces the project's ability to address gender-specific challenges, particularly for women in informal trade. Moreover, it limits the effectiveness of resource allocation to border and migration authorities responsible for combating organized international crime. As of October (evaluation second field phase), two CBTA has been formed with the support of the OSSEC and ITC. Important changes such as collaboration on BPs and issuing official ID cards to CBTs are already in place.

### 5.3. Project results

208. **Conclusion 6. Output-level results largely delivered despite some delays.** The project has generally achieved its intended output-level results on time, with exceptions in construction and rehabilitation activities delayed by extreme weather and extended community consultations. Targeted beneficiary numbers were met, and training, capacity-building, and skill-development activities were largely completed. Support provided through livelihood grants, financial literacy training, and business mentoring led to increased income levels. Border management capacity improved at designated sites, and awareness of child protection, HT, and IMP issues increased. The OSSEC in Farafenni, and the hospitality training centre in Mansa Konko are examples of successful engagements with high sustainability prospects implemented by the JP.
209. **Conclusion 7. Women CBT grantees show strongest entrepreneurial capacity.** The most capacitated beneficiaries are the women CBT grantees, especially in the NBR and LRR regions, who have designed investment plans to expand, diversify, or add value within their value chains. Their business activities span food processing, perfume production, fisheries, and construction. In contrast, young men and women without prior business experience received vocational and business training aimed at employability, with more varied outcomes.
210. **Conclusion 8. Grant-supported women drive community change amid economic constraints.** The project's grants scheme led to tangible and lasting shifts in mindset and behaviour among tutored and supported women. These women are emerging as community influencers and drivers of development. This impact extends beyond the scope of the project to include broader societal and psychosocial transformations. However, the gains are moderated by structural economic challenges, such as The Gambia's low minimum wage (less than \$1.20/day as of March 2024) and weak worker protections. As a result, young people who received TVET training may under certain circumstances see certification as a pathway to emigration, particularly irregular migration. The high cost of passports and Schengen visas may further shape migration choices, reducing interest in regular migration channels.

### 5.4. Implementation and operational challenges

211. **Conclusion 9. Joint implementation and coordination modality limits project potential.** Limitations arise from internal processes and structural challenges within the joint implementation framework. Participating agencies partly operated in silos, with insufficient coordination on communication and visibility (C&V), monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and operational support. This hampers the potential benefits of "Delivering as One." Decentralized fund disbursement and lack of centralized financial oversight weakened harmonized operations. Furthermore, the UN Resident Coordination System (UNRCS) was not sufficiently engaged, as the MPTF funding bypassed its usual oversight role, instead routing funds directly to agencies post-approval by the MPTF Steering Committee. These coordination shortcomings limited outreach, scalability, and policy alignment, especially given the project's pilot status.
212. **Conclusion 10. Incomplete stakeholder assessments limit sustainability planning.** Although the project partnered with relevant government institutions (e.g., GIEPA), its stakeholder assessments fell short of fully capturing institutional capacities, motivations, and financial capabilities to sustain or scale results. The design lacked a SWOT assessment to examine stakeholder impact, strategic intent, and capacity. These factors are crucial for sustaining benefits, especially under the whole-of-government approach adopted.

213. **Conclusion 11. M&E and data systems weakens learning and adaptation.** The project lacks a robust and centralized data collection and management system, alongside a weak and fragmented M&E function. This critical shortfall affects learning, adaptive management, and accountability. Reliable data systems are essential for tracking results, informing decision-making, and adapting to changing contexts. The project does not have a centralized archive for documentation or beneficiary information. While a consolidated annual progress report is produced in line with donor requirements, the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) does not fully meet donor expectations for performance tracking.

## 5.5. Sustainability prospects

214. **Conclusion 12. Mixed sustainability outlook shaped by institutions, beneficiaries, and handover quality.** The project's sustainability prospects are mixed and contingent on institutional capacity, beneficiary preparedness, and the effectiveness of handover processes. Sustainability drivers include:
215. Institutional capacity and handover effectiveness. Sustainability varies across partner institutions. Most project-generated capacities and systems were output-driven and lack structured exit strategies. Handover processes have been weakened by limited commitments and funding allocations by government ministries. Nonetheless, GiEPA's management of the One-Stop Shop (OSSEC) in Farafenni and the hospitality training centre in Mansakonko (under local council management) are promising examples of sustainability.
216. Government commitment and donor dependency. While policy support exists, operational commitment and financial planning remain weak. This is especially evident in the limited staffing and resource allocation by the MoGCSW and the MoJ. GiEPA stands out as an exception, having fully assumed responsibility for managing the OSSEC.
- a) Beneficiary capacity and experience. Sustainability of benefits is higher among experienced women CBT grantees. However, younger TVET beneficiaries often lack the necessary skills or support to maintain businesses independently.
217. Underutilized private sector partnerships. The project did not sufficiently engage private actors (e.g., HERICO or CSCG) who could have facilitated employment opportunities. Industry-aligned curricula for TVET in hospitality and catering are needed and includes e.g. cruise ships industry to match market demands. Exploration of opportunities beyond the hospitality business should be considered for future programmes.

## 5.6. Policy engagement and scaling potential

218. **Conclusion 13. Strong potential for scaling through joint programming and PUNO collaboration.** Weak policy engagement and the absence of a strategic framework limit the project's ability to address structural migration challenges. Progress is lacking in areas such as legal migration pathways (e.g., visa facilitation with the EU), access to travel documents, and strengthening agencies addressing organized crime linked to migration. Government resource allocation and prioritization for these agencies are insufficient. Moreover, a participatory policy process involving both government and private sector stakeholders is lacking, hindering alignment with regional and global migration goals.
219. **Conclusion 14. Weak policy engagement affects long-term migration outcomes.** Addressing HT and IMP is a necessity, not an option, and the project demonstrates strong potential for replication and scale-up. The MPTF pilot confirmed the need for continued intervention in this area. Despite some misalignments, the Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs) — ITC, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF — successfully collaborated, demonstrating added value, synergy, and a willingness to bridge operational and institutional cultures. The evaluation findings will help shape a future, potentially larger initiative. Joint programming offers enhanced value for money and can better realize the benefits of the "Delivery as One" model, improving sustainability and delivering stronger donor returns.

## 6. Recommendations

220. Recommendations are addressed to the MPTF JP programme's management and staff, the MPTF Donor, and PUNOs' management and divisions, to be considered for the follow-up phases of this project or other future interventions.

### 6.1. Strategic discussion and future programming design

221. **Recommendation 1. Scale up multi-country, multi-agency operations to counter human trafficking and irregular migration.** The Migration MPTF is strongly encouraged to deepen its engagement with the Joint Programme (JP) by providing sustained financial and strategic support, thereby enabling the adoption and operationalization of key recommendations from this pilot. This scale-up should include integrated operational frameworks involving law enforcement, naval forces, and specialized task forces to respond to the growing risks of human trafficking (HT) and irregular migration patterns (IMP), driven by socio-economic, environmental, and geopolitical pressures. (Refers to Conclusions 1, 2, 3, 13)

222. Key operational elements to prioritize would include:

- a) Institutionalizing cross-border collaboration and intelligence sharing through stronger engagement with INTERPOL and national agencies such as NAATIP.
- b) Expanding geographic scope via a multi-country approach, including maritime operations under the Yaoundé Architecture to address illicit migration routes.
- c) Mainstreaming Cash-Based Transfer (CBT) mechanisms to boost community resilience and women's economic participation.
- d) Establishing inter-agency task forces (e.g., involving DLEAG, GID, customs intelligence, and naval actors) to coordinate intelligence-driven enforcement.
- e) This approach should build on the current pilot's success and be supported through sustained donor investment, ensuring a unified, proactive response to HT and IMP across the region.

*Assigned to: ITC, IOM, Migration MPTF, UNRC office (strategic support)*

223. **Recommendation 2. Validate program assumptions and align with evolving contexts and global frameworks.** Key assumptions regarding the distinctions between Human Trafficking (HT) and Irregular Migration Patterns (IMP) should be thoroughly tested and validated to ensure optimal resource utilization and robust stakeholder engagement. This is crucial for providing clarity in the Theory of Change (ToC) and verifying causal linkages that influence program design.

224. Therefore, it would be pertinent to consider:

- a) Commissioning a research study or assessment to review the fundamental assumptions underpinning program design, such as the social context and traditional push factors for IMP. Experts for this study should ideally possess technical expertise and experience in psycho-social and anthropological studies.
- b) Concurrently, future programs must carefully monitor regional and geo-economic developments, particularly within the ECOWAS REC, to ensure the most relevant approach to regional trade and human movement is applied.
- c) The same vigilance applies to the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and other international obligations; failure to appropriately adopt these could adversely affect the operational coherence of future programs.

225. This adaptive approach will mitigate potential conflicts and more realistically reflect realities on the ground that affect vulnerable populations, including women, cross-border traders (CBTs), children, and communities at large. (Refers to Conclusions 1, 2, 13, 14)

*Assigned to: ITC, IOM, Migration MPTF*

226. **Recommendation 3. Strengthen UN Resident Coordinator oversight and strategic alignment.** The UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) office should take a more active role in overseeing and coordinating Joint Programme governance to enhance strategic alignment and long-term impact. To ensure coherence with UN system priorities and donor mandates, the RC or their delegate should have mandatory participation in all Joint Programme Steering Committees. This strengthened leadership will:
- a) Align Joint Programme efforts with broader initiatives such as the EU SSA-MIP and foster synergy across agencies, including NCB INTERPOL and UNODC.
  - b) Improve coordination between strategic, operational, and tactical levels to enhance the international dimension of responses to HT and IMP.
  - c) Support the formulation of explicit policy linkages for each output, aligning them with relevant government partner institutions.
  - d) Ensure that these policy linkages are embedded in exit strategies to guide future projects and enhance sustainability, impact, and local governance outcomes.
227. By institutionalizing UNRC leadership in strategic governance and linking policy to implementation, the Joint Programme can build a more resilient, coordinated, and future-ready response framework. (Refers to Conclusions 1, 2, 12, 13)

*Assigned to: ITC, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF, UNRC office*

## 6.2. Organizational and operational effectiveness

228. **Recommendation 4. Strategically engage and build the capacity of government, UN, and civilian partners through tailored assessments and operational alignment.** To ensure sustainable and effective programme outcomes, it is critical to carefully assess the capacities of partner government agencies, civilian entities, and Participating UN Organizations (PUNOs). This assessment is particularly important where the continuation of benefits relies on government interest, capacity, and resource allocation (Refers to Conclusions 9, 10, 11, 12).
229. Key operational elements to prioritize would include:
- a) Both government and civilian partners should undergo structured capacity evaluations such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analyses, complemented by other assessments (e.g., UNDP-led evaluations). The JP have conducted assessments, nevertheless, a comprehensive stakeholder mapping will facilitate stronger linkages and synergies, which must be integrated into project design to foster realistic, sustainable interventions.
  - b) For PUNOs, conducting individual SWOT analyses within Joint Programmes will help identify operational strengths and areas for improvement, allowing each organization to leverage its technical expertise and mandates effectively.
  - c) Budget allocation should prioritize PUNOs with country office status, as this supports more efficient management of procurement, financial reporting, and operational functions. Such prioritization will enable more unified and cost-efficient use of procurement capacities, central financial management and reporting, and operational responsiveness. A centralised and unified budget management approach aligns with operational principles as described by the UN Delivery as One framework.
- Assigned to: ITC, UNDP, IOM and UNICEF*
230. **Recommendation 5. Implement robust capacity and systems transfer as part of a comprehensive 'exit strategy' and institutionalize key operational handovers.** As part of a comprehensive exit plan, the GiEPA Trade Information Officer (TIO), currently based at the One-Stop Shop (OSSEC) centre in Farafenni, should be relocated to the new immigration complex at Keur Ali Border Post (BP), built by IOM. This move will provide direct and convenient access to vital trade and customs information, facilitating Cash-Based Transfers (CBTs) and enhancing awareness among women CBT beneficiaries regarding trade rights and obligations under existing schemes. It will also strengthen cooperation with Senegalese counterparts through the Inter-Agency Border Control Committee (IABCC). (Refers to Conclusions 5, 10, 12)

231. Key operational elements to prioritize would include:
- a) The TIO should be established as a permanent member of the IABCC, alongside a representative from the Cross-Border Trade Association (CBTA), to improve community representation and increase the IABCC's effectiveness in addressing local issues and mobilizing communities.
  - b) Additionally, the inclusion of the Alkalo (village head) or an equivalent local leader or group should be strongly considered to ensure meaningful representation of Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), gender, and child protection concerns within the forum.
  - c) To institutionalize these arrangements, the project should support a series of IABCC meetings to formally introduce the new members and address the sustainability and long-term functionality of the committee.

*Assigned to: ITC, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF*

### 6.3. Monitoring, accountability and learning for adaptative management

232. **Recommendation 6. Consolidate and analyse M&E data to build a cohesive, accessible knowledge base.** Undertake a robust, systematic effort to consolidate, organize, and analyse all available M&E data, learning outcomes, and related datasets to create a unified knowledge base. This should include diverse sources such as household and community surveys, beneficiary tracking systems, longitudinal studies, and qualitative assessments. (Refers to Conclusions 9, 11, 14). Suggested approach would be as follows:

- a) Focus on capturing transformative community changes—such as improvements in water, sanitation and hygiene (WATSAN), education access and quality, health outcomes, infrastructure development, economic empowerment—and link these to changes in irregular migration patterns (IMP) and human trafficking (HT).
- b) Enhance coordination with specialized agencies like NAATIP while considering ongoing changes to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Where possible, produce consolidated findings to share with policy-level stakeholders, the UN system, the Migration MPTF, and other potential donors.

*Assigned to: ITC, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF*

233. *This recommendation lays the foundation for data quality and availability, supporting the monitoring and evaluation improvements outlined below.*

234. **Recommendation 7. Strengthen logical framework management and M&E training.** Building on the available data (including the April-May 2022 rapid assessment), revise the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) to include realistic targets, assumptions, and verification sources. The LFM should clearly illustrate the results chain with indicators, baselines, targets, current values, verification sources, and assumptions.

235. All indicators need regular monitoring and reporting. To support this, provide tailored M&E training for project staff responsible for monitoring and clarify agency responsibilities across different result levels and indicators. (Refers to Conclusions 9, 11, 14)

*Assigned to: ITC, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF*

236. *This recommendation improves project-level tools and capacities to utilize the data consolidated under Recommendation 4.*

237. **Recommendation 8. Align MEAL with GCM objectives and engage dedicated expertise.** To strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL), align data collection and analysis with the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) Objective 1: “*collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies.*” Given MPTF's focus on migration, IMP, and HT, MEAL capacities must reflect this strategic orientation.

238. Data collection should go beyond outputs, capturing outcomes and behavioural changes. To achieve this, engage a dedicated MEAL or M&E expert (full-time, part-time, or seconded from a PUNO) to oversee multi-agency data systems, ensuring professional standards and responsiveness to donor priorities. (Refers to Conclusions 9, 11, 14)

*Assigned to: ITC, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF, Migration MPTF*

239. *This recommendation institutionalizes strategic alignment and professional capacity, enhancing the effectiveness of the actions recommended in 4 and 5*

### 6.3. Economic empowerment and private sector engagement

240. **Recommendation 9. Cultivate public-private partnerships and economic inclusion.** The project must actively engage and enhance public-private partnerships with companies like HERICO, which can facilitate international funds transfers and the settlement of commercial contracts for beneficiaries, particularly CBTs. The CSCG's (Cruise Ship Crew Gambia) potential to create cruise industry standards for TVET and hospitality training should also be leveraged. To further encourage returnees, structures like an association of Gambia cruise employees, linked to the establishment of a professional credit union for cruise workers (possibly modelled on the successful Gambia Teachers Credit Union), should be considered. Such an association and credit union would institutionalize conditions to encourage return and align with GCM objectives. (Refers to Conclusions 10 12)
241. To enhance economic integration and workforce development in the SeneGambia transport corridor, weak policy process engagement should be addressed and existing opportunities leveraged through a comprehensive approach:
- a) **Strengthen cross-border financial integration.** Establish robust linkages between HERICO payment systems and future CBTAs, such as the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS), to streamline money transfers between The Gambia and Senegal. This integration reduces the need to carry cash, lowers transaction costs, and enhances security for CBTs. Aligning with PAPSS, which supports 42 African currencies and serves 157.5 million users in the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ), facilitates contracts and transactions. Compatibility with international payment systems (MasterCard, Visa) and mobile money platforms (e.g., Wave) should also be incorporated to enable online shopping and trade, boosting financial inclusion and economic growth.
  - b) **Foster public-private partnerships in TVET.** Encourage training institutions like the Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute (GTHI) to form strategic PPPs with maritime-based industries, especially cruise ship operators, to align curricula with market demands. GTHI should partner with organizations like CSCG, which trains youth for global cruise ship and hospitality roles, to develop industry-aligned TVET programs. These partnerships can incorporate practical training on cruise ships, leveraging Gambia's multilingual workforce and tourism potential. The recently validated GTHI Redevelopment Plan, supported by the World Bank and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MoTAC), provides a framework for revising curricula and introducing new programs. Policy incentives, such as tax breaks for private sector involvement and stakeholder engagement through MoTAC's Tourism Diversification and Resilience Project, can drive these collaborations, address human resource gaps, and enhance employability.

*Assigned to: ITC, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF*

242. **Recommendation 10. Establish and empower Cross-Border Trade Associations (CBTAs).** To align with Zambia's successful model, the project should prioritize establishing a formal cross-border trade association to foster robust policy dialogue, improve access to legal migration channels, and strengthen systems to combat trafficking and crime, thereby enhancing the overall ecosystem for safe and sustainable cross-border mobility. ITC has extensive experience in supporting CBTAs in other African regions, and this expertise should be leveraged to establish a CBTA representing cross-border traders along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor, covering both North Bank Region (NBR) and Lower River Region (LRR) as one target zone. As of October, the evaluation found that CBTAs have been established with the support of ITC and OSSEC in both LRR and NBR. The total number of women members are almost 150. The CBTAs are already addressing challenges together with the OSSEC such as orderly border crossings during market days, official GiEPA id cards issued, fair and correct customs charges for imported goods, and generally a good cooperation based on trust. It is important that the support to the CBTAs continues by other similar programmes. (Refers to Conclusions 1, 2, 7, 8, 12)
243. The following elements could be considered in applying this recommendation:

- a) The government institutional link to this CBTA should be the GiEPA OSSEC in Farafenni. The CBTA should become a member of the IABCC, establishing an important link to civil society. The foundations for meaningful links already exist between GBoS (Gambia Bureau of Statistics), GiEPA, and CBTAs in the transport corridor, noting a planned free-trade zone in the same area as the GiEPA-managed OSS.
  - b) A CBTA is already being contemplated, with initial steps supported by GiEPA OSSEC in Farafenni. This CBTA can emulate the structure and organization facilitated by ITC programs, replicating experience and best practices from, for example, CBTA Zambia through ITC COMESA.
  - c) The CBTA should become a key stakeholder and the primary point of contact for future programs along the Trans-Gambia corridor, with institutional capacity building and organizational management training enhancing efficiency and encouraging cooperation with the Gambia Women Chamber of Commerce (GWCC) and Gambia Youth Chamber of Commerce (GYCC).
  - d) The collection and validation of data linked to informal trade should be done in collaboration between the GiEPA/TIO and GBoS, with enumerators operating along informal trade routes and at key Border Posts (BPs). Sensitization related to this can be significantly facilitated by working closely with a CBTA.
  - e) Furthermore, a partnership between the GiEPA TIO and the GBoS should aim to institutionalize the collection and validation of informal trade data, focusing on women-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in cross-border trade, leveraging GiEPA's TIO capacity and GBoS's statistical expertise.
244. This innovative approach, modelled on successful ITC-COMESA-Zambia collaboration, addresses a critical data gap in The Gambia, empowering women-led businesses and offering significant replicability potential for other West African nations, while enhancing policy-making and economic growth through better trade data.

*Assigned to: ITC*

#### 6.4. Policy and legal frameworks for migration and trade

245. **Recommendation 11. Develop a comprehensive policy framework to strengthen legal migration pathways and enhance cross-border cooperation.** To address weak policy-level engagement and boost the effectiveness of future projects, it is essential to develop a comprehensive policy framework that supports legal migration pathways and strengthens measures against human trafficking (HT) and irregular migration patterns (IMP). (Refers to Conclusions 2, 13, 14)
246. Key elements of this framework could include:
- a) Improving visa arrangements with the EU to facilitate easier and more accessible legal migration routes.
  - b) Empowering agencies such as NAATIP and NCB INTERPOL to implement stronger cross-border cooperation mechanisms aimed at combating HT and IMP.
  - c) Streamlining the issuance of affordable travel documents, like passports, to reduce barriers to regular migration.
  - d) Allocating sufficient resources, clear mandates, specialized training, funding, and technology to agencies responsible for tackling organized international crime linked to migration.
247. To build lasting political commitment and ensure alignment with regional and global migration goals, these priorities must be embedded in a participatory policy process that actively involves government, the private sector, and international partners.
248. Furthermore, to prevent weak policy engagement, the project should establish multi-stakeholder platforms—including government, private sector, and civil society representatives—to co-design, implement, and monitor future initiatives. Regular consultations, transparent reporting, and effective feedback mechanisms within these platforms will build trust, ensure policies reflect diverse needs, and promote inclusive decision-making.

*Assigned to: ITC, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF*

# Annexes

## Annex 1. Summary of the Terms of Reference

**Background.** The project is a pilot and addresses increased migration and vulnerabilities, particularly for women and youth, following the 2019 inauguration of the Senegambia Bridge, which enhanced connectivity along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor. Key challenges include high rates of irregular migration among youth due to limited economic opportunities, unemployment, and social pressures. The project targets four components:

- Enhancing border posts to reduce vulnerabilities.
- Strengthening the capacity of border authorities.
- Increasing awareness among women and youth of their rights.
- Strengthening skills and livelihood opportunities for women and youth.

The JP is implemented by ITC (lead agency), IOM, UNICEF, and UNDP, in partnership with national entities like the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment (MOTIE).

**Evaluation purpose and objectives.** The evaluation covers the entire project implementation period (January 2022–May 2025) and all project components. It aims to provide decision-making and accountability insights for ITC, participating UN organizations (PUNOs), and national partners.

Specific objectives are:

- Ensure accountability towards partners and funders by reviewing the performance, value, and effects.
- Offer strategic recommendations to consolidate the project achievements and potentially scale the initiative.
- Suggest ways to address irregular migration and human trafficking through future interventions and programmes.

### Key questions and assessment criteria.

**EQ1:** [Relevance] Does the project address the right needs and priorities of rights-holders and national partners?

**EQ2:** [Coherence] Is the project aligned with frameworks like the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and complementary to other initiatives?

**EQ3:** [Effectiveness] Has the project achieved its intended outcomes, such as improved rights awareness and livelihood opportunities?

**EQ4:** [Efficiency] Were activities well-coordinated, resources used efficiently, and mainstreaming dimensions (gender, youth, human rights) integrated?

**EQ5:** [Impact] What changes (intended or unintended) has the project generated for beneficiaries, communities, and entities?

**EQ6:** [Sustainability] Are the project's benefits likely to continue, and which components should be scaled up?

**Methodology.** The evaluation adheres to ITC Evaluation Guidelines, UN Norms and Standards, and ethical principles, emphasizing human rights, gender equality, and impartiality. Consultants will design a mixed-methods approach (quantitative, qualitative, participatory) during the inception phase, using an evaluation matrix to address data availability challenges. Stakeholder participation, including women, girls, men, and boys, is prioritized to ensure diverse perspectives.

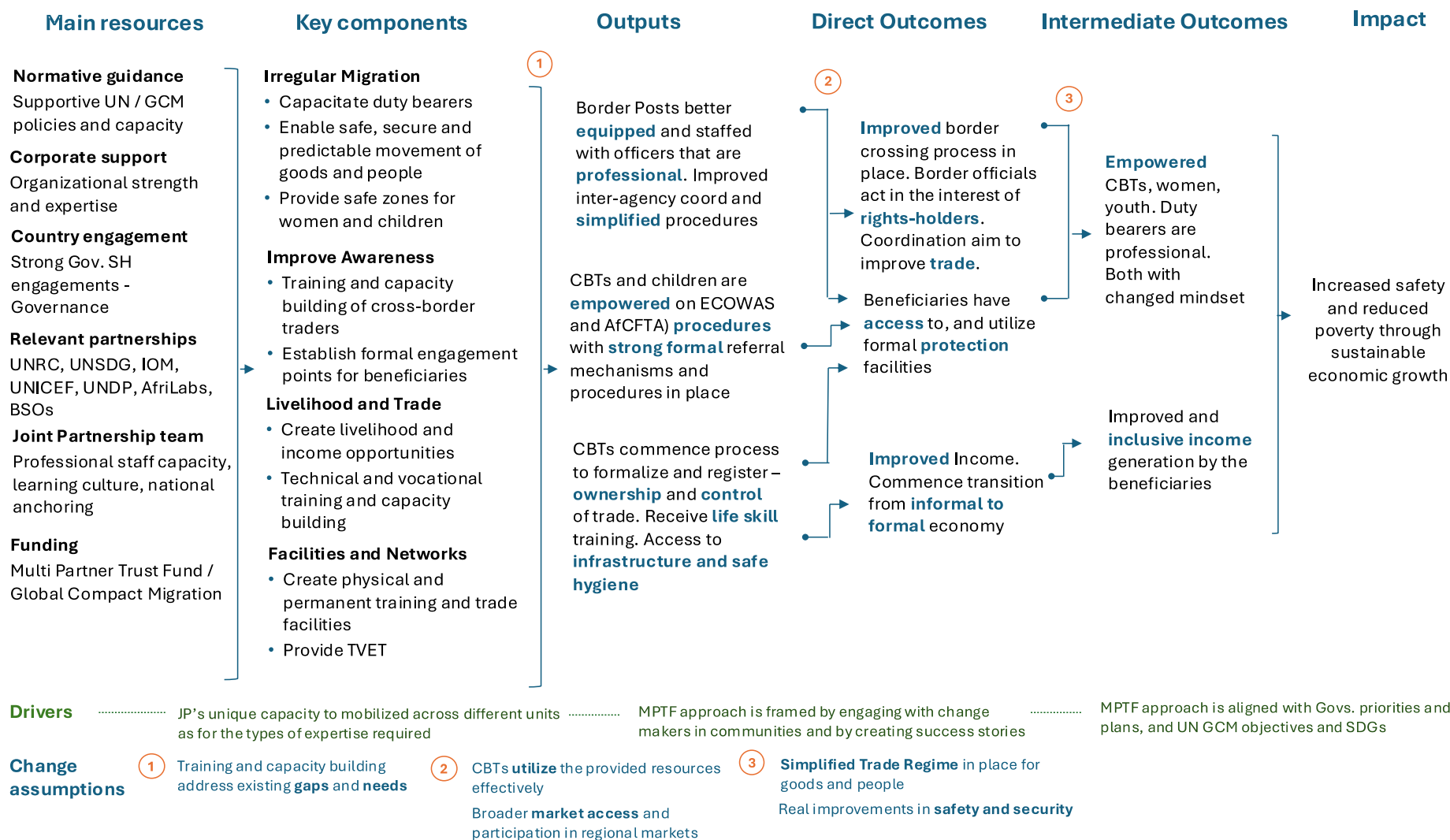
**Management and Stakeholders.** The evaluation is coordinated by ITC's Independent Evaluation Unit and supported by an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) comprising representatives from ITC (Yusupha Keita, ERG Coordinator), IOM (Ousman Badjie), UNICEF (Zanaba Jah), and UNDP (Shebia Ngewa). The ERG ensures credibility, utility, and stakeholder engagement.

### Phases and timeline

- Inception/design phase (March-May) to clarify the scope, evaluability conditions, data and informants available, and field data collection missions. These elements shall be reflected in the Inception Note.
- Data collection. PUNOs-related units in The Gambia (April)
- Analysing & reporting. Data analysis (April/May.); preliminary findings validation workshop with PUNOs key stakeholders (late-May.); evaluation report, first draft (end-June.); final draft of the evaluation report (Late July early August).
- Management response to the recommendations prepared by PUNOs managers and related units (August).

## Annex 2. MPTF’s reconstructed Theory of Change

Figure 8: MPTF project’s reconstructed Theory of Change



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### Abbreviations used in the Theory of Change

- TVET: Technical Vocational Education and Training
- UNRC: UN Resident Coordinator
- GCM: Global Compact Migration
- JP: Joint Partnership
- MPTF: Multi Partner Trust Fund
- UNSDG: UN Sustainable Development Group
- IOM: International Organisation on Migration
- UNDP: UN Development Programme
- UNICEF: UN International Children's Fund
- ITC: International Trade Centre
- SH: Stakeholder
- BSO: Business Support Organisations
- ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
- AfCFTA: African Continental Free Trade Area
- AfriLabs: African network of incubators and innovation hubs

## Annex 3. Detailed Methodology

### Annex 3.1 Evaluation Matrix

Key QUESTIONS and sub-questions	Assessment indicators / Lines of enquiry	Sources	Data collection techniques
<b>1. To what extent does the MPTF programme address the right needs?</b>		Evaluation criteria associated: Relevance	
1.1 To what extent has the project responded to the needs of right holders, especially the most vulnerable?	<p>1.1.1 MPTF’s project matches with the priorities outlined in the national development/action plans and policies, JPs corporate strategies and Global Migration Compact 23 objectives</p> <p>1.1.2 Presence and quality of pre-design needs assessments and baseline reflect actual needs reported by beneficiaries.</p> <p>1.1.3 The needs of the beneficiaries are clearly addressed in the needs assessment/baseline or similar studies conducted or other relevant sources</p> <p>1.1.4 The stakeholders and target groups are aware of their needs, and these are sufficiently considered for the design processes with a participatory approach</p>	<p>JPs Strategic plans, Annual Operational Plans and Annual Reports</p> <p>Project monitoring data</p> <p>National development/action plans</p> <p>Needs assessment studies</p> <p>JP staff</p> <p>End beneficiaries</p> <p>JPs Planning/design documents</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews with JPs and donors</p> <p>Interviews/FGDs with target groups/beneficiaries</p>
1.2 To what extent did the project meet national and local implementing partners’ needs and priorities in terms of addressing the drivers and causes of migration-related vulnerabilities in the border communities along the trans-Gambia transport corridor (Upper Baddibu and Jarra West Districts)?	<p>1.2.1 Geographical selection for project activities is based on consistent GCM corporate and JPs ad hoc criteria for intervention in relevant countries</p> <p>1.2.2 Stakeholder capacities are assessed before the design phase of the projects</p> <p>1.2.3 Project activities benefit from strong political will, country-wide support and ownership from the key institutions and governments, and sufficient number of implementing partners reporting satisfaction with the project’s responsiveness to their needs.</p> <p>1.2.4 Government entities and beneficiaries were included in the design of the projects</p>	<p>Country Engagement Strategies</p> <p>JP Strategic Plan</p> <p>Needs/capacity assessment/baseline studies</p> <p>JPs staff</p> <p>PSC meeting minutes/</p> <p>National stakeholders</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews with JPs</p> <p>Interviews with national (country) stakeholders</p>
1.3 To what extent were activities, outputs, assumptions and risks well identified and consistent with the needs identification and intended outcomes, and mainstreaming dimensions (gender equality, inclusion of youth, and human rights) properly considered in the design? (consistency of the Theory of Change)	<p>1.3.1. Percentage of activities and outputs directly linked to needs identified in the project’s baseline assessment.</p> <p>1.3.2. Proportion of assumptions and risks in the Theory of Change validated by stakeholder consultations.</p> <p>1.3.3 Degree of integration of gender equality, youth inclusion, and human rights in project design documents, and reflected in project activities</p> <p>1.3.4. Percentage of activities and outputs directly linked to needs identified in the project’s baseline assessment.</p>	<p>JPs strategy documents</p> <p>Analysis of Theory of Change</p> <p>Applied cross-border trade Business models</p> <p>JPs managers/staff</p> <p>JPs Monitoring systems</p>	<p>Document review and analysis</p> <p>Interviews with JPs</p> <p>Interviews with cross-border traders</p> <p>Data collection with statistical methodology</p>
<b>2. To what extent is the MPTF project aligned and compatible with other frameworks and interventions?</b>		Evaluation criteria associated: Coherence	

Key QUESTIONS and sub-questions	Assessment indicators / Lines of enquiry	Sources	Data collection techniques
<p>2.1 To what extent was the project consistent with relevant frameworks, particularly the Global Compact for Migration (CGM) guiding principles and markers? How well were they incorporated into the project cycle (design, implementation, monitoring and reporting)?</p>	<p>2.1.1 Percentage of project objectives aligned with GCM guiding principles and relevant objectives.</p> <p>2.1.2 Number of GCM markers explicitly incorporated into the project design phase.</p> <p>2.1.3 Proportion of implementation activities reflecting GCM-consistent practices.</p> <p>2.1.4 Degree of GCM integration in monitoring and reporting frameworks.</p>	<p>Project reports</p> <p>PSC minutes</p> <p>JP managers</p> <p>National ministry counterparts</p> <p>GCM resolution document</p> <p>The GCM's focus on migration drivers (e.g., poverty, conflict) and vulnerabilities aligns with project's aims</p>	<p>Document review and analysis</p> <p>Regional (ECOWAS) and national migration policies</p> <p>Interviews with key stakeholders</p>
<p>2.2 How well does the project complement and generate synergies with other ongoing UN and national and provincial governments' programmes in the country; and how these could be scaled up in a future follow up phase?</p>	<p>2.2.1 Number of joint activities or shared outputs with UN and national/provincial programs addressing migration vulnerabilities, including with European Union and other international organisations</p> <p>2.2.2 Proportion of MPTF project resources leveraged to enhance existing UN or government interventions, including the European Union and other international organisations</p> <p>2.2.3 Extent to which project monitoring identifies scalable models for future collaboration with UN and government programs, including the European Union and other international organisations</p>	<p>Project reports</p> <p>PSC minutes</p> <p>INTERPOL National Centra; Bureau</p> <p>The Gambia's "YIRIWA" plan (2023-2027)</p> <p>JPs project staff</p> <p>MPTF donor</p>	<p>Project document review and analysis</p> <p>Review of official documents on policy</p> <p>UN strategic country plans</p> <p>Interviews with key stakeholders</p>
<p><b>3. To what extent has the MPTF project is achieving its results?</b></p>		<p>Evaluation criteria associated: Effectiveness</p>	
<p>3.1 To what extent has the project achieved the intended outcomes along the Trans-Gambia transport corridor (with data and analysis disaggregated):</p> <p>- claiming their rights and utilize appropriate protection services and mechanisms?</p> <p>- demonstrating effective life skills and access to livelihood opportunities?</p>	<p>3.1.1 Percentage of target community members reporting increased ability to claim their rights and access protection services, disaggregated by gender, age, and vulnerability status.</p> <p>3.1.2 Number of individuals utilizing protection services or mechanisms established or strengthened by the project, disaggregated by type of service and user demographics.</p> <p>3.1.3 Proportion of trained participants demonstrating effective life skills and applying them to improve their livelihoods, disaggregated by gender and age.</p> <p>3.1.4 Increase in access to livelihood opportunities among target beneficiaries, disaggregated by type of opportunity and beneficiary group.</p>	<p>Target groups/end beneficiaries, trainees</p> <p>M&amp;E reports and input</p> <p>Project reports / training reports</p> <p>JPs managers / consultants</p> <p>Workplans</p>	<p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews with JPI staff and consultants</p> <p>Interviews with trainees and beneficiaries</p> <p>Site visits</p>
<p>3.2 To what extent were the relevant stakeholders reached as expected, and to what extent were they</p>	<p>3.2.1 Percentage of targeted stakeholders reached by the project compared to planned targets, disaggregated by stakeholder type</p>	<p>Project reports</p> <p>M&amp;E reports and input</p>	<p>Document review and analysis</p> <p>Interviewing beneficiaries and target communities</p>

Key QUESTIONS and sub-questions	Assessment indicators / Lines of enquiry	Sources	Data collection techniques
satisfied with the results of the intervention?	3.2.2 Average satisfaction rating of stakeholders with the intervention's results, disaggregated by stakeholder group 3.2.3 Proportion of stakeholders reporting that project results addressed their priority needs, disaggregated by type and location	Data collected from beneficiaries and target communities Interviews	Data collection with statistical methodology
3.3 What were the major factors, internal and external, influencing the MPTF project results?	3.3.1 Number of internal project factors identified as significantly affecting outcome achievement, with evidence of their impact 3.3.2 Percentage of project milestones delayed or enhanced by external factors, with documented reasons 3.3.3 Proportion of project risks identified in the design phase that materialized and affected results, with mitigation effectiveness assessed 3.3.4 Stakeholder-reported influence of internal and external factors on project success, rated on a scale.	Interview managers / staff/ consultants PSC minutes Risk Management strategy Environmental and weather conditions Economic, trade, social and community issues related to migration	Document review Interviews with JP managers and staff Interviews community / leaders Key stakeholders and government partners Statistical and data reports Geopolitical and conflict related data
<b>4. To what extent and how well were activities coordinated and implemented, synergies produced among UN implementing partners, and available resources efficiently used?</b> Evaluation criteria associated: Efficiency			
4.1 To what extent was the project efficiently managed and coordinated among UN partners involved, and how it contributed to increase the UN coherence (Delivery as One) under the Residence Coordinator (RC) leadership in Gambia?	4.1.1 Percentage of project activities completed on time and within budget by JPs, under RC oversight. 4.1.2 Number of joint coordination mechanisms established or utilized among UN partners, including utilising operational support functions (UNOPS) 4.1.3 Proportion of resources shared or pooled among UN partners, contributing to cost savings or efficiency gains 4.1.4 Stakeholder perception of UN coordination effectiveness and coherence, rated under RC leadership	Planning documents Project/progress reports MPTF strategies/policies UN Sustainable Development Group reports	Document review Interviews with JP managers and staff Interviews with key stakeholders Interview with donor
4.2 How well were the main activities implemented, and outputs delivered and/or properly adapted to emerging needs, and quality of the implementation perceived by key stakeholders?	4.2.1 Percentage of main activities completed, and outputs delivered according to the planned timeline and scope 4.2.2 The JP adjustments made to activities or outputs in response to emerging challenges, with documented justification reflecting change and adaptive management 4.2.3 Cost-efficiency ratio of delivering outputs relative to planned budgets using simplified financial analysis 4.2.4 Average stakeholder rating of the quality of implementation and output delivery, disaggregated by sex and age	Planning documents Project/progress reports Log-frames/indicators Baseline/needs assessment studies Target group/beneficiary representatives (disadvantaged population included) JPs staff/managers	Document review Interviews with JP managers and staff Interviews with target groups/beneficiaries Site visits
4.3 To what extent were the activities implemented in the most efficient	4.3.1 Percentage of activities completed within planned timeframes and budgets	Planning documents/ Baseline/needs assessment studies	Document review

Key QUESTIONS and sub-questions	Assessment indicators / Lines of enquiry	Sources	Data collection techniques
way (time and fund) and risks efficiently mitigated?	4.3.2 Average cost per output delivered compared to industry benchmarks 4.3.3 Number of identified risks mitigated effectively, with minimal impact on time and cost efficiency	Project/progress reports Log-frames/indicators Target group/beneficiary representatives JP staff/managers	Interviews with JPs managers and staff Interviews with target groups/beneficiaries
4.4 How well the on-going monitoring mechanisms were enabling a proper project steering, supporting decisions on any adjustment, and meeting accountability needs?	4.4.1 Ratio of monitoring reports delivered on schedule and used for project steering decisions 4.4.2 Number of adjustments to project activities or outputs directly supported by monitoring data 4.4.3 Proportion of key performance indicators (KPIs) tracked consistently and reported 4.4.4 Presence of a unified M&E system jointly used by JPs	Planning documents/ Baseline/needs assessment studies Project/progress reports Log-frames/indicators M&E reports and data JP staff/managers	Document review Interviews with JPs managers and staff
4.5 To what extent were mainstreaming dimensions (gender equality, inclusion of youth, and human rights) considered in the implementation of activities and services provided?	4.5.1 Activities and outputs explicitly designed and implemented with gender equality, youth inclusion, and human rights components 4.5.2 Number of beneficiaries reached by mainstreaming-focused activities, disaggregated by gender, age, and rights-affected groups 4.5.3 Stakeholder perception of the effectiveness of mainstreaming dimensions in activity and service delivery, rated on a scale	Planning documents/ Baseline/needs assessment studies Project/progress reports OECD/DAC marker system Target group/beneficiary representatives (disadvantaged population included) Log-frames/indicators M&E reports and data JP staff/managers	Document review Interviews with JPs managers and staff Interviews with target groups/beneficiaries
<b>5. To what extent has the project generated changes (positive or negative, intended or unintended) at the beneficiaries, communities and local and national entities levels?</b> Evaluation criteria associated: Impact			
5.1 To what extent has the project contributed to higher outcomes results in terms of: - the enjoyment of human rights by impacted rights-holders; - the advancement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls; and - the advancement of children's rights and meeting their needs?	5.1.1 Percentage of rights-holders reporting improved enjoyment of human rights due to project interventions, disaggregated by sex and age 5.1.2 Increase in women's and girls' empowerment indicators (e.g., income, decision-making, education access) attributed to the project, disaggregated by age 5.1.3 Number/percentage of children benefiting from improved rights and access to formal protection services (government, CSO, and NGOs) – disaggregated 5.1.4 Number of community or institutional changes (positive or unintended) linked to the project's focus on rights, gender, and children	JP staff/managers Project/progress reports Target group/beneficiary representatives Government statistics (GBoS) Project exit strategy	Document review Interviews with JPs staff/managers Interviews target group/beneficiary

Key QUESTIONS and sub-questions	Assessment indicators / Lines of enquiry	Sources	Data collection techniques
5.2 To what extent has the MPTF project brought significant change on the GCM implementation?	5.2.1 Number of GCM objectives advanced through project activities 5.2.2 Percentage of relevant stakeholders reporting enhanced GCM-aligned practices or awareness due to the project 5.2.3 Extent of national or local institutional adoption of GCM principles or practices as a result of the project	JP staff/managers Project/progress reports Target group/beneficiary representatives Government statistics (GBoS), policies, YIRIWA Development plan GCM resolution document UN Sustainable Development Group reports	Document review Interviews with JPs staff/managers Interviews government and key stakeholders
5.3 Is there any other intended or unintended remarkable result or effect?	5.3.1 Number of unintended positive effects identified at the beneficiary or community level 5.3.2 Number of stakeholders reporting significant negative unintended consequences 5.3.3 Number of institutional or policy changes at local or national levels attributed to the project, beyond initial expectations 5.3.4 Extent of community-level behavioural or economic changes attributed to the project	JPs managers and staff Project/progress reports Target group/beneficiary representatives Key government stakeholders	Interviews (with all sources of information) Site visits
<b>6. To what extent the benefits and effects are likely to continue and being sustained?</b>		Evaluation criteria associated: Sustainability	
6.1 To what extent did the project contributed to strength the capacities, plans and structures of the Government of The Gambia and its departments at national and local level to continue making use of the services/products produced?	6.1.1 Number of targeted national and local authorities and partners with enhanced capacities to manage and sustain project benefits 6.1.2 Number of plans or strategies updated or developed by authorities and partners to incorporate project services/products for continued use 6.1.3 Number of project services/products actively utilized by authorities and partners post-intervention, with evidence of independent operation 6.1.4 Stakeholder confidence in the ability to sustain project benefits	JPs managers and staff Project/progress reports Target group/beneficiary representatives Key government stakeholders	Interviews (with all sources of information) Site visits
6.2 Which activities or components of the project proved to enhance sustainability and should be scaled up, and which ones should be reinforced?	6.2.1 Number of activities or components demonstrating sustained benefits beyond project support 6.2.2 Stakeholder consensus on activities/components to scale up or reinforce	JPs managers and staff Project/progress reports Target group/beneficiary representatives Key government stakeholders	Interviews (with all sources of information) Site visits

## Annex 3.2 List of documents reviewed

### Evaluation scoping and actors

- MPTF Baseline Terms of Reference (ToR)
- Rapid Assessment Report (baseline) 032023
- ToR National Consultant (NCE)
- Reporting and data collection forms

### Corporate strategies (ITC, IOM, UNICEF, UNDP)

- ITC Strategic Plan 2022-2025
- ITC Country Engagement Strategy 2024-2030
- ITC IEU guideline on evaluations
- UNICEF – In Search of Opportunities (voices of children)
- UNDP The Gambia Country Programme Document
- IOM Interim Country Strategy – The Gambia

### Project Documents

- Annual Reports 2022, 2023, 2024
- Progress Report Aug 2024
- Project Steering Committee 2022, 2023, 2024
- Financial report (online) and budget
- ToR for Baseline Assessment Consultant
- Rapid Assessment on SSCBT and Migration along the Trans-Gambia TC April – May 2022
- Theory of Change document
- Updated Logframe
- IOM / The Hub – Final M&E report April 2025
- Presentation JP MPTF
- Various coaching and training reports
- Procurement (as per ARs)
- NCE 5 month revision October 2024
- Construction planning and reports
- Beneficiaries List various activities and JPs

### Project governance and partnerships

- GiEPA One Stop Shop Entrepreneurship Development Centre – Concept Note
- GiEPA OSSEC Standard Operating Procedures
- Project Steering Committee (PSC) Inaugural Meeting 072022
- PSC minutes 062022, 072023, 022024
- MoUs

- MPTF Funding MoU
- Contractual Documents
- No-Cost Extension (NCE) revision 102024
- Description of Action 122021

#### Migration Multi Partner Trust Fund

- Migration MPTF Marker Guidance – Priority Areas
- Migration MPTF – Standard MoU (not signed)
- Migration MPTF Operational Manuals
- Evaluation of the MPTF – Final Report December 2022
- MPTF Pipeline and Funding
- Implementing the GCM for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (booklet and guide)

#### Other Resource Documents

- Global Compact for Migration
- National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants, including Victims of Trafficking in The Gambia
- MoFEA Public-Private Partnership Operational Guidelines
- IOM Migration in The Gambia – Country Profile 2017
- The UN Resident Coordinator system – an overview
- EU Sub-Saharan Africa Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027
- Donor Briefing: Highlights from Afrobarometer Round 10 survey in The Gambia
- Gambia Recovery Focused National Development Plan 2023 – 2027
- AfCFTA and ECOWAS Guide
- INTERPOL NCB Gambia information sheet
- EU Maritime Security Fact sheet – The Gulf of Guinea
- EUTF Thematic Evaluation on Strengthening Resilience of Vulnerable and Displacement Affected Communities in the Horn of Africa
- UNFPA GMIS article 15 August 2023
- ENACT OCI Africa final report 2023
- ICCS Implementation Manual
- Multinational – Trans-Gambia Corridor Project Construction of Bridge and Cross-Border Improvement
- Songhai Initiative Final Report Evaluation
- Songhai Initiative Peace Corp
- Trans Gambia Project general information
- Gambia Migration Vulnerability / MPTF Office
- Gambia Country Report 2024 / The Standard
- Various News media reports

## Annex 3.3 List of interviews conducted

KII: Key informant interview; SSI: Semi-structured interview; FGD: Focus group discussion

Institution / Title	Method	Date - format
<b>MPTF, PUNOs and Management</b>		
Aklile Habtemariam, Programme Officer, ITC	KII	21 March - online
Yusupha Keita, Technical Advisor and Coordinator – Country Representative, ITC		07 April - online
Aissatou Diallo, Chief Office of Africa, ITC	KII	26 March – online 03 November - online
Laetitia Hoarau, Programme and Partnership Officer, Fund Management Unit – MPTF Donor	KII	02 April - online 07 April - online
Karl-Fredérick Paul, UN Resident Coordinator	KII	08 April, ITC Office, Bakau 17 April, UN House Bakau
<b>Field Phase - The Gambia</b>		
Mama Jarju, Director of Economic Statistics Sally Malack, Statistician – National Accounts Ebrima Darboe, Statistician – Trade	FGD	07 April, GBoS Office, Kanifing
Yusupha Keita, Acting Country Rep., ITC Ousman George Badjie, National Programme Officer, IOM Maimuna Jaiteh, Child Protection Officer, UNICEF Samba Jallow, Head of Poverty and Inclusive Growth, UNDP Alieu Bangura, Programme Associate, UNDP	FGD, Briefing	07 April, ITC Office, Bakau
Mamadi Dampha, Deputy Permanent Secretary, MoTIE Basiru Secka, Principal Economist, MoTIE	SSI	07 April, MoTIE, Banjul
Joseph Sambou, Finance and Admin Officer, Start-Up Incubator Jaffeh Faal, Business Support Officer, Start-Up Incubator	FGD	07 April, SIG Office, Kanifing
Modou L. Samateh, Superintendent, MoI	SSI	08 April, MoI, Kotu
Saika Sonko, Principal Gender Officer, MoGCSW Fillay Nyassi, Social Welfare Officer, MoGCSW	FGD	08 April, MoGCSW Office, Kanifing
Omar Bah, Peace, Security and Justice Officer, NYC Ebrima Ndow, M&E Manager, NYC	SSI	08 April, NYC Office, Kanifing 09 October - online
Gibbi Bah, Department of Community Development	SSI	08 April, DCD HQ, Banjul
Isatou Dabo, Executive Director, NAATIP	SSI	09 April, NAATIP, Kololi 09 October - online
Naffy Barry, President, GWCC Maimuna Sanyang, Business Development Officer, GWCC Ebrima Ceesay, Finance Officer, GWCC	FGD	09 April, GWCC Office, Kanifing 09 October - online
Madi Kambia, Director Enterprise Support, GiEPA	SSI	09 April, GiEPA HQ, Kairaba Avenue
Sheriff Conteh, Deputy Director General, GTHI Ebrima Ceesay, HoD of Academics, GTHI	SSI	09 April, GTHI HQ, Kanifing
NCB, INTERPOL names confidential	FGD	09 April, Police HQ, Banjul
Binta K.J Barrow, Assistant Commissioner, GID Abdoulatif Sonko, Asst. Superintendent, GID	FGD	09 April, GID Migration Management Unit, Banjul

Institution / Title	Method	Date - format
Akali Jammeh, Inspector MIDAS ToT, GID Lamin Jammeh, Inspector, GID Dembo Saidy, Inspector, GID		
Yusupha Keita, Acting Country Rep., ITC	SSI	09 April, ITC Office, Bakau
Ismaila Danso, Deputy PS and Chair of the PSC, MoGCSW	SSI	10 April, MoGCSW Office, Kanifing
Janko E. Marong, Trade Information Officer, OSS, GiEPA Rohey Jagne, Receptionist and Admin Officer, OSS, GiEPA	SSI	10 April, OSSEC, Farafenni
Lumo market, cold storage, hygiene site visit	Location	10 April, Farafenni
Mustapha Senghore, Regional Commissioner, Inter-Agency Coord. Committee (IACC), GID NBR Sanna Kanyi, Ass. Regional Commissioner, IACC, GID Abdoulie S. Camara, Ass. Immigration Control Officer, IACC, GID	FGD	11 April, GID Farafenni Office
Alagie Jobarteh, Head of Operations, IACC, Keur Ali BP	SSI	11 April, Keur Ali border Post
Ousianou Charreh, Customs Manager, IACC, Keur Ali BP	SSI	11 April, Keur Ali border Post
Adama Fofana, Beneficiary, CBT (cloths and shoes)	SSI	11 April, Farafenni
Oumie Cham, Beneficiary, CBT (Women accessories)	SSI	11 April, Farafenni
Bintou Danso, Beneficiary, CBT (Vegetables)	SSI	11 April, Farafenni
Fanta Faal, Food Vendor (not project beneficiary, community leader)	SSI	12 April, Farafenni
Haddy Secka, CBT, (Agro-processor) Ndey Ngalla, CBT, (Agro-processor) Kura Nying, CBT, (Agro-processor)	FGD	12 April, Farafenni
Amie Mboge, Gardener, (not project beneficiary, community leader) Adam Kassama, Gardener, (not project beneficiary, community leader)	FGD	12 April, Bereto
Mbenge Joof, Beneficiary, CBT (comsetic)	SSI	12 April, Farafenni
Jabou Kinteh, Beneficiary, CBT, (Batik and tie & Dye)	SSI	12 April, Farafenni
Observation of the border operation on Lumo Day	Observation	13 April, Keur Ali BP
Alieu Bittaye, Village head (Alkalo)	SSI	13 April, Keur Ali
Observation of the Lumo Day	Observation and casual interviews	13 April, Lumo Farafenni
Musa Keita, GID Commission and team, Regional Commissioner, LRR	FGD	14 April, Soma
Alagie Jobe, Ass. Superintendent, Head of Operations, GID	SSI	14 April, Misera BP
Couple Yankuba Saidybah, Head of MIDAS, GID	SSI	14 April, Misera BP
Mamadou Saidybah, Centre Manager, Mansakonko Hospitality Centre	SSI	14 April, Mansakonko
Ndey Fatou Ceesay, Beneficiary, CBT (cosmetics, shop owner)	SSI	14 April, Soma
Landing Sanneh, Chairman, Mansakonko Area Council	SSI	14 April, Soma
Amie Jagne, Regional Focal Person, GWCC	SSI	14 April, online

Institution / Title	Method	Date - format
Jontang Barrow, Beneficiary, CBT, (cosmetics, soap making)	SSI	15 April. Soma
Ramatoulie Jallow, Beneficiary, CBT (market stall)	SSI	15 April, Soma
Ndey Saidiba, Beneficiary, CBT did not receive grant (sells water)	SSI	15 April, Soma
Ya Haddy Saidyba, Beneficiary, CBT (construction, trade)	SSI	15 April, Soma 25 October, online
Mariam Jawo, Beneficiary, CBT (shop owner, cosmetics)	SSI	15 April, Soma
Omar K. Jammah, Center Manager OSS, GiEPA	SSI	16 April, Soma 09 October - online
Kaddijatou Suso, Beneficiary, CBT and community leader, did not receive grant	SSI	16 April, Kolilor village
Aminata Conteh, Beneficiary, CBT (fisheries and boat owner)	SSI	16 April, Tendaba village
Aminata Conteh, Programme Coordinator, Startup Incubator Gambia	SSI	17 April, Kanifing
Beran Ndondeh, Digital Transformation Advisor, The Hub	SSI	17 April, online 15 October, online
Amadou Jallow, owner HERICO Kindy Bah, technical officer, HERICO Bailo Jallow, sales manager Babacar Jallow, business development Omar Jallow, sales	FGD	18 April, Banjul

## Annex 4. Evaluation workplan

Evaluation Phase Tasks / Deliverables	Date / Location
<b>Desk-document review / Inception</b>	
- Collection, classification, in-depth review and analysis of documents <sup>47</sup>	13 Feb-15 March 2024
- Preliminary contacts/ online introduction interviews with ITC, IOM, UNDP and UNICEF managers – Collection of basic data	
- Consolidation of evaluation questions / evaluation matrix with indicators and data collection tools	01 - 15 March 2024
- Submission of an Inception Note with revised Evaluation Questions, stakeholders mapping, and Evaluation Matrix with indicators <sup>48</sup>	
- Preparation of interview/field agendas in coordination with ERG, national consultant and project teams.	16 March – 06 April 2024
<b>Data Collection – Field Trip and Remote Interviews<sup>49</sup></b>	
- Online technical interviews with donor and JPs as required	15 March -05 April 2024
- Data collection in the Gambia by local consultant – coordination, supervision and guidance by the evaluation expert. (If needed) conducting online surveys with the end beneficiaries in the targeted countries <sup>50</sup> & analysis of survey results	15 March / end of contract – The Gambia
- Interviews, focus group meetings, and other data collection with the implementing partners, target groups, stakeholders and end beneficiaries in The Gambia	06-19 April / The Gambia
- Brief and debrief the Migration MPTF partners, including national authorities if required (MoTIE, MoI, and MoGCSW) and with the UN Resident Coordinator or alternate.	07 and 18 April / The Gambia
- Additional data collection as result of the <b>project’s non extension cost for 3 months</b>	July (online and in The Gambia)
<b>Data validation/ consolidation of findings</b>	
- Presentation of preliminary findings/summary of the fieldwork management in discussion/feedback session	August 2025
- Presentation of preliminary findings/summary of the fieldwork to the ERG / JP (online validation workshop) discussion/feedback session	
- Consolidation of data and analysis of the feedback from validation workshop	
<b>Reporting Phase</b>	
- Drafting the evaluation report in line with the initial feedback from the preliminary findings/conclusions	April / May and August 2025
- Receive comments and feedback on the draft evaluation report from ERG / IEU and JPs	October 2025
- Finalisation and submission of the final evaluation report incorporating the comments received	October / November 2025
- Preparation of a communication product (2-pages) and presentation of the key evaluation results	

<sup>47</sup> Document analysis will continue throughout the evaluation exercise.

<sup>48</sup> The Inception Note will be revised in line with the comments of ERG if needed, and finalised before the field trips begin.

<sup>49</sup> JPs focal points for each country to manage in coordination with evaluators and supported by the ERG/IEU.

<sup>50</sup> This will require support from the JPs (dissemination of the survey and collection of responses).

## Annex 5. Summary of Findings by evaluation criteria

### Relevance

*The characteristics and institutional advantages of the PUNOs define the design and assumptions underpinning the project outputs and outcomes. This has guided the ToC, LFM, and programme design, shaping the understanding of the traditional push factors driving IMP. However, this may be misleading in some respects. The project has a coherent design aligned with the GCM's objectives, MPTF guidelines and programmatically established practices reflecting the defined push factors for IMP. On the other hand, the existing assumptions do not fully reflect the psycho-social and mindset-related realities of some individuals considering irregular migration. This led to some design issues and subsequently causal weaknesses in the project's ToC.*

*Some misperceptions persist regarding the concepts of migration (irregular vs. regular) and their links with HT. The lack of clarity when approaching these concepts leads to an inefficient allocation of resources and limitations in addressing the issues effectively. Regular migration is not problematic and is encouraged and facilitated in the GCM and NDP. It is the lawful and regulated movement of people, which does not represent an illegal act.*

*On the other hand, IMP uses unorthodox and illegal pathways to migration, which represents a significant risk, especially for vulnerable persons such as young girls and boys. Initiatives to address this issue are linked to socio-economic and psycho-social push factors. In some cases, IMP ends up as a transition to HT. HT being the criminal exploitation of persons on the move. In this respect, tackling this issue effectively requires capacities such as intelligence gathering, investigation, and prosecution, inter-agency collaboration, and a multi-country approach.*

*The project is partly addressing the main issues linked to migration with agency-specific competitive advantages that ensure attention to GCM's key objectives. However, the existing data collection and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are weak, which limits learning, traceability, and validation of important assumptions related to migration and IMP in The Gambia. This has an impact on design and the targeted stakeholders, while also defining capacities and allocating resources.*

*All the traditional thematic areas are covered in the project design, per the ToC and MPTF donor requirements. The PUNOs effectively apply the established programmatic approaches. There are sound systems in place to monitor the programmatic activities and outputs, including training, MIDAS installation, protection issues, income generation, and management of construction works. Yet, the shortcomings in the M&E/MEAL system led to insufficient data collection, weak tracking of outcomes and beneficiaries' post-TVET experiences, and inadequate testing of the project's assumptions regarding broader concepts of IMP and HT, consequently creating some obstacles for effective learning and adaptive management.*

### Coherence

*The project serves as a good model that can be further adapted and/or scaled up to foster collaboration between the UN, the Gambian government, the EU, and other international organisations. With a refined framework, the initiative can enhance coordination, streamline resource allocation, and address migration-related challenges more comprehensively. This collaborative approach would ensure sustainable outcomes, leveraging the strengths of each partner to support The Gambia's migration governance and socio-economic development.*

*The NRM is critical for ensuring operational consistency and effective responses by relevant agencies, particularly the NAATIP for human trafficking and the GID for migration issues. However, the project lacks sufficient resources and capacity-building measures to support the NRM's operational implementation. Currently, the agencies' capacities for coordination, data sharing, and management are inadequate to bridge this gap. While NAATIP possesses robust investigative and prosecutorial authority, it remains underutilised and unsupported by the project. Similarly, INTERPOL's potential to enhance international coordination through its NCB and an integrated security framework among Gambian agencies is untapped. This framework could have addressed not only trafficking but also broader issues such as intelligence, international networks, information sharing, and operational support.*

*INTERPOL's capacity to combat transnational crime is significant, with its 19 specialised databases collectively storing millions of records, including data on fugitives, stolen property, firearms, and travel documents. These databases, accessible via the secure I-24/7 communications system, enable real-time searches with an average response time of 0.5 seconds, facilitating rapid information sharing among 196 member countries. Tools like the INSIGHT platform and databases such as iARMS and IBIN support advanced criminal intelligence analysis, enabling the identification of crime patterns and connections. The systems are fully interoperable with the IOM's MIDAS BM systems that are already in use, while addressing important gaps in law enforcement capacities and coordination.*

*As a design weakness, maritime capacities have not been adequately considered in the project's design. The Yaoundé Architecture (YA) is a comprehensive maritime security and safety architecture that includes 19 littoral states of the Gulf of Guinea. The YA includes MMCCs/MOCs, and The Gambia falls under Zone G, together with Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Senegal; Cabo Verde is the host country for the MMCC. Currently, there is no MoU in place between the NCB and the MOC.*

*The GBoS is not directly involved in the project, and it does not currently have validated, informal trade data collected from the ground to be entered into national accounts. There is a TIO employed at the OSS in Farafenni, representing an important yet underutilised capacity. The work done by ITC in partnership with the COMESA Statistics Unit in Zambia may provide critical insights and knowledge on approaches and best practices. The GBoS is a key national stakeholder with the potential to establish a framework for collecting and validating informal trade data for the national accounts, and to inform relevant policies.*

## Effectiveness

*The project has made significant progress towards its goals, yet it also faces some challenges. Construction delays have impacted the Lumo, and hygiene facilities in Farafenni. The Farafenni One-Stop Shop (OSS) needs some operational improvements, and the Masa Konko Hospitality Training Centre is currently sufficiently in use. Plans to create safe spaces for children along the transport corridor were redirected to the Bakoteh Centre outside Banjul. The delays led to two no-cost contract extensions, adding eight months to the project timeline (January–May 2025 and June–September 2025). The Farafenni OSSEC, completed in September 2024 and managed by GIEPA, employs three staff members; however, it lacks the Ministry of Justice's support for business registrations, which recently resulted in challenges for eight women traders. Nevertheless, the centre has accepted registration and is redirecting them to the company registrar near Banjul. The Innovation Room is not efficiently utilised, the conference hall is fully equipped with TV, air condition and furniture and can be used by CBTs and local business free of charge.*

*Border operations have improved, particularly among immigration officials, with over 60% of the evaluation survey respondents noting positive changes. However, customs officials still face criticism for harassment, arbitrary tax collection, and inconsistent penalties targeting informal cross-border traders (CBT). Customs fees are often negotiated, which can result in delays for perishable agricultural goods at border posts. Compared to Senegal, The Gambia's customs protocols are weaker. While inter-agency patrols take place, customs authorities frequently conduct separate patrols, further complicating trade. Trainings on gender-based violence (GBV) and human trafficking, held since 2022 with NAATIP and MoGCSW, targeted border officials, civil society, and local government. A National Referral Mechanism (NRM) provides hotlines (NAATIP: 1123; GBV: 199 via GIMS, operational since March 2023). UNFPA reports 91 GBV cases as of March 2023; however, there is no available project-specific data on follow-up actions or prosecutions for those cases.*

*The project's income-generating activities have been highly successful, particularly for 30 CBT women in NBR and LRR. These women received grants and training in financial management, enabling them to adopt practices like bookkeeping, separating personal and business finances, and reinvesting in their businesses. Most of them report plans for business expansion, which reflects a positive shift in mindset. However, the digital skills training provided by The Hub was too brief and covered only basic online business skills, suggesting a need for a more comprehensive approach. The Farafenni Lumo, with 150 stalls in place, aims to support 500 weekly traders, yet it faces construction delays, particularly for the hygiene facilities. The limited number of stalls also raises concerns about fair allocation among the traders.*

*The project promotes women's empowerment and gender equality through a rights-based approach, empowering women and marginalised groups via capacity-building and income-generating activities. These*

efforts have fostered sustainable change, addressing poverty and inequality. However, some activities only support minimum wage levels, limiting economic security, especially for young people in TVET. The lack of consistent access to a living wage remains a significant gap, hindering the project's ability to fully address economic vulnerabilities for all beneficiaries.

## Efficiency

The project is a pilot intervention designed to test and refine the best practices for future similar initiatives. It focuses on close collaboration among four Participating UN Organisations (PUNOs) to "deliver as one." The project has provided valuable lessons in terms of management, particularly through its innovative whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach, supported by the specialised expertise of the four respective UN agencies. The evaluation highlights the areas where there is room for improvement in terms of operational coordination and strategic oversight.

The PUNOs have worked well together on programmatic activities, such as TVET, business development, and income generation, efficiently managing technical challenges as they arise. However, cooperation on operational functions such as procurement, budget management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and communication and visibility (C&V) has been limited. This stems from weak strategic guidance at the Project Steering Committee (PSC) level and the allocation of budgets to each PUNO, which follow their individual procedures. For instance, ITC, lacking a country office in The Gambia, faces delays in budget approvals due to its reliance on the headquarters in Geneva, as UN rules require permanent staff to authorise the expenditures.

The UN Resident Coordinator (RC) office in The Gambia was underutilised, with insufficient involvement in implementation and attendance at the PSC meetings, resulting in reduced oversight. The project also missed opportunities to streamline costs by sharing operational support functions. For example, the construction of the Lumo market, as well as hygiene facilities in Farafenni, was split between ITC and UNDP, utilising different contractors. This led to delays and weak oversight. The aspects of financial management could not be fully evaluated due to limited access to expenditure reports. Nevertheless, no major spending issues were identified.

The collection, organisation, validation, and utilisation of data related to target beneficiaries has been insufficient, particularly for young men, who are the most vulnerable population group in the context of IMP and HT. The deficiency of an effective M&E/MEAL system hampers learning and adaptive management, weakening a comprehensive alignment with GCM's Objective 1 and best practices.

The project design places a significant focus on HRBA, Gender, and Child protection, with the MPTF marker system indicating that these concepts have been considered in the proposal, thereby contributing to gender and child protection and mainstreaming. Project activities are consistently designed and implemented with components that prioritise gender equality, youth inclusion, and HRBA. All training includes these components, and especially duty bearers such as immigration officers have been targeted by these trainings. Beneficiaries, including CBT women and youth receiving TVET, have also been trained and provided with practical information regarding their rights and expectations when dealing with government officials.

## Impact

Although the project partnered with the right government capacities, such as GiEPA, the institutional capacity, motivations and financial capabilities have not been sufficiently addressed to continue or expand on the project's benefits, although assessments were conducted (such as UNDP's stakeholder assessments), the project lacked a comprehensive assessment, such as a SWOT analysis, to evaluate government stakeholders' interplay regarding impact, strategic intent, capacity, and sustainability, which are critical for ensuring the ongoing benefits to the targeted beneficiaries.

The project has strong prospects to sustain its model and networks beyond the current managerial structure, as the staff is competent and experienced. However, there is room for improvement in collaboration among the PUNOs. UNRCS is operational and is likely to streamline several operational functions of JPs, hence, improve JPs' management capacity with more substantial support. However, the process of establishing the RC's engagement is complicated, and there is little clarity on the funding structure for future similar projects.

*MPTF is willing to consider extending further funding; however, coordination between MPTF staff and UN agencies needs improvement. Projects must be sensitive to the requirement to enhance coordination and budget allocation, facilitating and streamlining the respective operations. A comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of PUNOs in the JP structure is essential. For example, ITC does not have full legal country office status in the Gambia. Its staff is project-based, and operational functions, such as budget management, are handled by ITC staff in the headquarters in Geneva.*

*The replication potential for the project is high for the joint approach, which includes income generation, entrepreneurship, market and employment pathways, BM, and targeted agency engagement to improve orderly migration, child protection, and a strong HRBA. The geographic scope is appropriate and scalable, allowing for an increased focus on IMP logistical routes and the involvement of specialised agencies such as NAATIP and NCB INTERPOL.*

*The project shows significant promise working with women-led MSMEs and established CBTs. The replicability potential is strong, particularly for community-based women-led businesses. Design of the (future) programmes should consider the need for strong commitment over an extended period to build capacities with a strong entrepreneurship mindset, building solid partnerships with TVET institutions, market connections to build trust and strategic partnerships with government, communities, CSOs, BSOs, and PUNOs. The project has built significant networks that can be exploited in this regard.*

## Sustainability

*Sustainability prospects are partly weak due to insufficient government capacities and commitments. Nevertheless, GiEPA is an exception and is fully engaged, committing resources, staff, and budget allocation to, e.g. the OSSEC in Farafenni. Another key institution is the hospitality training centre in Mansa Konko which is fully supported by the city council. The high turnover of key staff, especially in the GID immigration agency, is causing challenges, disrupting continuity, and eroding institutional knowledge. It also hampers the effective implementation of programs and weakens the agency's ability to maintain consistent progress towards sustainability goals. The issue is caused by weak staff retention strategies and inadequate workforce planning, which fail to ensure stability and expertise within the agency.*

*Establishing strong links to the policy environment can significantly improve impact and sustainability prospects, while strengthening programmatic frameworks, government partnerships, and contributing to improved governance and trust at the community level. Policy linkages should be formulated for each relevant output to the relevant government partner, with policy objectives and clear pathways. This can be included in an exit strategy as guidance for potential future projects.*

*Insufficient PPPs in the project weaken its sustainability and effectiveness, as it limits the collaboration needed to leverage resources, expertise, and innovation from both sectors. The lack of robust PPPs results in missed opportunities for GiEPA to access private sector funding, technical know-how, and operational efficiency that could enhance the OSS's implementation. This weakness exacerbates the challenge, such as high staff turnover in the GID, as private partners could potentially support capacity-building or retention programs. Furthermore, without strong PPPs, the project struggles to align the government's priorities with market-driven solutions, leading to reduced stakeholder trust. Weak government capacities further compound this issue, as insufficient frameworks or incentives fail to attract committed private sector involvement. Nevertheless, isolated examples exist, such as GTHI, which aligns its curriculum with industry standards.*

*The CBTs in NBR and LRR women's groups gained significant capacity benefits and systems that enable them to continue their operations beyond the project's support. The women CBTs' capacities built by the project are being retained and further capacitated. A majority of the CBTs are transformed into independent commercial entities with stable income-generating potential, which can handle their own sales and marketing functions. They possess the will and capacity to collaborate and make informed, independent business development decisions. There is also a high level of social awareness and understanding of the importance of women's empowerment that transcends the business dimension, which has enabled a tendency towards self-organisation and community engagement.*

*Not all TVET trainees have necessarily gained long-term employability; nevertheless, a majority of them report increased income generation skills. Most TVET students lack significant work experience, and they*

enter the job market immediately after completing their studies. Therefore, employers may be hesitant to hire newly educated or inexperienced staff. The project struggled to establish strong post-TVET links between trainees and the private sector.

The establishment of a CBTA in The Gambia, facilitated by GIEPA, appears to be an important strategic step in enhancing regional trade integration and economic growth. To date, this opportunity has not been fully leveraged. As of October second, field phase OSSEC has supported the establishment of two CBTA's, one in LRR and one in NBR. The initiative enhances The Gambia's position as a gateway to the West African markets. GIEPA's facilitation, as outlined in its mandate under the 2010 GIEPA Act, include promoting export-oriented investments and providing incentives such as tax holidays and duty waivers, which bolster the CBTA's operations by enhancing private sector participation, focusing on the crucial role of MSMEs in the economy, both formal and informal.

The potential CBTA's links to the TIO enables streamlined access to market intelligence and trade regulations, fostering efficient cross-border transactions, particularly within the ECOWAS framework, where The Gambia benefits from duty-free access under the Trade Liberalisation Scheme. However, these linkages needs to be strengthened by future projects. Additionally, the potential for expansion through collaboration with the GBoS offers opportunities to enhance data collection on informal trade, which constitutes a significant portion of The Gambia's economy. By validating and analysing informal trade data, GBoS could inform evidence-based policies to formalise and regulate these activities, improving trade transparency, increasing tax revenues, and supporting sustainable economic development.

The weakness of sustainability prospects is mainly due to the capacity problems in sustaining project benefits. This requires improvements in three critical areas: i) Government staff capacities and high turnover; ii) The autonomy of CBTs and the strengthening of the two CBTA's with potential regional reach; and iii) Closer working relationships with key regional actors. Key considerations for an up-scaled project approach with multi-country potential partnership, especially with Senegal, would also require strengthening of existing bilateral arrangements.

The project's business model demonstrates strong replication potential, particularly for agencies supporting MSMEs, HRBA and BM. This potential stems from the model of capacitating women CBTs along the TransGambia transport corridor, maintaining a strong focus on human rights, gender and child protection, and expanding and strengthening BM systems. These initiatives, through practical and relevant capacity-building efforts, would transform over time into formal and lasting institutions and processes.

For MSMEs and CBTs, the approach is highly replicable due to its structured focus on entrepreneurship development, enabling micro-businesses to scale up in a sustainable and responsible manner. Successful replication requires fostering a strong entrepreneurial mindset among participants, forging solid partnerships with TVET institutions, and establishing robust market connections. Additionally, high levels of collaboration, trust, and strategic partnerships among PUNOs are critical to ensure the model's scalability and sustainability across diverse contexts.

For BM, the project represents an opportunity to engage the relevant security agencies to address HT in a consolidated manner, while bringing new capacities and approaches to bear. The project makes available technologies and capacities to the law enforcement and border management agencies while ensuring a strong HRBA with a focus on GBV and child protection capacities.

The project enables a whole-of-society and whole-of-government engagement by maximising the UN's convening and mobilisation power. Furthermore, the JP enables a synergistic approach that capitalises on the competitive strengths of each PUNO, matching MPTF's donor requirements with real and practical solutions on the ground. The characteristics of the pilot project demonstrate an innovative and well-managed programmatic approach that combines strong elements of business development, HRBA, border management, and governance into a single force for change. These are all hallmarks of effective migration-related interventions and fulfil the intentions of diverse interests, from a development and security perspective, while serving the beneficiaries well.

## Annex 5. INTERPOL I-24/7 and IOM MIDAS: Advantage Analysis

Human trafficking, a grave human rights violation and transnational crime, relies heavily on the exploitation of vulnerabilities at borders. Effective border management systems are critical to detecting and preventing trafficking, identifying victims, and apprehending perpetrators. This analysis compares INTERPOL's I-24/7 global police communications system and the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) from the perspective of their roles in combating human trafficking, focusing on their functionalities, capacities, and effectiveness.

### 1. Overview of INTERPOL I-24/7 and IOM MIDAS

#### INTERPOL I-24/7

**Purpose:** I-24/7 is INTERPOL's secure global police communications system, designed to facilitate real-time information sharing among its 196 member countries to combat transnational crime, including human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

**Key Features:**

- Provides access to INTERPOL's databases, including records on stolen/lost travel documents, wanted persons, and criminal profiles.
- Enables frontline officers at border points to conduct instant checks via mobile technology.
- Supports global operations (e.g., Operation Liberterra II) to dismantle trafficking networks, with nearly 8 million database checks and 3,222 potential victims rescued in 2024.
- Facilitates notices (e.g., Orange Notices for imminent threats) and diffusions to track suspects or locate missing persons.

**Human Trafficking Focus:** I-24/7 is enforcement-oriented, prioritizing the detection of traffickers, fraudulent documents, and criminal networks while supporting victim identification through coordinated operations and training.

#### IOM MIDAS

**Purpose:** MIDAS is a customizable border management information system developed by IOM to enhance migration management, monitor cross-border movements, and combat transnational crimes like human trafficking.

**Key Features:**

- Collects and processes traveller data (biographic and biometric) at border points, synchronizing it with national headquarters in real-time.
- Integrates with INTERPOL databases and watchlists to flag suspicious documents or individuals linked to trafficking.
- Provides statistical data for migration policy planning and identifying trafficking trends.
- Deployed in 23 countries, with significant implementations in Nigeria and Haiti.

**Human Trafficking Focus:** MIDAS emphasizes migration management and victim protection, enabling border officials to identify potential victims and refer them for assistance while supporting anti-trafficking efforts through data-driven insights.

## 2. Comparative Analysis: Human Trafficking Perspective

### A. Detection and Identification of Trafficking Cases

#### I-24/7:

**Strengths:** I-24/7's strength lies in its global reach and real-time access to INTERPOL's extensive criminal databases, which include millions of records on stolen passports, wanted persons, and trafficking suspects. This enables rapid identification of traffickers and fraudulent documents at border points. For example, Operation Liberterra II conducted nearly 8 million checks, leading to 850 arrests for trafficking-related charges.

**Capacity:** The system's mobile technology allows frontline officers to perform instant checks, enhancing detection at strategic border points. Training programs like the Smuggling Training and Operations Programme (STOP) optimize its use.

**Limitations:** I-24/7 is primarily a law enforcement tool, focusing on criminal apprehension. Its victim identification capabilities depend on officer training and coordination with other agencies, which may vary by country.

#### MIDAS:

**Strengths:** MIDAS excels in processing traveller data at official border points, where 80% of trafficking victims cross, according to IOM data. Its integration with INTERPOL databases allows it to flag suspicious individuals or documents, while its statistical tools help identify trafficking patterns (e.g., routes, victim demographics).

**Capacity:** Deployed in high-traffic areas like Nigeria's Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, MIDAS processes millions of travellers annually, enhancing detection through real-time data synchronization. Its adaptability to local needs makes it effective in diverse contexts.

**Limitations:** MIDAS relies on government adoption and infrastructure, which may limit its use in under-resourced regions. Its focus on data collection may not directly translate to immediate enforcement actions without robust law enforcement integration.

**Comparison:** I-24/7 is more effective for rapid, enforcement-driven detection of traffickers due to its global database access and police coordination. MIDAS is better suited for identifying potential victims through data analysis and integration with INTERPOL systems, particularly at official border points. Their complementary roles are evident in their joint use (e.g., Nigeria's MIDAS querying INTERPOL databases).

### B. Victim Protection and Referral

#### I-24/7:

**Approach:** I-24/7 indirectly supports victim protection by enabling operations that rescue potential victims (e.g., 3,222 in Liberterra II). INTERPOL collaborates with NGOs and IOM to refer victims for assistance, but its primary focus is on disrupting criminal networks.

**Capacity:** INTERPOL's Human Trafficking Expert Group (HTEG) and global operations provide frameworks for victim safeguarding, but these rely on member countries' local systems for follow-up care.

**Challenges:** Limited direct focus on victim assistance may result in gaps in protection, especially in countries with weak social services.

#### MIDAS:

**Approach:** MIDAS prioritizes victim identification and referral by equipping border officials to recognize trafficking indicators (e.g., forged documents, vulnerable demographics). IOM's counter-trafficking expertise ensures victims are referred to protection services.

**Capacity:** IOM's global network, having assisted over 100,000 trafficking victims, supports MIDAS's role in victim protection. In Haiti, MIDAS implementation aims to reduce trafficking risks for undocumented migrants.

**Challenges:** Victim referral depends on local capacity and cooperation with NGOs, which may be inconsistent in crisis-affected regions.

Comparison: MIDAS has a stronger focus on victim protection due to IOM's humanitarian mandate and expertise in counter-trafficking. I-24/7 supports victim rescue through enforcement but is less equipped for direct protection and referral, relying on partnerships like those with IOM.

### **C. Capacity Building and Training**

#### **I-24/7:**

Efforts: INTERPOL's STOP program and regional operations (e.g., WEKA in Africa) provide training to frontline officers on using I-24/7 for trafficking detection. Workshops precede operations to enhance skills in identifying victims and traffickers.

Scale: Training reaches thousands of officers across 196 member countries, supported by INTERPOL's Integrated Border Management Task Force (IBMTF).

Impact: Strengthens law enforcement capacity but may be limited by varying national priorities and resources.

#### **MIDAS:**

Efforts: IOM trains border officials on MIDAS use, focusing on trafficking indicators and victim referral. In Nigeria, training accompanied MIDAS deployment at major airports.

Scale: Training is targeted to countries adopting MIDAS (23 currently), with a focus on building national ownership of data and systems.

Impact: Enhances migration management but is constrained by the system's limited geographic coverage compared to I-24/7.

Comparison: I-24/7's training is broader in scope due to INTERPOL's global network, making it more scalable for enforcement-focused capacity building. MIDAS training is more specialized, emphasizing migration and victim-centric approaches, but its reach is limited to MIDAS-adopting countries.

## **3. Capacity and Scalability**

#### **I-24/7:**

Global Reach: Operates in 196 countries, with over 11,000 registered users by 2007, likely far more now.

Infrastructure: Relies on INTERPOL's secure network and mobile technology, requiring minimal local infrastructure beyond internet access.

Scalability: Highly scalable due to its established global presence and ability to integrate with national police systems.

Challenges: Effectiveness depends on member countries' willingness to prioritize trafficking and allocate resources for training and system use.

#### **MIDAS:**

Global Reach: Deployed in 23 countries, with plans for expansion (e.g., Nigeria's additional airports).

Infrastructure: Requires hardware (e.g., biometric scanners) and software installation, which can be a barrier in low-resource settings.

Scalability: Less scalable than I-24/7 due to dependency on government adoption and funding but highly adaptable to local needs.

Challenges: Limited coverage and reliance on external donors (e.g., Denmark, EU) for implementation.

Comparison: I-24/7's global infrastructure and law enforcement focus make it more scalable and widely implemented. MIDAS, while effective in targeted deployments, faces scalability constraints due to infrastructure and funding needs.

## 4. Collaboration and Integration

**I-24/7 and MIDAS Synergy:** The 2014 INTERPOL-IOM agreement formalized collaboration to combat trafficking, emphasizing information exchange, joint projects, and capacity building. MIDAS's ability to query INTERPOL databases exemplifies this integration, combining IOM's migration data with INTERPOL's criminal intelligence.

**Joint Projects:** Initiatives like the 2015 Ghana-Côte d'Ivoire project to combat child trafficking in the cocoa industry highlight their complementary roles, with INTERPOL focusing on investigations and IOM on victim assistance.

**Impact:** This collaboration enhances both systems' effectiveness, allowing I-24/7 to leverage MIDAS's data for enforcement and MIDAS to benefit from INTERPOL's global intelligence network.

## 5. Effectiveness in Combating Human Trafficking

**I-24/7:** Highly effective in disrupting trafficking networks through global operations and real-time intelligence sharing. Its enforcement focus has led to thousands of arrests and victim rescues, but it relies on partnerships for comprehensive victim support.

**MIDAS:** Effective in identifying victims and trafficking patterns at official border points, particularly in high-traffic areas. Its data-driven approach supports long-term policy solutions, but its enforcement impact is indirect.

**Complementary Roles:** I-24/7's strength in enforcement complements MIDAS's focus on victim identification and migration management, making their combined use more effective than either system alone.

## Conclusion

INTERPOL's I-24/7 and IOM's MIDAS are powerful tools in the fight against human trafficking, with distinct but complementary strengths. I-24/7 excels in enforcement, leveraging its global reach and real-time intelligence to disrupt trafficking networks. MIDAS prioritizes victim identification and migration management, using data to inform anti-trafficking strategies. Their integration, as seen in joint projects and MIDAS's use of INTERPOL databases, maximizes their impact. By addressing scalability and victim protection gaps, both systems can further enhance efforts to combat human trafficking.

## Annex 6. Map of MPTF presence in The Gambia



## Annex 7. Migration MPTF Trans-Gambia Survey

### Content

#### SAMPLE COVERAGE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES (Outcome 3: Improved life skills and income for women/youth)

PROTECTION SERVICES AND RIGHTS AWARENESS (Outcome 2: Women/youth utilize protection services and claim rights)

FACILITATING SAFE AND ORDERLY MIGRATION (Outcome 1: Border authorities effectively facilitate safe migration for women/youth)

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Current Project Needs
- 2) Strategic Considerations
- 3) Scaled-Up Future Interventions

#### SAMPLE COVERAGE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

**Table 1:** Results of interviews

Results	Count	Percent
Sample	202	
Reached	183	90.6
Consent gained / Response rate	170	84.2
Consent declined	13	6.4

**Table 1** presents results of the sample implementation, including response rates. Of the 202 beneficiaries selected for the sample, 183 were reached. Of these, 170 were successfully interviewed for a household response rate of 84.2 percent.

**Table 2:** Characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	39.4
Female	60.6
<b>Age</b>	
15 - 24	11.2
25 - 34	46.5
35 - 49	31.2
50+	11.2
<b>District</b>	
Upper Badibu	45.3
Jarra West	54.7
<b>Beneficiary category</b>	
Cross border trader	17.6
Young people (not engaged in cross border trade)	53.3
Border official	7.1
Community member	21.7

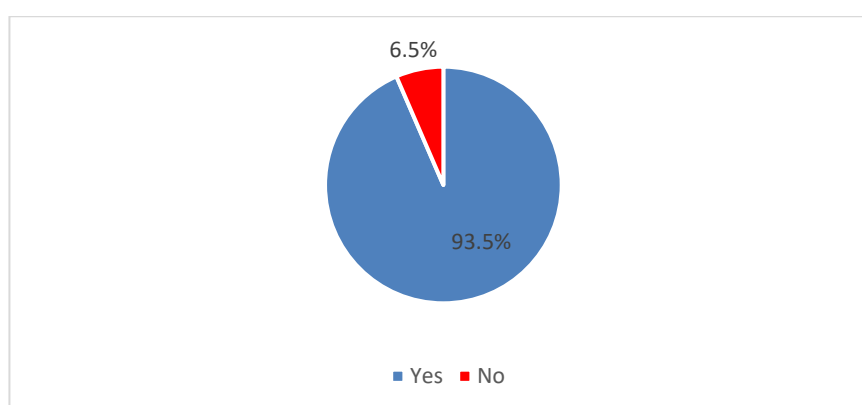
**Tables 2** provide details on individual level characteristics obtained in the survey. It presents the distribution the gender, age and geographic distributions of the respondents. The respondent pool is predominantly female, with females making up nearly two-thirds of the sample (60.6%) while male counts for 39.4 percent.

The largest age group is 25–34 years, comprising nearly half (46.5%) of the respondents followed by 35–49 group (31.2%). The 15–24 and 50+ age groups are equally represented but constitute smaller portions with 11.2 percent each. At district level, the respondents are split between two districts, with Jarra West having a slight majority (54.7%).

The distribution of respondents by category shows that young people constitute the largest group at 53.3 percent, followed by community members at 21.7 percent. Cross-border traders account for 17.6percent, while border officials represent the smallest group at 7.1 percent.

### LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES (Outcome 3: Improved life skills and income for women/youth)

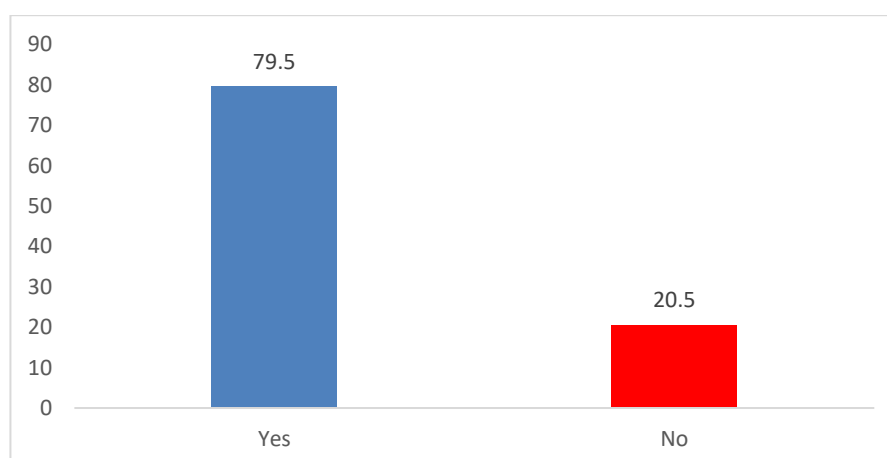
**Figure 1:** Distribution of project’s funded training attendance



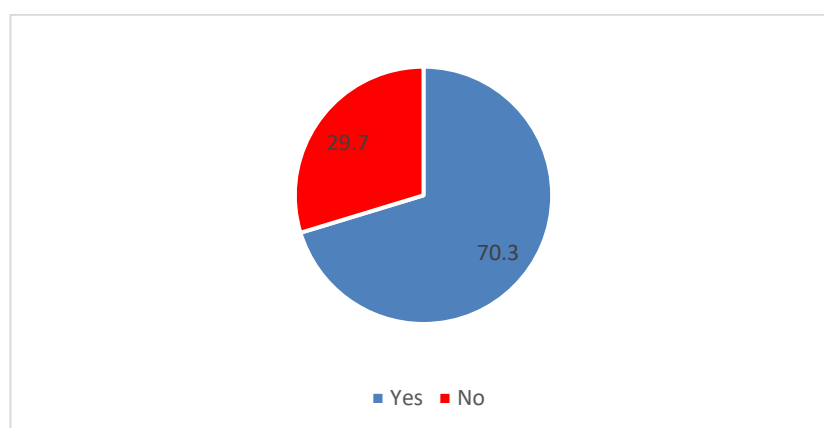
**Figure 1** illustrates respondent participation in business, migration, and rights-related training funded or conducted by the project. The data reveals that a vast majority of respondents (93.5%) attended such training, while a small minority (6.5%) reported no participation. This distribution indicates strong engagement with the training programs among respondents.

Participants who attended the training reported involvement in sessions covering business management, cross-border trading, agricultural skills, human rights and legal protection, migration procedures and safe movement, interactions with border officials, women’s rights, and child protection. Additionally, 93.7 percent of informal cross-border traders and young people not engaged in cross-border activities confirmed they apply the knowledge gained from these sessions, while 6.3 percent reported not implementing what they learned.

**Figure 2:** project’s impact on beneficiaries' income

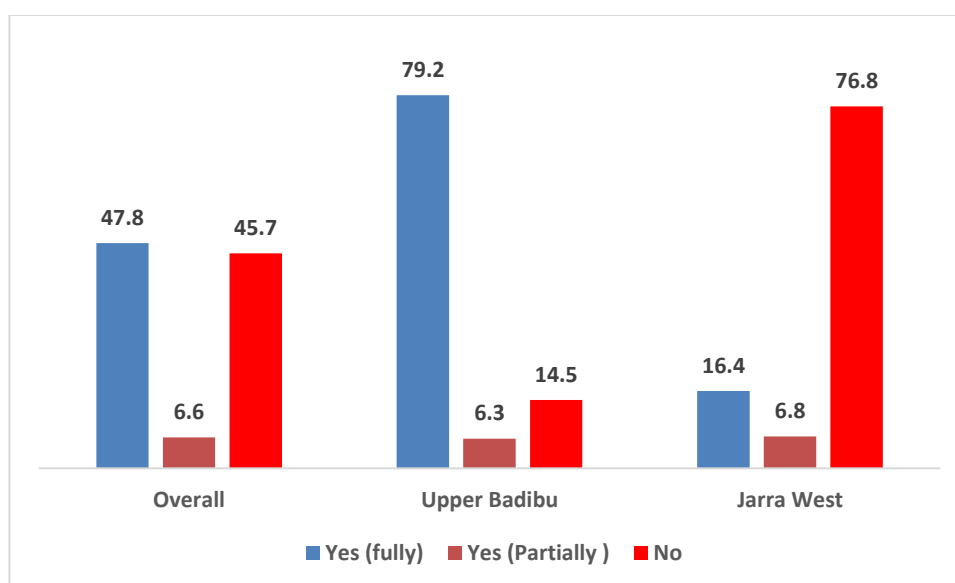


**Figure 2** presents the project's impact on the income of informal border traders and young people. Results indicate that 79.5% agree the project boosts their income, while 20.5% disagree, suggesting a positive effect on their earnings.

**Figure 3: Improve storage/market accessibility**

The results highlight the accessibility of storage and market facilities for informal CBTs and young people not engaged in cross-border activities. Over two-thirds (70.2%) reported access to these facilities due to the project.

At district level, in Upper Badibu, 79.2 percent of respondents reported access to these facilities, while in Jarra West, 64.4 percent indicated access. These findings suggest that Upper Badibu has relatively greater accessibility compared to Jarra West.

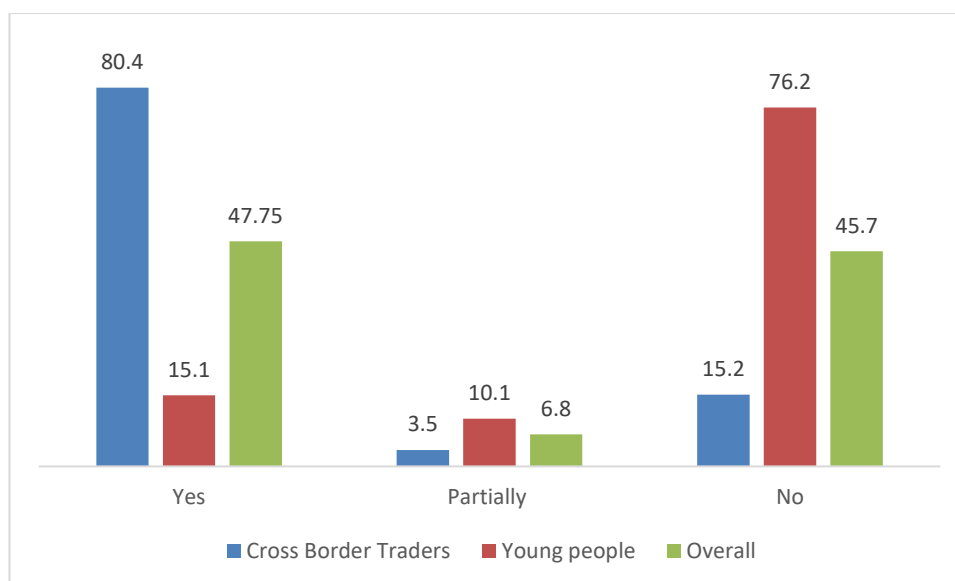
**Figure 4.1: Perceived impact of livelihood programme on irregular migration by district**

**Figure 4.1** illustrates how respondents from different districts perceive the impact of the project's livelihood programme on irregular migration. Overall, 47.8 percent of respondents reported that the programme fully contributed to reducing migration, while 6.6 percent indicated a partial contribution, and 45.7 percent reported no impact. This indicates a nearly even split in overall perception, with a slight tilt toward a positive impact.

When disaggregated by district, perceptions vary significantly, in Upper Badibu, the programme was seen as highly effective, with a strong 79.2 percent of respondents reporting it fully contributed to reducing irregular migration, 6.3 percent stating it had a partial impact, and 14.5 percent seeing no impact. In contrast, perceptions in Jarra West were much less favourable. Only 16.4 percent felt the programme fully reduced migration, 6.8 percent reported a partial effect, and a large majority (76.8 %) believed the programme had no impact.

These findings suggest a stronger perceived effectiveness of the livelihood intervention in Upper Badibu compared to Jarra West, potentially reflecting differences in programme implementation, local context, or socio-economic dynamics.

**Figure 4.2: Perceived impact of livelihood programme on migration by beneficiary category**



**Figure 4.2** presents respondents' perceptions of the impact of the livelihood programme on migration, disaggregated by beneficiary category. The data reveals a notable contrast between different groups.

Among Cross Border Traders, an overwhelming 80.4 percent reported that the programme positively impacted migration reduction, while 3.5% indicated a partial effect, and 15.2 percent stated it had no impact. This suggests that the programme was particularly effective for this group, likely due to its alignment with their livelihood needs.

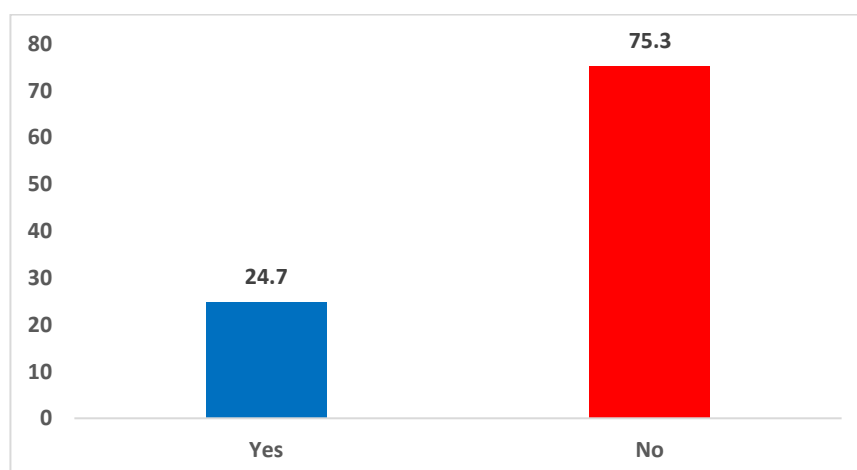
In contrast, only 15.1 percent of Young People not engaged in cross border trade reported that the programme helped reduce migration, with 10.1 percent seeing a partial benefit, and a significant 76.2 percent stating it had no impact. This suggests a limited perceived relevance or effectiveness of the programme among young people, possibly pointing to gaps in targeting or responsiveness to their specific aspirations and economic realities.

Overall, 47.75% of respondents believe the programme reduced migration, while 6.8% perceived a partial effect, and 45.7% saw no impact.

These findings indicate the programme's impact was uneven across beneficiary categories, underscoring the need for more tailored interventions that address the distinct needs of youth and other marginalized groups.

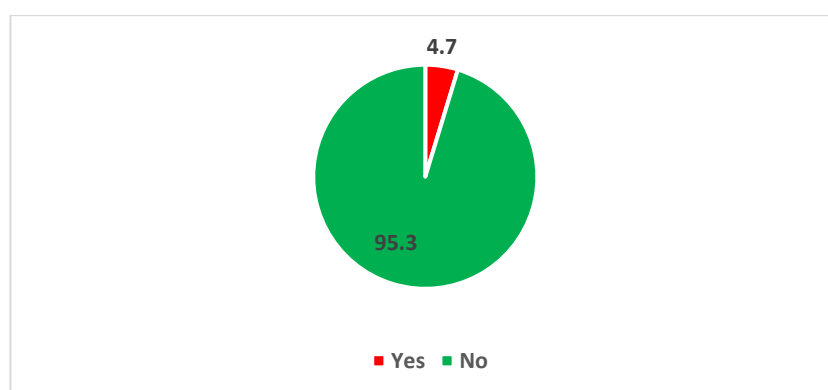
### PROTECTION SERVICES AND RIGHTS AWARENESS (Outcome 2: Women/youth utilize protection services and claim rights)

**Figure 5:** Awareness of Child Protection Services at the Border



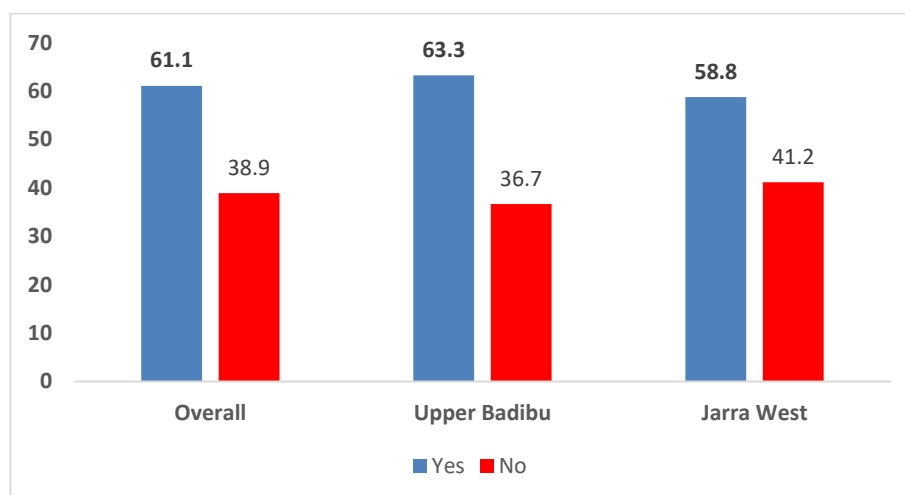
**Figure 5** presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their awareness of child protection services at border areas. The results indicate that a majority of respondents (75.3%) are not aware of such services, while only 24.7 percent reported being aware. A similar trend is observed at the district level. In Upper Badibu, 79.4 percent of respondents are unaware of these services, compared to 20.6 percent who indicated awareness. Likewise, in Jarra West, 72.2 percent reported a lack of awareness, while only 27.8 percent were aware. These findings underscore a significant gap in awareness of child protection services at border points, highlighting the urgent need for increased sensitization and targeted outreach efforts within these communities.

**Figure 6:** Experience of child protection violations at border crossings



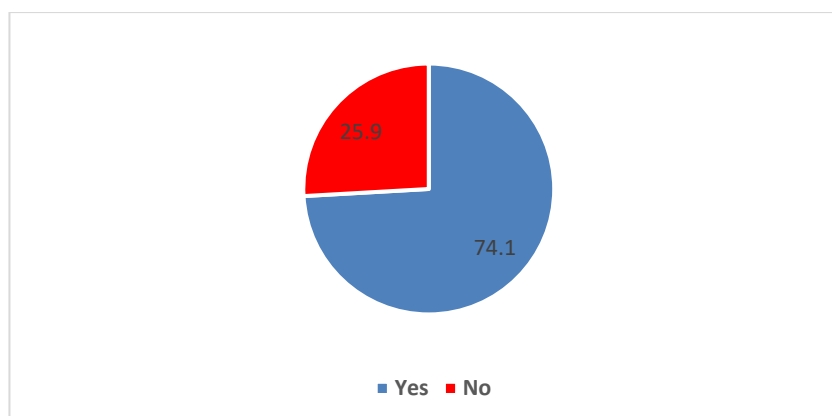
**Figure 6** above presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their experiences with child protection issues at border crossings. The results reveal that an overwhelming majority of respondents (95.3%) did not report experiencing any child protection violations at the border, while only 4.7 percent indicated that they had encountered such violations. These findings suggest that reported incidents of child protection violations at border points are currently relatively low. Similar patterns were observed across both districts, reinforcing the overall trend.

**Figure 7:** Knowledge of how to Report Border Harassment or Abuse



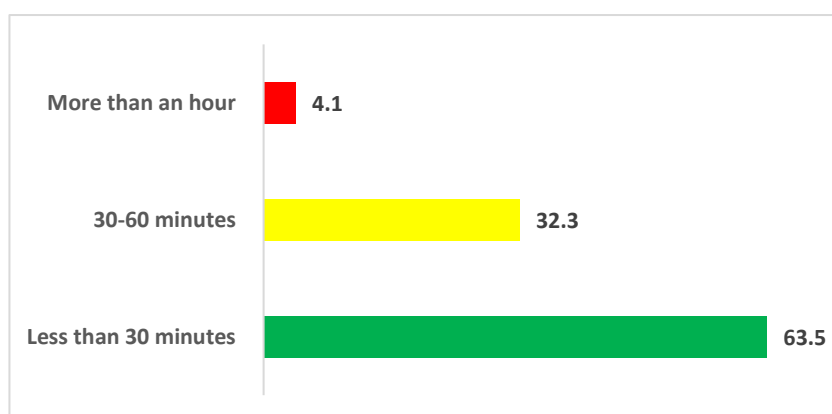
**Figure 7** presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their knowledge of how to report border harassment or abuse. The results show that a majority of respondents (61.1%) reported knowing how to report such incidents, while a significant proportion (38.9%) indicated that they do not know the reporting procedures. Among those who reported having knowledge, 61.2 percent stated that incidents are typically reported to the nearest police station, border immigration officers, the alkalo (village head), or the district chief.

When disaggregated by district, the data show that in Upper Badibu, a slight majority (53.3%) indicated knowing how to report harassment. Similarly, in Jarra West, a majority (58.8%) reported having such knowledge. These findings point to a moderate level of awareness across both districts, while also highlighting the need for further outreach and education on accessible and trusted reporting mechanisms for harassment and abuse at border points.

**Figure 8:** Awareness of right under ECOWAS and AfCFTA: Then and Now

**Figure 8** presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their awareness and understanding of their rights under ECOWAS and AfCFTA, comparing their current knowledge to the period before the start of the project. The results show that a majority of respondents (74.1%) reported having a better understanding of their rights now than they did previously, while 25.9% indicated that they were more aware of their rights before the project began. A similar trend was observed at the district level, suggesting a general improvement in rights awareness across both regions as a result of the project's interventions.

#### **FACILITATING SAFE AND ORDERLY MIGRATION** (Outcome 1: Border authorities effectively facilitate safe migration for women/youth)

**Figure 9:** Average waiting Time at the border

**Figure 9** illustrates respondents' estimates of the average waiting time at the border. The results indicate that the majority (63.5%) reported waiting less than 30 minutes, while 32.3 percent wait between 30 to 60 minutes, and only 4.1 percent reported waiting more than one hour. These findings suggest a notable improvement in border processing times, reflecting possible enhancements in immigration procedures and overall border efficiency.

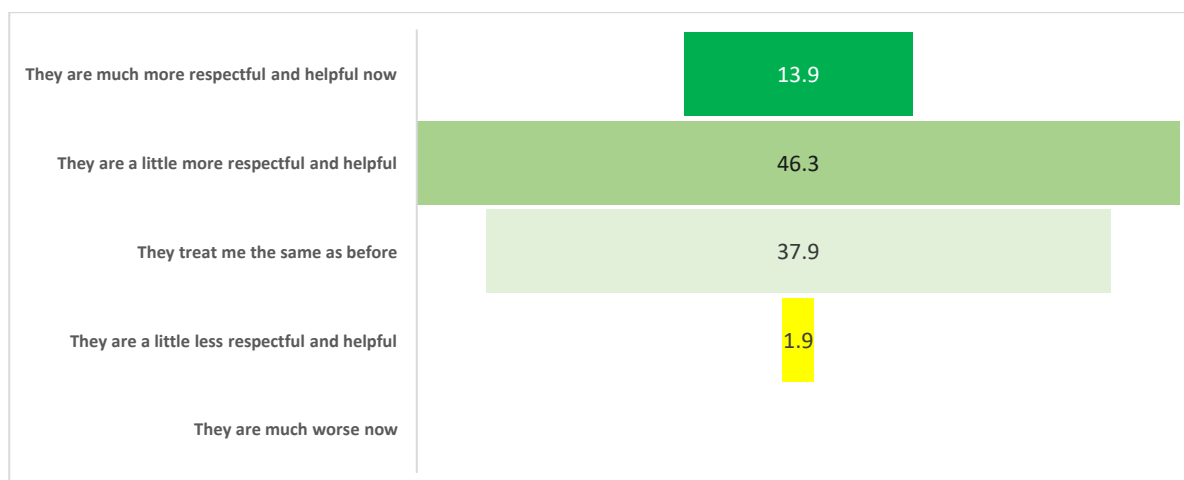
**Table 3:** Improvement of border facilities

Have border facilities (e.g., child-friendly spaces, toilets, water) improved?	Percent
Yes	28.8
No	17.7
Don't Know	53.5

**Table 3** presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their perceptions of improvements in border facilities. The results show that a majority of respondents (53.5%) reported having no idea about whether improvements had been made. In contrast, 17.7% believed there had been no improvement, while 28.8% indicated that there had been improvements. These

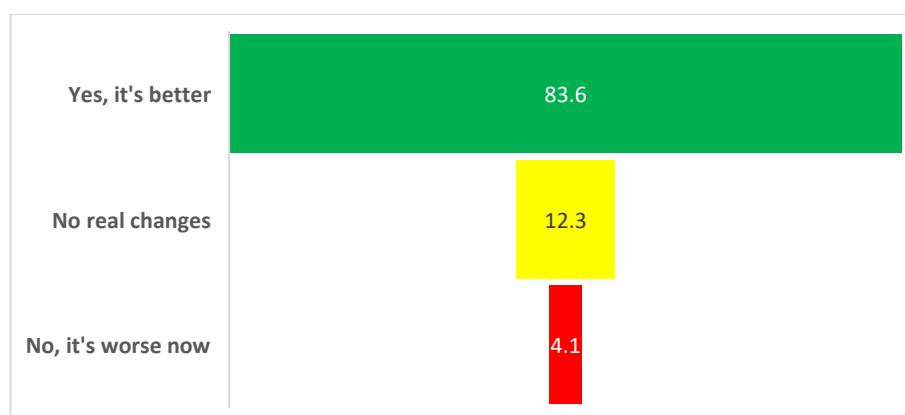
findings suggest that while some respondents recognize positive changes, a significant portion remain unaware, highlighting the need for greater visibility and communication around infrastructure development at border points.

**Figure 10:** Perception on the behaviour of border officials



**Figure 10** illustrates respondents' perceptions of the behaviour of border officials since the introduction of the project. The results indicate that a plurality of respondents (46.3%) observed that officials are now a little more respectful. This is followed by 37.9% who reported no change, stating that officials treat them the same as before. Additionally, 13.92% indicated that officers are much more respectful, while a small proportion (1.9%) felt that officials are a little less respectful. These findings suggest that the project may have contributed to modest improvements in the attitudes and behaviour of border officials, although a considerable number of respondents have not yet perceived a significant change.

**Figure 11:** Impact of MIDAS



**Figure 11** illustrates respondents' perceptions of the impact of the Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) on border activities. The results show that a large majority (83.6%) of respondents reported that conditions at the border are now better since the introduction of MIDAS. This is followed by 12.3 percent who indicated that there has been no real change, while a small minority (4.1%) reported that conditions have worsened. These findings suggest that MIDAS has had a positive perceived impact on border operations, contributing to improved efficiency or management, although a small portion of the population remains unconvinced or unaffected.

**Table 4:** Irregular migration attempts in the past 3 years at household level

District/response	Yes	No	Prefer not to say
Upper Badibu	52.9	47.1	0
Jarra West	61.1	35.6	3.3

**Table 4** presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding whether any of their household members have attempted irregular migration in the

past three years. In Upper Baddibu, a slight majority (52.9%) reported that a family member had attempted irregular migration, while 47.1 percent indicated no such attempts. In Jarra West, the proportion was even higher, with 61.1 percent reporting an attempted irregular migration by a household member. Meanwhile, 35.6 percent reported no such attempts, and 3.3 percent preferred not to disclose. These findings point to a notable prevalence of irregular migration attempts, particularly in Jarra West, and highlight the ongoing socio-economic pressures or motivations driving such decisions.

**Table 5:** Preferred destination after taking irregular migration

Preferred destination	Percent
Another country in West Africa	1.1
Europe	97.8
Another region	1.1

**Table 5** presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their preferred destination if they were to undertake irregular migration. The results reveal that an overwhelming majority (97.8%) expressed a preference for Europe, while only 2.2 percent indicated a preference for destinations within Africa. These findings underscore the strong allure of Europe as a migration destination, likely driven by perceptions of better economic opportunities, quality of life, and social services compared to those available within the continent.

**Table 6:** Common route used for irregular migration

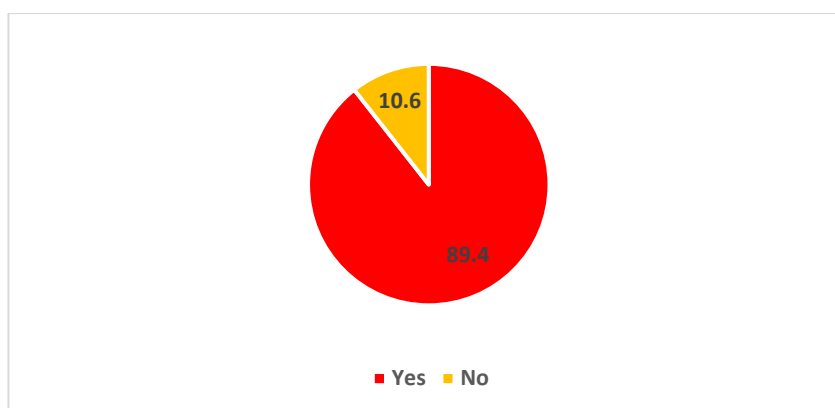
Common route used	Percent
Trans-Gambia corridor	6.8
Sea	78.6
Desert	14.6

**Table 6** presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding the common routes used during irregular migration. The results indicate that a significant majority (78.6%) reported using the sea route, while 14.6 percent indicated the desert route, and 6.8 percent cited the Trans-Gambia corridor. These findings highlight the predominance of maritime migration, which is often associated with high risks and fatalities, and underscore the need for targeted interventions focused on awareness, prevention, and safer alternatives for at-risk populations.

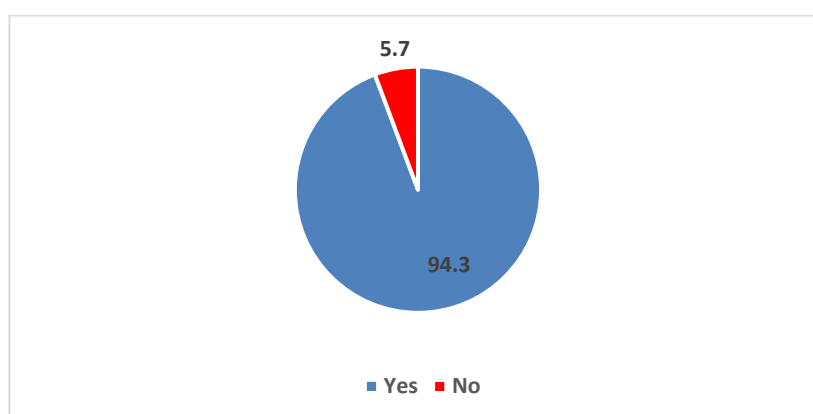
**Table 7:** Perception on Evolution of Irregular Migration for the past Two to Three Years

Perception	Percent
Reduced significantly	2.9
Reduced	23.5
No change	5.9
Increased	65.8
Increased significantly	0.5
Don't know	1.2

**Table 7** illustrates respondents' perceptions of the evolution of irregular migration over the past two to three years. The results indicate that a majority (65.8%) of respondents believe irregular migration has increased, while 23.5% stated that it has reduced, and only 2.9% reported a significant reduction. A small proportion (5.9%) saw no change, 0.5% reported a significant increase, and 1.2% stated they did not know. Similar trend was observed at district levels. These findings suggest that irregular migration is perceived to be on the rise, underscoring ongoing push factors such as unemployment, limited opportunities, and socio-economic vulnerability in the communities surveyed.

**Figure 12: Awareness of the dangers could happen during irregular migration**

**Figure 12** presents respondents' awareness of the potential dangers associated with irregular migration, such as exploitation, abuse, arrest, torture, death, and injuries, prior to undertaking the journey. An overwhelming majority (89.4%) reported being aware of these risks, while only 10 percent indicated a lack of awareness. These findings suggest that most individuals are well-informed about the dangers of irregular migration, which may reflect the impact of awareness-raising efforts. However, awareness alone may not be sufficient to deter migration if underlying push factors remain unaddressed.

**Figure 13: Awareness of Legal Migration Options**

**Figure 13** presents responses from informal cross-border traders, young people not engaged in cross-border activities, and community members regarding their awareness of legal migration options. The results show that a vast majority (94.3%) reported being aware of such options, while only 5.7 percent indicated a lack of awareness. Similar trends were observed at district levels. These findings suggest a high level of awareness among respondents, which reflects the project's effectiveness of outreach and information campaigns aimed at promoting safe and legal pathways for migration.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the survey findings, the following recommendations are proposed to address gaps, enhance outcomes, and guide future interventions. These are categorized into **Current Project Needs**, **Strategic Considerations**, and **Scaled-Up Future Interventions**, focusing on improving livelihoods, protection services, and safe migration.

### 1) Current Project Needs

**Increase Awareness of Child Protection Services.** With 75.3 percent of respondents unaware of child protection services at borders (Figure 5), launch targeted sensitization campaigns in Upper Badibu (79.4%

unaware) and Jarra West (72.2% unaware). Use local radio, community meetings, and posters in local languages, engaging alkalos to promote services for traders and youth.

**Enhance Visibility of Border Facility Improvements.** As 53.5 percent of respondents are unaware of border facility upgrades (Table 3), implement a communication strategy with signage, WhatsApp group updates, and community briefings to highlight improvements, especially in Jarra West where access is lower (64.4% vs. 79.2% in Upper Baddibu, Figure 3).

**Strengthen Harassment Reporting Mechanisms.** Since 38.9 percent of respondents do not know how to report border harassment (Figure 7), distribute clear guides (e.g., flyers) outlining procedures for reporting to police, immigration officers, or alkalos. Popularize the GBV toll-free hotline to encourage reporting, particularly in Upper Badibu (53.3% awareness).

## 2) [Strategic Considerations](#)

**Address Migration Perception Disparities.** The contrast in migration impact perceptions (79.2% in Upper Baddibu vs. 16.4% in Jarra West believe the program fully reduced migration, Figure 4) requires a comparative analysis of interventions. Prioritize livelihood programs in Jarra West to address the 76.8% who see no impact.

**Expand MIDAS Integration.** With 83.6 percent reporting better border conditions due to MIDAS (Figure 11), expand training for border officials to sustain reduced waiting times (63.5% wait under 30 minutes, Figure 9).

**Leverage ECOWAS/AfCFTA Awareness.** Given 74.1 percent report improved understanding of ECOWAS/AfCFTA rights (Figure 8), develop advanced training for traders and youth on using these frameworks for market access. This will enable The Gambia to full tapped from the regional integration.

## 3) [Scaled-Up Future Interventions](#)

**Establish Migration Resource Centers.** With high irregular migration attempts (61.1% in Jarra West, Table 4) and Europe as the preferred destination (97.8%, Table 5), set up resource centers in both districts offering legal migration counselling, job placement, and skills training.

**Launch Maritime Migration Safety Campaign.** As 78.6% use the sea route for irregular migration (Table 6), initiate a regional campaign using survivor stories and community theater to highlight risks. Collaborate with NGOs to promote visa facilitation as a safer alternative.

**Scale Livelihood Programs Nationally.** With 79.5% reporting income boosts (Figure 2), expand livelihood programs to other Gambian regions, focusing on agriculture and trade. Align with the National Employment Policy to create sustainable jobs for youth and women, reducing migration pressures.

## Annex 8. Stories from the field

**Ali Bete**, born 1970 and the Alkalo at Keur Ali border post, Farafenni

In The Gambia, an Alkalo is a traditional village chief or headman, a role formalized in the Gambian Constitution under Chapter V, Part 6, alongside the Seyfolu (district chiefs). Historically, the Alkalo was the primary leader responsible for village governance, but today, they work with elected village elders, requiring unanimous agreement for decisions. The Alkalo oversees local administration, land disputes, and community development, often acting as a mediator and custodian of tradition. As of 2017, 1,810 Alkalolu were appointed across the country, with notable examples including female Alkalolu like Aja Aja Fatou Danso from Basse Kabakama, a village in the Upper River Region (URR), indicating evolving gender roles in leadership

Ali took over as Alkalo from his father, which inherited the position from his father, making the role hereditary. He manages a business of husbandry and gardening. He strongly supports the establishment of a CBTA pointing out that this will improve the roles of civil society and business. He is not member of the IABCC but points out that this should be changed.

One of the big challenges facing CGTs are the exchange rates between the *Communauté Financière Africaine* i.e. the African Financial Community (CFA) and Dalasi which has depreciated with over 10% since May 2024.

Ali is the Chair of the Community Child Protection Committee; he has not worked with UNICEF but points out the support from IOM and has participated in several trainings and workshops. In November 2024 he conducted a weeklong workshop with IOM on free movement and trafficking. According to Ali, most of the children (75%) are from the Fula tribe. The children are sent to madrassa that do not charge money, and they then send the children to the street to collect money – at least 50 Dalasi. There is awareness, he goes on, but nothing is implemented.

“I do not blame the children; I blame the parents”

**Jontang Barrow**, around 35 years old, has two children (boy 7 and girl 5) both attending school

She started her business in 2021 after her husband left for the “backway”. He was a welder and was the breadwinner in the family. Currently she has a shop selling soap and processing food products, and she is expanding with another shop which was bought with the 150,000 Dalasi grant received from the project. She travels to Dakar, Senegal for business on a monthly basis. Her biggest complaint is police and customs which she claims is corrupt, especially on the Senegal side where they charge 100 – 200 CFA to pass the check points.

In terms of the project she says “it is important to select woman that has existing businesses. There was five drop-outs by women from the project and none of them had an existing business. There must be a mindset for change.”

Some of the important lessons from the training is the importance of separating personal from business. This is related to financial management and as she explains: “I now have financial records, and I separate business and personal expenses. I keep records, and I set aside money for business expansion.”

Her biggest challenges are linked to food processing, and she says that packaging materials can only be found in Senegal, and stickers for labelling are very expensive.

**Ya Heddy Saidyba**, around 40 years old, 4 children, married

In 2021 she did not have a registered business, and she was not initially selected by the project. A woman she knew told her she could not attend an ITC project training and told her she could step in unofficially. She did and finished the training. She has been a government employee, and her cousin is the Minister of Finance, her husband works with customs which she describes as “wicked people”.

She attended the Istanbul Beauty exhibition in May which GWCC organised. She is covering the cost of this herself. She will also source for construction material during her visit to Türkiye and she is planning to open up a construction business shortly.

“When I cross from Dakar, Senegal, I say I will transit, but I drop off at Soma. This way I avoid taxes. I have an international network I source from Nigeria, Mali and Türkiye. I want to diversify from Chinese products to other countries.”

She claims to have 10 certificates from ITC including one for digital training. Her business structure includes contacts in Banjul, among them African Tours, which she uses for distribution, especially to/from Mali. She believes “the Trans-Gambia corridor is a catalyst for change”. When the creation of a CBTA was discussed, she stressed that future selection of woman CBT grant recipients should be done by the CBTA.

**Aminata Conteh**, around 35-year-old, lives in Tendaba Village, married with two children

In 2022 she was selling fish and making very little money. She was selected for the project and with the grant she was able to buy a fishing boat, nets and a refrigerator unit.

“The boat meant I could go on the river myself and catch fish to sell. It increased my income and enabled me to become the breadwinner in the family. Now even my husband is employed by me. He works and I pay him a salary which he manages his own needs. I take care of the children and the house. The children go to school, and they have food and clothes.”

The refrigerator is important because it means she can keep fish frozen when sales are slow and manage her business better. This is an important business specific need to her situation. She has learned to separate private and business needs and is keeping financial records. She is currently employing three persons not including her husband. She estimates that within three to four months she will be able to buy a second, and larger vessel and employ an additional four persons. This will expand her business significantly.

Her story is significant also because of the changing family situation with her husband working for her. When asked if this is problematic, she said: “not at all, my husband is very supportive and likes our arrangement very much.”

Evaluation of the “Addressing the Drivers and Causes of Vulnerability in Migration among Border Communities along the Trans-Gambia Transport Corridor” project in The Gambia: A Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) joint project.

An ITC, IOM, UNDP and UNICEF joint evaluation

Report available at [www.intracen.org/evaluation](http://www.intracen.org/evaluation)

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