

\$12m initiative launched to boost Gambia entrepreneurship, jobs

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The government of the Gambia, the European Union (EU), and the International Trade Centre (ITC) have launched a EUR11 million (US\$11.8 million) project aimed at supporting entrepreneurship and job creation in the Gambia over the next four years.



Image by 123RF

The Gambia Youth Empowerment Project aims to address the root causes of the high levels of irregular migration from the Gambia, particularly by young people leaving the country.

Taking a market-driven approach, the project will focus on building skills among the youth in a number of sectors, especially traditional economic driver industries such as agriculture and tourism. It will also help diversify the Gambian economy by supporting the strengthening of “new” sectors, including the creative and digital services industries.

“The new Gambia dedicates itself to the battle against unemployment and creates the enabling environment for youths to unleash their potentials and together we shall succeed,” says the Gambia’s Minister for Trade, Regional Integration and Employment, Isatou Touray.

“Today’s launch of the Youth Empowerment Project marks another building block to the construction of the new Gambia. One that will have youth, job creation and trade as its core element,” adds ITC executive director, Arancha González.

“Trade will play a crucial role in achieving this and ITC is looking forward to working with the Gambian government, businesses, trade and investment support institutions to ensure that more jobs and opportunities are created for youth and entrepreneurs – and especially companies run by women.”

In addition to encouraging youth development initiatives, skills training, and business support programmes, the Project also hopes to attract Gambians who have left the country to return and assist in rebuilding the economy. A number of programmes will look to engage with the diaspora, and encourage them to participate in Gambia’s regrowth.

In this vein, the EU’s Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is putting EUR11 million (US\$11.8 million) forward to back the successful execution of the Project.

“This initiative funded under the European Emergency Trust Fund for addressing root causes of instability and irregular migration in Africa will also give the opportunity to restore hope for members of the diaspora and Gambians who migrated abroad,” says European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica.

“In the past years, so many young Gambians have fled their country. Today the Gambia needs all of its sons and daughters to rebuild the country. And you need them in the Gambia, not abroad. Pilot initiatives will be targeting the diaspora more specifically by addressing their needs and promoting inclusive entrepreneurship schemes along various value chains with high potential for exports.”

The Project outlines a number of specific targets within the Gambia for the next four years. The initiative aims to raise awareness about skills training and development for 100,000 youth; ensure that 7,000 youths complete technical or vocational training programme or an apprenticeship; provide entrepreneurship services – such as business advisory support and access to finance – for at least 8,000 youth, and support and help improve the training programmes for 10 partner institutions.

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