

COUNTRY PRESENTATION FOR THE GAMBIA

**NATIONAL REPORT ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT (FINAL DRAFT)**

**WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT,**

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	-	African Development Bank
AMCEN	-	African Ministerial Conference on The Environment
ANR	-	Agricultural and Natural Resources
ASP	-	Agricultural Services Project
BADEA	-	Arab Bank for African Economic Development
BHE	-	Bakoteh Housing Estate
CCA	-	Common Country Assessment
CILSS	-	Interstate Committee for Drought Control in The Sahel
CRD	-	Central River Division
CRS	-	Catholic Relief Services
CSD	-	Commission for Sustainable Development
DCC	-	Divisional Co-ordinating Committee
DLS	-	Department of Livestock Services
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
ECOMOG	-	Economy Community Monitoring Group
EMCBP	-	Economic Management Capacity Building Programme
ERP	-	Economic Recovery Programme
ESAF	-	Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility
FAO	-	Food and Agricultural Organisation
GAMTEL	-	Gamtel Telecommunications Company
GEAP	-	Gambia Environmental Action Plan
GDI	-	Gender Related Development Index
GEM	-	Gender Empowerment Index
GER	-	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GIS	-	Geographic Information Systems
GPA	-	Gambia Port Authority
GPTC	-	Gambia Public Transport Corporation
GTZ	-	German Technical Co-operation Agency
HARRP	-	HIV Aids Rapid Response Project
HIPC	-	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
HLEC	-	High Level Ministerial Economic Committee
IDB	-	Islamic Development Bank
IFAD	-	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
IMR	-	Infant Mortality Rate
ITC	-	International Trypano-Tolerant Centre
KESS	-	Kanifing East Site and Services Scheme
LEAPS	-	Local Environmental Action Plans
LGA	-	Local Government Agency
LSU	-	Livestock Stocking Units
MDFT	-	Multidisciplinary Facilitation Teams
MMR	-	Maternal Mortality Rate
NACIP	-	National communications and Information

	-	Policy
NARI	-	National Agricultural Research Institute
NAWEC	-	National Water and Electricity Company
NEA	-	National Environment Agency
NEMA	-	National Environment Management Act
NEMC	-	National Environment Management Council
NEPAD	-	The New Partnership for Africa's Development
OPEC	-	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PER	-	Public Expenditure Review
PEP	-	Public Expenditure Programme
PIP	-	Public Investment Programme
PHC	-	Primary Health Care
PHPNP	-	Participatory Health Population and Nutrition Project
PRGF	-	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRSP	-	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSD	-	Programme for Sustained Development
RFCIP	-	Rural Finance and Community Initiative Project
SAL	-	Structural Adjustment Loan
SDA	-	Strategic Development Areas
SDRP	-	Support to Decentralise Rural development
SPA	-	Strategy for Poverty Alleviation
SPACO	-	Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Co-ordinating Office
SWMU	-	Soil and Water Management Unit
UNDAF	-	United Nations Development Assistant Framework
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	-	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	-	United Nations Fund for Population Affairs
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children Education Fund
UNSO	-	United Nations Sahel Office
URD	-	Upper River Division
VDC	-	Village Development Committee
VISACA	-	Village Savings and Credit Associations
WDC	-	Ward Development Committee
WSSD	-	World Summit for Sustainable Development
WTO	-	World Trade Organisation

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Gambia is situated on the West African coast, extending along the banks of The River Gambia inland from the Atlantic Ocean for about 320 km. It is surrounded on all sides by Senegal except on the Atlantic Coast. The width of the country varies between 24 kilometres to 48 kilometres, and covers an estimated area of 11,000 sq. km. Due to its location within the Sudano-Sahelian region, The Gambia has a rainy season lasting from June to October, with an annual precipitation of between 850mm to 1200mm. The western part of the country has the highest annual precipitation. The National Census 1993 estimated the Gambia's population at approximately 1.4 million growing at an annual rate of 9% per annum. With a population density of approximately 124 persons per sq. km, The Gambia has one of the highest population densities in the world. At present trends, this population is expected to double in the next 16-17 years spurred on by a high fertility rate and a decline in infant mortality rates as well as a high rate of immigration, which accounts for about 1.7% of population growth.

The Gambia depends heavily on its natural resources for its survival and for socio-economic development. The land provides the means to grow crops for subsistence and for export; the sea and its marine resource are the source of cheap, affordable protein, employment and foreign exchange. The forests provide food and shelter to our animal species as well as fuel wood, timber and other essential produce for domestic use. The groundwater and surface water resources fulfil our agricultural, industrial and domestic needs. Being a predominantly agrarian economy, the agriculture and natural resources sector provides employment for about 75% of the labour force. The sector also generates about 40% of the total export earnings, and an estimated 33% of total household income. The sector is characterised by subsistence rain-fed crop production, traditional livestock rearing, semi-commercial groundnut, horticulture, cotton and sesame production and a large artisanal fisheries sub-sector. Especially in the urban and growth centres, population pressure on agricultural land is extremely high. Currently, most of the agro-industrial activity is limited to groundnut milling, cereal processing, dairy production, small-scale milling, cotton ginning, sesame oil extraction and fish processing. The livestock and fisheries production systems are predominantly traditional, although a few industrial fishing enterprises are now in operation.

The Gambia belongs to the group of least developed countries and real GDP per capita is USD456 according to the Central Statistics Department. The 1999 Human Development Index (HDI) ranked The Gambia 163 out of a total of 174 countries studied. This level of socio-economic development notwithstanding, Gambians had evolved effective methods of sustainable development. Resource regeneration techniques such as the practice of extracting only dead wood for domestic use, the observance of closed fishing seasons and the designation of sanctuaries to protect spawning species from capture, have been quite useful. However, concerted efforts towards sustainable development were initially spurred by the effects of the international oil price shocks of the mid-seventies and those of the recurrent Sahelian drought of the seventies.

The oil price hikes generated a high debt burden aggravated by adverse terms of trade which led to significant borrowing to finance the budget deficit and increased reliance on government intervention in allocating credit and promoting development. This dirigiste approach created structural imbalances in the economy and led to an unsustainable economic situation.

To ameliorate the situation, the Economic Recovery Programme was launched in 1985 to restore macro-economic stability in the short term followed by the PSD (Programme for Sustainable Development) to generate growth and to alleviate the social cost of the ERP. Growth and equity have since been constant in the national socio-economic agenda.

The recurrent Sahelian drought in the 1970's, which was both a cause and an effect of non-sustainable techniques of natural resource exploitation, led to a severe degradation of the environment. The response to this environmental crisis initially assumed a regional dimension, which gave birth to CILSS (Interstate committee for Drought Control in the Sahel). With significant donor support through the Club du Sahel and UNSO, CILSS co-ordinated the formulation and implementation of its first generation program which aimed at exploiting the vast underground water resources of the Sahel. The objective was to reduce the dependence on rain-fed agriculture so as to guard against future droughts. CILSS had since served as a mechanism for the co-ordination of the position of Sahelian countries on international environmental issues. This mechanism in collaboration with AMCEN (African Ministerial Conference on the Environment) was much utilised during the negotiations of the international conventions on Biodiversity, on Climate Change and particularly during the negotiation of the Convention on Desertification and Drought. At Rio, in 1992, CILSS was also influential in the co-ordination of the African position on Agenda 21 issues.

At the national level, the formulation of the Gambia Environmental Action Plan was parallel to the pre-Rio preparatory process. The national consultative process marked the dawn of a new management culture of broad-based multi-sectoral consultation to fashion a holistic perspective and an integrated design of development programmes. This process has still been the modus operandi of government in programme development and has been utilised in all policy and programme initiatives. And in all such initiatives, especially the National Vision 2020, sustainability has been a central and constant concern. Thus in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to be held in Johannesburg in September 2002, at which forum this National Report on Sustainable Development and the implementation of Agenda 21 will be submitted, the Gambia Government with assistance from Capacity 21/UNDP, created a national preparatory task force in early July 2001 to lead the assessment process. The terms of reference of the assessment were finalised at a meeting organised by Capacity 21/UNDP in Dakar (June 25-29, 2001) attended by all African beneficiary governments of CAPACITY 21. The meeting was held to build consensus on the thrust of and relevant issues to feature in the assessment at the national level and on ways of influencing the assessment at the regional level in order to enhance the evolution of a common African position at Johannesburg.

The task force which is spear-headed by the National Environment Agency, includes representation from the parent Department of state in charge of Natural Resources, Finance and Economic Affairs, The Office of The President, the NGO community and the private sector.

However, consistent with the government's commitment to evolve a strategy for sustainable development as recommended by CSD, and in the interest of a systematic assessment of the implementation of sustainable development, which yields to an economic, environmental and social dimension, the report will:

1. catalogue the national strategic framework for sustainable development.
2. assess the implementation of programmes in the different dimensions of sustainable development identified in terms of the strategies put in place, achievements and challenges.
3. document government priorities for sustainable development and
4. put forward recommendations for improved international partnership towards the common goal of sustainable development.

The national assessment of the implementation of sustainable development and Agenda 21 was contracted to national consultants whose output was reviewed and improved upon at a national workshop in which all relevant stakeholders were present. This has resulted in drafts of this document put together by a consultant hired by the Capacity 21/UNDP. The present version has also been finalised by the facilitator hired by Capacity 21/UNDP after consultations with all horizontal co-ordination committees mentioned in the report followed by a thorough scrutiny by the task force, and endorsement by the National Environment Management Council and the High Level Ministerial Economic Committee.

2.0 NATIONAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Gambia designed and launched a Programme for Sustained Development (PSD) in 1990 following the implementation of an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP). The ERP reversed a severe monetary and public finance crisis in the 80's. The rate of growth of the country's GDP was significantly lower than the population growth rate and declined by 15% in real terms from 1975 to 1980/81.

The situation was ameliorated through a flexible, market-determined exchange rate policy, which triggered a sharp depreciation of the real effective exchange rate, which in turn restored the competitiveness of the economy. The consolidated public finance deficit was reduced from 22% of GDP in 1986/87 to 2.5% in 1992/93. The rate of inflation declined from 70% in 1986 to about 10% in 1992. Despite deterioration in the terms of trade, foreign exchange earnings increased rapidly and economic growth averaged about 4% per annum from 1986/87 to 1992/93. Modest diversification of agriculture to other non-farm activities was achieved and a thriving informal sector could temporarily absorb a significant portion of the labour force. However, the social sectors of health and education fell victims of the budget cuts as total recurrent expenditure in these sectors was reduced from 32% in 1984/85 to 14% in 1987/88.

Given this mixture of benefits and drawbacks of the ERP, the PSD objectives included: firstly to consolidate the gains of the adjustment process; and secondly, to achieve a long term expansion of the productive capacity of the economy that would support a significant improvement of the living standards of the population. In addition, an important objective of the PSD was to initiate a decentralisation process and to involve the nation in a national debate on critical economic, social and institutional issues.

The PSD was designed as an evolving programme with in-built flexibility to adjust to the changing requirements of policy development in a small, open economy vulnerable to some internal socio-economic obstacles and external shocks.

Thus, this structured but flexible design of the PSD and its broad objectives which hinge on sustainable growth, equitable access and increased popular participation in development, served as the basic principles and process elements for the incremental development of the national strategic-framework for sustainable development. Institutionalised consultation with the UNDP and the multilateral and bilateral donor community, through the roundtable process, facilitated the development of these overall objectives of the PSD into economic, natural resources/environment and social policy agendas. The transformation of these distinct but inter-related agendas into specific sectoral and thematic policies, their related plans of action and technical co-operation programmes elaborated upon the development objectives and national priorities of the Gambia towards the goal of sustainable development. However, the respective contents of these instruments, developed incrementally and through a broad-based consultation process with all relevant stakeholders, reflect to a large extent the outcomes of both inter-African and inter-governmental U.N. sponsored conferences and provisions of international conventions and treaties on the economic, environmental/natural resources and social dimensions of sustainable development in general and Agenda 21 in particular.

Within the context of this incremental approach to development, the change of government in 1994 heralded a period of continuity, re-emphasis as well as discontinuities in the development process. With the advantage of hindsight and a quest to chart the path to sustainable development, the formulation of the National Vision 2020, was preceded by a transition agenda that endorsed the macroeconomic regime established by the ERP and attempted to strengthen PSD priorities in health and education and to improve physical infrastructure and the governance environment. As a guide to action and an instrument of focus, consistency and perspective, the overall orientation of National Vision 2020 is reflected in its mission statement:

“to transform the Gambia into a financial centre, a tourist paradise, a trading, export-oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well-educated, trained, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population, and guaranteeing a well balanced ecosystem and a decent standard of living for one and all under a system of government based on the consent of the citizenry”

Thus, the elements of the national strategic framework for sustainable development range from the guidelines of the mission statement of the National Vision 2020 through the missions, policy objectives, means and mandates of the various sectoral and thematic programmes, to the functions of the intra and inter-institutional vertical and horizontal structures, mechanisms, systems and processes to integrate these differentiated, yet inter-related sectoral and thematic perspectives and monitor their progress towards the common goal of sustainable development.

The crystallisation of this strategic-framework for sustainable development, which is the concern of this section, will proceed on the basis of policies for sustainable private sector-led growth, pursuit of the objectives of balanced agriculture and natural resources development and inclusive and equitable social development.

2.1. The dimensions of Sustainable Development

2.1.1. Sustainable Growth

The consolidation of the gains of the ERP was the first logical priority of the PSD to guard against relapse into the public finance crisis of the pre-ERP period and effect a transition from stability to growth. A policy Framework Paper with the IMF and World Bank with conditions for structural and sectoral lendings, provided the basis for the government's agreement to continue with strong policies and a broad range of economic reforms to reduce financial imbalances and strengthen the basis for durable economic growth. These included: (1) a tight fiscal policy involving improved expenditure control and a broadening of the tax base, (2) restrictive monetary policy, (3) the strengthening of economic incentives, including the lifting of most price controls and the introduction of a market determined exchange rate in the context of a liberalised trade and payments system; and (4) the divestiture of a number of enterprises remaining in the public domain. The implementation of these policies was thus financed under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) of the IMF, and the World Bank's Second Structural Adjustment Loan (SAL.II).

Indigenous economic management capacity, built during the first and second five year development plans, contributed to the fulfilment of the performance criteria of the ERP. The criteria called for meeting revenue targets and reserve requirements and observing expenditure ceilings and interest and exchange rate margins. Consolidation of this cluster of gains of the ERP, under the PSD was attempted through the Economic Management and Capacity Building Programme in May 1992. The main objective of the EMCBP was to respond to the priority tasks of the PSD by strengthening institutional capacity to organise, conduct and disseminate sound macro-economic and financial analysis for national policy review through inter-agency collaboration. These tasks are currently being fulfilled under The Capacity Building and Economic Management Programme funded by the World Bank. Similarly, human resource development, an unfulfilled activity under EMCBP continues to be managed from a program and project – based perspective. The absence of a human resources development policy thus represents a void in the strategic framework and indicates the need for the planned development and retention of the requisite technical and managerial expertise to run the civil service and support private sector institutions.

This is also required to reduce dependence on foreign expertise and to enhance national ownership and sustainability of the development process. While a human resource development policy is still on the policy agenda, the PRSP which provides the framework for the pooling of external resources has also made urgent the need to formulate a policy on the co-ordination and mobilisation of foreign aid.

The planned development of indigenous development management capacity has been an essential concern of the PSD. However, the pursuit of the objective of sustainable growth has been through the overall strategy of greater involvement by the private sector in economic activities with intensified efforts to promote national and foreign direct investment, constant improvement and development of the infrastructure, and the diversification of the economy with horticulture, livestock and tourism assuming increasingly important roles.

A National Policy and Plan of Action for Tourism Development 1995-2000 has been the basis of action in this sector with high growth potentials. To exploit such latent opportunities, government has adopted a 15- year Master Plan on the industry based on a study funded by the ADB to promote both domestic and foreign investment in the sector. While the formulation of an industrial policy and Plan of Action is at an advanced stage, increased growth in the industrial sector is expected from the development of small- scale manufacturing enterprises into medium and large scale enterprises. Small-scale manufacturing accounts for about 67.64% of total contribution of the manufacturing sector to GDP.

The sale of some public enterprises was the first measure to build the asset base of the private sector. Currently, however, a Divestiture Strategy and Regulatory Framework 1999-2004 is the instrument to transfer government shares in the parastatal sector to the private sector. These public enterprise institutions include GAMTEL, (the telecommunications parastatal), NAWEC (National Water and Electricity Company), GPA (Gambia Ports Authority) and GPTC (Gambia Public Transport Corporation). The main issues of sustainability in this sector have revolved around the re-orientation and re-introduction of a commercial culture into the operations of the public enterprises. Strategies towards this goal entailed performance contracts with government to meet certain revenue targets and memoranda of understanding to fulfil certain debt obligations and dividend payments. However, the role of the private sector as an engine of growth has been crystallised in the Private Investment Policy. Attempts to lure private sector operators include a set of fiscal incentives, legal guarantees and legislative reforms in such priority areas as the service sector, productive agricultural activities, light manufacturing and assembly operations, export – oriented investment, industrial activities based on domestic primary resources as well as free economic zones and special industrial zones. In fulfilment of government's responsibility to regulate the economic environment, a policy on competition has been formulated to enhance free and fair competition, remove distortions and market imperfections in the economy and avoid undue protectionism in trade. In the same vein, a private sector development programme is under formulation and a policy on employment operational to curb youth unemployment in the urban areas and rampant underemployment and low productivity in the rural areas.

The development of economic infrastructures has also been a principal enabling element for increased private sector involvement in productive economic activities. The array of physical assets includes a road network, modern capital equipment, and physical facilities in other modes of transport, communications, energy generation and institutions in the financial sector.

The National Transport Plan 1986-2000 seeks to build partnership between government and private sector agents in roads construction and maintenance, transform Banjul International Airport into the main gateway to the West African region and the transport hub of the region, as well as elevate the Port of Banjul to a regional entreport.

The relevant objectives of the National Communications and Information Policy (NACIP) 2000-2008, are to provide universal services of broadcasting and telecommunications with opportunities for private sector participation and the facilitation of the development of a national information infrastructure and its connectivity to the global information infrastructure and society.

2.1.2 Balanced Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Development

Given that the national economy is predominantly resource-based, the agriculture and natural resources (ANR) sectors have commanded priority attention in pursuit of the PSD objective of the expansion of the productive base of the economy.

These potentials for growth constrained by the degraded status of the natural environment caused by the Sahelian drought, elevated the ANR sectors into prominence in the Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP) developed in 1992, in collaboration with the World Bank and the UNDP. The GEAP was to provide a long-term vision and direction towards the goal of sustainable development and to serve as the overall plan for integrating other sectoral programmes.

The objectives of the GEAP were to conserve and promote rational use of natural resources, strengthen the institutional framework for environmental co-operation, integrate environmental issues in economic development and raise awareness of environmental issues. Developed in consultation with a representative cross-section of the donor community, the GEAP and allied natural resources policies, mirror the consensus of the international community expressed in the relevant principles of Agenda 21; the objectives and programmes in its section on Conservation and Management of Resources for Development and the provisions of other relevant international conventions on the environment.

The objectives of the agricultural sector have been to increase output of both domestic and export produce, create employment and generate income, diversify the agricultural base, reduce gender and regional disparities in income, provide effective linkages between agriculture and other sectors of the economy such as tourism, and create a balanced mix between rain-fed and irrigated agriculture. In the medium term, these objectives are pursued through the Strategy for Agricultural Development Horizon 2010 developed in collaboration with FAO to implement the outcomes of the

World Food Summit. The Agricultural Transformation Programme 1999-2020 has been designed to address the long-term objectives of the sector.

Its components include support to agricultural research and extension, support to primary and medium – scale agricultural export producers and production programmes for commercialisation by small-scale producers and producer organisations as well as the expansion of rural financial institutions in collaboration with IFAD. A draft Agriculture and Natural Resources Sector Policy (2001-2020) is also currently under review prior to adoption.

Medium term instruments for sustainable natural resources development include the National Forest Policy (1995) and Plan of Action for Desertification Control, the Fisheries Strategy Plan, The Biodiversity Strategy and Plan of Action, and the Indicative Programme of the Water Resources Sub-Sector.

The overall goal of these sectoral plans has been to improve the quality of life of the population within the carrying capacity of the natural resource base. Thus the Forest Policy seeks to increase the environmental, subsistence and socio-economic benefits of forestry through the strategies of community forestry and increased participation of the private sector for value-added product processing, within the context of a system of production and plantation forest management that accommodates protected areas.

Improved management of the energy sector was indicated by the priority status of the energy programme under GEAP I. However, under the Policy Framework Paper 1998-2000 – a Policy on Energy has been formulated. The objectives are to reduce the dependence on fuelwood by introducing more efficient cooking stoves, expanding the sustainable production of bio-energy sources, a sustained programme of forest regeneration and afforestation, and to introduce cost effective and affordable substitutes to fuelwood.

The fisheries resources are under-exploited as only 40% of the maximum sustainable yield are currently harvested. Thus to tap its vast potentials in order to expand the productive base of the economy, The Fisheries Strategy Plan aims at increasing both private sector and community participation in fisheries to increase employment, improve the nutritional status of the population and increase foreign exchange earnings. The revised Fisheries Act and Regulations provide guidelines and strategies for increased exploitation whilst preserving the resource base.

The potential socio-economic benefits from the Wildlife and Parks sub-sector range from improvement in the nutritional status of Gambians, revenue generation and employment creation in the tourist industry. The strategies to develop the sub-sector while conserving relevant life-support systems and biodiversity include increase in protected area coverage, involvement of local communities in wildlife management and access to biotechnology through the implementation of the International Biodiversity Convention.

In the water sub-sector, while the overall resource base is not threatened, a reduced recharge of the groundwater resources has resulted in recession of the upper aquifer. However, to respond to the projected increase in demand from 60 million cm³ in 1996 to 116 million cm³ in 2010, required for improvement in agricultural and

livestock production and human health, the deeper sand stone aquifer will be exploited.

Rational exploitation will in the first instance, necessitate further hydrological investigation, which is a priority activity of the Indicative Programme of the water sub-sector. However sustainable development of the resources calls for an accurate data and information base, a sector-wide management perspective and a well-defined institutional structure to regulate resource exploitation.

2.1.3. Sustainable Social Development

The social aspects of sustainable development concern improvement in the quality of human life. This entails universal goals of a healthy life, education, access to resources for a decent standard of living, political freedom, guaranteed human rights and freedom from violence. The pursuit of the goals of a healthy life and education correspond to the respective mandates of the health and education sectors. However, while the concerns of political freedom and human rights are issues of governance, access to resources for a decent standard of living is central to poverty reduction and growth strategies. These elements correspond to the outcomes of the Summit on Social Development indicated in the Copenhagen Declaration. They also coincide with the Agenda 21 principles of social development, the thrust of the policy objectives in aspects of its social and economic dimensions and the goal of social integration, on which the Agenda 21 section entitled: Strengthening of The Role of All Major Groups, is predicated.

Policies and programme of action in these areas provide the context in which these universal goals are pursued. The Health Policy 1994-2000 aims at increasing access and quality care through the extension of health service coverage to the entire population, equitable distribution of limited health resources, reduction of the incidence and improvement in the treatment of the main diseases, decentralisation of health service management and improving cost recovery.

The Primary Health Care (PHC) system, which is community-based and relies on preventive care, has been the main strategy for sustainable quality health care. A Maintenance Policy to enhance durability of the social infrastructure of the health system, namely: bio-medical equipment, health posts and the transpost fleet is also operational, sponsored by The World Bank under PHPNP (Participatory Health Population and Nutrition Project). Under the same Project, a National Nutrition Policy and Action Plan has been developed.

Much progress have been made in the human resource development goals of the education system in terms of increased enrolment and improvement in quality and relevance. The main objectives of the Education Policy 1988-2003 and Master Plan 1998-2006 are to expand services further without sacrificing on quality, relevance and functionality of the curriculum and with minimal inequalities in access in terms of gender and regions.

As an outcome of the UN conference on Population and Development, a National Population Policy was formulated with specific goals to strike a balance between population and socio-economic development, protect the environment and establish targets to monitor and evaluate implementation of the policy. The demographic indicators have revealed progress towards the specified goals through increase in life expectancy of 28% and a reduced fertility rate.

The population programme 1993-2003 under implementation seeks further improvement in the demographic indicators. Similarly, a National Housing Policy was developed in 1990 and a National Plan for Human Settlement 1996-2000 presented at the Habitat 2 Conference in Istanbul, as a comprehensive framework to improve housing in The Gambia.

Increased involvement of special stakeholder groups in development activities has been the main *raison d'être* of the National Policy For The Advancement of Gambian Women (revised) 1999-2009, the National Youth Policy 1988-1998 and the National Youth Policy and Action Plan 1999-2008; the Local Government Reforms and Decentralisation, the establishment of a National NGO Agency to implement NGO policy. and the National Governance Policy and Programme 1999-2004.

The main goal of the policy on gender relations has been to mainstream women issues in the development process and to ensure that sectoral policies are gender sensitive.

The National Youth Services Scheme established in 1996 under the Youth Policy 1988-1998 and linked to technical and vocational training programmes served as mechanisms for participation in national development of young men and women through skills training and socialisation in civic responsibilities. The thrust of the present policy is to consolidate the modest gains of the previous one and address constraints that militate against increased involvement of youths in national development as guarantee for the availability of a well-cultured and skillful population in the future.

The governance environment has been predictable in terms of a stable multi-party system and regular presidential and parliamentary elections. Since 1994, however, the environment has experienced constant flux in the form of new legislations. A transition governance program has been implemented and a novel National Constitution developed through extensive consultation.

The main objectives of the policy on governance are to consolidate and reinforce constitutional democracy, strengthen capacity for election administration, improve efficiency, transparency and accountability in the discharge of government functions and of administration and dispensation of justice. Within the context of these objectives, a rights – based approach to sustainable social development will also be pursued through the indigenisation of the body of international legal instruments ratified by the Gambia. The provisions of these instruments that touch on the fundamental human rights that the 1997 Constitution provides for, will be fulfilled in collaboration with UNDP under the UNDAF.

The related objectives of NACIP in support of good governance are guarantee of freedom and independence of the press and other information media services, the upholding of their professionalism and responsibility to civil society and the fostering of greater cohesiveness and understanding between the Gambia's diverse peoples and cultures through IEC (Information, Education and Communication) processes.

2.1.4. Means of Integrating The Dimensions Of Sustainable Development

2.1.4.1. Vertical Co-ordination Mechanisms

The overall integration of the economic, environment, natural resources and social dimensions of sustainable development is the responsibility of Cabinet. This responsibility is delegated to the High Level Ministerial Economic Committee (HLEC) and the National environment Management council (NEMC), which have more broad-based and overlapping membership. The mandate of HLEC includes donor co-ordination, policy guidance and supervision of programme implementation and the NEMC is responsible for environmental policy, standards and regulations. The Department of State for Finance serves as the Secretariat of HLEC and the National Environment Agency is the technical arm of NEMC. Each of these structures, like other cabinet level co-ordinating mechanisms in the areas of population, nutrition and disaster preparedness, report to the plenary sessions of cabinet. The overall functions of these mechanisms are to promote an integrated approach in policy making and planning in appreciation of the interlinkages between their relevant constituent sectors. However, the management of the programmes to operationalise these policies and plans of actions, operate from a sectoral perspective with the responsibility to evaluate the impacts of actions taken in one sector on the others.

2.1.4.2 Horizontal Co-ordination Mechanisms

Horizontal co-ordination mechanisms at the expert and technical levels have been mandated to fulfil the need for an inter-sectoral perspective. This responsibility is charged to the sectoral planning units and crosscutting co-ordination mechanisms at the expert level, in the form of task forces, working groups and committees. The highest body at this level is the National Vision 2020 Task Force, which includes representatives of all public sectors, private sector agencies and non-government organisations. The Public Investment Programme/Public Expenditure Programme has the specific function of co-ordinating the budget process and is active only during budgetary consultations. However, in terms of poverty reduction programming, which constitute the short and medium term focus of national development, the most active mechanism is SPACO, (Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Co-ordinating Office), under the Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs.

Supported by a Technical Working Group, the membership of which takes account of the multidimensional nature of poverty, SPACO co-ordinated the formulation and the implementation of SPA (1). SPACO has also been responsible for the co-ordination of the formulation of the second Strategy for Poverty Alleviation (SPA2), alias The PRSP and its current operationalisation into a plan of action.

This strategy is an integrated programme, which attempts to reduce poverty by jointly enhancing the productive capacity of the poor, improving their access to and performance of social services and building capacities at the local level for improved participation in governance and as a means of sustainable development.

For improved integrated planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of interventions under the Horizon 2010 Strategy in the A.N.R sector, a thematic working group on food security, supported by FAO, is operational.

This working group collaborates closely with the National CILSS Secretariat responsible for co-ordination of the implementation of an integrated sub-regional SAHEL development plan directed towards the goal of food Security. The National Population Task Force and the National Governance Task Force assume similar co-ordinating functions to enhance resource sharing and inter-sectoral collaboration required for equitable access to social and civic services.

Reviews of sectoral policies and programmes within the context of multi-sectoral participation have also been functional means of improving the sustainability of interventions and grasping opportunities of program compatibilities and avoiding inter-agency conflict.

Public expenditure reviews (PERs) that attempt to link macro-economic and sectoral policies and programs have been piloted in the education and health sectors. One is currently being conducted in the environment, agriculture and natural resource sectors. The intention is a system-wide adoption of this fiscal management tool, like the three year rolling budget. The latter, initiated under the PSD, was designed to enhance planning by ensuring certainty of resource flow in the medium term. As a strategy to cope with resource constraints, resource envelopes are allocated to sectors and sector managers thus bequeathed with the autonomy and flexibility to determine intra-sectoral allocation of the envelopes. The provisions for autonomy and flexibility have the prospect to spill over into inter-sectoral bargaining, resource-sharing and joint action in pursuit of common goals.

As a fiscal tool for improvement in the efficiency of resource allocation, the PER fosters consistency between policy priorities and patterns of resource allocation and ensures proper targeting of expenditures. Related to these PERs are the regular midterm and final reviews of projects and annual reviews of the education, health and agriculture sectors. Cross-sectoral programmes funded by the UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and other UN Agencies are also subjected to regular annual reviews as a means of fostering synergy and maximising programme benefits.

UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework) is the latest instrument of co-ordination to promote integrated development management. The UNDAF evolved from the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and hence has drawn from its participatory process and will thrive on its output of a common data-base for programming and its principle of inter-agency consensus on development priorities and on indicators to monitor programme performance. The integrative elements of the framework include harmonisation of programming cycles, collaborating in programme formulation and development, consideration and utilisation of modalities of inter-agency co-financing of activities, as well as collaboration in aid co-ordination and resource mobilisation.

Horizontal co-ordination at the technical level is more advanced in the natural resources and environment sectors under the Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP). Technical working groups and networking systems have emerged as effective means of integrating policies and programmes in these sectors. Ten functional working groups act as clearinghouses for their respective programme areas to ensure complementarity and to maximise impact from often limited resources.

The Technical Services Network, facilitate the provision of environmental standards and regulations and the Inter-Sectoral Network fosters inter-agency collaboration between different institutions involved in environmental management.

2.1.4.3 Divisional co-ordination Mechanisms

Planning and co-ordination of development activities at the divisional level has been a weak link in the national planning system. The establishment of the Department of Community Development in 1986 was meant to bridge the gap between rural communities and the national policy-making mechanism.

As part of the reform measures in the Policy Framework Paper that underpinned the PSD, the five year planning cycle was abandoned and the three year rolling budget and Public Investment Program (PIP)/ Public Expenditure Programme (PEP) instituted. The introduction of these planning and fiscal tools enhanced direct linkage between the Department of Finance and the line departments but with less participation of the communities in determining the content of the PIP/PEP. However, in pursuit of the PSD objective of initiating a decentralisation process, a divisional development planning system was designed to integrate development efforts of the local communities with national policies and plans.

The hierarchical structure of the divisional planning system ranked the Divisional Co-ordinating Committee (DCC) at the apex, followed by the Ward Development Committees (VDC) and the Village Development communities (UDC) in all five administrative divisions. The horizontal structure reveals the Community Development Offices, sectoral offices of various departments of state and non-governmental organisations. DCC's are chaired by the Divisional Commissioners with the Department of Community Development or Area Council staff as committee secretaries. Not legally constituted and without defined functions, DCC's are organised into sectoral sub-committees and function as information sharing fora for divisional actors. However, because of capacity limitations, neither DCCs nor Area Councils function as an effective channel for upward and downward flow of information between the divisional centre and the village.

The Local Government Reforms and Decentralisation programme, which is a national constitutional provision and an integral component of the good governance programme, has been designed to rationalise the divisional planning system described above and improve its process. The reforms will transfer sectoral competencies such as policy making, programme development and budget control, by statute, to Local Government Authorities and Councils. These sector-specific councils will provide extension services, participate in policy planning and formulation and promote research and planning at the local level.

As an integral part of this reform process, divisional planning and co-ordination at the technical level has since 1996, been conducted on an experimental basis in the Upper River and North Bank divisions by multidisciplinary facilitation teams (MDFT's) under the SDRD (Support to Decentralised Rural Development) programme funded by the EU.

MDFT's represent a paradigm shift requiring the effective reorganisation, involvement and participation of beneficiary communities and other stakeholders at all levels within the division in the planning, design and implementation of development interventions in a more integrated manner. The functions of MDFT's are to train VDC's, to facilitate community planning, to facilitate at WDC meetings and to co-ordinate inter-sectoral activities where possible. MDFT's are also required to strengthen divisional structures to enhance their efficiency and for improvement in genuine community led prioritisation of development initiatives.

As facilitators of institutional capacity building of the WDC's and VDC's, MDFT's are also expected to be conversant with government policies and plans in the relevant sectors and to undergo training in areas relevant to the execution of their functions. The goal of institutional capacity building is to enable WDC's and VDC's formulate and implement sustainable and integrated community action plans. The NEA has prepared local environmental action plans (LEAPS) that have taken into account synergies between the priority actions of the three Conventions on Desertification, Climate Change and Bio-diversity. These LEAPS provide fertile ground for collaboration between the NEA, the MDFT's WDC's and VDC's in the development and implementation of sustainable natural resource management programmes within the cross-sectoral community action plans of VDC's.

3.0 ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Economic Performance

The annual GDP growth averaged 3.5% from 1991/1992 to 1997/1998. The GDP in 1997 measured in current prices translated into a growth rate of 5.4% over the 5.1% recorded in 1996. In 1999, real GDP registered an increase of 5-6%, which was more than the target of the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) set at 4.2%. In the year 2000, GDP was estimated at 4.3% which is lower than the estimated 5.6% GDP growth for developing countries as a whole in 2000.

The agricultural sector revealed a mixed trend. Agricultural production dropped by 3-6% in 1996, by 4% in 1997 and increased by 28.3% in 1999 and 7.5% in real terms in 2000. Value-added in the fisheries sector increased by 12.8% from 1999 and by 2.9% in 2000. The livestock sub-sector has continued to record a steady growth in value-added of 4.0% in 1999 and 3.0% in 2000.

The industrial sector's average contribution to the economy has been 4% for the period 1991 to 1998. Tourism, an important industry in terms of foreign exchange earnings and employment continued to account for about 10% to 12% of GDP, after a decline of 65% in 1995.

Value-added from the services sector to the overall national income rose from 67.9% in 1990/91 to 70.6% in 1998 and accounts for the bulk of GDP. The service sector recorded a real growth rate of 2.8% in 2000, following a decline in value added of 3.3% in 1999.

The promotion of more open and less regulated foreign trade has been a strategy to integrate the national with the international economy in pursuit of sustainable development.

This has meant a firm commitment to simplify the tariff structure and reduce the tariff rates in compliance with the WTO Regulatory Framework and Uruguay Round provisions.

The impact of these measures has been mixed. The trade balance deficit declined slightly by 8.1% due largely to improvement in groundnut exports by 42.3% in 2000, and a 32.8% increase in exports of horticultural products. A margin of growth in import values of 2.8% was accounted for by increase in food and fuel items and price hikes in international oil markets.

The service account indicated negative net inflows due to high payments for freight and insurance in respect of imports and a 29.0% drop in gross savings from tourism in 2000. Consequently, the current account balance worsened to a deficit of 0.9% of GDP in 1999. On the other hand, capital inflows rose to 2.2% of GDP due mainly to significant rise in official loans by 43.1% as against marginal rise of 2.4% in amortisation and an increase of 18.8% in profits realised from re-exports. However as at end of 2000, gross official reserves was estimated to rise slightly to 5.9 months import cover equivalent.

On the fiscal front, deficits have been constant but on the decline, as the fiscal deficit dropped from 12% in 1994 to 4.8% of GDP at the end of 1999. The fiscal deficit was further reduced to 3.6% of GDP in 2000 and above the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) target of 3.5 of GDP.

The rate of inflation has declined from 12.2 % in 1990 to 1.1% in 1998 and to 0.9% at the end of 1999. However, while interest rates continued to be positive, the range was between 18% and 24%. For the period 1990 to 1997, gross domestic savings averaged about 5.5% of GDP.

External loans accounted for 62% of development expenditure for the period 1990/91 to 1998. The external debt stock in nominal terms between 1992 to 1999 also rose by 33% from US\$322 million to US\$429 million. Total debt service from 1992 experienced a steady growth from \$6 million reaching a peak of US\$19 million in 1996 and declining to \$16 million in 1999. Debt sustainability analysis for the Gambia undertaken in 2000 revealed that the Gambia had contracted 525 separate loan agreements and that it has been current in its debt service payments.

However, the net present value of the debt stock equivalent to US\$258 million and commensurate with 59% of GDP in 1999, 217% of exports of goods and non-factor services and 335% of government domestic revenue, translates into an unsustainable burden. These indicators also qualified the Gambia for HIPC initiative both through the export window and its being a PRGF and IDA – only country.

The anticipated assistance from this initiative on Cologne terms (90% in NPV reduction) includes US\$30 million dollars from Paris Club, US\$23 million dollars from IDA for the period 2001 – 2012, US\$15.6 million dollars in nominal terms from the IMF.

HIPC resources are lodged in the Poverty Reduction Trust Fund as a means of sustainable financing of anti-poverty interventions under the Strategy for Poverty Alleviation (2) or PRGF, which represents the main set of instruments for sustainable growth and development in the short and medium term.

However, sustainable development as a long-term goal is expected to be financed increasingly from private sector investment. Thus Gambia Investment Promotion and Free Agency has been established as a one-stop-shop to streamline and expedite the investment process, as an incentive to private sector agencies. For the period 1990 to 1997, gross domestic investment averaged about 19% of GDP and the flow of direct foreign investment increased from US\$6 million in 1992 to US\$13 million in 1997.

Progress has been made in the development of economic infrastructure to improve conditions for sustainable growth.

In terms of financial institutions, additional initiatives have been taken by the Central Bank to improve the soundness of the financial system. At the end of 2000, the financial sector consisted of the Central bank and six commercial banks, ten insurance companies, five brokerage firms and fifty-one micro-finance institutions. Continuous review and modernisation of laws and supervisory instruments have produced the Financial Institution Act 2000 and the Insurance Act 2001.

Increase in competition in the financial sector has broadened access to banking services, improved facilities provided to customers and triggered participation in socio-economic development through sponsorship of social programmes, lending to development projects and participation in crop financing.

In spite of this diversified investment portfolio however, risk management has effected improvement in the quality of assets of the commercial banks indicated by a drop in non-performing loans from 17.1% of gross loans in December 2000. Further, to provide security required to encourage private sector lending, a commercial court was established in 1999 and the bankruptcy and liquidity process will be streamlined as well as related commercial legislations.

In the transport sector, the total road network in 1998 was 2819 kilometres long comprising 495 km tarmac, 1064 km gravel and 1300 km soil roads as well as farm access roads, bridges and feeder roads. A 1998 Road Conditions Survey indicated that only 21% of the road network is good, 33% regarded as fair and 46% as critical. The road network has increased recently due to the construction of Kombo Coastal Roads Project and the Essau to Farafenni stretch with a bridge at Kerewan in the North Bank funded by the Kuwaiti Government. The planned construction of the Serrekunda-Mandinaba Road co-financed by the IDB, OPEC and government will further increase the tarmac component.

The medium term strategy to attain the objectives of the road transport sub-sector is through government and private sector participation in roads construction and rehabilitative maintenance. In the long term, these functions of management, expansion and rehabilitative maintenance will be financed from resources of a Road Fund and transferred to a Highway Authority to be established.

In the area of air transport, Banjul International Airport, steadily evolved from a refuelling stop to Trans-Atlantic and Europe bound flights to accommodate significant volume of traffic level of 275, 000 annual passenger movement, due to the growth of tourism.

The complex consists of a single 3,600 metre long runway, a new main terminal and control tower constructed in 1997 and a modern international flight centre opened in 1993. These infrastructural developments have increased capacity to accommodate freight traffic and provide cold-storage facilities. The mission of the air transport sub-sector, in line with the National Vision 2020, is to develop Banjul International Airport as a main Gateway to the West African Region and as the Transport hub of the region. The strategies for the attainment and sustainability of this goal include: increase in demand of air services on the basis of increased synergy between the airport and the export and tourism sectors of the economy; compliance with international standards in the areas of flight safety, aviation security and improvement in the navigational facilities and services of Banjul International Airport.

The Port of Banjul under the Gambia Ports Authority has developed into a key gateway for the movement of bulk freight to and from Europe and other international locations. The port also handles all imports and exports by sea and hence its operations have the potential of reducing the cost of living by minimising the landed costs of imports and securing the competitiveness of exports as well as the realisation of the long term vision of developing into a regional entreport. Implementation of a Port Master Plan developed in 1991 has entailed both modernising and expanding port capacity.

These investments have increased cargo handling to 1.5 million tons annually, total quay length to 750 metres, covered storage area is currently 3000 sq. metres and uncovered storage capacity is 38,000 sq. metres. Pilotage service also operates for 24 hours. The operations of the Gambia Ports Authority as a parastatal entity has been financially viable as it has regularly fulfilled the targets in its memorandum of understanding with government. Sustainability of its performance will be enhanced through an evolutionary assumption of entrepreneurial autonomy within a well-regulated and transparent environment.

GAMTEL, the telecommunications parastatal has constantly provided high quality communication services integrated into the global information infrastructure. From 1991-1998, the number of telephone lines has increased by 128% and in 1999 ratio of 59 persons per telephone line reflected the extent of access to telephone services. GAMTEL has a current call completion rate of 60% compared to 34% for the average for Africa and a capacity of 30,000 local and 414 international working circuits.

Given that telecommunication services are not affordable and accessible to the majority of the population, the thrust of the Telecommunications Policy has been to reform the structure of the industry through the attraction of private sector involvement to enhance the sustainability of quality telecommunications services. Modest progress has been made in this respect. GAMTEL is in partnership with CELLNET in the digital mobile network and a prepaid phone card system has increased access to telecommunication services.

NAWEC, the National Water and Electricity Company, a parastatal has increased electricity generating capacity for the period 1991-1998 from 16 to 22 megawatts in the Greater Banjul Area and generating equipment in the rural areas have been replaced.

Electrification of major rural communities will begin in 2002 through a rural electrification programme co-financed by the IDB, ADB and BADEA. Electricity production has also steadily increased between 1991 to date from 66.26 million kwh to 126.64 million kwh to meet increase in demand. However, inadequate reserve generating capacity, weak transmission and distribution systems and high cost of fuel have necessitated frequent load shedding and power cuts. Partnership arrangements with multinational energy companies for the latter to generate supplementary capacity, which is sold to NAWEC for transmission, distribution and sale to consumers, are the strategic objectives of the sector.

3.2 Strategies for and Achievements in Sustainable Agriculture, Natural Resources And Environmental Management

Severe environmental degradation of the country's natural resources has singled out soil erosion as the greatest threat to the land.

The factors responsible for soil erosion are mainly deforestation of the forest cover and poor agricultural farming systems. The land resources are subjected to a multitude of competing demands by various users which has resulted in severe land degradation in the various parts of the country.

This situation has elevated soil fertility management as the main strategy to improve productivity and hence an inescapable part of sustainable agricultural development.

The planning of interventions in this connection has been enhanced by the establishment of a land-use planning framework in 1997 and a database of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps on land use and land cover. However, while the reversal of soil fertility is a long term and continuous process, Gambian farmers have evolved short term coping strategies in response to the decline of rainfall and shortening of the rainy season. These strategies of shifts in cropping patterns and changes in farming systems have utilised techniques such as moving from groundnut production to the cultivation of cereals, which are mainly food crops; a shift from late millet to early millet and from the late maturing to the early maturing variety of groundnuts. The introduction of site-specific varieties of crops and the adoption of livestock production along-side crop production have also supplemented the income of farmers.

The Soil and Water Management Unit (SWMU) was established and its manpower trained to implement soil and water management programmes. The SWMU provides demand-driven support to farmers to increase agricultural Production on a sustainable basis, reduce or reverse land degradation and implement an integrated water shed management strategy.

Farmers and extension staff are trained to implement simple conservation techniques to maximise water and soil fertility utilisation. Dikes built in villages to collect run-off water reduce the dependence of upland and lowland agricultural farmers on rain water, and the construction of water bounds in the uplands control soil erosion and maintain soil moisture for crop use.

The use of surface water for rice production in tidal and pump irrigation schemes has necessitated the rehabilitation of over 2000ha of land. In the Central River Division (CRD), which is the main rice production area, LADEP (Lowland Agricultural Development Project), a water shed –based approach to rice production was designed to consolidate the gains of previous rice development projects and increase productivity on a long term basis.

LADEP has developed 3,735 hectares for lowland rice production, up graded 1,640 hectares of existing rice production schemes, improved access to 2,700 hectares of tidal swamps and increased farmers and community participation in rice production towards the goal of food security.

In addition to the improvement in the water regime and soil conditions, the success of water impoundment in the villages provides water to livestock even during the dry season, and vegetable production now obtains in the upper ridges of the valleys. In the rehabilitated areas, yields have increased from 3.4 tons per hectare to 5 tons per hectare in the dry season and from 5.4 tons per hectare to 6.2 tons per hectare in the wet season.

Sustenance of progress in the management of soil fertility for increased productivity is related to the function of research and technology development. Scientific research into areas of agriculture and natural resources is conducted by the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), the International Trypanotolerant Centre (ITC) and a small number of NGOs. NARI is involved only in adaptive research and its programmes include agricultural engineering, agro-forestry, crop improvement research for cereals, cropping systems and resource management, fisheries, grain, legumes and oil seeds, horticulture, livestock and seed technology.

ITC, an international research institution situated in the Gambia specialises in the resistance of livestock to tropical diseases such as trypanosomiasis. ITC also conducts research on nutritious, cheap and easily available feeds for livestock and, in this respect, it works closely with the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) and the Rural Finance and Community Initiative Project (RFCIP) for the establishment of feed gardens to provide fodder for livestock. The Catholic Relief Service (CRS) conducts research into sesame production, the yields of which have increased significantly.

Adaptive research has yielded techniques in crop varieties with desirable attributes in crop production and livestock husbandry. Technologies have been disseminated in the areas of crop, livestock and fisheries processing, which have contributed to the reduction of post-harvest losses. The introduction of cold storage transportation has also contributed to this reduction. In the field of manufacturing, hitherto unknown methods of production in soap, plastic, foam, soft drinks and other light industries have contributed towards economic development.

Livestock production has both economic and security values with 15-20% of the rural population owning cattle. The population is estimated at 780,000 livestock stocking units (LSU) with a stocking rate of 70 heads per km compared to the Sahelian average of 50 heads per km and its annual herd growth rate is above its annual off-take rate. Livestock production has vast potentials to increase its contribution to GDP (5.50%) on a sustainable basis, within the context of the integrated livestock management system.

The elements of this potential include the existence of and multiplication of an improved trypanotolerant variety of the nucleus herd and flock the establishment of pasture seed multiplication plots or conservation, effective training programmes for communities on feed preservation, fodder production and improved range management techniques; high level community awareness of the impact of bush fires, and the existence of livestock owners associations active in the operation and maintenance of the physical assets of the sub-sector such as wells, pumps and slaughter houses.

Fisheries production ranks second in importance to farming as a rural and peri-urban economic activity. It has great potential to contribute towards the improvement of the quality of life of the population. Fisheries resources are more commonly exploited by artisanal and industrial fishing within the Gambia River. The extensive freshwater and mangrove vegetation zones are recognised and endowed with vast potential for fisheries resources development including oyster culture. Artisanal fisheries development has made significant progress with donor assistance within the context of the community fisheries model.

This has resulted in community empowerment and participation in establishing and strengthening local institutional structures, developing capacities in the fishing communities to identify and implement micro-project activities and operate credit and savings schemes as well as association of community fisheries centres. While these measures indicate bright prospects for the viability of the community fisheries models, rational exploitation of the resources is pursued through enforcement of regulations such as pseudo-property rights in the form of zonal and fishing gear regulations and surveillance of the economic zone through a sub –regional effort.

In the forestry sub-sector, the present state of the resource base, according to the recent inventory of forest resources funded by GTZ, is indicated by the sustenance of 85% of forest parks and the active management of 18,000 ha. The Forest Policy 1995 empowers communities to establish community-owned forests, private forests and plantations. Community forests are being successfully managed in various parts of the country and this has contributed in reducing the incidence of bush-fires and the uncontrolled felling of trees in both state and community owned forests.

Community forestry has also increased the earning capacity of the communities through organised sale of forest produce. Plantation forestry, has, on the other hand, reduced the dependence on imports in certain forest products, which translates into an opportunity for linkage with the construction and building industry.

Progress has been made towards the attainment of the objectives of the GEAP to establish a regulatory framework for environmental protection.

The revision of the National Environmental Management Act in 1994 and all other laws related to environmental protection has led to the formulation of an Environmental Legislation Action Plan, which is under implementation. The National Strategies for Environmental Quality Monitoring and Enforcement of Solid Waste Management have been developed. Implementation of these strategies has commenced and an inspectorate unit established and provided with operational guidelines, equipment and training to enhance its enforcement capacity.

The regulations for pesticides and other hazardous chemicals have been prepared, a task force set-up to develop a National Action Programme for Integrated Chemicals Management and a profile to assess the national infrastructure prepared. Currently, 134 pesticide trade names have been registered and many others banned for containing active ingredients harmful to human health. Similarly, a national action plan to phase out the use of certain types of Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) in the Gambia has been developed in fulfilment of the provisions of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the London Amendments to the Protocol. The enforcement system is being developed through training of relevant technicians and customs inspectors for the identification, monitoring and control of imported ODS. The environmental impact assessment procedures with sector-specific guidelines were adopted in the NEMC in 1999. Prior to this, the procedures were utilised by the EIA working group and a team of local consultants to appraise the environmental effect of some natural resources project proposals.

A National Strategy for Disaster Preparedness and Contingency Planning for ten of the most likely disasters have also been adopted. The intention is to integrate this strategy into the national framework for the management of both natural and man-made disasters.

3.3. Strategies for and Achievements in Sustainable Social Development

The programme for sustainable Development placed inter-alia, a high premium on improvement in human resource capacity of public institutions with particular emphasis on capacity building in economic management, strategic planning and development of the social sectors. The outcomes of effort towards these objectives have been the actual formulation of major sectoral policies and programs with 90% Gambian professional input, improved macro-economic and financial management capacity and the strengthening of national management training institutions to enable them support government's strategy of private sector led growth.

Thus the National Youth Service Scheme established in 1996 under the Youth Policy 1988-1998 and other programmes in the formal education system, and in technical and vocational training, have increased the economically active section of the youthful population to 70%.

For the period 1990-1996, average enrolment of students in the Gambia College has been 500 per annum; and in the Gambia Technical Training institute student enrolment increased from 422 students in 1990 to 522 in 1995. In qualitative terms, formal professional training has raised the standards of development agents, both in the public and private sectors.

Progress towards the human resource development goals of the educational system has also been enhanced. To improve on quality, the number of trained teachers in the system rose from 54% in 1991/92 to 67% in 1996/98 and expenditure in training increased from 20% in 1990 to 45% in 1996.

Educational relevance has been promoted through the reform of the curriculum and the orientation of both the University Extension Programme and the University of the Gambia towards science and technology, agricultural extension, general nursing and mid-wifery, medical and other strategic subjects. The incorporation of environmental education in the curriculum at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels has also been accomplished. The Environmental Award Scheme with an annual average of 250 entries has been quite effective in heightening environmental awareness. In non-formal education, the translation of the GEAP in three local languages, training of extension staff in participatory rural appraisal techniques and sensitisation of the media on environmental issues, have been effective means of raising popular awareness on environmental issues.

In terms of increased access to education, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in primary schools increased from 59% to 71% between 1990-1996 at a rate of 2.4% a year for boys and 4.7% for girls. The transition rate from primary to junior secondary rose from 30% to 72% compared to the target of 45% in 1996. Enrolment grew by 78% and 86% at the junior and senior secondary levels respectively and the literacy rate for 15 years and above dropped to 63% from 76% in 1993 while that for female decreased from 88% to 78%.

In the health sector modest improvement has been achieved in increase in access to primary health care services and enrolment rates in education. There are 400 village health posts providing primary health care to about 60% of the rural population and maternal and child health delivery points have increased from 82 in 1982 to 177 in 1997. In response to the needs of the disabled, community based rehabilitation services have been integrated into the Primary Health Care system.

The infant mortality rate declined from 167 per 1000 in 1993 to 66 per 1000 in 1999 and the under five mortality rates has been reduced from 260 per 1000 in 1993 to 87 per 1000 in 1999. The demographic indicators have also revealed similar improvement in efforts to strike a balance between population and socio-economic development.

Life expectancy has increased by 28%, the fertility rate has been reduced due to less incidence of early marriage and teenage pregnancy and a modest level of contraceptive-use.

Gender relations have been a high priority of government indicated by the establishment of the National Women's Bureau and Council in 1980, the successful implementation of a pilot Women-in-Development Project funded by the World Bank and the formulation of the National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian women. Reviews of the operations of the Women's Bureau and Council and evaluation of the Women-in-Development Project and other related sectoral programmes have documented positive developments in the status of women. The gender gap has narrowed in literacy and access to education, in employment opportunities and the proportion of women in managerial, professional and other technical positions has doubled in the last ten years according to the Gender Statistics of 1993.

The shelter sector also improved slightly through the implementation of the Kanifing East Site and Services Scheme (KESS) and the Bakoteh Housing Estate (BHE). The KESS was realised through the World Bank funded Urban Management and Development Project and the BHE through a package deal funded by two Norwegian companies. The implementation rate of the National Housing Policy and Plan of Actions has been quite low. However, a Housing Finance Institution has been established, layout for low income housing schemes identified, and experimentation on locally produced materials through appropriate technology has borne positive results. Recently, TAF Holding company, a private sector operator, has through financing from Shelter Afrique, embarked on a housing scheme aimed at providing housing for the urban poor.

The Gambia has had a political culture of a liberal, multi-party democratic system since independence. Thus the PSD recognised the importance of the existence of an un-restrictive governance environment as a pre-condition for sustainable development. Measures taken to enhance the governance environment included the establishment of a Civic Education Panel, an Independent Electoral Commission and the formulation of a new National Constitution in 1997, with novel provisions that extend the scope of human rights to the rights of women, the right to marry and basic political rights. The Office of the Ombudsman was also established.

The National governance Policy and Programme, developed in consultation with civil society organisations and representatives of the donor community, is under implementation and progress is being monitored through performance indicators. However, in qualitative terms, the implementation is expected to strengthen the conditions of peace and political stability, which have been developed through mutual ethnolinguistic and religious tolerance and adherence to the rule of law.

This climate of peace has been sustained by a foreign policy based on the principles of non-alignment, good-neighbourliness and the pro-active pursuit of peace through diplomatic initiatives for the diffusion of tension and resolution of conflicts in the sub-region. The outcomes of these policies have been the restoration of peace in Guinea Bissau and the use of the Gambia as a haven for peace for refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and The Casamance (Senegal) fleeing from conflicts in their respective countries.

The Gambia's participation in peace-keeping efforts of ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and of the UN in East Timor and Kosovo indicate the commitment of the Gambia Government to peace and stability at the global level.

4.0 CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The challenges of sustainable development in The Gambia are discussed in terms of the prospects and efficacy of the model for sustained economic growth and constraints under the agriculture, natural resource and environment sectors as well as the social sectors.

4.1. Sustained Growth through Poverty Reduction

The PRSP represents the current paradigm of the international community for sustained economic growth. It is the successor of the Policy Framework Paper of the IMF, which was suited for the attainment of short-term macro-economic stability as indicated by the Gambian experience in structural adjustment.

The linkage between poverty reduction and growth is reflected in the transformation of the regular ESAF into the PRGF with additional emphasis on complementarity between macro-economic, structural and social policies. Debt relief through the HIPC initiative serves as the means of financing poverty reduction with the expectation that IMF resources would catalyse additional donor financing. Thus the main thrust of PRSP conditionality is such that in addition to the fulfilment of regular macro-economic performance criteria of the former ESAF, the financing of poverty reduction activities through debt relief, will provide durable exit from the debt problem and thus contribute towards strong sustainable economic growth. The Gambia has just recently been qualified for access to HIPC resources and as such it is premature to ascertain the promise of the HIPC initiative.

However, since 1998, the pursuit of prudent macro-economic policies and implementation of broad-based structural reforms have, together with favourable weather, resulted in stabilisation of the economic environment and laid the foundation for a sustained recovery in economic growth. In effect the challenge has been the selection from the set of macro policies, those capable of ensuring continued macro-economic stability, improving pro-poor employment and fostering innovation, savings and investment. The strategy for Poverty Alleviation 2 or the interim PRSP is an attempt to respond to this challenge with a combination of macro-economic, structural and social sector program areas. The requisite consultation is in progress to operationalise the program concepts into implementable activities within the context of a plan of action.

Given the experience in the implementation of the first strategy for poverty alleviation (SPA1), enriched both by expert evaluation and participatory assessment, the outcomes of which have been accommodated into the formulation of SPA2 (the PRSP), chances are that the SPA2 will appropriately respond to the challenge.

However, the quantum of HIPC resources programmed for availability subject to fulfilment of PRSP conditionally, is estimated at USD32 million for 2001-2012. Thus HIPC resources should not only be separated from regular aid, but would need to be supplemented by a significant increase of the latter for poverty reduction to result in higher growth. In The Gambia, the level of donor financing of SPA I was under 50% of total resource requirements.

But even if the situation improves, diversified economic growth, may not create sufficient conditions for average income to rise beyond the needs of subsistence consumption, for increased domestic savings and investment to transcend the debt over-hang. Per capita income for the Gambian in 2000 was USD359.00. This compares favourably to per capita income of USD340.00 and USD336.80 in 1999 and 1998 respectively. However, given the threshold per capita income of USD900.00 to graduate from LDC status, higher rate of investments and investments that yield higher rates of return are required for sustained growth.

While Vision 2020 and SPA 2 have specific pro-poor policies for poverty reduction, the basis for growth and expansion of the domestic economy is premised on the expansion of investments in trade and business ancillaries such as energy, telecommunications and transport. These sectors are related to employment generation for private income and skills development which presupposes increased savings and improvement in allocative and technical efficiency. However, although higher investments generate higher growth rate of per capita income, technological progress depends on scale economies such as a large capital stock and a large population, which could lower the cost of innovation. The paradox is that while population growth is high relative to current level of GDP growth and the demographic structure such that the population will increase exponentially, The Gambia is not favoured by these scale variables. As a result, even with continued progress in the removal of distortions in the economy towards improved allocative efficiency, the disadvantage of small size may keep the economy stagnant. Thus, for opportunities of long term sustained growth, The Gambia has a vested interest in regional economic integration through ECOWAS to generate the threshold scale needed to attract the adequate levels of investment necessary for the development of modern manufacturing and the transfer of technology, within the context of the free zone strategy.

This strategy is predicated on the comparative advantage inherent in the Gambia's geographical situation and competitive efficiency in port services to serve as an entreport to the sub-region. It will be pursued through the Government and World Bank financed Trade Gateway Project, which will establish free zones for processing, packaging, transshipment and distribution of goods. The challenge within ECOWAS therefore concerns schemes to avoid duplication of effort and which promote efficient and equitable location of industries as well as harmonised investment policies and programmes within the community. This is consistent with the policy of the African Union of encouraging regional economic integration as a strategy for long term sustainable development. At the global level, the realisation of this strategy, which has been endorsed by the donor community through the roundtable process will require the building of both mutually-beneficial and concessionary partnership with developed countries.

The conditions of this partnership should guarantee increased private investment and technology transfer encouraged by the governments of developed countries, increased technical assistance to build trade related institutional capacity, improvement of access to the markets of developed countries and offer of additional relevant trade concessions to enhance sustained industrial growth.

4.2. Constraints to Sustainable Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Development

Since the adoption of the Strategy for National Agricultural Development Horizon 2010, government with financial and technical assistance from its traditional donor partners implemented a large number of programs and projects. These interventions were in the areas of forest resource development, rural water supply and sanitation, co-operative development, crop production and development of rural financial markets. The modest improvement in the overall performance of the agriculture and natural resource sector has been associated with these investments.

However, the strategic issues that confront the agriculture and natural resource sectors revolve around increasing their contribution to GDP and raising the average income of the rural population without resulting in further environmental degradation. The medium-term challenges thus remain to be rural poverty reduction and improved food security through increased production and productivity.

Production promotion policies will therefore continue to emphasise greater private sector participation, diversification of the production base, increasing domestic savings, arresting rural-urban migration, containing natural resource degradation and the empowerment of women in production activities. The constraints that militate against these objectives in the medium term include limited access to credit facilities, inadequate water supply and other essential inputs, paucity of skilled manpower, inadequate infrastructure and use of low output labour-consuming land preparation and production systems.

Other restraining factors relate to low soil fertility and land productivity, an inappropriate land tenure system, over-dependence on rain-fed agriculture and a high demographic growth rate of 4.1% per annum.

Government and private sector partnership will serve as the strategic context to address these constraints. The present liberal investment climate characterised by legal guaranties, institutional and fiscal incentives will be enhanced with efforts to reform the land tenure system and to improve soil fertility, bio-diversity endowment and water resource management. Essential factors of production such as the critical mass of skilled technicians and professionals, appropriate technology through strengthened research and extension capacities and facilitation of increased and affordable access to rural credit are also key elements of government's investment promotion strategy to increase production and productivity in the agriculture and natural resource sector.

The achievements of GEAP include the establishment of a functional institutional framework for natural resource management and planning, heightened awareness of the importance of environmental issues and gradual adoption of a more participatory and integrated approach to natural resource management.

The strengthening of these positive developments through the improvement of environmental awareness at the policy level and aligning environmental management with the private sector-led strategy for economic growth are some of the key concerns of GEAP 2.

However, an environmental issue-cluster which is of fundamental survival importance is the problem of coastal erosion and constraints to integrated coastal zone management. Unplanned development of social and recreational facilities in the beach-resort Tourism Development Zone and illegal sand-mining by the construction industry have exacerbated coastal erosion to the extent that UNEP has declared the city of Banjul, which is below sea-level, as one of the most vulnerable areas to sea level rise. In addition, threats to an integrated management and sustainable development of the coastal zone area include beach pollution, water pollution, potential salt-water intrusion into wells in the surrounding areas and contamination of wells through improper disposal of untreated solid waste.

In the absence of a comprehensive strategy to address coastal erosion, short-term coping measures being enforced range from prohibition of beach sand-mining at Bijilo, identification of alternative mining sites at Kartong to the construction of mini-sea defences to reduce the rate of erosion at strategic locations.

However, an ADB-funded study on the causes and remedial actions for coastal erosion has recently been concluded and will be reviewed along with governments of neighbouring coastal states in the quest for sustainable solutions. The findings of the study and outcomes of sub-regional efforts will enrich the coastal resources data base linked with the environmental information system programme and enhance rational use of coastal resources within the context of an integrated coastal area management plan.

4.3 Constraints to Sustainable Social Development

Social development indicators have revealed significant progress in access to education and health care, potential for improved gender relations, and a framework to facilitate access to low cost housing to the urban areas. Nevertheless, all social sectors continue to be constrained by specific challenges that need to be addressed to ensure further progress towards sustainable development. Limitations of efforts in gender mainstreaming are indicated in the Human Development Report (1999). The Gender empowerment Index (GEM) for Gambia (0.277) ranks Gambian women 93 out of 102 and the gender related development Index (GDI) ranks the Gambia 163 out of 174 countries. Youth employment is at the rate of 11% and 13% of youth in the age bracket 15-19 and 20-24 years respectively. The situation is compounded by problems of drug abuse, increasing disabilities, pockets of children in difficult circumstances as well as inadequate opportunities for training in marketable skills for school dropouts and out of school youth. The implementation of the Youth Policy and Action Plan 1999-2008 and the National Plan of Action for Human Settlement are constrained by difficulties in resource mobilisation both at the local and international level.

The implementation of the education Policy 1998 to 2003 has increased access to education beyond its target. However, the increase was accompanied by certain shortcomings. The expansion of school infrastructures has been biased towards the urban areas; and enrolment has been lower in the rural areas due to economic, social and cultural reasons that restrain high enrolment of children in the rural areas. Gender disparities are also evident in enrolment ratios and dropout and repetition rates are higher for girls.

In addition, literacy levels are higher in urban areas and among males. However, while significant decrease in illiteracy has taken place; the level of literacy is still low and needs to be increased and sustained through the provision of post-literacy materials.

Quality of education has been enhanced, indicated by an increase in the number of qualified teachers from 54% in 1991 to 67% in 1997/98; increase in expenditure for training from 2% in 1990 to 45% in 1996, the upgrading of 1200 qualified teachers and the provision of teaching and learning materials.

A drop in the teacher-pupil ratio at the primary level from 38:1 in 1993/94 to 34:1 in 1994/95 and from 12;1 at the junior and secondary level also indicated improvement in quality. However, quality could be further enhanced through: the determination of an optimal pupil/teacher ratio as a standard to be adhered to; improving efficiency of expenditure on learning materials, setting performance standards to evaluate knowledge and skills of teachers; and upgrading of teacher training programs to enhance career development.

The key health indicators such as the MMR, and the IMR have revealed a declining trend in morbidity and mortality in the Gambia. However, these indicators are still considered too high compared to other countries in the sub-region. The main constraints of the health sector have been the high population growth rate at disparity with per capita health expenditure, and indicated by an overall population per hospital bed ratio of 1,132 per bed in 1995 and inadequate financial and logistical support. Lack of adequately and appropriately trained health staff is demonstrated by a ratio of one nurse to 1,170 persons; an over-dependence on foreign doctors, as well as a high attrition rate and lack of effective and efficient referral system. Poverty and ignorance also lead to inappropriate health seeking behaviours and contribute to ill health.

Achievements have been made in reducing vaccine preventable diseases, but communicable diseases like malaria, diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and tuberculosis continue to account for high morbidity and mortality. The incidence of HIV/AIDS is relatively low compared to other countries of high incidence. The first case of HIV/AIDS was reported in 1986 and since then 1,400 Gambians have died of the disease. The first zero-prevalence survey conducted in 1988, showed a prevalence of 0.1% for HIV-1 and 1.7% for HIV-2. HIV-2 has been stable while HIV-1 prevalence rose from 0.6% in 1988 to 8% in 1993. Commercial sex workers have been an important core group for transmission of this more communicable strain that has been significantly on the rise.

Surveys have indicated that HIV-1 prevalence has increased by more than 100% over the last five years among pregnant women while HIV-2 remained stable over the period. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's), a co-factor of HIV infection have also affected 40.6% of all women, 25.5% of whom had had an active STI.

The multi - sectoral HIV/AIDS Rapid Response Project (HARRP) 2001-2003; funded by the world Bank has the overall objective to slow down the epidemic in the Gambia through a rapid comprehensive, and multi-sectoral response to prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission and a system of care and support with active community and private sector participation.

5.0. NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The macro-economic framework and sectors of agriculture, education and health have been constant priorities since the inception of the PSD in 1990. The elevation of the agriculture sector to priority status has been a function of the sector's comparative advantage. On the other hand, education and health became priority sectors in development expenditure to alleviate the social cost of the economic recovery program.

Implementation of the PSD which involved ill – advised farming practices, also revealed extensive land degradation, loss of forest cover and bio-diversity, coastal erosion as well as poor-sanitation and pollution with severe socio-economic implications. This cluster of issues, which necessitate the formulation of GEAPI, raised sound environmental management and sustainable natural resource development into priority concerns. Thus a three-pronged priority cluster emerged, namely: macro-economic stability and growth, equitable social policies and programmes and sound environmental management.

However, given the primacy of growth, effective distribution and redistribution activities, coupled with the mutually supportive relationship between poverty and environmental degradation, the strategy for Poverty Alleviation (SPA1) was conceived as an all-embracing integrated priority and as a programmatic instrument of strategic focus towards sustainable development. This decision gave rise to the formulation of the second phase of the three year strategy for Poverty Alleviation SPA 2 or the interim PRSP as the main entry point for sustainable development in the short and medium term. This position also coincides with the short and medium term priorities of NEPAD to eradicate poverty in order to put African States on a path to sustainable development.

Implementation of SPA I activities did not however change the generic nature of poverty in the Gambia. The 1998 National Household Poverty Survey Report indicated that the poor constitute 55% of households and 69% of the population and that it assumes a genderised nature. Poverty has increased considerably about 32% overall, between 1992 to 1998 with wide variations in incidence between households and persons in different geographical locations: 60% in the rural areas, 13% in Greater Banjul Areas and 28% in the urban centres. The deteriorating situation of the poor has been confirmed in the participatory Poverty Assessment report 1999 – 2000 conducted by SPACO. The report revealed that 54% of Gambian households are very poor, 38% are poor and only 8% are considered non-poor.

The overall goal of SPA2 – the PRSP is to reduce extreme poverty by 50% within the next fifteen years, based on an annual GDP growth rate of 7%. The objectives are to create an enabling policy environment to promote economic growth and poverty reduction, enhance the productive capacity and social protection of the poor and vulnerable improve coverage of the basic social service needs of the poor and vulnerable, build the capacity of the local communities and civil society organisations and mainstream poverty related issues such as the governance programme, the gender programme, the Gambia Environmental Action Plan and the HIV/Aids Rapid Response Project.

The priority action areas for the period 2002 to 2004 will include implementation of structural budgetary reforms to lay the foundation of medium term macro-economic and sector-wide planning and strengthening the co-ordination capacity of SPACO. A food and nutrition security programme and an essential social service package will also be implemented. In addition, participation will be enhanced and empowerment increased. The SPA2 will be updated from the strategic development areas (SDAs) of the National Vision 2020 which are consistent with the conditions for sustainable development and sectoral priority programmes put forward for further development and implementation under NEPAD.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND EXPECTATIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The foregoing assessment has revealed that sustainable development has taken root in the Gambia. The national strategic framework indicates a decisive departure from ad hocry to concrete efforts towards a proactive culture of strategic planning and management. The existence of policy agenda in the economic, natural resource/environment and social dimensions of sustainable development constitutes an expression of commitment to evolve a comprehensive national strategic framework for sustainable development. The institutional set-up in terms of appropriate policies and plans of action as well as co-ordination mechanisms and processes in the form of task forces, working groups and reviews have been regular methods of planning and management of development activities.

Cross-sectoral programmes are part of the development landscape being implemented with the assistance and involvement of the IMF/World Bank and U. N. Agencies. The Strategy for Poverty Alleviation (PRSP) is one such principal priority programme under formulation and to be implemented. Experience gained from the implementation of the first phase is a source of strength that enhances the prospects of the second.

Action is ongoing to fill the institutional gaps identified in the framework. The strength of the framework is however lopsided in favour of the centre and an obvious weakness has been the ineffective linkage between divisional planning and co-ordination with the central policy making apparatus. The Local Government Reforms and Decentralisation Programme is the long-term response to this weakness.

The overall weakness of the national strategic framework, however, resides in the paucity of human resource capacity both at the centre and divisional level and amongst the technical, professional and managerial cadres. While this weakness is systemic, it is being addressed on a program and project-specific basis.

Sound macro-economic management has been credited for the constant average rate of GDP growth at 5% between 1996 to 1999. However, output growth relative to the growth rate of the population of 4.2% per annum, has not been strong enough to allow real increase in per capita income for increased domestic savings and investments. This level of increase has not been significant to embrace the poor and allow them to share in the fruits of development, as indicated by the assessment of the Strategy for Poverty Alleviation. The private sector led strategy for growth is continually being improved through the provision of physical, fiscal, financial, legal and institutional incentives. The trend however is that foreign direct investment, with its concomitant benefits of employment, exports, new skills and technology has been on the increase, but that it is concentrated in a small number of advanced developing countries. The lesson that seems to be deducible from this trend is that although such enabling conditions are necessary they are not sufficient to attract higher investments. The comparison of actual risks and returns tends to be determinant. However, while perceived risks in least developed countries like the Gambia is more deeply rooted in the overall vulnerability of the economy, the calculation of returns transcends national to regional markets. The Gambia has made progress in the implementation of the Trade Liberation scheme of ECOWAS.

Its implementation by other ECOWAS member states will create a community market, the competitiveness of which will require a common investment regime within the community.

The conservation of life-support systems and the rational use of renewable resources have been constant concerns in the agriculture and natural resource sectors. Efforts for reversal of land degradation and improvements in soil fertility and water management preserve the resource base required for sustained growth. The current under exploited state of the fisheries resources and the underground water endowment indicate potentials for improved growth. The combination of livestock and crop production through integrated livestock programmes promotes optimal use of agricultural land. Conservation and sustainable use of resources are crucial elements of the community fisheries and community forestry models.

Community environmental awareness has increased and the completion of the incorporation of environmental education in the curriculum at all levels of the education system will enhance the scientific understanding and basis of sustainable management. However, while the GEAP has developed natural resource management practices that are being replicated and a framework for integrated natural resource management as well as a regulatory framework for sound environmental management, enforcement capability is weak. These achievements need to be strengthened and enforcement improved as an assurance of inter-generational equity in access to resources.

The satisfaction of basic needs, fulfilment of fundamental rights and equitable access to opportunities and services have been the key issues in sustainable social development. Modest achievements have been made in access to health and education services, gender relations, youth development and community and civil society participation in development. However, the increase in poverty documented and the target to reduce poverty by 50% in 2015 pose as a formidable challenge. Gender asymmetries in asset ownership, education and employment and inter-regional inequities in income level, access to health, education, shelter and employment opportunities indicate wide gaps in social integration.

Given the commitment to the national strategic framework, the development of and use of sustainable management strategies in implementing macro-economic, sectoral and thematic programmes, limitations in progress towards sustainable development targets are a function of both endogenous and exogenous constraints. The transformation of these limitations into strengths is the substance and purpose of international development partnership. The direction of action should be to reduce weaknesses and improve on achievements in order to enhance the capability to exploit opportunities and guard against threats. These issues are central to the availability of means to developing countries for the implementing of Agenda 21 and other international instruments on the various dimensions of sustainable development. Such issues, reiterated in the UN Millennium Declaration have been crystallised and the commitments of both African Countries and their development partners further defined to enhance their translation into reality under NEPAD. For the Gambia, the overall strategic development issues relate to its underdeveloped and vulnerable economy, inadequate human resource and institutional capacity and scarce financial resources for development.

The vulnerability of the economy exposes the Gambia to external economic shocks. Shocks emanating from decline in export earnings are cushioned through STABEX resources. However, the MARAKESH DECISION for compensation of net food-importing developing countries should be enforced and revisited with measures to improve the agricultural productivity and development potentials of LDCs under the WTO system. Support of developed countries is essential in this respect as a measure of policy consistency.

The Gambia is also vulnerable to natural and man-made disaster. The development of contingency plans for probable disasters, the Plan of Action to control desertification and drought, the development of sources and sinks of green house gases and an integrated Coastal area management plan represent frameworks to resist, guard against and manage such possible eventualities. Such efforts have not excluded donor assistance, however, their strengthening with requisite resources and institutional support will improve international partnership.

Regarding man-made threats, much emphasis has been placed on peace through good governance and preventive diplomacy at the sub-regional level. Timely and adequate assistance of the U.N and the international community is however required to strengthen regional organisations and national governments in their role of conflict prevention, conflict management, peace-building and post –conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Capacity-building whilst a structural constraint has been a priority government concern. The free access to education at the basic level, incentive measures such as the Girl's Education Trust Fund, the re-orientation of the curriculum with emphasis on technical and vocational education as well as the commencement of university education are measures to build the human capital of the country in a systematic manner. While such investments have started to yield fruits, technical co-operation has been the main source of development expertise. The supply has been demand-driven based on priority projects and programmes. Beneficiary sectors have been economic management sponsored by the Bretton Woods Institutions. Natural Resources and Environmental Management Capacity have also been strengthened.

The four-year training programme under the Capacity 21 project benefited Government institutions, NGOs, Schools, Community-Based Organisations and Private Sector Operators. The result has been a widespread adoption of improved natural resources management throughout the country. Similar benefits have emerged from the World Bank/IFAD supported Agricultural Services Project (ASP) in the areas of extension, planning, research, agricultural communication and education, livestock development and management as well as water management. The Household Food Security Project funded by UNDP under the first Strategy for Poverty Alleviation have registered achievements on skills transfer, technology dissemination and increased productivity. In general, the level of human resource development remains low. However, the technical and managerial capacity of line departments in agriculture and natural resources have been strengthened to improve planning and implementation of activities for increased production and cost-effectiveness.

At the community level, the Rural Finance Community Initiatives Project (RFCIP) has improved the capacity of community based organisation to plan, organise and monitor development activities. It has also expanded local micro-finance institutions (VISACAS) and rehabilitated the existing ones. The project has also strengthened the capacity of NGOs involved with the grass roots in efforts directed at food security, poverty reduction and literacy programmes. The health and education sectors have been reinforced through south-south co-operation programs with the governments of Egypt, Nigeria, and Cuba, and rice production has improved with assistance from the government of Taiwan.

Institutional capacity building is one of the strategic means of implementing Agenda 21. Increased support by governments of developed countries to build the capacity for macro-economic management and social development and the capacity to manage and conserve natural resources required for sustained growth is therefore required. Such increased assistance should be on a long-term basis to generate the growth in income required for poverty elimination.

The provision of new and additional resources to developing countries has been one of the commitments of developed countries in Agenda 21 and all other international environmental conventions. That governments of developed countries have not fully honoured this commitment through the disbursement of 0.7% of their respective GNP has been a significant constraint to sustainable development. This omission has been severest among least developed countries like the Gambia that depend on official development assistance for over 60% of development expenditure.

For the period 1994 to 1998, the flow of development assistance has been uneven and uncertain. In 1994, there was a total decline, in 1995 with the exception of assistance for human resource development, the trend of decline continued and slightly improved from USD17.8 million in 1996 to USD19.4 million in 1997. The trend of decline was reversed since the return of democratic civilian rule. However, financing gaps still exist in most of the sectoral technical co-operation programmes designed as a partnership framework towards sustainable development. The National Governance Programme shows a financing gap of USD42.8 million. The Health Plan of Action 1999-2003 has a financing requirement of USD44.5 million, the Basic Education Expansion Programme a gap of 29.6% and the University Education Programme a gap of 33.2%. In addition, the Gambia Environmental Action Plan (2) is yet to attract donor commitment.

In conclusion, it is recommended that the commitment of developing countries like the Gambia to the spirit and letter of Agenda 21, the Rio Conventions and the outcomes of all other international conferences and conventions on sustainable development be enhanced through a higher level of commitment to these instruments by governments of developed countries. Such commitments, which will be pursued and negotiated under regular bilateral and multilateral arrangements as well as within the context of NEPAD, should be expressed in the form of:

1. New and additional financial resources distinct from HIPC resources, and with greater flexibility in the use of such resources.
2. Increased HIPC resources and debt cancellation following the proper management of HIPC resources.
3. The encouragement of direct private investment both nationally and within economic groupings.
4. Support to sub-regional and regional initiatives under NEPAD
5. Transfer of information and communication technology and access to safe and harmless biotechnology on concessionary terms.
6. Support to human resource development and capacity building in general and in trade-related areas to take advantage of opportunities through trade promotion, effective participation in WTO and the ability to satisfy international product standards.

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