



Republic of The Gambia



**THE GAMBIA: Voluntary National Review Report on the
Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development**

June 2022

Foreword

Gambia is committed to the full and integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda, since its formulation and adoption in 2015. As part of our commitment, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are being mainstreamed into the national development planning processes; the National Development Plan (NDP), sector strategies, regional strategic plans, and other national policies. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2018 -2021 has been used as a vehicle to mainstream and implement the SDGs and to support the implementation and the attainment of the SDGs at the local level, all the Local Government Authorities (LGAs) have formulated regional development plans that are aligned to the NDP and SDGs.



To review progress in SDG implementation since 2020, The Gambia initiated another Voluntary National Review (VNR) process in 2022. The VNR process has enabled us to review our implementation of the SDGs and provided broad-based consultative mechanism for a whole of society approach at national, regional, and sectoral levels including government departments, private sector, local government representatives, youth, children, women, development partners, persons living with disability, and academia. This has enhanced inclusivity and ensured that no one is left behind. Three LGAs in the country are conducting Voluntary local Reviews (VLRs) of the SDGs in 2022 which will provide information on SDG implementation at the decentralised level and thus help in aligning local development plans with SDGs at local level.

COVID-19 presented a big challenge and was a major impediment to continued progress in the realisation of the SDGs. As a result, since 2020, the Government continued to adopt policies and implement programmes geared towards addressing the negative impact of COVID-19 including improving the lives and livelihoods of the people, and addressing the issue of 'leaving no one behind'. These policies and programmes include the Programme for Accelerated Community Development (PACD), launched mainly to address disparities in socio-economic opportunities and access between rural and urban areas. Since the submission of the Gambia's first VNR in July 2020, the implementation of the PACD has progressed with the provision of potable water, labour saving devices, and electrification of rural communities in several rural villages.

Other initiatives aimed at bridging the rural urban divide and empowering youth and women include the expansion of electricity, construction of roads with a particular focus on the rural areas, a social protection programme and the social safety net project (NAFA), establishment of a Women Enterprise Fund, the Youth Empowerment Fund, and the enactment of the National Health Insurance Act. These interventions are geared towards making development more inclusive by reducing the rural urban divide and addressing challenges faced by youth and women.

The government continues its strong commitment to addressing the climate crises and was recognised last year as the only country worldwide that is Paris Agreement Compatible and on track to meeting the targets of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

The emergence of COVID-19 has had significant negative impact on the economy and the implementation and attainment of NDP objectives and the SDGs. The containment measures had very negative effects on daily socio-economic activities of people and the operations of government. The early response strategies led to a significant slowdown in economic activity and reallocation of resources to activities which hitherto were not planned. This eroded development gains earlier registered with far-reaching consequences on overall national development.

To address the challenges of the potential health and socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 to the attainment of the SDGs, and build back better, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is coordinating the development of a robust green recovery focused national development plan to address these challenges, climate change, and achieve sustainable development.

As a government, we will continue to mainstream the SDGs in our development planning processes taking note of the multi-dimensional and integrated nature of the SDGs. We will also strengthen our efforts in identifying innovative financing mechanisms to finance our national development as well as ensure that the development process is anchored on a green COVID recovery strategy.



Seedy K. M. Keita
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CHAPTER 1: Highlights

1.1 VNRs previously presented and significant changes since the last review

This is the country's second VNR; the first one was presented in 2020. Since the last VNR, significant developments in the country included the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent price increases in the country due partly to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Russia-Ukraine war. As a result, the latest preliminary data on poverty from the 2020 Integrated Household Survey (IHS) indicate a 5.4 percent increase at national level, 3.9 percent increase in the urban areas, and 7.1 percent increase in the rural areas from 2015/16. This is not surprising as lockdown measures during the height of the pandemic resulted to decline in economic activity and reduced employment especially among youths.

1.2 The core elements of the country-level review process

The Gambia's review process included the setting up of a national VNR steering committee comprising of representatives of Government, National Assembly, Academia, CSOs/NGOs, Development Partners, youth, and women. The steering committee coordinated the entire VNR process including supervision of the work of the drafting team charged with the responsibility of drafting the report. Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA) and the Office of the President served as the secretariat and coordinated the VNR process and activities. In addition, a team from Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) actively participated which immensely helped in ensuring availability authenticity of updated data on SDG indicators for the VNR report. Also, the VNR was validated with various stakeholders at national level and there are plans for a post VNR consultation the outcome of which will feed into the development of the national development plan.

An outreach strategy involving consultations with stakeholders at regional level was also developed and implemented. Regional consultations involved discussions with specific population groups; women, persons with disabilities, young people including youth and children as well as regional community leaders. In addition, community radio stations were used to increase reach to local communities. National level consultations target the same groups but in addition reached out to development partners, private sector and civil society.

1.3 Status of SDG implementation; successes and failures

The country has made significant gains regarding access to quality education. There has been an increase in the school enrolment rates as well as the provision of qualified teachers and the introduction of e-learning programmes at all levels of education.

In addition, significant achievements have been registered in gender equality, women and girl's empowerment. The creation of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and the Women Enterprise Fund and the supportive legislative instruments formulated are clear manifestations.

There have been collaborative initiatives to restore and improve the country's biodiversity ecosystem. These include planting of mangroves in various areas along the river bank as well as encouraging and supporting afforestation exercises. These are expected to minimise biodiversity loss, desertification and land degradation and enhance resilience.

Also, the government established different strategies to enhance consistency and effectiveness in the development financing landscape. These include the establishment of The Gambia Strategy Review Board (GSRB), The Gambia Climate Change Fund, and the process of developing an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) and a climate change budget code.

COVID-19 impacted the implementation of National Development Plan and the SDGs with the restrictions including travel restrictions introduced to control the spread of the disease slowed down most economic activities especially tourism, and the transport sector. The huge quantity of resources needed to respond to the outbreak as well as resources being moved from their initially programmed areas as well as increased investment in the health sector posed fiscal challenges to government.

Specific sector impacts included loss of contact (teaching) hours for schools, delay in training of qualified teachers and construction of school buildings, reduced economic activities resulting in loss of jobs and income in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), delay in completion of labour-intensive projects, and its wider social and economic ramifications.

Also, COVID-19 heightened the threat to food security attributed to climate change and biodiversity loss. Extreme weather events such as, droughts and prolonged dry spells have become more common in recent years resulting in significant crop failures and affecting rural livelihood opportunities, undermining the attainment of Zero hunger and poverty reduction efforts, particularly in rural areas. Crop yields have fallen in recent years because of erratic and short rainfall durations.

1.4 New and emerging challenges

The impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations has been disproportionate; the pandemic primarily affected women in vulnerable occupations. Young workers are also at a higher risk of job loss and income reduction than their older counterparts. This is primarily due to their limited work experience and networks, the occupations

they hold, their lower savings and lower adaptive capacity in the face of labour market shocks.

The pandemic also revealed serious weakness in the country's healthcare system. At the start of the pandemic, the country's lack of suitable isolation facilities, inadequate numbers of medical staff and health professionals, combined with insufficient medical equipment, created additional pressures far beyond the capacity of the current national health system.

Also, the pandemic posed significant risks to the education sector due to the closure of schools and other educational institutions in accordance with COVID-19 prevention measures. This has had an impact on inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as opportunities for lifelong learning for all.

1.5 Government Response

Government formulated and implemented a six-month COVID-19 health response plan followed by a national response plan to deal with the multi-sectoral impact of the pandemic. In addition, a health policy (National Health Policy 2021-2030) has been developed as part of the health recovery efforts aimed at increasing the number of trained health professionals as well as upgrading and equipping health facilities across the country to improve quality health service delivery. In the education sector, the government continues to advocate for higher educational attainment and diversity, particularly in STEM and TVET, in order to build the human capital required to diversify the Gambian economy.

1.6 Leaving no one behind

Government continues to implement policies and programmes to enhance inclusive development and address the issue of 'leaving no one behind'. These policies and programmes include the Programme for Accelerated Community Development (PACD), launched mainly to address serious disparities between the urban and rural areas in terms of access to socio-economic opportunities and infrastructure.

In addition, there are targeted programmes for young people including construction of more schools and classrooms, and the Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP) continues to provide TVET to youth with a particular focus on those not in education, employment and training.

A social protection programme has recently been launched and initiatives within it include a social safety net project (NAFA), establishment of a women empowerment fund, the youth empowerment fund, and the passing of the health insurance bill. Also, Government enacted the Persons with Disability Act in 2021 that will further protect the rights and freedoms of persons living with disability and enhance their inclusion in the development process.

1.7 Good Practices and Lessons Learnt

The Gambia was recognised last year as the only country worldwide that is Paris Agreement Compatible and on track to meeting the targets of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. This shows government's strong commitment to addressing the climate crises. Government along with its development partners has been embarking on annual tree planting including mangrove restoration with strong collaboration and engagement of communities to ensure sustainability.

Also, community members mainly women and young people living around protected forest areas and affected by the decline in tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are being supported with community initiated social protection programmes and alternative livelihoods to build their resilience and recover from the negative impact of the pandemic.

1.8 Challenges

One of the major challenges the country faces in SDG implementation is the erosion of gains made in poverty reduction during the past few years. The country had seen slight improvements in reducing poverty particularly in urban areas but the latest poverty estimates indicate that poverty is now on the rise again particularly in the urban areas. This, combined with rising cost of consumer goods is having a negative impact on lives and livelihoods in the country.

1.9 National Initiatives that need support

The availability of real time data to enable the country measure progress in realising the SDGs is a major challenge and requires support. Though significant progress has been made in recent years, huge challenges remain especially data in the environment sector and support is required particularly in the use of new and emerging technologies such as the Digital Earth Africa initiative.

CHAPTER 2: Introduction

Since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, the country made efforts to accelerate its implementation and ensuring ownership; effectively mainstreaming the SDGs into the national development planning framework; the National Development Plan (NDP), sector and regional strategic plans, and other national policies. Following the presentation of its first VNR in July 2020, post-VNR consultations were conducted across all administrative regions to present the status of SDG implementation, engage citizens on the impact of Covid-19, and gather feedback on how to accelerate attainment of the SDGs and the NDP. These helped enhance ownership and reporting of progress on the SDGs. The consultations helped inform the national Covid-19 Response Plan and identify the most important SDGs to accelerate during the Decade of Action.

The COVID-19 pandemic added new levels of complexity to the development landscape posing a number of risks, structural vulnerabilities, and resilience factors that have persisted in The Gambia's SDGs narrative. GDP contracted from 6.1% in 2019 to -0.2% in 2020 due to the effects of lockdown measures including trade disruptions and a huge drop in tourism receipts; a main source of revenue for the country. This had adverse effects on lives and livelihoods.

The pandemic also had disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations such as daily wage earners, market women; who had to cope with restricted and reduced market hours, and young workers (those between the ages of 15 and 24) who were at a higher risk of job losses and income reduction.

The pandemic magnified challenges in the country's healthcare system. The lack of a suitable isolation facility, inadequate number of health professionals combined with insufficient medical equipment, created additional pressures far beyond the capacity of the national health system. The pandemic also had significant impact on the education sector due to the closure of schools and other educational institutions in accordance with COVID-19 prevention measures. There were reduced contact hours and classes conducted online or via radio as a compensation mechanism were not equally accessible to all students, thus negatively impacting inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as opportunities for lifelong learning for all.

COVID-19 also heightened the threat to food security which is also being fuelled by biodiversity loss, and recurring extreme weather events due to climate change. Droughts and erratic rainfall patterns coupled with prolonged dry spells are linked to significant crop failures, declining agricultural production and productivity affecting rural livelihood opportunities, undermining the country's efforts to achieve zero hunger and reduce poverty. Currently, this pressure on food security is being compounded by the rising food prices resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war.

With regard to the focus areas of this year's VNR, which are quality education, gender equality, life below water, life on land, and partnerships, the country is registering mixed progress. Regarding access to quality education, there has been consistent increase in enrolment rates at levels as well as a significant increase in the number of qualified teachers. In order to enhance content knowledge, government introduced e-learning programmes targeting teachers.

The country has established a new Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and a Women Enterprise Fund as part of its commitment to support children and promote gender empowerment.

There has been significant efforts at strengthening the country's bio-diversity ecosystem through mangrove restoration and reforestation initiatives. These initiatives are geared towards addressing deforestation, bio-diversity loss and enhancing resilience.

The government established the Gambia Strategy Review Board (GSRB) and is in the process of developing an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), for greater coherence and efficiency in the development financing landscape. The Gambia Climate Change Fund has been established and the government is working on developing a climate change budget code.

In the drive to *"build forward better from the COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"*, the government continues to implement policies and programmes to enhance resilience and inclusivity. These policies and programmes include the Programme for Accelerated Community Development (PACD), launched mainly to address serious disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of access to socio-economic opportunities and infrastructure. Since the submission of the Gambia's first VNR in July 2020, the implementation of the PACD has been progressing by providing rural communities with potable water, access to electricity and labour-saving devices. In addition, a national social protection programme has recently been launched and initiatives within it include a social safety net project (NAFA), establishment of a Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), the youth empowerment fund, the passing of the health insurance bill and the disability bill.

Moving forward, government intends to implement a Recovery focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP 2023 -2027) that is green, builds resilience, and leaves no one behind. The long-term nature of recovery would also be addressed in the upcoming development vision 2050. Through these two development planning frameworks, government will additionally pursue greater coherence and coordination of its SDGs implementation while contributing to a re-invigorated global partnership for development (SDG 17) across relevant sectors, risks and stakeholders and within the context of an INFF.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology and Process for Preparation of the Review

3.1 Introduction

The preparation of The Gambia's VNR adopted a participatory and all-inclusive process which availed the country an opportunity to review the progress made towards the implementation of Agenda 2030 for sustainable development in a manner that creates national ownership and better understanding of the SDGs. Equally, the VNR is part of the formal intergovernmental follow-up and review mechanism on the Agenda 2030. It represents The Gambia's progress report to its peers and other stakeholders at the global level on the implementation of the Agenda 2030.

3.2 Gambia's VNR Roadmap

The VNR preparation process followed a timeline that enabled The Gambia to present to the HLPF taking place in July of 2022. This timeline as shown in annex 1, includes not only a preparatory process within The Gambia but also peer engagement at the regional and global levels including regional consultations in Nigeria, Rwanda and Lesotho. The process also included internal consultations at the regional level as well as preparation of three Voluntary Local Reviews for Kanifing, Brikama and Kuntaur of the 8 Local Governments.

3.3 The process

Upon receiving approval to present its VNR, The Gambia set up a national VNR steering committee comprising representatives of Government, National Assembly, Academia, CSOs/NGOs, Development Partners, youth, and women. The steering committee coordinated the entire VNR process including supervision of the team drafting the report. MoFEA and the Office of the President served as the secretariat and coordinated the VNR process and activities. In addition, a team from GBoS actively participated in ensuring availability and validity of data presented in the VNR report. The UN system provided both technical and financial support towards the process. As part of the process, the VNR was validated with various stakeholders.

3.3.1 Regional Consultations

As part of the outreach and sensitization strategy, the team embarked on comprehensive VNR consultations with stakeholders across all Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the country. The aim of the consultations was to engage key stakeholders in LGAs across the country to gauge the level of implementation of the SDGs and ascertain the level of progress registered, challenges encountered, development initiatives being undertaken at community levels, and the way forward.

Consultations followed a qualitative approach with Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held in each of the LGAs with different groups including local authorities, women, persons with disabilities, opinion leaders/elders, the media, CSOs/NGOs, the private sector, youth and children. This approach provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions on various issues relating to the SDGs. To ensure greater outreach, community radio stations were used to engage stakeholders to deepen understanding of the Agenda 2030 and the VNR process in particular.



VNR consultations with women

3.3.2 Consultation with the Young people; youth and children

Increasingly, Gambia's youth are becoming more and more important in the country's development quests as evidenced by their involvement in various national development initiatives and the implementation of the SDGs in particular. The youth and children group pointed to widespread and rising poverty, food scarcity, limited health facilities, equipment and healthcare workers, lack of mental care facilities and counselling centres for young people as major challenges. In the area of education, they raised concerns over limited qualified teachers, bullying and sexual harassment among learners and teachers as well as limited mobility to access educational facilities.

3.3.3 National Outreach

Further to the regional consultations, a national outreach was embarked on mainly involving Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Private Sector and Civil Society Organisations and persons with disabilities. The general aim was to sensitize stakeholders about the SDGs and the VNR process in an effort to enhance inclusiveness and participation. The workshops culminated in a set of recommendations. The need for adequate and timely availability of data for SDGs reporting emerged and participants emphasized the need to strengthen the country's National Statistical System (NSS). Furthermore, participants lamented on the need for adequate financial and technological resources for effective and efficient implementation of the SDGs in The Gambia. On partnership (Goal 17), there is urgency in strengthening multi-sectoral coordination within government, development partners, private sector and CSOs through continuous dialogue, consultations, commitment to financial resources and coherent institutional

arrangements. Concluding the national outreach sessions, participants reiterated the need for continuous capacity development for effective SDGs implementation.

3.3.4 Consultation with persons with disabilities

Besides inviting their representatives in each of the regional consultations, a special session was held with the persons with disabilities. They pointed to a number of challenges including the inadequacy of support for the vulnerable (persons with disabilities), the lack of ramps and sign-language interpreters at hospitals, the trouble of having to remain in queues to access public services, the inadequate supply of disability-friendly transportation facilities, the paucity of sign language-trained qualified teachers, the inadequacy of assistance to set up businesses, the limited access to information, the pending disability bill to properly address their needs, the denial of deaf persons the right to drive, the high unemployment rate among members, the low access rate to higher education and the persistent discrimination against members in all aspects including police cases, abuses among others.

A major step to mainstream and strengthen the socioeconomic development of persons with disabilities would be to finalize and enact the draft disability bill. This would contribute a great deal to realizing SDG 10 – reduced inequalities. Passing the bill into Law will help address such challenges as unequal access to opportunities for affected persons, access to health care, justice, transportation facilities and infrastructure, and quality education. In the draft constitution, there is a provision to increase the number of nominated persons with disabilities from one to two in the National Assembly.

On the education front, opportunities from primary to tertiary level including Technical and Vocational and Education Training (TVET) for persons with disabilities needs to be strengthened. There is also the need to work on normalization and integration of persons with disabilities in mainstream schools. The curriculum should be reviewed and tailored to their needs and special needs schools be decentralized and strengthened to enable those in remote regions to also benefit. Appropriate learning materials such as braille machines for the visually impaired, qualified teachers trained on sign languages for the hard-of-hearing should be provided. The transport and infrastructure sector should cater for persons with disabilities. There is the need for all public buildings to have ramps and sliding doors, The toilets in public places should also be built in such a way that it can accommodate people sitting on wheel chairs.

CHAPTER 4: Policy and Enabling Environment

4.1 Ensuring Ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and the VNRs

Since the adoption of the SDGs, the country has made efforts to accelerate its implementation and ensure ownership. Effectively mainstreaming the SDGs into the national development planning framework; the National Development Plan (NDP), sector strategies, regional strategic plans and other national policies helped enhance ownership and reporting of progress on the SDGs.

Since the launch of the NDP (2018-2021), series of popularization and sensitization workshops were held at national and regional levels to increase awareness and understanding of the NDP and the SDGs by the local population.

Following the presentation of its first VNR report at the HPLF in July of 2020, Post-VNR consultations were conducted across all administrative regions of the country to present the status of SDGs' implementation and gather feedback on how the government can accelerate their attainment and the NDP. The consultations which coincided with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic also provided an opportunity for government to engage citizens on the impact of COVID-19. The outcomes helped inform the national COVID-19 Response Plan and also helped identify the most important SDGs to accelerate for the Decade of Action. The consultations targeted stakeholders at the national level including MDAs, National Assembly members, the private sector, youth and children, NGOs and CSOs, and the Gambia Federation of the Disabled. Local level consultations targeted members of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) at regional level and men, women, youth, children, Persons Living with Disability, private sector and civil society at community level.

As the country prepares its successor NDP which will be recovery focused, regional and ward level consultations were conducted across the seven administrative regions of the country which helped in localising and mainstreaming the SDGs into the national development agenda. These consultations which targeted TAC members, CSOs, private sector, youth, Persons Living with Disability, children, women and council of elders, provided stakeholders an opportunity to discuss and highlight gaps, challenges and improvements in NDP implementation, and recommendations for future development interventions.

Consultations were also held at the national level with MDAs, Development Partners, CSOs, Private sector, Media, Academia, the National Assembly, Inter-Party Committee (IPC), the Judiciary, Gambia Federation of the Disabled, Women, Children and the Elderly, and the diaspora, to capture their inputs into the new national development plan.

In order to boost the participation of the diaspora, virtual participation, and ensure diversity of views on development planning, a National Development Planning Platform was developed to promote dialogue on the development planning process, interactions, knowledge and information sharing, and collaboration among relevant stakeholders. The platform is being used to facilitate diaspora consultation of the new NDP.

National efforts to ensure ownership were supported and complemented by the UN system in the Gambia. The United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO) with support from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) supported the piloting of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) in three Local Government Areas: Kuntaur Area Council, Brikama Area Council and Kanifing Municipal Council. The VLRs gave the local councils the opportunity to review their progress in localizing the SDGs and the outcomes fed into the VNR process.

Also, as part of its efforts to help localise and accelerate the SDGs in the Gambia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed an MOU with the University of The Gambia (UTG) to mainstream the SDGs in its academic curricular, research programmes and community engagement. As a result, UTG is initiating research to track, monitor and evaluate the progress of SD implementation in the Gambia, mainstreaming the SDGs into the university curricula, conducting case studies and research to fill gaps in baseline information, organizing seminars, conferences and workshops to popularize and sensitize citizens on the SDGs and in collaboration with the UNDP co-host activities in the areas of research, innovation and solutions mapping. The 2020 VNR process and post VNR consultations helped in catalysing these initiatives.

Peace Hub The Gambia, a youth-led organisation active in peace building and social cohesion has embarked on an initiative dubbed 'SDGs on the wheel' that seeks to popularise the SDGs and create a platform for youth innovation as a solution to development challenges. The initiative includes inter-tertiary institution SDG solution challenge, community solution challenge, which are geared towards actively engaging tertiary institutions and youth at community level in creative contest for solutions to development challenges.

4.2 Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks

In 2017, following a protracted period of dictatorship and economic crisis between 1994 and 2016, the country formulated a new National Development Plan (NDP) 2018 - 2021, extended to 2022, as a medium-term development blueprint that sought to address the many pressing social and economic challenges affecting the country with

a view to “*delivering good governance and accountability, social cohesion, and national reconciliation and a revitalized and transformed economy for the wellbeing of all Gambians*”.

Premised on the above, the government made an explicit commitment to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063, as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Istanbul Programme of Action into its NDP, and use these as conduits for the realisation of the goals of the national development plan. Sector and Local Government Strategic Plans were formulated and aligned with the NDP and by extension the SDGs. As a way of ensuring that sectors comply, MoFEA ensures that Programme Based Budgets (PBB) of sectors are rigorously scrutinised for alignment with NDP priorities.

However, a major challenge in SDG implementation is inadequate data. In the 2020 VNR, the country was able to report on only 52% of SDG indicators which necessitated the conduct of an SDGs survey after the completion of the 2020 VNR. The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) in collaboration with the Directorate of Development Planning (DDP) of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA) with financial support from the UNDP Country Office undertook this task to update the status of the indicators.

4.3 Integration of the Economic, Social and Environmental dimensions

Cognizant of the importance of consistent economic, social and environmental policies to promote sustained economic growth, reduce poverty and vulnerability, and improve the well-being and welfare of its population; the Government of The Gambia formulated and implemented a series of sector policies and programmes. The Gambia's government, through the Ministries of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare, and Finance and Economic Affairs, began the process of introducing gender-based budgeting into the budgeting cycle. Following series of consultations and the approval of a cabinet paper, gender-based budgeting will be piloted in four ministries in the 2023 budgeting cycle: agriculture, health, basic education, and gender.

Economic policies formulated include The Gambia's Trade Policy (2018-2022) with the overall goal of making The Gambia a competitive and export-oriented economy led by private sector growth for employment creation and poverty reduction. Also in existence is a National Employment Policy (NEP) 2022-2026 that seeks to create sufficient and productive jobs, decent and freely chosen employment to alleviate poverty and reduce income inequality, youth unemployment, labour underutilization and enhance productivity and competitiveness in the country. In addition, there is a National Entrepreneurship Policy (2016-2026), which aims to build a national entrepreneurship ecosystem to support inclusive and green entrepreneurship development targeted at creating new economic activities, improving local productive

capacities, providing solutions to environmental and social challenges and generating decent jobs.

To complement the above is the National Transport Policy (2018-2027) that guides the development of the country's transport sector, with focus on the development and maintenance of transport infrastructure to contribute to reducing extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. The ICT Policy (2018-2028) pursues a strategy directed to the development, deployment and exploitation of ICTs to support the delivery of health, education, government and social services and to facilitate the acceleration of the development of the nation's economy through the development of ICTs, where a reasonable large proportion of the population have access to information and communications technology products and services. Finally, a National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (NSTI) 2015-2024, exists to promote the harnessing of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for vibrant and sustainable socioeconomic growth and development for improved quality of life of the population through an effective utilization of STI for the socioeconomic transformation of the Gambia and increased integration into the world economy.

On the social front, a National Health Policy (2021-2030) has been formulated to provide quality, affordable and accessible health care services for all in The Gambia hinged on the theme *building partnerships for quality health care for all*. Also, a national health insurance scheme has just been launched after the enactment of the National Health Insurance bill 2021. An important component of the civil service reform is a pay and grading structure which has been approved by Cabinet and due to come into effect in July 2022 as well as a new pensions bill enacted. All these are geared toward addressing the harsh living conditions of the working poor.

An Education Sector Policy (2016-2030) exists to provide accessible, equitable and inclusive quality education for sustainable development, particularly prioritizing girls for greater gender equity. Other policies in existence include a Tertiary and Higher Education Policy (2014-2023) and a National Social Protection Policy (2015-2025) aimed at accelerating and sustaining pro-poor and inclusive economic growth, poverty reduction, enhance human capital development, social cohesion, and the attainment of basic human rights for the population.

Policies in the Energy Sector such as the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (NEEAP) of The Gambia (2015-2030) and the Renewable Energy Act 2013 are geared towards increasing access to energy but also promoting Low Carbon Development and reducing Carbon Emissions for sustainable development. More importantly, given the low-lying nature of the Gambia and the negative and potential consequences of climate change, the government will be adopting a more holistic approach toward sustainable development as an overarching framework, moving away from the

sectoral approach to development, which has failed to adequately address all the dimensions of sustainable development. The country is therefore steadily moving towards the level of sustainable institutionalization necessary to ensure that environmental considerations are incorporated into major development policies or programs implemented in the sectors.

With respect to Environment and Climate Change, The Gambia 2050 Climate Vision and National Climate Change Policy (2016-2025) aims to mainstream climate change into national planning, budgeting, decision-making, and programme implementation, through effective institutional mechanisms, coordinated financial resources, and enhanced human resources capacity. This mean The Gambia will pursue climate risk management for pro-poor, equitable and inclusive growth, and that social development will be an integral part of adaptation and mitigation measures against climate change. Also, there is an Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Policy 2017 - 2027 with *the over-arching objective of maximization of poverty reduction and enhancement of food, income and nutrition securities through the optimal utilization of the resources of the sector consistent with safeguarding the integrity of the environment.*

All these policies are translated into programmes within the NDP which ensures strong inter linkages across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Its 8 (eight) strategic priorities focus on issues related to Governance, Economic Growth, Agriculture & Natural Resources, Social Services (Health & Education), Infrastructure, Tourism, Youth and Private sector development. In addition, the NDP has 7 (seven) critical enablers one of which seeks to promote environment sustainability, to ensure that The Gambia's Environment and Natural Resources are managed sustainably and conserved in order to increase resilience by strengthening Environment and Climate Change-friendly Policies, creating programmes to raise awareness at all levels for Resilience and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources.

Achieving the 3 (three) dimension of the SDG requires cooperation and coordination between sectors and institutions in order to manage the trade-offs and leverage on the synergies among the goals which cut across the three dimensions of sustainable development. To realise this, the country has in place a Planners Forum, which brings together central and local government planners to consistently dialogue and review planning and implementation of sector policies and programmes. This platform also addresses gaps in sector policies, ensures synergy in sector policies and enhances integrated and inclusive sustainable policy formulation.

The emergence of COVID-19 since early 2020 diverted resources from priority sectors and thus impacted the implementation and attainment of NDP objectives and the SDGs. The lockdowns had very negative effects on daily economic activities of people and on the economic and services sectors including the operations of government. The

early response strategies orchestrated drastic measures and decisions which led to a significant slowdown in economic activity and huge movement of resources – money and materials, to activities which hitherto were not planned. This eroded gains earlier registered with far-reaching consequences on overall national development.

To address the challenges of the potential health and socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 to the attainment of the SDGs, and build back better, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is currently coordinating the formulation and subsequent implementation of a Green Recovery Focused National Development Plan to address the different facets of the pandemic and support the implementation of the NDP and attainment of the SDGs.

4.4 Leaving no one behind

Since independence, The Gambia has been implementing policies and plans to reduce poverty, improve the lives and livelihoods of the population. However, despite these policies and plans, the country is still a Least Developed Country; ranked 172, with a Human Development Index of 0.496 in 2020. Economic growth is volatile and not as inclusive with high susceptibility to erratic rainfall and external shocks. There are disparities and inequalities between different segments of society and between regions, rural and urban areas and as a result, some groups of people continue to be at the risk of being left behind.

4.5 Groups at risk of being left behind

In 2015, The Gambia formulated a national social protection policy for a ten-year period to 2025. The policy identified vulnerable groups which include extremely poor individuals and households, vulnerable children, the elderly, people with disabilities, individuals and families affected by HIV, and vulnerable women and youth. These vulnerable groups are also identified as being most at risk of being left behind. Rural populations are also at risk of being left behind.

Poverty levels remain high at 54.0 per cent (2020 Integrated Household Survey¹). While poverty has increased in both the urban and rural areas, the prevalence of poverty is more than double in rural areas and so poverty continues to be primarily a rural phenomenon. Rural areas fare poorly on many socioeconomic indicators such as access to health, access to education, literacy rates, access to electricity, road infrastructure etc.

Women continue to face challenges in terms of access to finance, and access to decent employment, as well as limited participation in politics and decision-making processes compared to their male counterparts. These challenges impact the

¹ Preliminary IHS results

development of women and the attainment of the SDGs. The Gambia had a Gender Inequality Index score of 0.612 with a rank of 148 in 2019.

Youth continue to face challenges including high unemployment levels (41.5%) compared to the general population, limited access to technical vocational education and training especially for those in the rural areas. These challenges have been key drivers of irregular migration.

There are several factors/challenges that hinder the participation of vulnerable groups in the development process. These include difficulties in accessing TVET facilities, economic opportunities, and financial services, especially in the rural areas. Access to decent employment for women and youth continue to be a challenge despite several initiatives. Women and youth participation in politics and decision-making is challenged at all levels. Persons living with disability continue to face challenges in terms of access to education and employment opportunities. The special needs schools that exist are mainly concentrated in the urban areas. Covid 19 has exacerbated some of these challenges.

4.6 Policy Responses

Government continues to implement policies and programmes to enhance inclusive development and addressing the issue of 'leaving no one behind'. These policies and programmes include the Programme for Accelerated Community Development (PACD), launched mainly to address serious disparities between the urban and rural communities in terms of access to socio-economic opportunities and Infrastructure. e. Since the submission of the Gambia's first VNR in July 2020, the implementation of the PACD has been progressing by providing rural communities with potable water, electrification, construction of rural roads and bridges, and agricultural machinery and labour-saving devices such as milling machines to boost agricultural production and reduce the drudgery encountered by women in processing agricultural produce.

Targeted programmes for young people include construction of more schools and classrooms, and the Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP). Since 2020, Government has continued to invest in the expansion of access to education by constructing more classrooms and schools. The Youth Empowerment Programme continues to provide TVET to youth with a particular focus on those not in education, employment and training.

A social protection programme has recently been launched and initiatives within it include a social safety net project (NAFAA), establishment of a women empowerment fund, the youth empowerment fund, the passing of the health insurance bill, the passing of the disability bill. The Gambia National Assembly passed the Persons with Disabilities Bill in July 2021, which has since been assented to. After almost a decade

of tireless advocacy engaging a range of stakeholders, people with disabilities now have a fully-fledged law that protects their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Reacting to the advent of this this long-awaited piece of legislation, Chairperson of the Gambia Federation of the Disabled (GFD) stated: *“This law is the most important piece of legislation for us [Persons with Disabilities]. The Law not only recognises our rights, but also enables us to hold the government accountable where it fails to protect these rights”*.

4.7 Institutional mechanisms

The Gambia initiated another Voluntary National Review (VNR) process of the progress of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in 2022. By design or serendipity, the structural, organizational, administrative and implementation managements of this initiative turned out to be an all-time inclusively consummate and flexible institutional arrangement which became adopted as the institutional framework through which all relevant stakeholders are mobilized and engaged in the implementation management of the agenda 2030 in The Gambia. The review process of the SDG indicators results in the elaboration of a country VNR Report.

The institutional framework has two key sets of functions thus: a). policy and oversight functions which are carried out by Cabinet, National Assembly and inter-Ministerial Committee; and b). technical and implementation functions are manned by National Technical Steering Committee (NTSC), Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), National Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) platform, Sector Working Groups (SWG), and Regional Technical Advisory Committees (RTACs).

The National Technical Steering Committee (NTSC) is the overarching body responsible for the overall monitoring, coordination, and resource mobilisation for the VNR report. The NTSC meets quarterly and comprises of all the Permanent Secretaries of the various Ministries, headed by the Secretary General and Head of civil service. The Development Cooperation Forum is a bi-annual resource mobilization event which is primarily an engagement with our Development Partners to enhance support and collaboration in the implementation of SDG indicators. Thus, the financial and technical participations of UN Agencies in the country are enlisted in the preparation of the VNR report. These UN Agencies’ supports are coordinated by the UNRCO Office which also sits on the VNR steering committee. The remaining technical committees are engaged in ensuring that the sectoral and regional development priorities are aligned and consistent with Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063.

The institutional framework also provides a broad-based consultative mechanism for a whole-society consultation approach at national, regional, and sectoral levels including private sector, local government representatives, youth, children, women, development partners, persons with disabilities, human right institutions, and

academia. This enhances inclusivity and ensures that no one is left behind in SDG reporting. Additionally, it is important to note that The Gambia is submitting Voluntary Local Review report on SDG indicators for the three selected regions in 2022 as well. In this connection the institutional mechanism caters for a joint stakeholder consultation of both VNR and VLR at the regional level as well as at steering committee meetings level to ensure synergy.

All key national actors and stakeholders participating in the process of implementing SDGs have roles and responsibilities in the development of VNR report. In this regard the Directorate of Development Planning under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is the Secretariat that spearheads the stakeholder's consultation and coordination of the preparation of the VNR. On the other hand, Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD) at the Office of the President is responsible for mainstreaming of agenda 2030 into our National Policies and Programmes and National Development Plan as well as across all sectors of the economy while Gambia Bureau of Statistics provides leadership in the overall SDG data collection and analysis in the report. Cognisant of the data challenges of the 2020 VNR, the Government through The Gambia Bureau of Statistics with financial support from UNDP has conducted a survey on updating the SDG indicators so as to overcome data challenges in subsequent VNR report. In view of this, sectors are responsible for providing the necessary administrative data while GBoS supplies the technical data for the report.

With the support of EU, the Government established the Gambia Information Monitoring and Evaluation System for national development plan monitoring and reporting while the Economic and Social Commission (ECOSOC) built the capacity of the planning cadre on Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit on SDG reporting. The Gambia launched a National Development Platform to facilitate online data collection and dissemination. These platforms have greatly enhanced SDG alignment and reporting with National Development Plan.

4.8 Systemic issues and transformative actions

Despite some achievements in implementing the 2030 Agenda, The Gambia is faced with a range of structural issues that challenge its efforts in implementing the SDGs. As the result of its narrow economic base and its reduced internal market, the country will continue to rely heavily on the productivity of its citizens to reverse the cycle that keeps families in poverty generation after generation. COVID-Covid-19 has also largely affected the implementation of NDP and SDGs mainly its slowing down of economic activity leading to loss of government revenue, loss of jobs and private income. This has exacerbated inequalities and widened divides, with the most detrimental impact on those who are already at risk of being left behind.

The economic fallout of the crisis has put many groups in society further behind, including children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, day labourers,

and people living at or below the poverty line. The pandemic is making inequalities more visible, such as acute disparities and inequalities in wealth, access to health, employment and livelihood, and in the ability to adopt preventive and isolation measures. The hardest hit sectors of the economy due to COVID-19 related restrictions are Agriculture, food security and nutrition, education, tourism, trade, transport. A number of challenges still remain for the attainment of inclusive growth and economic stability. The slow pace of fiscal reforms (rationalization of agencies and embassies, vehicle policy, tax expenditure policy) still continues to pose challenges.

Another two major structural challenges are the high dependency on rain-fed agriculture and the seasonality of tourism in which the former contributes about 20 percent of GDP. The halting of the tourism sector and the reduction in economic activities adversely affected GDP growth resulting to revenue shortfall for the year of about GMD1 billion (approximately USD20 million). In late March it was expected that there would be a drastic drop in remittances (international transfer) driven by an inability of senders abroad to leave their homes to make transfers. The pandemic has not only affected the business sector it has also brought about unprecedented effect on the functioning of justice systems. Thus, the pandemic will further strangle development in these sectors with tourism likely fall off its track of achieving the SDGs. Given that most resources will be diverted to fighting the pandemic, this means that proper implementation of the SDGs will be a challenge and this will eventually result to the fall in some of the achievements made thus far on the NDP and SDGs. These are further compounded by the limited growth of the private sector to, among other things, create jobs and provide necessary services due partly to the crowding out effect of excessive government borrowing. The inadequate necessary infrastructure such as electricity and roads transportation network has constrained productivity and growth.

Despite achievements in key reforms, there have been setbacks to the transition process. Key structural reforms (in particular SOE and Procurement reforms) have been lagging and the government needs to show quick gains to its population, as the transition led to very high expectations from citizens. The National Assembly rejected the Constitution Promulgation Bill 2020, which would have introduced measures to strengthen democracy, including setting a presidential term limit and enhancing the inclusion of marginalized groups.

Additionally, growth has also been constrained by low skills level. Poverty reduction is a complex equation that involves improvements in job creation, especially for high-skilled and productive employment, as well as improvements in human capital levels to ensure that citizens are able to take advantage of employment opportunities. Currently, however, low human capital levels greatly limit the

productivity and employment outcomes of the population, as evidenced by the fact that a majority continues to work in subsistence agriculture, especially in rural areas. Nearly 60 percent of the poor in The Gambia are under the age of 20 years. Youth face significant challenges with respect to employment outcomes, such as a very difficult transition from school to work and very low levels of education and training. In terms of education levels, a significant proportion of young people (especially in rural areas) leave school early, in part due to what are perceived to be low returns on education. Many of those who do receive high quality education and training choose to emigrate. In a country where more than half the population is under the age of 20 years, these trends are worrisome. Overall, young workers are employed in jobs of low quality and high levels of informality.

In the area of youth and women employment, the latest labour force survey (GLFS 2018) of women employment indicated that 17.9 percent are in managerial positions, 38.7 percent are engaged in informal activities. For the youth, 56.8 percent of them (aged 15-24 years) are not in education, employment or training of which 44.7 percent are male and 56.3 percent are female.

As at 2020, in the National Assembly for instance, only 10.3 percent (52 males, 6 females) of seats are occupied by women compared to the target of 30.0 percent despite the fact that women continue to vie for such positions. Cabinet is also male dominated with only 20.0 percent female representation (16 males, 4 females). However, while there are more unemployed males (32.8%) than females (28.8%) in the urban areas, the proportion of unemployed females is higher (71.2%) than males (67.2%) in the rural areas. The Gambia's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2019 is 0.496 – which put the country in the low human development category – positioning it at 172 out of 189. Literacy² rates for women are 47.2 percent and for men 66.8 percent. Malnutrition indicators remain high with 17.5 percent and 5.1 percent of children under 5 being stunted and wasted respectively. . The anaemia rate amongst women of reproductive aged is 44.3 percent. These shows mixed progress towards attaining the Global Nutrition Target (GDHS, 2019-20 and GNR³, 2020).

The gender machinery still grapples with inadequacy of funding to provide the required services. Currently, there are serious budget limitations, making it difficult to put into actions its gender equality plans. Many policies and plans still need to be turned into real gains for the local populations, particularly women and girls who continue to suffer from deprivation, exclusion and vulnerability. Furthermore, Gender Based Violence (GBV) including Femal Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) continues to be practiced in some communities despite a law banning

² These are for those aged 15-49

³ Global Nutrition Report, 2020

it. Young girls are still getting married as 1 in 5 (19%) between the ages 15-19 are currently in a union. (GDHS, 2019-20). The proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM/C; has hardly changed just registering a slight drop from 75.0 percent in 2013 to 73.0 percent in 2019/20. This is an indication that FGM/C is still widely practiced in The Gambia as 46.0 percent of women reported that the practice should not be continued (GDHS 2019-20). On November 24th, 2015, an enterprise development fund which was set up and approved by Cabinet will go a long way in supporting women empowerment .

The unsatisfactory governance situation in socioeconomic development that existed until December 2016 especially the lack of respect for democratic principles and alleged widespread corruption, are still major impediments. The enactment of the Draft Constitution; a promise of the 2016 Coalition to put the country firmly on the road to democracy, suffered a setback at the National Assembly leading to several talks with political parties, religious and traditional leaders facilitated by International IDEA, which also proved unsuccessful. This undermined the efforts of the constitutional reform agenda, as the country continues to be governed by the 1997 Constitution, which has undergone several amendments rendering it incompatible with the principles of good governance following 22 years of President Yahya Jammeh dictatorial rule.

The Gambia's governance and business environment are respectively still ranked poorly in the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index (102 out of 180) and the World Bank's 2020 Doing Business Index (155 out of 190). Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), although still low has improved from USD 5.4 million net inflows in 2017 to USD 32.2 million in 2019. Personal inflows of remittances remain ahead of FDI with inflows registering over 8 times the level of foreign direct investment.

The Government of The Gambia within the context of its National Transitional Justice Programme embarked on a comprehensive legislative and transitional justice reform process. From 2017 to date, the following key legislative reforms were implemented; Constitution (Amendment) Act (2017); Constitution Review Commission Act (2017); National Human Rights Commission Act (2017); Truth Reconciliation and Reparations Commissions Act (2017); Elections Bill (2020); Local Government (Amendment) Act (2018); Gambia Public Procurement Authority (Amendment) Act (2018); the Vetting Agency Bill (2020), Criminal Offences Bill (2020), Criminal Procedure Bill (2020), Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Bill (2020), International Crimes Bill (2020), Anti- Corruption Bill (2019) and Access to Information Bill (2020), to mention a few.

Another reform undertaken was to decongest the prisons through pardoning of some prisoners and expediting court processes. Following decades of human rights

abuse, the new Government is committed to a fully functional National Human Rights Commission whose roles and responsibilities conform to international standards. Other transformative policies includes National Youth of The Gambia (2019-2028) to curb youth migration among others, the reviewed National Employment Policy and Action Plan (NEAP) 2020-2025, Labour Act and Regulation, promotion of trade facilitation, investment, and private sector development , the revised Trade Policy, developing the Trade Strategy 2018-2022, the formulation of a legal framework for the establishment of a Single Window for Customs Clearance, development of an investment park, and National Investment Policy 2018-2022

The GNAIP II is also supporting key structural reforms in a bid to improve agriculture and trade policies on input subsidy, transparency and efficiency, groundnut pricing reform, more resources for agriculture and more efficiency in their allocation and land policy reform to secure farmers' land property rights while fostering private investments. A national employers' skills needs survey was conducted to identify skills gaps and training needs. This has helped National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA) to review training standards and curricula to align them with market needs. In this regard, the NAQAA Act (2015) was reviewed in 2021 to ensure quality and standards are maintained in tertiary and higher education institutions,

The Government has adopted a reform agenda which includes a number of initiatives to improve governance, access to equitable justice and strengthen security sector (for example, the adopted onational security policy and a Security Sector Reform Strategy (SSRS) (2020 - 2024) were developed to address gaps, deficiencies and challenges faced with a view to restructure and cultivate an effective, professional, apolitical and accountable security sector. Following decades of human rights abuse, the new Government is committed to a fully functional National Human Rights Commission whose roles and responsibilities conform to international standards. The reform of The Gambia's media law received a boost from ongoing collaboration with Article 19 aimed at the adoption of international best practices in media regulation and the replacement of the draconian laws promulgated by the previous administration. The TRRC reports are key milestones for The Gambia, but also present risks to political stability in the country. It is the moment to consolidate the transition, build on progress made since 2017, and address lingering issues, related to the macroeconomic stability, governance, security sector reform and human capital development. There is a window of opportunity that the government is committed to seize to transition out of fragility.

Following democratic elections in December 2016, significant improvements have been realised in the governance landscape. The country has strengthened the coordination mechanism among civil society actors to ensure integrity of the

electoral processes and the capacity of civil society to monitor elections and political reform processes. These deliberate moves, including the restoration of relations with strategic development partners within the international community, have led to a relatively stable political environment and consequently restored confidence of development partners and private investors.

Government has also taken steps towards enhancing gender equality and equity in the political, social and economic spheres. Women's empowerment forms a key priority of government as set out in the NDP. In January 2019, the Government of The Gambia created the first ever Ministry for Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW), now named Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MoGCSW). In its continued efforts to addressing gender inequalities, the Gender Policy 2021 to 2030 is currently being developed. The Ministry is also reviewing and updating the Children's Act and Sector Policies to better strengthen government response and support vulnerable children (DSW Policy, Children Policy and Disability Policy). The Disability Bill is developed and submitted to the National Assembly for enactment to enhance the inclusion of this vulnerable group. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare also established the women Enterprise Fund in 2020 to address the challenges of access to finance for women, providing access to micro credit services and training of women owned MSMEs. Other efforts include mainstreaming of gender into the National Development Plan and other policies, development of a strategy and action plan to combat GBV practices, development of a Gender Management Information System/Africa Gender Development Index (GMIS/AGDI) data base and capacity development for women entrepreneurs.

There has been significant strides in key areas such as transitional justice, macroeconomic reforms and performance, stabilization of government finances, youth employment and State-owned Enterprises (SoE) reforms. However, a continued effort is critical to sustain gains and provide a turnaround mechanism for the consolidation of the transition and reconciliation processes, political stability and a more inclusive and broad based growth for enhanced poverty reduction, founded on solid policy and institutional arrangements, improved human capital development outcomes and enhanced resilience.

CHAPTER 5: Progress on Goals and Targets

5.1 Progress and status of the SDGs-(Focus for 2022 VNR)

5.1.1 Goal 4: Access to Quality Education

The Gambia has made significant gains in access to education across all the regions. Despite this, achieving quality education will require more investment and efforts by the Government and its partners.

Foundational Learning Skills

Proficiency in reading and numeracy continue to be a challenge for pupils in grades 2/3 and this is noticeably lower for numeracy (3.7 percent) compared to reading (5.2 percent) at the national level. For pupils in grade 6, there is slight difference of less than 1 percent in proficiency levels in reading and numeracy at the national level.

Girls in grades 2/3 are more proficient in both reading and numeracy than boys, while for grade 6, boys were more proficient in both reading and numeracy. Disaggregating competency based on geographical areas, boys and girls in urban areas are more proficient both in reading and numeracy compared to boys and girls in rural areas. Thus, there is need to improve overall quality of education especially in rural areas (Table 6.1.1.).

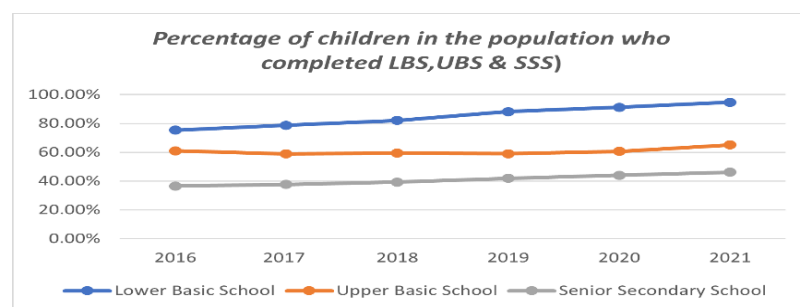
Table: 6.1.1: Percentage of children who demonstrated foundational skills in reading and numeracy

Grade	Reading Skills			Numeracy Skills		
	National	Male	Female	National	Male	Female
2/3	5.2	3.8	6.3	3.7	3.4	4.0
Grade 6	30.9	39.5	25.1	31.7	35.8	29.2
7-14 years	12.4	11.1	13.5	8.6	6.8	10.1
Urban	15.7	13.7	17.3	12.3	8.8	15.1
Rural	6.6	6.8	6.5	2.6	3.5	1.9

Source (MICS 6, 2018)

Completion rates

Completion rates are higher at primary level compared to both upper basic and senior secondary schools. On average, at the primary level, the completion rate is 85.05 percent, from 2016 to 2021, compared to upper basic (60.68 percent) and senior secondary schools' levels (40.95 percent).



Source: (Education Statistical Yearbook 2016 - 2021)

Male completion rate at the primary level was lower; on average at 82.05 percent, compared to female completion rate (87.88 percent). Similarly, male completion rate at the Upper Basic level is also lower at 58.38 percent compared to female completion rate at the level of Upper Basic (62.80 percent). At the level of Senior Secondary, the average female completion rates were higher (41.98 percent), compared to male students (39.85 percent) for the period 2016 to 2021.

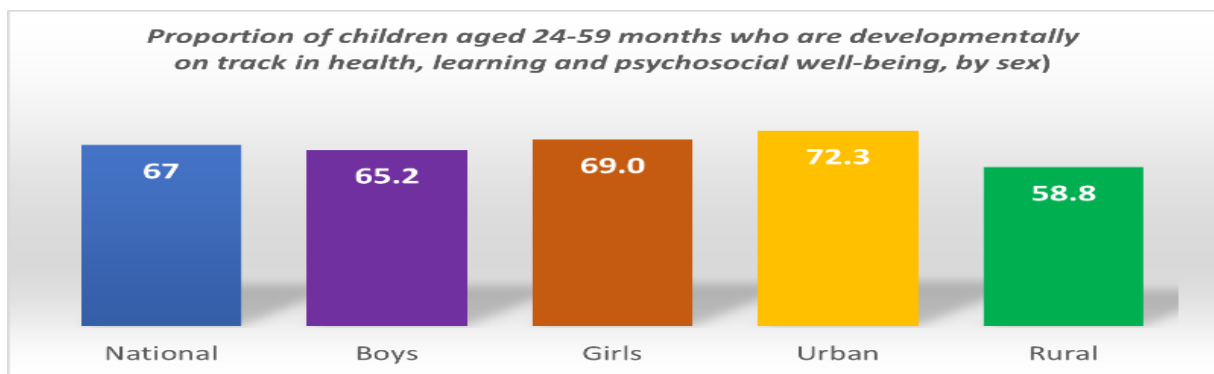
Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Government acknowledges the importance of the early years of development for children as readiness of children for primary school can be improved through attendance of early childhood education programmes or through pre-school.

ECD index score for children under 5 years was 67.0 percent in 2018. However, ECD of girls at this age was higher (69.0 percent) compared to boys with an index score of 65.2 percent. Early childhood index score was higher for children under 5 in the urban areas than children of same age in the rural areas.

Government through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) has started the implementation of the National Policy on Integrated ECD and plans to strengthen ties and collaboration with partners in this area. MoBSE continues to coordinate, support, and facilitate the early years' education, care and development of children through monitoring, assessing and developing guidelines for the establishment and management of nursery schools. In addition, early learning centres will continue to be incorporated in existing Lower Basic Schools in 'deprived' communities.

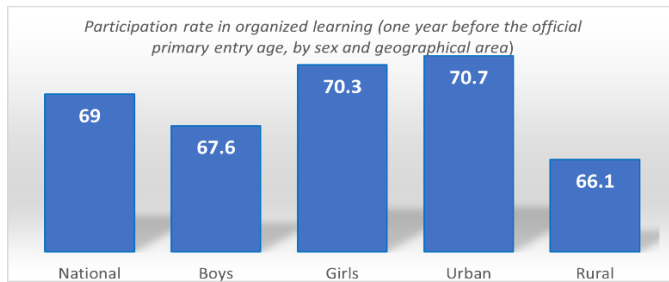
In addition, a Multi-Sectoral Working Group (MSWG) on ECD comprising of all stakeholders involved in ECD Policy formulation and implementation has been established to facilitate regular engagement and update on ECD matters.



(Source (MICS 6, 2018)

Participation of children in organised learning one year before the official primary entry age stood at 69.0 percent in 2018 at national level. More girls (70.3 percent)

attended organized learning than boys (67.6 percent). Participation rate in organized learning is higher in the urban areas (70.7 percent) than the rural area (66.1 percent).



Source (MICS 6, 2018)

Participation of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training

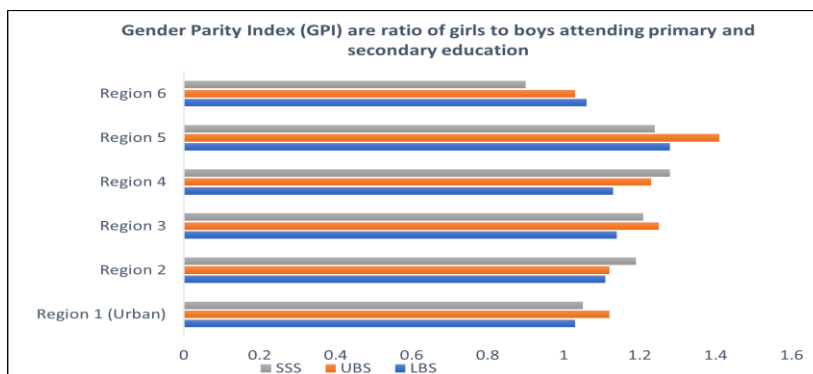
Youth (15-24) participation in both formal and non-formal education and training is 34.3 percent, compared to adult (25-64) which is 9.8 percent. More male youths (36.7 percent) participated in training programs than their female youths (32.5 percent). In the same vein male adults (14.1 percent) attended formal and non-formal training programs than female adults (6.5 percent).

In terms of participation rates for technical vocational skills, youth (15-24) is 54.3 percent whilst the adult (25-64) is 67.2 percent. However, more youths (82.7 percent) have been engaged in literacy programmes than adults (73.9 percent) (2020-21 Gambia SDGs Monitoring Survey).

Parity Indices

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a ratio of girls to boys attending primary and secondary education. Note that the ratios included here are obtained from Gross Enrolment Rates (GER).

The Gambia has achieved parity from primary to secondary levels as at 2020/21 and this achievement was registered in all regions across the three levels of basic and secondary education except at senior secondary level in Region 6. (Figure xxx)



Source: (Education Statistical Year Book 2016 - 2021)

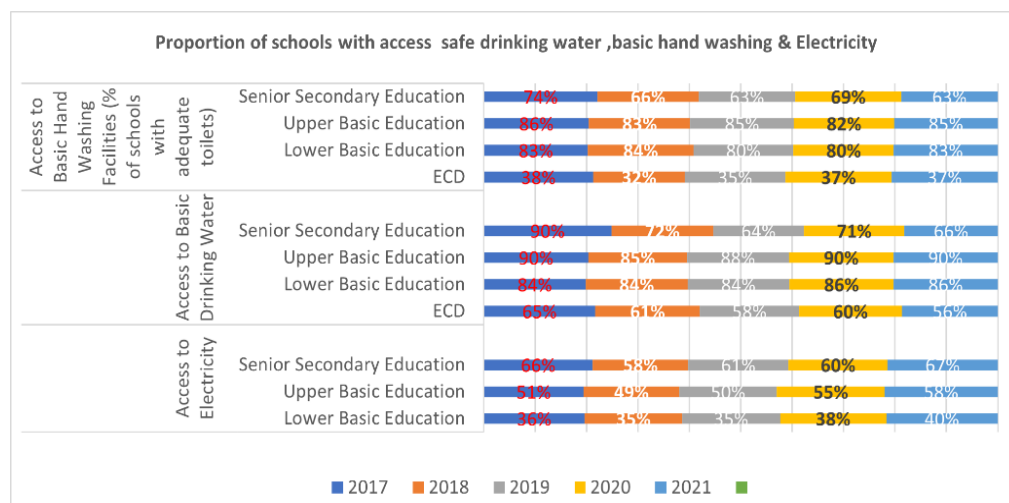
Learning Environment

To ensure an inclusive learning environment, government has increased access to electricity, safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities in schools across the country. In its efforts to ensure educational facilities are disability friendly, wheelchair access ramps are included in the design of all new school buildings, while exiting schools' buildings have created access ramps to cater for students living with disability.

The implementation of the Persons with Disability Act passed in 2021, will ensure greater access to all public buildings for persons living with disability.

On average, access to electricity is higher at the Senior Secondary School level at 63 percent compared to both Upper Basic (51.8 percent) and Lower Basic level (36.2 percent).

However, access to safe drinking water and hand washing facilities are higher in Lower Basic and Upper Basic levels than at the Senior Secondary levels (Figure xxx)



Source (Education Statistical Yearbook 2017 -2021)

Regional Consultations

Community members opined that the country over the years registered steady progress in terms of access to basic and secondary education in all regions across the country. Access to tertiary, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Madrassa⁴ remain low in most regions. The Basse Annex of the Gambia College was opened in 2020. However, there is steady progress in access to basic and secondary education attributed to increased access to basic education in all regions, free education, school feeding programme especially in rural Gambia, support and involvement of School Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations (SMC/PTA/Mothers' Club) and the School Improvement Grants (SIG) initiative, education policy of having a school within a 3km and 7km radius (basic and secondary

⁴ Medium of instruction is Arabic with emphasis on Islamic Education

schools respectively), the intervention of philanthropic organizations, increased awareness and advocacy programmes.

Despite the significant achievements in access to education, the following challenges continue to affect quality education: inadequate infrastructure (physical infrastructure, internet facilities and energy), inadequate number of trained teachers especially in specialized areas, limited teaching and learning materials, policy of mass promotion, inadequate science laboratories, absence of student transport services, teacher content knowledge, lack of decentralization of special needs education centres for persons living with disability, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, social media influence both within and outside the school, high cost of fees in private schools in urban areas, access to sanitary pads especially in Madrassas, domestic work and peer influence.

People in the various regions across the country remain committed towards improving access to and quality education and work towards addressing these challenges. They embark on advocacy programs seeking support from Area Councils and other NGOs for scholarships to outstanding and needy students, engagement and dialogue with partners, award scholarships to needy students, offer extra classes, embark on site visits to learn and share best practices, organize regular SMC meetings to discuss existing challenges, write formal requests to the Regional Education Directorate for support

5.1.2 Goal 5: Advance Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls

Regional Consultations: Recommendations to enhance access to quality education

- Review and alignment of the education policy to current realities
- Establishment of more tertiary and TVET institutions in rural Gambia
- Ensure teachers maintain high ethical standard,
- Increase advocacy on access to and quality education for all
- Provision of school internet facilities and science laboratories in rural schools
- Provide qualified teachers in specialize subjects for rural schools
- Provide incentives for teachers in remote areas including provision of staff accommodation
- Ensure effective monitoring of teaching and learning
- Limit number of student per class to avoid overcrowding,
- Organize career guidance and counselling for final year students,
- Strengthen implementation of Disability Act to support the needs of students living with disability
- Provide scholarship to needy students,
- Provision of adequate student transport services in all regions across the country
- Synchronize admission requirements to higher education and also standardize the madrasa system to include TVET and sciences.

Progress made in this area include the creation of the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Welfare, significant steps being taken for the empowerment of women through several legislative acts, as well as vigorous efforts to ensure gender parity in primary education. The 2021 Mid-Term Evaluation of the NDP showed progress in outcomes on enhanced women economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods, and reduction of gender-based violence including doing away with harmful traditional practices such as FGM and early marriage. For the former, the practice was outlawed in the country in 2015 but the cultural belief and the practice still persists. The proportion of women aged 15 – 49 years who have undergone FGM decreased from 76.3 percent in 2010 to 75.7 percent in 2018 and 72.6 percent in 2019/20 but the prevalence is still high.

Figure 6.1.2.a: Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18

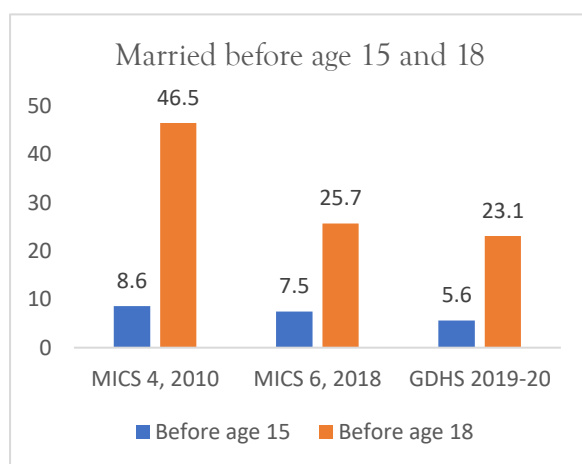
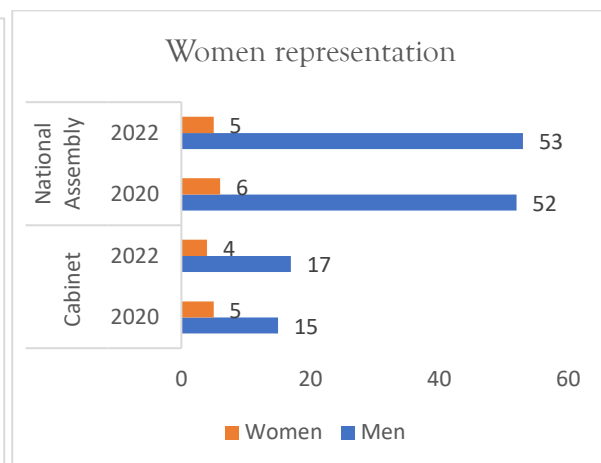


Figure 6.1.2.b: Women representation in decision making



Source: MICS 4 2010, MICS 6 2018 & GDHS 2019-2020

The prevalence of early marriage as shown in Figure 6.1.2.a is generally on the decline for those married before age 15 and 18. One possible reason for the decline could be enactment of the Women Act (2010) and improved enrolment and retention particularly for girls and increased access to financial opportunities.

Women representation in decision making is generally seen to be on the decline in The Gambia. As depicted in figure 6.1.2.b above, women representation in Parliament has declined from 10.3 percent in 2020 to 8.6 percent in 2022. Similarly, representation in Cabinet has declined from 25 percent in 2020 to 19 percent in 2022. This is well below the recommended 30 percent gender quota agreed during the 1995 United Nations Beijing Conference on women for which The Gambia is party and signatory to.

On violence against women, the proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current

or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months is 17.3 percent. In addition, physical, sexual and psychological violence is reported to be 9 percent, 2.4 percent and 13.7 percent respectively.

However, contrary to the existing socio-cultural norms and practices that continue to put women at a disadvantaged position, women ownership (secure rights) of agriculture land is surprisingly high (65.2 percent)⁵.

Regional Consultations

During community consultations, the general feeling was that there is improvement in the area of gender equality and women and girls' empowerment with regards to decision making, resource allocation, political representation and participation in most of the regions across the country. The advancement in gender equality and women and girls' empowerment is largely attributed to a range of factors including strong political will (establishment of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social welfare), education and career improvements, and change in cultural and traditional beliefs.

Advocacy and awareness programs on gender equality and women and girls empowerment through the media, extra curricula activities in schools also helped especially girls in education. Youth organizations also helped in advancing the women's and girls' empowerment. Changing institutional and policy framework changed the dynamics surrounding women issues and these include the existence of the Women's Act 2010, existence of the Gender and Women Empowerment policy 2010 - 2020, enactment of the Children Act 2005, enactment of the Domestic Violence Act 2013, existence of women empowerment organizations such as Female Lawyers Association Gambia (FLAG), the National Women Council, existence of the Women Federation, establishment of the women enterprise funds, increase in women interest in TVET, and increased in women representation in decision making position such as VDCs, WDCs and LGA Councils, among others.

However, some; including urban women, felt that gender equality and women and girl's empowerment issues remain the same due to a range of challenges that continue to affect gender equality and women and girls' empowerment. These include: sexual harassment, gender-based violence, reproductive health issues especially during child birth, limited access to land and agricultural inputs and implements, male dominance in decision making, low political representation, low self-esteem, discrimination at workplaces especially in seeking employment and holding key position, discrimination against women in male dominated fields, early marriage, religious, culture and traditional beliefs, limited income, absence of infrastructural development schemes for women and girls.

⁵ SGD Monitoring Survey 2021

As a result, people in various regions are advocating for efforts to further empower women. More efforts are needed in areas such as strengthening school clubs and women and girls' educational organizations to help in mitigating the above issues. Recommendations to help in improving gender equality and women and girls' empowerment are outlined in the text box below:

5.1.3 Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Overall, data is available for 5 of the 10 indicators on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources thus indicating improvement over the 2020 VNR report. The proportion of fish stock within biologically sustainable levels indicator was reported in the last VNR but due to technical and financial reasons, no update is available for 2022.

The Gambia is implementing an ecosystem-based approach through management of protected areas and other area-based conservation measures such as Niimi Biosphere Reserve 131,000 ha. In terms of coverage of the protected area, the country has a total of 94,975.1 ha of which 92,199.1 ha is coastal and marine. Regarding the degree of implementation of an international instrument, the country signed bilateral partnerships and agreements with several countries to support the implementation of international instruments to combat illegal fishing. One such instrument is the Sub-Regional Fisheries

Recommendations to improve gender equality and women and girls' empowerment

- More advocacy programs for women and girls' empowerment
- Improve girls' participation in academic and extra curricula activities
- Provide career development initiatives in schools and other avenues especially in TVET and entrepreneurial and financial opportunities
- Create equal opportunities and more incentives for women and girls to participate in decision making process
- Organize mentorship and coaching programs for women and girls
- Provide more TVET/ STEM education for women
- Put policies in place to enhance women's access to land
- Provide infrastructural developments; roads, markets, preservation and storage facilities especially for gardens
- Provide improved access to financial services for women and girls through the Women Enterprise Fund
- Improve production and productivity in agricultural activities
- Provide entrepreneurial skills and non-formal education schemes for women and girls
- Operationalise the existing Women's Act and the gender policy
- Inclusion of women empowerment issues in the curriculum,
- Institutionalize a quota system for women representation in parliament and cabinet and create awareness through women groups.

Commission comprising seven member countries⁶. The commission is responsible for participatory surveillance to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

The indicator on the proportion of the total research budget allocated to research in the field of marine technology is not reported as there is no specific budgetary allocation. With regards to the degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries, the Ministry of Fisheries is developing a new Fisheries Policy which will soon be submitted to cabinet for consideration. The proposed policy addresses the issue of access rights to small-scale fishing among others. Also, the policy framework caters for the provision of global and regional instruments such as Africa Union (AU) Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PFRS) for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa Food and Agriculture Organisation-Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (FAO-CCRF) and United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals to ensure greater coherence and alignment.

Currently, the sector is faced with financial and technical capacity challenges to carry out scientific research to address the problem of data for the sector and enforcement of Fisheries Act to ensure responsible fishing as well.

In spite of these challenges, the sector is promoting building back better initiatives such as mangrove restoration, promotion of aquaculture, beekeeping provision of energy-saving cooking stoves, and turtle conservation in coastal communities to promote sustainable management of the marine resource. These initiatives enhance employment and livelihood opportunities, income and foreign exchange earnings, food, and nutrition security among others.

Regional Consultations

During the regional consultations, community members stated that the current status on the sustainable use of the river/ocean and management of marine resources in most communities in the country is alarming and remain a cause for concern. This is due to over exploitation of marine resources especially IUU,

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enforcement of existing fisheries regulations and policies
- Planting of more tress along the coastal zones
- Organize trainings and provide appropriate gears for fishermen
- Organize town hall meetings to sensitize people and share best practices on coastal management
- Deploy more personnel and equipment for surveillance and protection of marine resources
- Build standard fishing port along the river Gambia and the coast to enhance fish processing and marketing
- Review the activities and operations of fish meal factories to enhance sustainable management and use of marine resources
- Build capacity of youths and provide support for their effective engagement in the fisheries subsector

⁶ Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone

absence of proper control and monitoring mechanisms, inadequate sensitization and disregard of the marine policies and environmental laws and regulations. The unsustainable use of the river is as a result of poor management of marine resources, inadequate policies on the management of resources, negative effects of fish meal factories in some of the coastal villages such as Gunjur and Sanyang. Communities complained about the unsustainable use and management of river and marine resources. Salt water intrusion in some areas negatively affects rice production and the marine ecosystem.

Challenges in the sustainable use and management of marine resources include river pollution, over exploitation, use of inappropriate fishing gears, inadequate personnel for monitoring of fishing activities, inadequate enforcement of the Fisheries Act, unregulated fishing, capacity constraint (finance, technical, and material), inadequate storage, and processing facilities in fish landing sites.

Nonetheless, people in the respective regions across the country embark on advocacy programmes, re-planting of mangroves, regular cleansing exercises along the beaches, placing of trash-bins around the beaches, sensitizations on illegal fishing using the media to help address the above challenges.

5.1.4 Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Despite the country's susceptibility to the vagaries of the environment and climate change with the latter significantly hindering the performance of growth-driving sectors such as agriculture, tourism, industry, and posing significant challenge in the fight against poverty; this SDG is seriously beset with data constraints, hence our reporting on only one (1) of the thirteen (13) indicators accounting for only 7.6 percent coverage during the 2020 VNR.

Available data for the following indicators are quite obsolete – most recent of which are available in 2017 and those on 2010 were supposed to be updated in 2020 but not done due to resource constraints: Forest area as a proportion of total land area reduced by 19.5 percent (from 525,000 ha in 1998 to 423,000 ha in 2010). Terrestrial and freshwater as percentage of total land area stands at 2.3 percent (26,150 ha) in 2017, with plans to conduct a national forest assessment to update the data this year (NFA is every 10 years). On progress towards sustainable forest management, there are about 550 community forest currently, with 50,000 ha already transferred to communities to manage in 2022. However, forest land lost due to different drivers or land uses between 1998 and 2010 stands at 97,000ha (8.8 percent). The Digital Earth Africa initiative has the potential to support the country in reporting on some environmental related data.

During the regional consultations it was generally felt that progress related to the terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable forest management, combatting desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss is limited in almost all parts of the country due to high demand for fuel wood, sand, charcoal, human settlement, and land for agriculture.

In addition, overgrazing, bush and forest burning, and ineffective environmental committees also affect the terrestrial ecosystem. Furthermore, desertification is on the rise in most of the communities putting them at risk of windstorms, erosion and climate change. All these factors and hunting are aggravating biodiversity loss.

However, the recent interventions of the Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA), Action Against Desertification, community Based

Dryland Forest Management projects in LRR, CRR, NBR and URR coupled with the establishment of community forest parks, eco-tourism camps (in WCR), construction of dikes to control salt intrusion into rice fields among others have in recent years helped control and preserve the environment.

The country continues to face a range of challenges related to terrestrial ecosystems, sustainable forest management, combatting desertification, land degradation, biodiversity loss due to increased population, human induced activities.

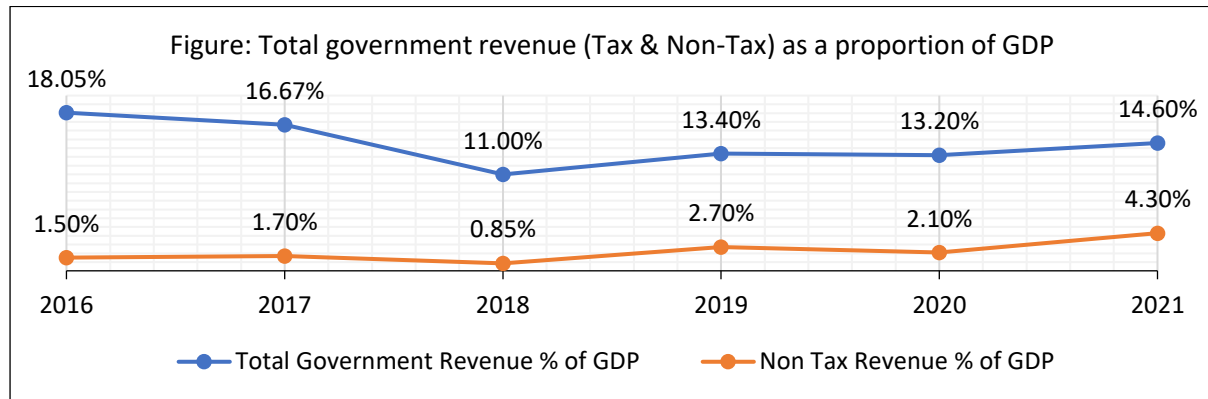
5.1.5 Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

The government strengthened domestic resource mobilization in recent years in order to increase domestic resource availability to finance the country's development needs. The proportion of tax and non-tax revenues to GDP rose to 13.4 percent in 2019, but

RECOMMENDATIONS

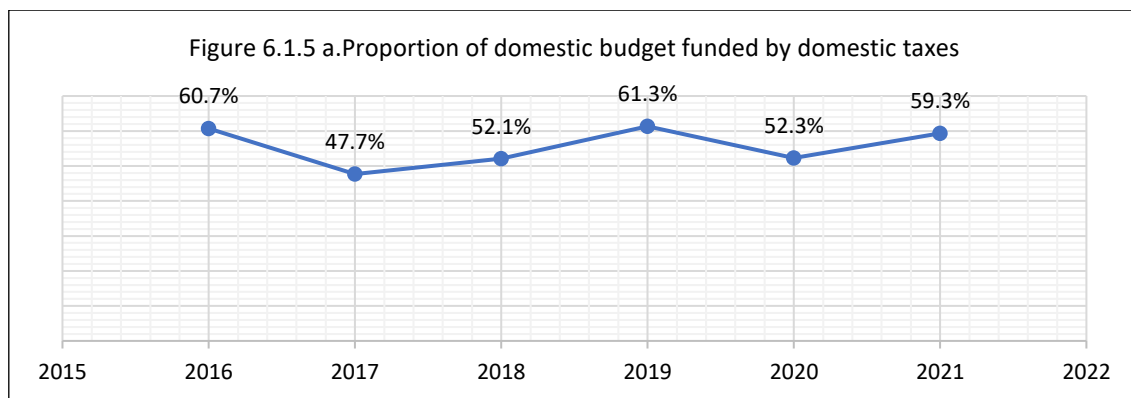
- Support more advocacy programs that are geared towards climate change and environmental needs,
- Government should continue to encourage reforestation initiatives
- Government and relevant stakeholders should initiate waste sorting and recycling
- Develop and implement policies to regulate the activities of real estate companies
- Enforce environmental laws and regulations
- Promote more use of renewable and green energy including provision of alternative sources of energy for domestic use
- Strengthen the support given to communities with good forest management practices
- Establish good drainage systems to reduce land degradation
- Provide alternative sources of livelihood especially for communities living around Protected Areas (PAs)
- Strengthen political will to protect and promote biodiversity
- Government should develop a comprehensive land policy

declined to 13.2. percent and 14.6. percent in 2020 and 2021 respectively. Non-tax revenue increased marginally between 2016 and 2017 and increased to 2.7 percent in 2019, decreasing to 2.1 percent and significantly increasing to 4.3 percent between 2020 and 2021.



Source: Statement of Government Operation (MoFEA, 2020/21)

The figure below reveals that, proportion of the domestic budget funded by domestic taxes, fell from 60.7 percent to 47.7 percent between 2016 and 2017. It then increased to 61.3 percent in 2019, before dropping to 52.3 percent and 59.3 percent in 2020 and 2021 respectively. This decrease is due to an increase in domestic expenditure allocated to road infrastructure development that does not match the increase in domestic revenue.

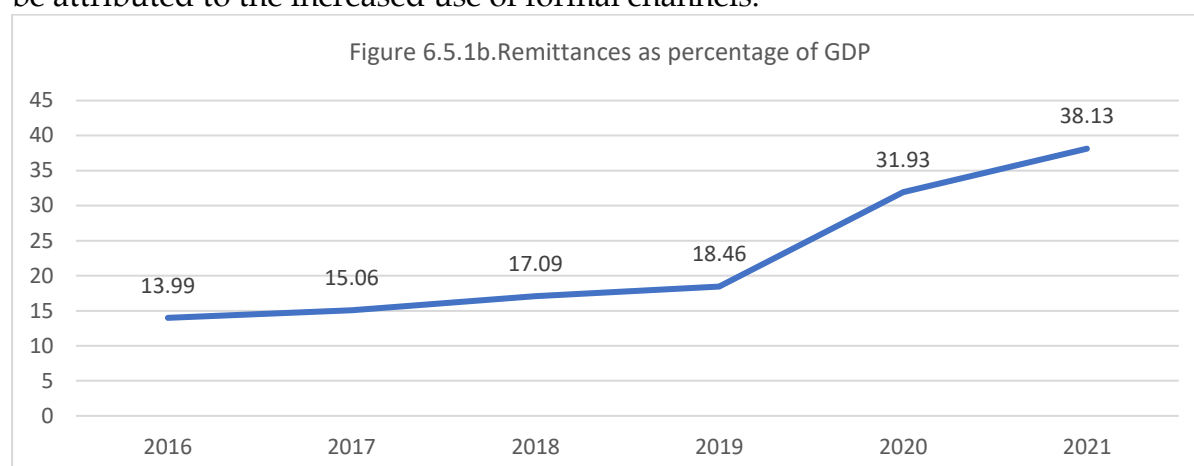


Source: MoFEA

Debt service as a proportion of goods and services exported has increased from 22.5 percent in 2020 to 23.8 percent in 2021. The rise in this ratio is attributed to the debt service relief that the government received in 2020 through the Debt Service Suspensions Initiate (DSSI). This relief has reduced the debt service payment in 2020 before increasing in 2021 upon the expiration of the relief package. Additionally, the fall in the ratio is as a result of the slight decrease in the total exports of goods.

The Figure below shows that remittances as a percentage of GDP have been increasing from 2016 to 2021. However, following the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a

significant increase from 18.46 percent in 2019 to 38.13 percent in 2021, which could be attributed to the increased use of formal channels.



The country has high mobile telephone penetration rate; 111 percent in 2020. Mobile internet penetration rate is 42 percent with broadband (3G & 4G) subscription rates increasing by 20 percent and 17 percent respectively. However, fixed broadband internet access remains a challenge with less than 5 percent penetration rate at household level in 2020. According to the Demographic Health Survey (2019/2020), the proportion of individuals using the internet stood at 67.6 percent. The proportion is higher for males at 73.3 percent than for females at 61.8 percent.

Regional Consultations

Regarding programme implementation, government relies heavily on partners to finance national development initiatives through the provision of development aid, capacity building, technical assistance and technology transfer. Some of the key partners in the development process include; multilateral partners, bilateral partners, NGOs and CSOs, philanthropic organizations, the private sector and regional/sub-regional organizations.

Community members were of the opinion that ineffective and inefficient implementation, poor sustainability, and the lack of effective reporting, and monitoring and evaluation are challenges encountered in the implementation of development projects/programs.

To enhance partnerships for national development, government should improve accountability and transparency in project implementation, ensure that development aid is highly concessional, encourage technology transfer between developing and developed countries, and ensure that development assistance received is channeled into priority sectors.

Most regions across the country face the following challenges in attracting partners: inadequate capacity for partnership building, inadequate infrastructure (energy, internet, roads etc.), small population size and limited market, poor track record on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of previous partnership projects, and difficulties to meet partner’s criteria. Some of the regions are also faced with challenges of coordinating and managing partners due to poor communication, inadequate capacity on financial management, resource mobilization, political interference, and low transparency and accountability mechanisms. People from various regions across the country use different strategies such as donor mapping, development of strategic plans, proper implementation of partner’s projects and programs, and consultation and collaboration with partners to address these challenges.

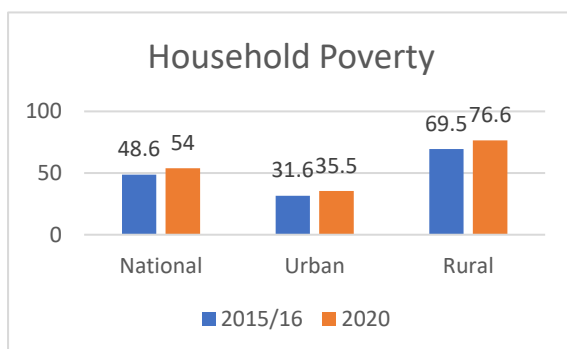
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Effective institutional collaboration with relevant partners to ensure effective management of resources
- Increased participation of all stakeholders in national development
- Institutionalise consultations with beneficiary communities before the start of any project
- Support communities with farming implements, small ruminants, entrepreneurship skills, poultry farms, training on reproductive health, provision of dryers for fish smokers, support fish smoking and support value addition
- Improve community capacity in partnership building
- Enhance effective and transparent financial management mechanisms
- Improve accountability and transparency in project implementation
- Ensure that development aid is highly concessional
- Promote technology transfer between developing and developed countries
- Ensure that development assistance received is channelled into priority sectors

5.2 Progress on the other SDGs

5.2.1 Goal 1 Poverty

The latest preliminary data on poverty from the 2020 Integrated Household Survey (IHS) indicate an overall increase in poverty levels from 48.6 percent (2015/16) to 54.0 percent (2020) particularly in the urban areas. The increase in poverty is partially explained by the contraction in the services sector.



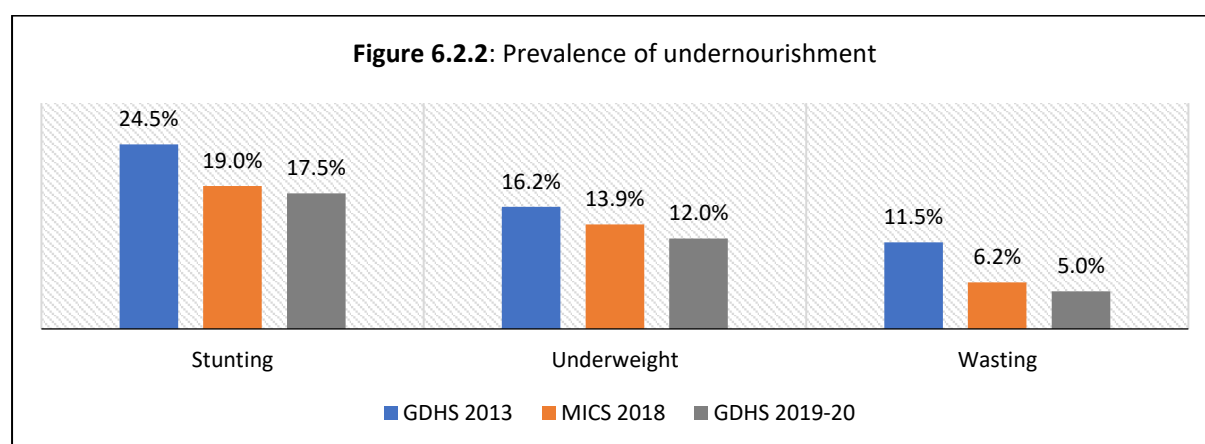
The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic is having a negative impact on poverty eradication efforts in the country. The pandemic also has an impact on the spatial dimension of poverty between urban (35.5%) and rural (76.6%) areas. This is because the pandemic has led to loss of employment in many sectors including tourism, loss of incomes, and contraction in

economic growth. According to the High Frequency Survey (HFS) of the impact of COVID-19 job losses (defined as individuals who were working before the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, but subsequently stopped working) declined between August and December 2020 from 26% to 17%; but increased slightly to 21% in April and June 2021. The share of households who reported a decline in income increased from 44% in December 2020 to 57% in June 2021. This jump follows a period of declining share of households experiencing income loss—from 92% in August 2020; to 70% in October 2020; and 44% in December 2020. According to the same survey, in April 2021, 6 out of 10 household heads feel they are poor based on their income levels - 8% feel they are 'very poor'.

The 2020-21 Integrated Household Survey (IHS 2020-21) which has reliable household consumption data is expected to provide latest poverty statistics. The survey is being currently analysed and the results are expected later this year.

5.2.2 Goal 2: Ending Hunger

As shown in figure 6.2.2, the prevalence of undernourishment from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) shows reduction in the prevalence of stunting, underweight and wasting across the country from 2013 to 2020. Further, the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA) which is a nationwide study provides estimates on prevalence of food insecurity. The 2021 CFSVA report indicated that 13.4 percent of the population was food insecure.



Several child nutrition indicators are showing slow progress in the country. The prevalence of malnutrition for children under 5 in the general population was 6.2% in 2018 and increased to 7.2% in 2019-20. Improvements in child stunting was registered in the same period from 19% to 17.5% for children under 5.

Impact of COVID-19

During consultations with the community, the general opinion was that the COVID-19 pandemic had serious impact on the lives and livelihood of people in the country as shown in the adjacent box. The impact has increased hardship at community level, which is being complicated by the rise in prices due to war in Ukraine. Price inflation led to increase dependency, increase in domestic violence, and reduced access to food resulting to poor nutritional status.

Impact of COVID-19

- Increase in school dropouts
- Teenage pregnancy and early marriage
- Increase in child labor
- Loss of small businesses
- Increase cost of commodities
- Increase in birth and death rates
- Increase in dependency
- Loss of employment
- Low academic performance limits social interaction

Community members recommended measures such as regulating the operations of the market, increase local production of food through the mechanization of agriculture and use of irrigation schemes, employment creation, and enhancing vegetable production, processing and storage.

Causes of Price Inflation in Gambia

- Weak regulatory frameworks
- Russia- Ukraine war
- High taxes on imported commodities
- Low level of manufacturing
- Inefficient utilization of resources
- Covid-19 pandemic
- Low agricultural production and productivity and high dependence on imported products
- Climate change
- High tariffs on utilities

5.2.3 Goal 3: Health

As a strategic priority in the NDP, the government is committed to putting in place efforts to strengthen quality health service delivery for reduction of maternal, newborn, infant, child morbidity and mortality, and improvement in adolescent and youth health. Also, in the National Health Sector Strategic Plan (2021-2025), the government commits to improving health services in the country and reducing maternal mortality to improve health status of the population.

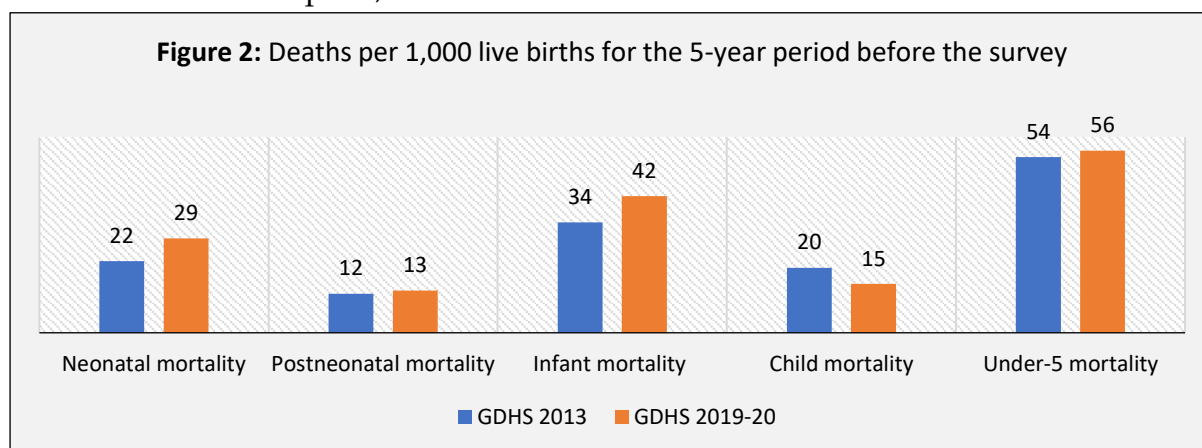
Maternal Mortality

In 2019-20 maternal mortality ratio (MMR) for The Gambia is 289 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The estimated pregnancy-related mortality ratio (PRMR) is 320(GDHS, 2019-20) deaths per 100,000 live births; that is, for every 1,000 births in the country, about three women die during pregnancy or within 2 months of the end of a pregnancy from any cause including accidents or violence. In 2013 GDHS, the

pregnancy-related mortality was 433 deaths per 100,000 live births. Overall, there appears to be a downward trend in the PRMR⁷ since 2006-13.

Trends in Childhood Mortality Rates

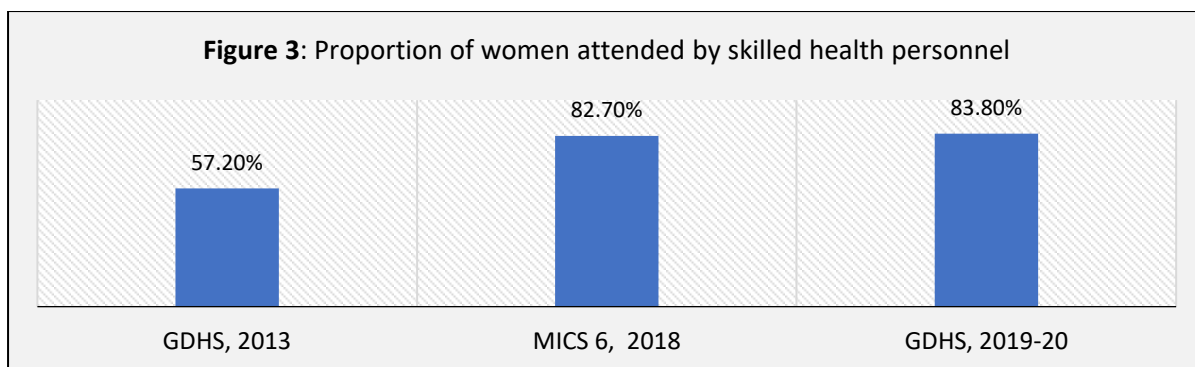
Child mortality estimates are presented in Figure 2. In the latest GDHS, infant and under-5 mortality rates for the 5-year period before the survey are 42 and 56 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively. The neonatal mortality rate is 29 deaths per 1,000 live births. At these mortality levels, about 1 in 18 children in The Gambia does not survive to their fifth birthday. In The Gambia, infant, under-5 and neonatal mortality levels have increased since 2013. Under-5 mortality has slightly increased from 54 to 56 deaths per 1,000 live births. Infant mortality has increased from 34 to 42 deaths per 1,000 live births. Neonatal mortality has increased, from 22 to 29 deaths per 1,000 live births. Child mortality (deaths of children between ages 1 and 5) decreased slightly from 20 to 15 deaths per 1,000 live births.



Skilled attendance at delivery

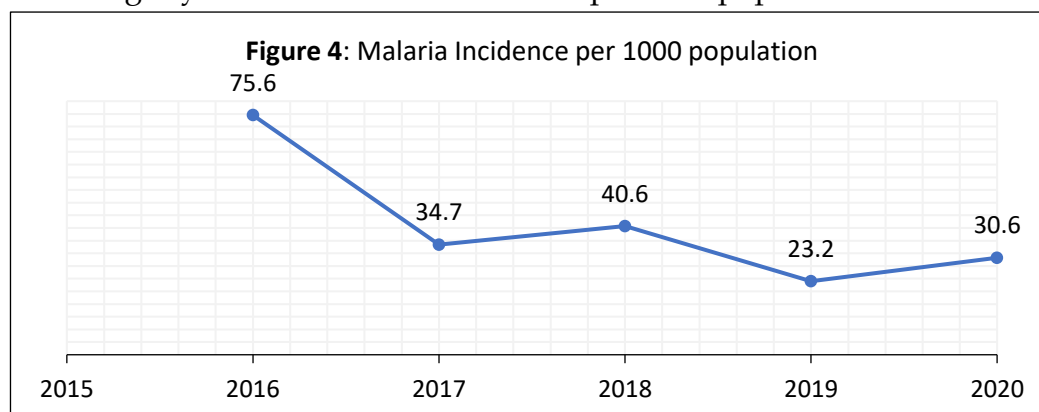
The government has promoted the presence of a skilled attendant at every delivery in the country and major accomplishments were registered. Ensuring institutional deliveries increase the chances of skilled birth attendance and ensures that many of the interventions known to save the lives of women are properly implemented. At the national level, the percentage of births with skilled assistance during delivery increased from 57% in 2013 to 84% in 2019-20. Achievements are in part due to community birth companions (formerly Traditionally Birth Attendants) not being allowed to assist delivery but rather escort women in labour to the nearest health facility.

⁷ Includes deaths up to two months after birth irrespective of the cause of death.



The country has also registered improvement in uptake of family planning services. The proportion of women of reproductive age (15–49) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods increased from 37.6% (MICS 6, 2018) to 41.3% (GDHS, 2019-20).

Malaria as a communicable disease is a major public health problem and one of the leading causes of morbidity in the country. Figure 4 shows the incidence of malaria per 1000 population in the country. The data shows a significant reduction in the prevalence of malaria over the previous years. However, from 2019 to 2020, the prevalence slightly increased from 23.2 to 30.6 per 1000 population.



Source: Health Services Report

The government through the National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) has significantly invested in malaria control and prevention including the mass distribution of Long-Lasting Insecticide Nets (LLINs). On routine basis, the distribution of LLINs is done across the country. Also, the regions with high prevalence of cases are targeted for routine Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS). Furthermore, malaria case management, community sensitization and related programs were scaled up to control the disease.

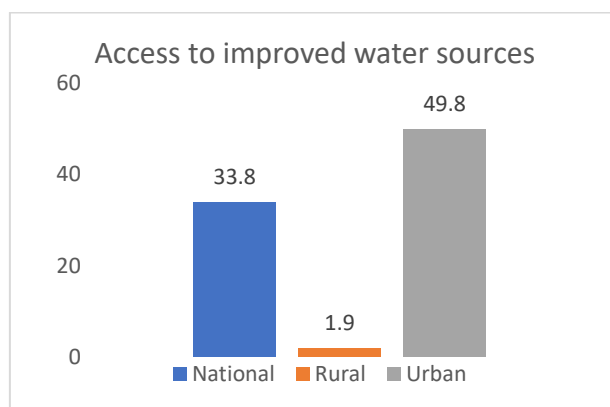
5.2.4 Goal 6 Ensure Access to Water and Sanitation for All

Recognized as a basic need for survival, access to clean drinking water is seen as a fundamental human right. Improving access to safe and affordable water and sanitation and good hygiene practice is a crucial priority of the current NDP. However, due to the increase in population (annual population growth rate is 3.1

percent), service providers in the country are seriously constrained in the provision of this crucial basic service. To meet this key priority, the government initiated the PACD with a view to accelerating access to basic services such as water and sanitation, particularly targeting the rural areas.

Latest data show that the proportion of households with access to improved water sources was 85.5 percent in 2010, rose to 89.8 percent in 2013 and further increased to 90.4 percent in 2018. However, access to safely “managed drinking”⁸ water source is still a considerable challenge. Only 33.8 percent of the population have access to safely managed drinking water sources, with large rural urban disparities, 1.9 percent and 49.8 percent respectively. On access to improved sanitation facilities, the proportion of households using improved sanitation facilities was 76.3percent in 2010⁹, dropped to 39.8percent in 2013¹⁰, before slightly increased to 47.1 percent in 2018¹¹.

Figure 5.2.4.a Access to improved water sources ¹²



The level of water contamination both at source of drinking water and at premises was also assessed. The findings reveal that faecal contamination in water, measured by the level of E-coli¹³ was higher in the premises than at source of water. This points to the risk of contamination of water during transportation from source or storage of water at premises. As shown in figure 5.2.4.b below presence of E. coli in water at premises was recorded at 73.2 percent in 2018, with large rural (92.1 percent) urban (65.5 percent) differences. Water contamination is higher for households in poorest wealth quintiles (93.3 percent at premises) than households in richest wealth quintiles (44 percent at premises).

⁸ This indicator measures the proportion of households with safely managed drinking water services, which comprise of the percentage distribution of households with improved drinking water services on premises, free from E-Coli, and available when needed

⁹ MICS 4, 2010

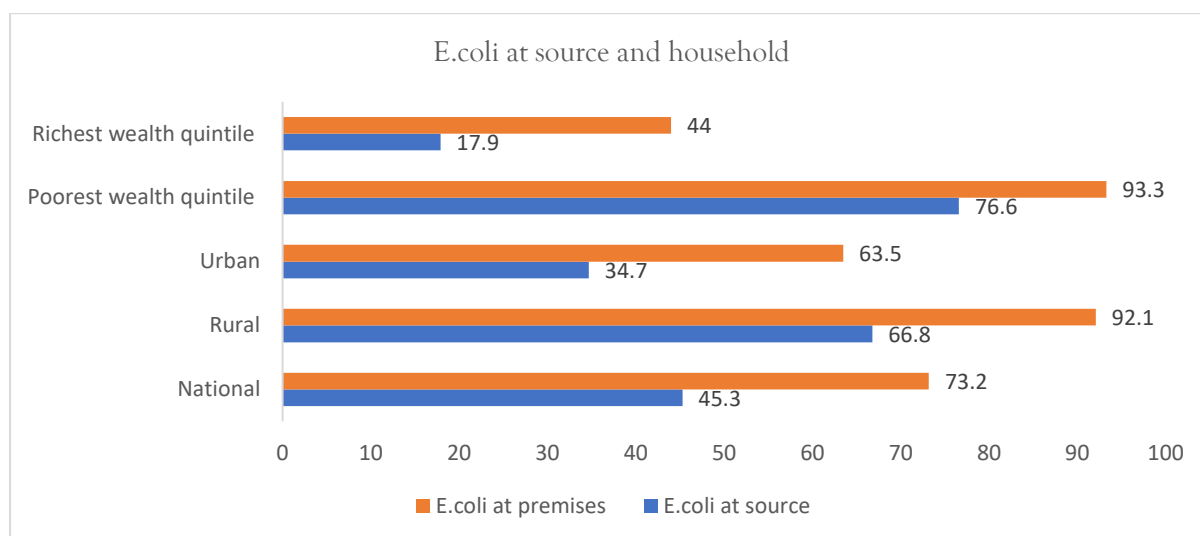
¹⁰ DHS 2013

¹¹ MICS 6, 2018

¹² This is the percentage of household members with an improved drinking water source located on premises, free of e-coli and available when needed

¹³ E-Coli is used to measure the level of faecal contamination in water

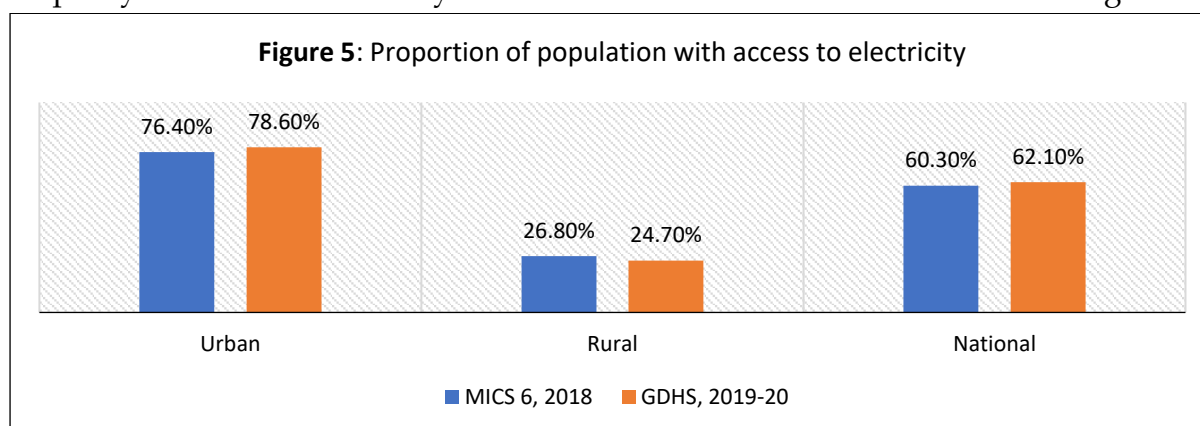
Figure 5.2.4b: E. coli at source and premises



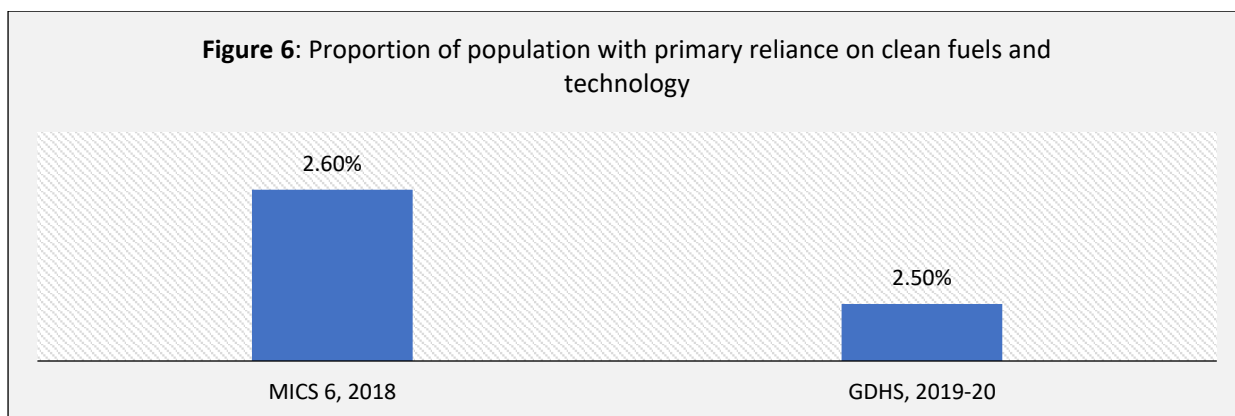
Source: MICS 6, 2018

5.2.5 Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Access to affordable clean energy remains a key priority for the government. The National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC)'s total installed capacity is over 110 megawatts (MW) with a generation level half the installed capacity. The proportion of the population with access to electricity increased from 60.30 percent in 2018 to 62.10 percent in 2019-20, leaving significant room for growth in the energy market to bolster economic activities and support the provision of social services throughout the country. Despite this progress at national level, there is a wide disparity in access to electricity between rural and urban areas as shown in Figure 5.



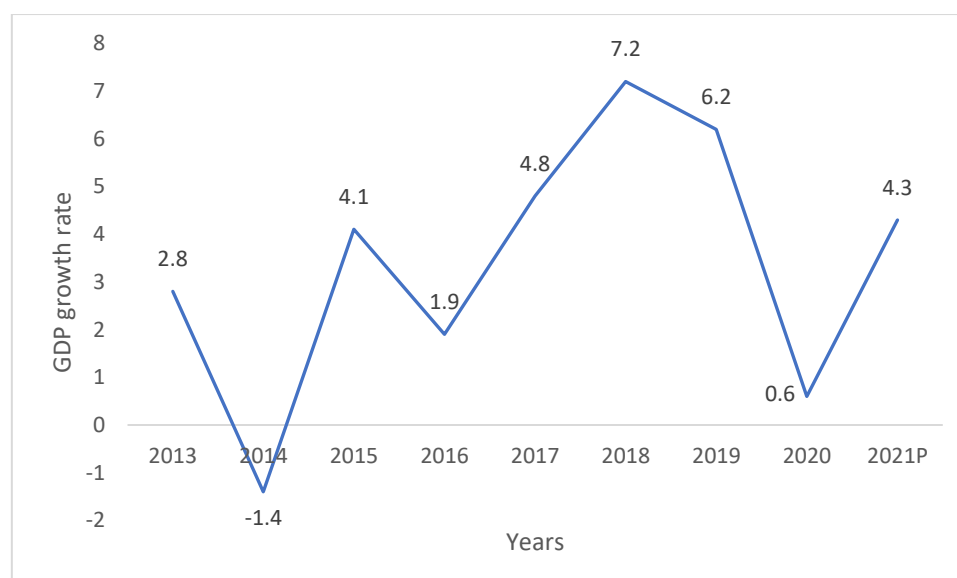
In order to achieve the targets for a range of global priorities such as equitable economic development, gender equality, improving primary health care, and environmental protection, the Gambia needs to expand access to clean household energy for cooking, heating, and lighting. Evidence from the MICS 6 and GDHS (2019-20) shows a slight decline in the proportion of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology (Figure 6).



5.2.6 Goal 8: Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Employment and Decent Work for All

The Gambian economy is highly undiversified with a narrow productive base, making it highly volatile to shocks (both climatic and other external shocks). Over the past eight years (2013-2020), GDP growth averaged 3.3 percent fluctuating from -1.4 percent in 2014 to 7.2 percent in 2018¹⁴ (see figure 8.1 below). The high volatility in GDP growth has direct ramifications on livelihoods, wealth creation and government’s poverty reduction efforts, mostly affecting the most vulnerable. GDP growth in the country is mostly below the 7 percent SDG minimum annual growth target enough to lift the Least Developed Countries (LDC) out of extreme poverty. The lack of sustained periods of stable growth clearly results from the performance of the various sectors of the economy.

Figure 8.1. GDP growth rate in The Gambia (2013-2021P)



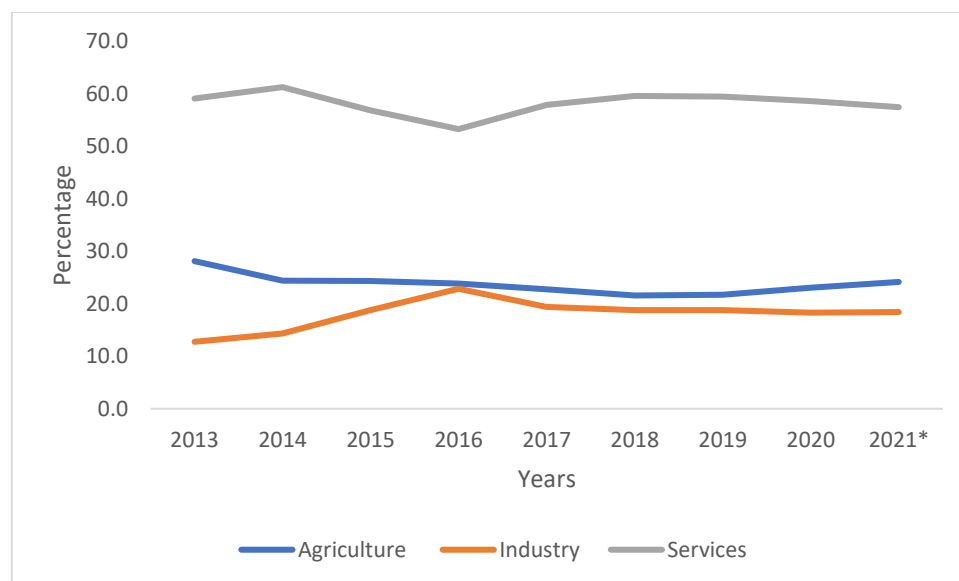
Source: GBoS, National Accounts (2021)

¹⁴ National Accounts GBoS. 2021 figures are provisional

The economy is largely dependent on agriculture, which account for on average around 23.8 percent of GDP¹⁵ from 2013-2021 and is the main economic activity for 31.5 percent of the general population and 57.3 percent of rural population¹⁶. The fluctuations in the growth rate of the economy as shown in the figure above are largely influenced by the agriculture sector.

The industrial sector contributed on average about 18.0 percent of GDP between 2013 and 2021¹⁷. The sector consists mostly of construction, mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity and water. The Services sector, which is the largest contributor to GDP accounted for 58.2 percent of GDP between 2013 and 2021, with trade and transport, and communications being its largest components¹⁸. Tourism is the largest foreign exchange earner for the country and it contributes on average 12-16 percent to GDP¹⁹. Due to the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry, wholesale and retail, and transport and storage activities, the service sector's contribution to GDP is expected to marginally decline from 59.5 percent in 2019 to 57.5 percent in 2021²⁰ (see figure 8.2 below).

Figure 8.2: Sectoral contribution to GDP



Source: GBoS National Accounts (2021)

For growth to be inclusive and sustainable, it must have direct effect on lives and livelihoods through employment creation. The most recent figures indicate that unemployment is on the rise in the country, with youth the most affected. The unavailability of decent jobs could partly explain the mass exodus of youths through irregular migration. Between 2012 and 2018, youth unemployment has increased by

¹⁵ National Accounts 2021 (GBoS). The 2021 figures are provisional

¹⁶ MICS6, 2018

¹⁷ National Accounts, GBoS 2021 Provisional

¹⁸ *ibid*

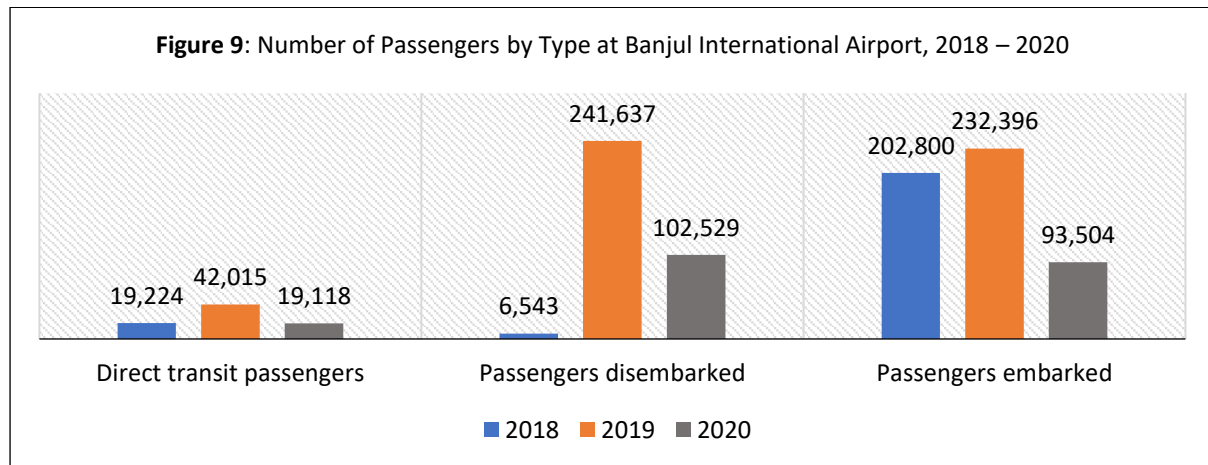
¹⁹ NDP 2018-2021

²⁰ National Accounts, GBoS 2020 Provisional

more than 6 percentage points from 35.3 percent²¹ to 41.5 percent²². Similarly, at a national level, unemployment rose from 29.8 percent in 2012 to 42.1 percent in 2018.

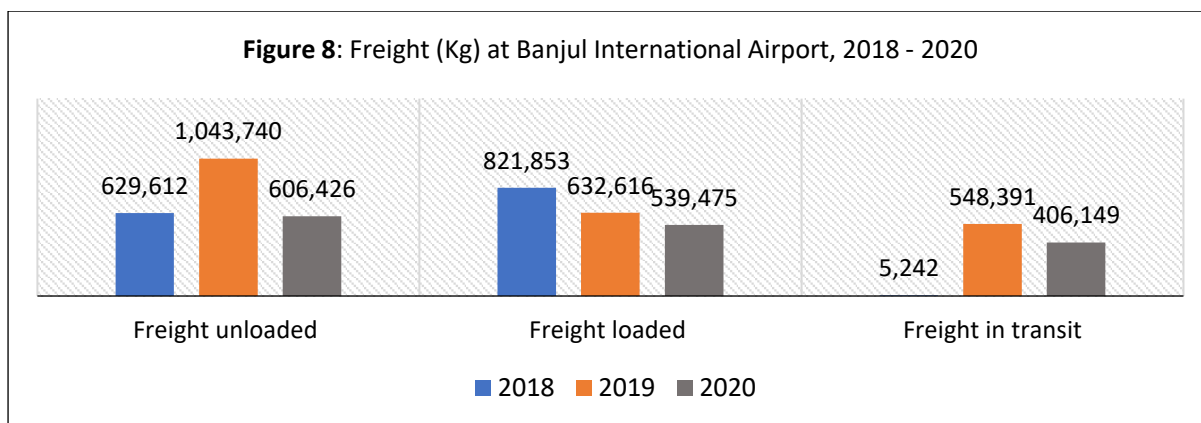
5.2.7 Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization & foster innovation

As a strategic priority in the NDP, the government is committed to the realization of this goal through building or modernizing infrastructure to drive a vibrant private sector and enhance access to social services. Modernization of airport infrastructure and construction of good roads have been initiated to improve air transport and access to roads. This makes the country more globalized and connected and promotes the efficient and timely movement of people and goods, thus leading to integration and economic growth. The number of passengers that either embarked or disembarked or were in transit at the Banjul International Airport from 2018 -2020 is shown in Figure 9.



, For the three-year period, there was a reduction in the freight loaded at the Banjul International Airport (Figure 8). Also, the freight unloaded decreased from 1,044 tonnes in 2019 to 606 tonnes in 2020 a decline of about 42 per cent. Similarly, freight on transit decreased by 26 per cent from 548 in 2019 to 406 tonnes in 2020, and freight loaded declined by 15 per cent from 2019 to 2020.

21 Gambia Labour Force Survey 2012
 22 Gambia Labour Force Survey 2018



5.2.8 Goal 10. Reduce Inequality within and Among Countries

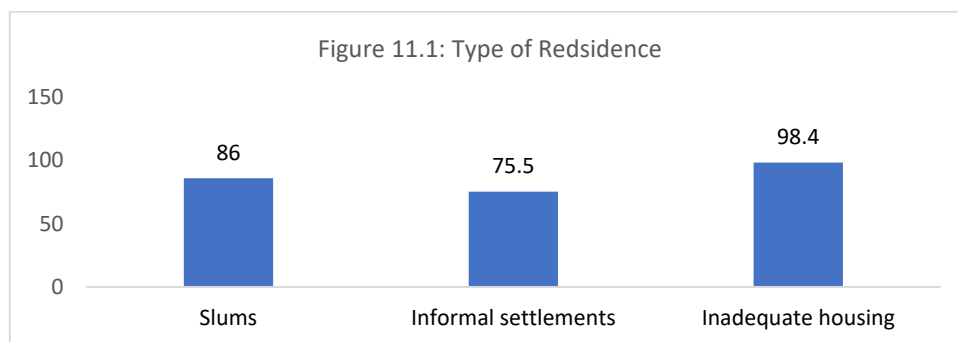
Although there are limited available estimates to measure progress under this goal, the 2020-21 SDGs Monitoring Survey findings indicated that 23.6 percent of the population reported having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law. This report has highlighted that the impact of COVID-19 has been more severe on the most vulnerable.

5.2.9 Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

The high population growth (3.1 percent) coupled with the sharp increase in urbanization has led to huge population concentration in the urban area. With about two thirds of the population residing in urban areas, there is increasing pressure on access to basic services, including challenges in transportation and access to housing. As shown in figure 11.1, about 86 percent of urban population live in slums, 75.5 percent live in informal settlements²³ while 98.4 of the urban population live in inadequate housing condition. The high rate of slum dwelling in urban Gambia has increased the level of vulnerability to diseases as a result of poor waste management and lack of proper infrastructure (e.g., drainage, roads, housing, etc.). The massive population concentration in urban areas has posed immense pressure on infrastructure and services, placing serious challenge on service providers to meet these increasing demands.

²³ Inhabitants have no security of tenure; neighbourhoods usually lack, or are cut off from formal basic services and city infrastructure; housing may not comply with current planning and building regulations

Figure 11.1: Population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing

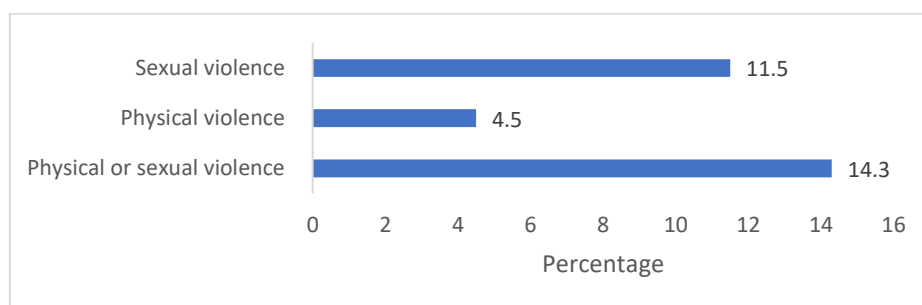


Source: SDG Monitoring Survey 2020-21

Rapid population growth and urbanization equally has implications on sustainable waste management. With only 25.7 percent²⁴ of the population having access to Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Collection Services, waste management is increasingly becoming a big problem in urban Gambia. Although the Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC) and Banjul City Council (BCC) have made progress in waste collection services, but waste recycling and segregation, which have a serious implication on the environment remain a challenge.

As shown in figure 11.2 below, the proportion of victims of physical or sexual harassment was 14.3 percent in the past 12 months. Similarly, victims of physical and sexual harassment were 4.5 percent and 11.5 percent respectively.

Figure 11.2: Proportion of persons who are victim of physical and sexual violence



Source: SDG 2019-20

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

The Gambia has subscribed to various international treaties: Basel Convention, Bamako Convention, Stockholm Convention and Rotterdam convention. Due to

²⁴ SDG Monitoring Survey 2020-21

paucity of data, the country is challenged in adequately reporting on this goal. As part of its reforms, government is committed to strengthening the national statistical system to enable it report on this goal and other important national and international commitments.

5.2.10 Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact

Despite contributing the least to the climate crisis, The Gambia continues to show strong leadership in addressing it. The Climate Action Tracker 2021 rating demonstrates that the Gambia's second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is the only most ambitious plan globally with targets compatible with the Paris Agreement target of keeping global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. The second NDC aims to raise the target for reducing emissions to 49.7 percent from 45.4 percent by 2030, indicating significant mitigation potential through sectoral approaches using circular economy.

Similarly, the country's 2050 Climate Vision, which was formulated in 2021 demonstrates the country's strong commitment to decarbonisation by establishing the country's goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Through green economic growth, the vision aims to transform the Gambia into a climate-resilient, middle-income country. This is strengthened by a Long-term Climate strategy (LTS) 2050, and a Green Recovery Focused-National Development Plan which would serve as the country's next medium term development plan.

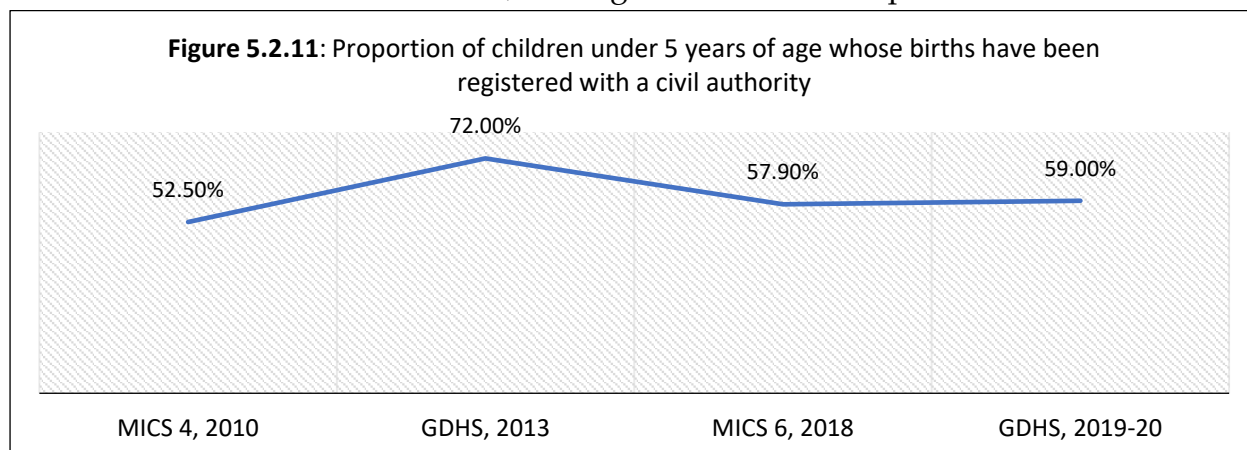
In terms of climate change financing, the government intends to increase both international and domestic resource mobilization in order to meet these lofty targets. A Climate Change Fund has been established as part of the national climate change policy, with the goal of attracting and pooling multiple sources of international and national funding. Similarly, efforts are being made to develop a budget code to integrate and track climate related expenditure within the national budget, as well as to incorporate low-carbon climate resilience development interventions into a broader portfolio of investment, thereby unlocking other sources of capital and shifting to longer-term financial planning.

5.2.11 Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Birth Registration

The country recognised the need to register all births to prevent children from being denied the right to an official identity, a recognised name, and a nationality. Figure 5.2.11 shows information on birth registration of children under age 5. The percentage

of children under age 5 whose births are registered with the civil authorities declined from 72% in 2013 to 59% in 2019-20, leaving more room for improvement.



For the proportion of the population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months, 4.8 percent²⁵ experienced physical or sexual violence, whilst 4.0 percent experienced physical violence and 1.0 percent were subjected to sexual violence.

The proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities (police) is 8.5 percent for physical violence and 1.5 percent reported sexual violence. The proportion of the population that are satisfied with health care services is 73.7 percent, 89.2 with basic education services, 89.5 percent with secondary education services, and 49.4 percent with selected government services.

Since the change in Government, several commissions were established as part of the transitional process with the overarching objective of delivering good governance and accountability, social cohesion, and national reconciliation. The TRRC has finished its work and submitted its report. The Government has since published a white paper accepting most of the recommendations of the commission. The government is now in the process of putting in place the necessary institutional arrangements and processes necessary for the implementation of the recommendations. This comes on the heels of the successful and peaceful conduct of the presidential and national assembly elections.

In order to enhance excellence and accountability in the public service, the President has created a new ministry in charge of the public service, administrative reform, policy coordination, and delivery. This ministry will have general oversight over the public service and shall work towards the formulation of policies geared towards

²⁵ SDG Monitoring Survey 2020-21

institutionalising a culture of efficiency and performance for the attainment of development objectives.

Given the history of lapses in governance and human rights violations, the government has embarked on Security Sector Reform (SSR). After the 2020 VNR, a National Security policy and National Security Strategy has been developed. Sensitisation programmes on SSR have been conducted to enhance public trust and confidence in the security sector. Several institutions have been engaging the security sector in human rights activities with a view to raising awareness and building the capacity of the security sector.

CHAPTER 6: New and Emerging Challenges

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the Gambian economy, as well as the lives and livelihoods of its people. The Gambia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by 2.4 percent in 2020, following a growth rate of 6.2 percent in 2019. The economy has deteriorated because of trade disruptions and a drop in tourism. The tourism and trade sectors were the hardest hit, with trade disruptions and a drop in tourism receipts increasing the current account deficit to 8.6 percent of GDP, up from 5.3 percent in 2019.

The Gambian Tourism Board report that, the tourism industry lost \$108 million in 2020, a massive loss for the sector and the economy as a whole. The pandemic also significantly reduced foreign exchange earnings through trade, with total export values falling to GMD261 million, a 60% decrease from 2019.

In response to the pandemic's impact on the tourism sector, the government has revised the outdated Tourism Policy of 2005, as well as developed a new tourism sector strategy. These policy documents advocate for the promotion and support of local and regional tourism, which includes Gambians as well as citizens of other West African countries. The government has enlisted in the UNCTAD and the UN Economic Commission Africa (UNECA) to help kick-start the initiative of attracting tourists that are African to mitigate the effects of a lack of international tourism in case of a similar pandemic in the future. Furthermore, Ecotourism businesses are being promoted as appealing offers in order to boost local tourism demand.

Remittances, on the other hand, increased and reached an all-time high before declining slightly but remained in subsequent months. From April to December 2020, the average remittance value received per month was approximately \$55 million (compared to \$28 million in 2019 over the same period), which could be attributed to reductions in remittances through unofficial sources. In its recovery efforts, the government intends to reduce the cost of remittances to The Gambia in order to maximize the benefit received by local recipients. Government also plans to conduct more detailed analysis and policy directives.

The COVID-19's impact on vulnerable populations was disproportionate. The pandemic has primarily affected women in vulnerable occupations, accounting for 83.2 percent of the total population, compared to 64.2 percent of men. Young workers (those between the ages of 15 and 24) are also at a higher risk of job loss and income reduction than their older counterparts. This is primarily due to the occupations they hold, but it is also due to their lower savings and lower adaptive capacity in the face of labor market shocks because of their limited work experience and networks.

The pandemic has revealed serious flaws in the Gambian healthcare system. When the pandemic struck, the country lacked a suitable isolation facility, and the medical staff-to-population ratio was low, at 5.19 per 10,000 people. This, combined with insufficient medical equipment, creates additional pressures far beyond the capacity of our current national health system. Due to the closure of schools and other educational institutions in accordance with COVID-19 prevention measures implemented by the Gambian government, the pandemic has also posed significant risks to the education sector. This has had an impact on inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as opportunities for lifelong learning for all.

A health policy 2021-2039 has been developed as part of the recovery efforts in the health sector, with the goal of increasing the number of trained health professionals as well as upgrading and equipping health facilities across the country to improve quality health service delivery. In the education sector, the government continues to advocate for higher educational attainment and diversity, particularly in STEM fields and TVET, in order to build the human capital required to diversify the Gambian economy.

COVID-19 has heightened the threat to food security. This could be attributed to climate change and biodiversity loss. Extreme weather events, such as droughts and prolonged dry spells, have become more common in recent years. Resulting in significant crop failures and affecting rural livelihood opportunities, undermining our attainment of Zero hunger and poverty reduction efforts, particularly in rural areas. Crop yields have fallen in recent years because of erratic and short rainfall durations.

As a result, according to the most recent Comprehensive Food Security Vulnerability Assessment (CFSVA) 2021, 13.4 percent of the population, or 329,189 people, are food insecure in the country. 1.8 percent of the population is severely food insecure, while 11.6 percent is moderately food insecure. Food insecurity rose from 5.6 percent in 2011 to 8% in 2016 and 13.4 percent in 2021. The borderline population increased from 29 percent in 2016 to 60 percent in 2021. More than half of the country's population is on the verge of food insecurity, and any shock could push them into the insecure category.

The government has invested in refurbishing and scaling-up mixed farming centres to serve as extension hubs and demonstration centres and has introduced climate-smart agriculture to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change to enhance the sector's productivity and resilience. The country is currently implementing an Ecosystem Based Adaptation Project to diversify rural livelihood and strengthen local communities' resilience. Approximately 7,000 hectares of degraded forest and

agricultural land have been restored because of the project. In order to establish natural resource businesses, it has identified beekeeping, forest collections including tea, and nursery design and establishment as viable natural resource businesses for rural community livelihood opportunities.

Furthermore, it has successfully integrated climate change and eco-system-based adaptation into the rural development policy, agricultural extension strategy and action plan, Agriculture and Natural Resource policy, and Forestry policy. In addition, a Rural Integrated Climate Adaptation Resilience Building Project (RICAR) and an Organizational Resilience for Transformative Smallholders Agriculture Project (ROOTS) are also being implemented to improve community resilience in order to meet the relevant SDG goals. In addition, the country is a member of a regional risk financing pool to protect farming communities in the event of severe drought.

In terms of policies and measures for recovery, the government intends to implement a COVID-19 recovery plan that is inclusive, resilient, green, and leaves no one behind. This recovery plan will go beyond human health to include multi-sectoral elements while also addressing the triple crisis of the pandemic, climate change, and environmental destruction. Given the pandemic's significant impact and long-term economic consequences, recovery measures will be addressed in both the upcoming medium and long-term development plans.

The country has the potential to harness opportunities to improve the realization of the 2030 Agenda. The OMVG electrification project would improve access to electricity, reduce carbon emissions, boost investment, spur industrialisation, and create employment. The River Gambia creates opportunities for improved agricultural production and productivity, alternatives to road transportation, diversification of tourism among others.

In addition, the improved governance environment create opportunity for the private sector, diaspora, and civil society organizations to engage more effectively in national development and the attainment of the SDGs. The improved access to education, which is being supported by policies geared towards enhancing quality and relevance has the potential to help the country reap the benefits of the demographic dividend.

CHAPTER 7: Means of Implementation

In line with goal 17 of the SDGs the government of The Gambia has recognized the role of development financing, technology transfer and adoption, and capacity building in the attainment of the SDGs targets. The government is currently leveraging on ICT in managing government financial accounting and reporting, revenue generations, records keeping and monitoring and evaluation, procurement, debt management, etc. The use of technology has been a great catalyst in facilitating resource flows for development. In line with government's Public Financial Management (PFM) reforms, the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) has been upgraded from the EPICOR 9 to EPICOR 10 which will facilitate web-based functionality of the system. The IFMIS has been fully rolled out to all Sub-Treasuries, Embassies and Local Government Councils. On revenue collection, the government has continued to leverage on the use of ICT to facilitate revenue collection effectively and efficiently. As part of efforts to ensure a more transparent and digitalized revenue collection and administration, the GRA is upgrading the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) from the ASYCUDA ++ the ASYCUDA World. Other efforts in the use of technology include the automation of the Records Management System, which is ongoing; the use of an integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Platform to monitor progress in the implementation of the NDP and the SDGs, the introduction of e-procurement, etc.

On capacity building, the capacity needs assessment conducted by the African Capacity Building Foundation in 2018 continues to guide the government's short and long-term capacity needs. In addition, the adoption of new ICT tools and systems comes with the need to continually develop capacities of government workers for effective use of the systems. Numerous short and long-term trainings have been conducted on the use of these systems.

Development Financing

In the current context, the Government has pursued various financing options (domestic resources, ODA/ concessional financing, and private sector investment) to finance its development priorities. The aim of diversifying the funding options is to minimize the fiscal risks associated with the failure to receive funding from any one particular source due to unforeseen shocks. The limited fiscal space has led to the dependence on external financing over the years. However, the net impacts of current reforms by government are expected to improve domestic development financing.

Reliance on domestic resourcing is becoming increasingly important for meeting the financing needs of developing countries. The Gambia already relies heavily on taxation to finance government expenditure. However, due to its debt servicing and

other statutory obligations, the Government has been unable to allocate significant resources to finance development. The Government is however implementing the following measures to enhance domestic development financing.

The Government has continued the path of prudent fiscal management and structural reforms which are expected to rationalize the budget. To mitigate the fiscal risks associated with sovereign guarantees of SOEs loans, the government has introduced a new guarantee framework, a code of good corporate governance and an SOE oversight directorate at MoFEA – to oversee governance and operational performance of SOEs. The reforms to establish a Treasury Single Account (TSA) by the central government is currently ongoing. The objective is to effectively manage revenue by closing the remaining accounts of core ministries/ departments and shifting from bi-weekly to real-time remittance of all government revenues collected by MDAs in to a Consolidated Revenue Fund. As part of the TSA implementation, The Government of The Gambia in a view to digitalizing the revenue collection has initiated the processes of developing a new Payment Gateway Platform. This Platform will interface with the core banking system of the CBG, GRA, commercial banks and Central Government IFMIS.

On debt management, the government is committed to improving the fiscal space by enhancing domestic borrowing. In addressing the challenge of effective public debt recording, monitoring and reporting, MoFEA has migrated from Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System (CS-DRMS) to Commonwealth Meridian. This has significantly improved the recording and reporting of public and publicly guaranteed debt as well as general debt transparency. In order to locally raise the resources for development financing, the government is gradually increasing the share of longer-dated domestic debt instruments (3 years and 5 years) in the debt portfolio to mitigate the refinancing risk of short maturing debt instruments. In addition, an annual borrowing plan meant to operationalize the Medium-Term Debt Strategy (MTDS) is now been developed and published on a monthly basis. The objective of the borrowing plan is to meet the aggregate borrowing requirement of the government for improved debt sustainability. Also, the National Assembly approved the 2021 Capital Market and Securities Bill. This bill aims at establishing a capital market in The Gambia which will assist in the mobilization of long-term financing for socio-economic development.

On revenue collection, efficient revenue collections mechanisms and efforts to simplify and expand the tax base are being pursued. Reforms are progressing on the implementation of the Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool (TADAT) recommendations which include the cleaning of the taxpayer registry, enhancement

of the GAMTAXNET (registration, returns and payment), establishment of a tax policy unit and digital transformation of tax administration.

As part of strategies to help channel government resources to priority areas of development, the government; through MoFEA, has established the Gambia Strategic Review Board (GSRB) to strengthen project selection and screening, ensure that projects are aligned with government development priorities and that such projects economically viability.

Challenges

In the midst of the current COVID-19 crisis, the OECD estimates a decline in annual GDP growth of up to 2 percentage points for each month where strict containment measures continue. This could put pressure on DAC donors' aid budgets of supporting national responses to the COVID-19 crisis. The dip in tourist arrivals since March 2020 is narrowing; remittance inflows have continued at a record-high pace (reaching about US\$300 million in the first half of 2021, compared to about US\$400 million during the full-year 2020) and private credit rebounded by 5.8 percent at end-August 2021. These developments have translated into an improvement in the CBG's composite index of economic activity. However, challenges persist as inflation accelerated to 11.7 percent in April 2022 driven by increasing global food and fuel prices, pandemic-driven high freight costs, and a slight weakening of the dalasi relative to some major currencies.

The Gambia needs to continue its reforms to build capacity of key government agencies to increase domestic resource mobilization and further engage donor partners in increasing alignment and harmonization of activities for The Gambia to achieve the Paris Declaration targets and improve aid effectiveness to help stimulate economic growth.

The Gambia is committed to continuing to strengthen fiscal governance, improve the business environment, strengthen the rule of law, including contract enforcement and protection of creditor and investor rights, and expand access to information are key steps in improving aid effectiveness and private sector lead growth.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusion, Lessons Learnt and Next steps

8.1 Conclusion

The country remains committed to the implementation of the SDGs and has in place policies and programmes to accelerate implementation in this *Decade of Action*. The inclusive nature of the VNR process and the composition of the VNR steering committee is a clear manifestation of the country's commitment to ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement in the implementation and attainment of the SDGs. Furthermore, the government through its policies and programmes encourage and enhance participatory development to ensure leaving no one behind in the national development processes. The broad stakeholder involvement in the VNR consultation process at both local, regional and national level added value to the content of the VNR report as people shared their opinions on several issues affecting their lives and livelihoods.

The country continued to register steady progress in the implementation of the SDGs until the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. Progress is being registered in areas such as gender equality, women and girls' empowerment, and access to and quality education. This is attributed to increased political commitment, stability, advocacy and sensitization campaigns, stakeholder involvement and participation, development partners' support and partnership, among others. On the other hand, the status of achievements in some of the SDGs such as Goal 14 and 15 remain low due to global warming and climate change challenges, indiscriminate logging, frequent bush fires, deforestation and desertification.

The implementation and attainment of the SDGs requires effective collaboration and support from all stakeholders. The peaceful co-existence among the different stakeholders and the improved development partner collaboration enhanced effective and efficient implementation of the SDGs.

8.2 Lessons Learnt

- Despite challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country continues to take steps including committing resources towards the implementation and realization of the SDGs by 2030. The Government through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs should continue to devise appropriate strategies to encourage innovative financing mechanisms to accelerate the implementation of SDGs. This will promote inclusive and participatory development thus enhancing sustainability.
- SDGs have been mainstreamed into the national planning process. However, there is need to strengthen the linkage between planning and budgeting to enhance the sustainable financing for national development and the SDGs.

- There should be wider sensitizations and advocacy programmes using different media outlets to raise awareness on environmental preservation, conservation and protection as well as sustainable management, and utilization of marine resources.
- The inadequate availability of TVET institutions in the rural areas has been highlighted prominently during the VNR consultations. The Government in collaboration with partners should enhance efforts to decentralise tertiary and TVET institutions as well as special needs schools to improve access to education in the country. Additionally, there is a need to establish equipped science laboratories in schools across all regions, provide adequate teaching and learning materials and infrastructure, provide continuous in-service training of teachers, and strengthen school monitoring activities to enhance quality of education.
- Given the current crisis regarding global food supply, there is need to rethink food production strategies including agricultural mechanization, reducing dependence on rain-fed agriculture and improving storage, preservation, processing and marketing (especially for horticultural production).

8.3 Next Steps

The Government intends to conduct a robust post-VNR outreach and engagement to disseminate the final report and sensitize the population about the SDGs. This will be done in collaboration with the NYC, the press, and CSOs using different approaches including the media and community radios. This will help to enhance the understanding and ownership of the SDGs at the local level which is crucial for accelerating implementation. The post-VNR activities will also take into consideration lessons learnt from the VLRs.

8.4 Annexes

8.4.1 Matrix of SDG Implementation Status

Annexes: