

THE GAMBIA VNR REPORT_ 2020 KEY MESSAGES

Delivering good governance, accountability and a revitalized economy for sustainable development in The Gambia

Introduction

The Gambia has demonstrated its commitment to the implementation of Agenda 2030 by mainstreaming the SDGs into the National Development Plan (NDP 2018 – 2021); providing an opportunity to implement the SDGs. The Government continues to engage the private sector, civil society, and development partners in the implementation of the Agenda 2030. While there is need to increase awareness around the SDGs, the participation of stakeholders has increased ownership of the Agenda 2030.

Partnerships & Institutional Arrangements - The Government has aligned the SDGs and NDP institutional arrangements to enhance coordination. These include Ministerial Steering Committee, technical Sector Working Groups. The multistakeholder VNR Coordinating Committee will be maintained and transformed for overall SDG coordination.

Peace - On governance, a new draft constitution has been completed which espouses respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, and rule of law. It strongly advocates gender balance and fair representation of women, youth and persons with disability in parliament, other statutory bodies and State Owned Enterprises. In the judiciary, a balance in gender representation was achieved and there is a Gambian female judge at the Supreme Court; and the President of the Court of Appeal is also a female. At the political level, a female was elected as the Mayoress of the capital city. The Truth Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) established to conduct research and investigations into human rights violations of the previous regime with a view to facilitate community and national reconciliation has submitted its interim report to Government.

Prosperity - GDP grew steadily but erratically in the past 3 years; 6.5% in 2018, 4.8% in 2017 and 1.9% in 2016 mainly driven by tourism, rain-dependent agriculture and remittances, and is vulnerable to external shocks. The collapse of Thomas Cook in late 2019 and the COVID-19 outbreak dealt a heavy blow to tourism leading to loss of revenue and jobs with initial estimates indicating GDP growth slowing from projected 6% to 3.2%. On the fiscal front, the COVID-19 pandemic will widen the fiscal deficit from projected 1.5% to 2.1% of GDP in 2020.

Overall, 48.6% of the population are poor with variation between urban (32.6%) and rural (69.5 %) areas.

On agriculture and food security, about 75% of the population depends on crops and livestock for livelihood. The sector witnessed a slight revival in 2018 and grew by 0.9% compared to the sharp contraction of 4.4% in 2017. However, erratic rainfall in the 2019/2020 cropping season reduced agricultural production by about 23%. The country is therefore not on target to achieving food and nutritional security, which is being further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rural dwellers who are mainly subsistence farmers will require support for the next cropping season mainly in forms of farming inputs and implements.

People- In the social sector significant progress has been recorded with respect to access to education, water, and nutrition. Gains were registered with respect to: school enrollment and retention, proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water, prevalence of underweight and wasting among children under 5, prevalence of stunting among children; pregnant women with anemia; and prevalence of underweight non-pregnant women.

Planet - With respect to environmental resilience and climate change, The Gambia is rated among the world's two most ambitious developing countries; its Nationally Determined Contribution has ambitious conditional and unconditional targets that meet the 1.5°C Paris Agreement Commitment.

The key long-term development challenges facing The Gambia are related to its undiversified economy, small private sector and internal market, limited access to resources, high public debt, high population growth rate, and inadequate skills necessary to create jobs for the youthful population. Data for Development remains a challenge and government has developed a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics and is exploring its innovative financing. The country's current vision 2020 is being evaluated to guide the formulation of subsequent long-term vision.

To accelerate the implementation of the SDGs and the NDP, the Government has initiated the Programme for Accelerated Community Development (PACD) which factors the synergies between the SDGs and aims to reduce the gap between the urban and rural areas.