

THE GAMBIA VNR 2022- MAIN MESSAGES

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 submission of its first VNR at the HPLF 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 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 for the Decade of Action.

The COVID-19 has added new levels of complexity across 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 with adverse effects on livelihoods.

The COVID-19's 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 loss and income reduction.

The pandemic has magnified challenges in the Gambia'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 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. . Classes conducted online or via radio were not equally accessible to all students negatively impacting inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as opportunities for lifelong learning for all.

COVID-19 has heightened the threat to food security which is also being fuelled by climate change and biodiversity loss, recurring extreme weather events. Droughts and erratic rainfall patterns spells are linked to significant crop failures, declining agricultural production and productivity affecting rural livelihood opportunities, undermining the country's attainment of Zero hunger and poverty reduction efforts. This pressure on food security is being compounded by the rising food prices resulting from the Russia-Ukraine war.

On the main themes of this year's VNR, the country is registering progress; with improvements in access to quality education. The country has established a new Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and a Women Enterprise Fund as part of its commitment to gender empowerment. The country was recognised last year as the only country worldwide that is Paris Agreement Compatible and on track to meet the targets of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. 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 disparities in socio-economic opportunities and access in rural and urban areas. Since the submission of the Gambia's first VNR in July 2020, the implementation of the PACD has been progressing with the provision of potable water, and electrification of rural communities. In addition, 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 and the disability bill.

Moving forward, government intends to implement a recovery focused national development plan (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 integrated national financing framework (INFF).