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Senior Programme Officer of the Gambian Association of Local Government Authorities (GALGA)

State of Local Economic Development [LED] of Gambie

Rapport Février 2016
This publication presents the state of art of Local Economic Development programs and projects it’s a national report on current Local Economic Development legislation and practices.

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PURPOSE.

Since Local Authorities in the Gambia neither have a LED policy nor a strategy. It is believed that the purpose of this write up is to show case LED associated interventions undertaken in the Gambia for broader sharing of information with possibility of sharing of knowledge, skills and innovations being tried with varying degrees of success in country. Another purpose is that the document will kindle interest on the side of local authorities and their stakeholders to seriously think of coming up with a LED policy and strategies and search for support for its implementation. It is further believed that during their Annual plans and Budget preparation, the LED concept will be given more impetus. This is crucial as in the Gambia, like in most African countries, political decentralization did not go in equal footing with economy decentralization, hence the absent of LED Policies and strategies particularly at decentralised levels. The process of decentralization although contained in the 1970 and 1997 constitutions of both the first and second republic, only commenced with de-concentration and of recent some degree of decentralization in most sectors including local governments.

UNDERSTANDING OF LED& LED CONTEXT AT MACRO ENVIRONMENT LEVEL

Although Nationally, regionally and at community level, the Gambia does not have a policy and strategy specifically on Local Economic Development, the country has actually been implementing all the components of LED through various economic and social service interventions.

Since independence in 1965, the country has been making strenuous efforts to build and improve the socio-economic well being of all citizens at all levels of society. It created a whole Ministry (Ministry of Economy Planning and Industrial Development (MEPID) 1975), the National Planning Commission (NPC 2006) and a Strategy for Poverty Alleviation Coordination Office (SPACO). All these go a long in explaining that the country has made giant steps in implementing what can squarely be referred to as LED.

Over the years, Gambia has been implementing economic development activities as evidenced by the successive Five Year Development Plans, all of which rigorously made dents towards the improvement of the Socio-economic status, nationally, regionally and locally. The Five Year Development Plans were sequentially followed by the Economic development plans which also contained interventions on socio-economic issues.

From 1975 to 1988, which witnessed the Global Economic Crises, the country introduced the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP1988/89), aimed particularly at revising the downward trend being experienced as a result of the economic meltdown/Global crises.

After few years of the implementation of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP)(1988/89), the country introduced the Programme for Sustainable Development (PSD) only to be followed by a more comprehensive socio-economic revival and development plans which were introduced and implemented. These were the MDG based Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP1 and PRSP2). Some of the missing links in the PRSPs were soon incorporated into the Programme for Accelerating Growth and Employment (PAGE 2011-2015), which is also MDG based and is being extending to December 2016 to cover up the missing links.

Armed with all these National development blue prints over the years, significant efforts were made to boost the economy through the economic productive based sectors such as Agriculture along with its associated sub sectors such as crop production (30% GDP), live stock(8.6% GDP), fisheries (3% GDP) and forestry (1%GDP) (GBoS 2013).
The Travel and Tourism sector, which commands a respected position in all economic enhancement initiatives as the single most important foreign exchange earning sector, was given equal attention. The Travel and Tourism sub sector is significant as it contributed 16.0% of the GDP of the country in 2012. The interventions in this sector saw the upcoming of ecotourism and rural tourism, all of which significantly contribute to local economic development. All these initiatives go a long in demonstrating that while it may not be called LED per say, in reality it is LED as all these are premised around LED.

NATIONAL ENABLING PERSPECTIVES

The National enabling perspective can be seen through the commitment of the country as clearly alluded to in the earlier section.

To begin with, the constitutions of both the First and Second Republic made abundant provision for social and economic development at all levels and for members of society irrespective of gender, age, physical ability or nationality to partake in the social development of the nation. The Gambia in cooperated VISION 2020 which is the key development blue print and dream of the country aspires “To transform the Gambia into a financial centre………………..of the citizenry”, clearly indicates national commitment to LED associated activities.

From the legislative stand point, the government has ratified and signed many national and international conventions, protocols, Polices and Acts such as the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change(UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological diversity(CBD), the Banjul Declaration, the Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Fisheries Act, the Forestry Act, the National Energy Policy (2007), the Renewable Energy Act(2013), the National Environment Management Act (NEMA), The National Adaptation Plan of Action(NAPA) and the National Appropriate Mitigation Actions(NAMA), all go to protect and preserve our biological and natural resources which are so important for local economic development. These legal provisions are complemented by the Local Government 2002, the Finance and Audit Act 2004 and the Local Government Decentralization Policy (2014), all of which also go to enable the operationalisation of particularly, LED related policies and strategies. All these come to count in considering national enabling perspectives for local economic development. In the Local Govt. Act2002, there are adequate provisions supportive of LED implementation for local authorities.

Cognizant of the important of sea ports in LED related activities and noting the proximity of the Banjul Port to most European markets, the country, with Bilateral and Multilateral development partners, under took massive projects that improved the harbor handling facilities to the extent that the Gambia now handles most of the re-export trade for the sub region. This is bringing foreign exchange and thus helping in undertaking locally based economic development activities such as the construction of markets and roads and bridges, so crucial for local economic developments.

In the same vein, the country has been investing heavily in promoting tourism, which enables local communities along with investors to venture into ecotourism which has become very important in the economy of rural Gambia and of local authorities.

Like the sea port, the air also benefited from big projects which have face lifted the Banjul International airport to international standards. All these are enabling efforts for improving economic development generally and locally.

Similarly, for the implementation of LED related activities, the Ministry of Finance was established in 1965 and charged with the overall responsibility of mobilizing finances for the country’s infrastructure and social services including the construction of income generation skills centres and training out of school youths and women in various life skills, thus creating employment opportunities.
Through the establishment of the Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment (MOTIE), the Government utilizes such opportunities to enhance economic productivity as evidenced by its active involvement in the West African Monitory Union. Through her integration with the Republic of Senegal, they were able to jointly engage development partners such as the ADB, ADF, EU etc, to secure funding to the tune of €75.2 million for the construction of the Trans Gambia bridge at Farafeni. Once completed, the Bridge will greatly enhance trade between the North and south of the country and also between Northern and Southern Senegal. It has also created opportunities for local petty trades in and around the communities to buy, sell and transport their commodities.

The government created the National Road Authority (NRA) which has constructed a good road network (2/5) of all Gambian roads are up to standard. Government also established the Gambia Public Transport Cooperation (GPTC) which for decades has been enhancing the movement of people, goods and services. This transport cooperation was soon succeeded by the Gambia Transport Service Cooperation (GTSC) which currently is plying the length and breadth of the country. To these initiatives must be added construction of many mini bridges at various river crossing points. These road networks are enhancing swift travel between towns and communities thus facilitating the movement of people, goods and services thus promoting local economic development.

The country established the Gambia Radio and Television station to provide economic and financial information. Several community and private radio stations along with various newspapers were established. These media houses on daily basis broadcast/carry information on the availability of goods and services in the country, thus helping in boosting local economic development. To further enhance communication between people and entities involved in economy and commerce, the government in collaboration with the private sector, established four GSM/Cellular Companies. Today almost one in every four Gambian owns or has access to a cell phone, thus enhancing information transmission.

Through the Organization of the River Gambia Basin Project commonly referred to as OMVG, attempts are in advanced stages for constructing two hydro eclectic dams at Sabangolo on the river Gambia located in the Republic of Senegal and a second damp, the Kaleta dam, on the Konkoure river in the Republic of Guinea. This OMVG Energy Project is being jointly funded by four West African countries (Guinea, Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau) with technical and financial support from the EU, ADB, AFD and a host of other financial institutions. This project has potential to offset the current energy crises of the four countries particularly the Gambia, which depends on fossil fuel for over 94% of its energy demand. In fact in the Gambia only 12% (Ministry of Energy 2011) of rural and semi urban settlements have access to electricity which is in fact very unreliable. This project once realized, will increase access to clean energy / electricity for most parts of the Gambia there by promoting industrial development which increase employment opportunities and local income, thus cutting down poverty levels. With the construction of more industries, local economic will certainly spring up as most of the raw materials for the anticipated industries are in the communities. This intervention can also be added to the list of enabling perspectives for LED.

Complementary to initiatives directed at harnessing hydroelectric power, are other interventions for using solar generated energy. This is also laudable cognizant of the fact that in the Gambia there is ten to eleven hours of sun shine almost every day. The use of solar energy which is at a very low scale has great potentials yet to be exploited.

To promote and enhance economic investment, which is a pre-requisite for local economic development, the country has made a sound investment policy which provides liberal markets, free market economy with a stable political and social programme framework.
Constitutionally, there are provisions for encouraging, promoting and protecting beneficial investments which serves as an enabler for socioeconomic change and progress. Through the Gambia’s membership to UN, AU, ECOWAS, OMVG, WTO, ADB, WB Group, ACP-EU, IDB, UNDP, FAO, WHO, UNICEF, along with the political stability which the county continues to enjoy, all subscribe to the enhancement of LED as they enable the country to tap development support from bilateral and multilateral development partners and donor agencies.

The Ministry of Lands and regional government came up with a policy on Decentralization and Local Development 2015 to 2024 and also undertook a review of the decentralization process. The Ministry itself prepared a Strategic plan (2016-2020). The strategic plan is aimed at broadening and deepening the decentralization process through which the capacities of the Local Authorities will be built so as to enable them undertake various interventions including local economic development activities.

Although most if not all LED related departmental responsibilities/interventions such as Agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry, travel and tourism, small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) development are both conceived and planned at national level by the specialized Departments, their implementation and subsequent end beneficiaries are the communities at decentralised levels.

Recently, however there has been growing involvement of the communities through their Community Action Plans (CAPs). They now participate during the conceptualization to full implementation of LED associated interventions. At the Decentralised levels, all Area Councils’ plans including LED related activities are generated from the villages through village meetings. These activities are sent to Wards where they are compiled and subsequently passed to Council level. During the planning process communities and stakeholders pledge their own resources in the form of counterpart contributions. The CAPs are sent to Councils to form the Annual Development Plans and Budgets. Communities and other stakeholders also go ahead in mobilizing the pledged resources and participate fully in the implementation of the activities.

Government engagement in LED related activities therefore happens further up stream where it is continually creating enabling environment for economy investments.

In terms of starting business that is obtaining construction permits, getting electricity connectivity, enforcing contracts, registering properties and trading across borders, it is easy and fast to get it done in the Gambia. The Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment along with the Gambia Growth and Competitiveness project (GGCP) which is UNDP supported are the institutions behind this initiative.

The abundant fertile lands and suitable climate for agricultural investment are also enabling factors. The Department of Agriculture through bilateral and multilateral donor agencies such FAO, IFAD, EU are making impressive interventions so as to address food insecurity.

The River Gambia flows throughout the length of the country and is rich in fish in the salty areas and the fresh water portion of it is suitable rice irrigation. This is an enabling factor for LED activities.

The country, in partnership with the Federal Republic of Germany (GTZ), has supported many communities in establishing community forests, parks and wood lots. These parks and woodlots serve as attractions to ecotourism guests which brings income to local communities. The forests and wood lots also contribute to increasing rainfall on which rain fed agriculture depends since there are few small holder irrigation schemes. The community forest, parks and wood lots also serve as wind breakers thus protecting communities from windstorm hazards. The Department of Forestry, the Gambia Tourism Authorities and local authorities are the institutions supporting this process.
Recognizing the importance of disaster management, the Government established the Disaster Management Agency through an Act of Parliament in 2008 and provided resources for its decentralization.

Regular source of water supply is crucial for economic development, therefore the country through bilateral and multilateral support agencies provided water reticulation facilities in almost all major villages and pipe borne water in all the towns in the country complemented by creating more access to electricity supply for both domestic and industrial development.

Without a healthy and able bodied population, all efforts directed at economic development will certainly go down the drain. This is what led the country to adopt the Health for All policy, the 5Km access to health facilities for all, the free Health Care Policy and the impressive immunization programme which is second to none in the Sub Region. Of late a Medical faculty at the University of the Gambia was established and is now training home grown doctors. This is increasing the doctor population ratio, thus improving health care services for all.

The Gambia mobilized US$28.0 million through the Food and Agriculture Sector Development Project (FASDEP) funded by the G8. This project is reducing rural household poverty, increasing food security and thus reducing malnutrition.

**LOCAL ENABLING PERSPECTIVES**

Following the enactment of the 1997 Constitution of the Second Republic, Cap XV, Section 193, Councils have power and authority to mobilize resources and judiciously use them for not only LED activities but the total development of their areas. The following legal provisions in both the Local Government Act 2002 Section 90, Sub Sections 1 and 2 (a, b, c and d) and its amended versions and the Local Government Finance and Audit Act2004, Section 8, Sub sections 1, 2 and 3 (a and b), Sub sections 4, 5, 6 (a, b and c), Sub sections 7, 8 & 9 and in conformity with the Gambia Incorporated ….Vision 2020), the Programme For Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE), which is a successor to the MDG based Poverty Reduction Strategy paper 2,(PRSP2), councils have the power and authority to levy tax and other dues and judiciously use them for the total development of their respective local authorities.

In an attempt to translate government pledges made in the VISION 2020 document and the 1997 Constitution and the much needed Local Government Reform and Decentralization Programme which is crucial for LED, the country enacted the first ever Local Government Act2002, followed by the Finance and Audit Act 2004 along with their complementary policy documents for the effective implementation of these Acts and programmes. The Local Government Act2002 demarcated the country into eight Local Government Areas as shown in the map.

Soon after the enactment of the Local Government Act in 2002, there were local government elections which ushered in elected Mayors and Councillors through universal adult suffrage and Chairpersons in the rural councils who were further selected/elected by elected Councillors. There are 114 Wards and 114 elected Councillors and a number of nominated Councillors for various interest groups.
To support the full implementation of the Local Government Act and following colonial demarcations, the country was broken into seven Regions, five of which are rural. The remaining two are the City of Banjul and Kanifing Municipality. Each of these regions is headed by a Regional Governor except for the City of Banjul and Kanifing Municipality which are headed by Mayors elected through Universal adult suffrage. Using the Local Government Finance and Audit 2004, they are able to levy additional taxes and pay counterpart contributions to earn projects such as markets to promote businesses thus promoting initiatives. Between 2011 and 2015 local authorities constructed or renovated over thirty markets in towns and growth centres and many weekly or roadside markets. These generate income and also serve as enablers for local economic development.

Annually, Mayors and Chairpersons of councils along with their teams of technocrats tour their cities, municipalities and Local government areas to met and discuss with the tax payers, the business community and decentralised structures to hear their version as regard programme/project implementation and take on board suggestions from the communities to enrich annual plans.

Although without either a LED policy nor strategy but have been supporting the training of youths at the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS) and at various training centres on various marketable skills and also supporting youths to set up their own enterprises soon after training. In collaboration and partnerships with NGOs operating in their areas of jurisdictions, Local authorities give training and financial support to women and youth groups to venture into income generation projects. Through Village credit and savings (VISACAs) and other micro finance institutions, local authorities have been supporting community Based Organisations to acquire credits and undertake their own micro finance schemes at village and town/community levels. These initiatives singly and collectively are stimulating local economies in most Gambian settlements.

In relation to stakeholders, the Gambia Chambers of Commerce and Industries (GCCI) which houses the private sector is solidly established and is supporting private sector involvement at National and local level. Almost annually and when big feasts are approaching, they organise trade fares from which various goods and services are displayed thus enhancing partnerships between business entities with the masses including communities who come to partake in the trade fares.

Several NGOs both International and national have over the years been supporting local communities in income generation skills, such as poultry breeding, ram fattening, cloth dyeing, sewing etc. Support in agriculture, community forestry, micro finance/saving and credit are all being provided which is enhancing local livelihoods. The availability of a young healthy and cheap labour force is also an enabling factor for local economic development.

To ensure effective involvement of key stakeholders at local authority level, a Councillor is selected to represent the Business community. Issues of interest to the business community are brought to council for deliberation, cognisant of the fact that businesses contribute significantly to local level economic development. Unfortunately and admittedly most of the councillors representing the Business community are not in business persons. GALGA will engage the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government, the Councils and the Gambia Chamber of Commerce to ensure that future councillors representing the business community come from the business communities themselves.

The willingness to uptake the literacy and numeracy programmes particularly by women has lead to increased literacy and numeracy skills to the extent that they are able to follow business plans, calculate profits/gains and losses in their enterprises thus further contributing to improved local economic interventions.
LED RELATED PRACTICES (SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROJECTS) Below is a matrix briefly showing some of the LED related projects undertaken at decentralised level followed by brief analysis of the projects.

**LED RELATED ACTIVITIES BEING IMPLEMENTING BY SECTORS/AGENCIES) AT LOCAL AUTHORITIES LEVELS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified projects</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Thematic Areas &amp; other associated thematic areas</th>
<th>Trends of Thematic Areas</th>
<th>Donors/ funders</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Spatial areas of intervention</th>
<th>Project Time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Based Infrastructure and Livelihood Improvement Project</td>
<td>GAMWORKS</td>
<td>IDB, GAMBIA Govt, Local Authorities, Communities</td>
<td>Infrastructure Dev, economy enhancement, Human resource Dev.</td>
<td>An upward trend in funding and implementation</td>
<td>IDB, Gambia Govt,</td>
<td>US$ 18.2 Million</td>
<td>Country wide</td>
<td>2011-2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mass Vaccination on Contagious Bovine PluroPneumonia (COBPP)</td>
<td>Animal Health and Production</td>
<td>FAO, MOA, DLS, Gambia Govt, Communities</td>
<td>Animal protection, income enhancement and Human resource Development</td>
<td>The trend is on the rise.</td>
<td>FAO, Gambia Govt,</td>
<td>D1000,000 (US$ 25,641.00)</td>
<td>Country wide</td>
<td>2012- 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Implementing Organization(s)</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting Commercial Poultry Production</td>
<td>FAO, Gambia Govt, DLS, Communities</td>
<td>Poultry protection, income enhancement and Human resource development</td>
<td>The trend is rising</td>
<td>FAO, Gambia Govt,</td>
<td>US$500,000</td>
<td>Country wide</td>
<td>Jan 2016 - Dec 2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Vaccination against NCDs</td>
<td>ADB, NEMA, FASDEP, Gambia Govt. &amp; Communities</td>
<td>Animal protection, Food security, income enhancement and Human resource Development &amp; Institutional strengthening</td>
<td>More interventions are forthcoming to support the sector</td>
<td>ADB, NEMA, FASDEP, Gambia Govt</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>Country-wide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Name</td>
<td>Implementing/Partnering Organization(s)</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>On the Increase</td>
<td>Funding Details</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Start Date - End Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Based Infrastructure &amp; Livelihood improvement Project (CIL-IP)</td>
<td>IDB, GAM-WORKS (Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Gambia Govt.), Ministry of Land and Regional Govt.</td>
<td>Infrastructure Dev. Livelihood Development Capacity building</td>
<td>On the increase</td>
<td>US$18.02 million</td>
<td>Country wide</td>
<td>2011-2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training and production of farm implements and low fuel utility stoves (Vesto stoves) for out of school youths</td>
<td>Gambia Technical training Institute (GTTI)</td>
<td>Food security, Income enhancement, Environmental protection &amp; Climate change, Income enhancement</td>
<td>The schemes are scaling up.</td>
<td>SDF, CU, Gambia Govt. GTTI</td>
<td>Country wide</td>
<td>2013-2015</td>
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**LED RELATED PRACTIONARIES, COMPETENCY CENTRES**

Although as indicated earlier, a policy and strategy on LED is not yet available, there are a pool of trained personnel in economy from the University of the Gambia, Management Development Institute (MDI), the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), Government Departments and work places particularly in NGOs and commercial institutions.

The Department of Community Development in particular has a pool of trained personnel in rural economic development at the Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Mansakonko. This competency centre continues to train Field workers and communities on local income/economic generation/development skills, entrepreneurship, business development and management. The RDI trains field workers who work with communities in areas of income generation such as soap making, cloth dyeing, sewing, carpentry, Fabrications, pottery, just to name some. Field workers train communities in these trades and also help decentralised structures such as Village and Ward Development committees to articulate their needs and put them in plans commonly called Community Action Plans (CAPs).

These CAPs are forwarded to Local Authorities for inclusion in their Annual Plans and Budgets. This would be an important point to initiate the concept, strategy and implementation of LED in Local Authorities. Capacity building trainings would be crucial covering concepts, strategies and implementation modalities for LED.

Other centres associated with income enhancement skills training include the Gambia Hotel School which trains out of school youths in various aspects of the tourism industry including hotel and hospitality. This makes them employable particularly in the hotel industry. These youths are also playing key roles in rural ecotourism thus contributing to the local economy.

The Gambia Telecommunication Multi Media Training Centre is also training young Gambians in IT, Telecommunication equipment on installation, management and repairs. The training provides the youths with marketable skills. Back to their communities, those trained set up their own workshops or get engaged in other institutions.
IDEAS FOR LED THEMATIC STUDIES

Local Authorities through GALGA needs to request for external expertise to research into the feasibility of local economic development at council level and come up with viable intervention options. A human resource capacity assessment study in relation to LED needs also to be undertaken. Studies and researches on other countries which are implementing LED activities needs to be carried out so that such interventions can be replicated in country.

At community level LED assessment studies need to be undertaken which will also identify suitability for LED interventions.

CONCLUSIONS

KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

There is need for advocacy and lobbying to Government to institute full decentralization of local government authorities along with the associated government departments to complement the capacity gabs in the local authorities. Local authorities need to recruit competent staff and also train the trainable staff to better manage their affairs including the uptake of development concepts such as LED along with its strategy. Local authorities should create new partnerships and strengthen already existing ones to enhance resources mobilization.

Least Developed Countries such as the Gambia and therefore need to intensify current drives in marketing the Gambia as a tourist destination both wet and dry seasons thus making it all year round.

Government need to modernize tourism related infrastructures and promote Cultural and religious tourism.

The fisheries sector is capable of creating employment opportunities and needs in provision of capacity building coupled with enforcement of protective legislations against indiscriminate, illegal and unregulated fishing.

Capacity building for youths in the area of entrepreneurship skills to address the high unemployment rates crucial. Micro finance interventions will help sustain entrepreneurship activities and should be supported at all levels.

The establishments of small scale industries that would transform raw material into near finish or finished products command a high premium.

Ruminant fattening and poultry keeping using locally available feeds such as millet brands, maize stalks including groundnut hay are cheap but readily available feeds.

The trade fairs mounted every season or annually is mostly staged in the urban areas. The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GCCI) need to be encouraged to move further to the communities to attract their products.

Weekly markets commonly known as “Lumos” are emerging economic flash points and thus government needs to support local authorities to construct solid structures with vital facilities and services to serve as stimulant to local economic growth.

As Disaster is crucial in both National and Local Economic development, Central government along with Local Governments with active involvement of the private sector and donor community need to support the Decentralised structures.
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13-National Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) for Gambia.
14-NBSAP-Biodiversity Policy for the Gambie
Local community planting mangrove in Niumi National Park

Bees Wax Baiting (Misera)

Bees wax baiting (Darsilami)

Local Community Training on Bee keeping

Darboe R/Person supervise hive stand construction

Joof R/Person demonstrate hive installation

Solar Renewable Energy Project