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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBOs and FBOS	Community and Faith Based Organizations
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DYS	Department of Youth and Sports
ECOWAS	Economic Commission of West African States
GAMJOBS	GambiaThe Gambia Priority Employment Programme
HDR	Human Development Report
ILO	International Labor Organization
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoBSE	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFWR&NA	Ministry of Fisheries, Water Resources and National Assembly Matters
MoFA&GA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Gambians Abroad
MoF&E	Ministry of Forestry and Environment
MoH&SW	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
MOTE	Ministry of Trade and Employment
MOYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
PMO	Personnel Management Office
NA	National Assembly
NaNA	National Nutrition Agency
NACCUG	National Association of Cooperative Credit Union
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
NAWEC	National Water and Electricity Company
NDT	National Dialogue Team
NEA	National Environment Agency
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NHA	National Health Account
NPAP	National Poverty Alleviation Program
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSC	National Steering Committee
OP	Office of the President
OVP	Office of The Vice President
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PMS	Poverty Monitoring System
PIP	Public Investment Programme
PHC	Primary Health Care
PPA	Participatory Monitoring System
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
NAS	National AIDS Secretariat
NAYCONF	National Youth Conference
NEDI	National Enterprise Development Initiative
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NYC	National Youth Council

NYP	National Youth Parliament
NYSS	National Youth Service Scheme
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper
RYC	Regional Youth Committees
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
WB	World Bank/Women's Bureau
WHO	World Health Organization

FOREWARD

Like society itself, policies undergo continual changes in order to remain relevant and responsive to the changing times as no given situation, circumstance and/or variable remains static. Therefore, it becomes necessary for Government and all stakeholders to identify emerging needs and provide the requisite agenda for intervention in order to satisfy those needs.

The National Youth Policy (2009-2018) is the second ten year framework formulated under my purview as Head of State and in total the third policy for youth of the Gambia. However, much progress has been registered in certain quarters of the Youth sector but much need to be done as well; especially in terms of attitudinal change across the board. Young people need to begin to take ownership and participate fully in national development.

Young people are a key priority of the government as they will continue to be the engine of growth and prosperity of our country, in recognition that they form the largest cohort of our population. For this reason, the Government will not relent in its efforts to give the sector the maximum attention it deserves. Not only does the policy try to focus on key sectors for better results but it also recognizes Youth employment creation as a growing challenge and also attempts to provide the Ministry of Youth and Sports with the opportunity to restructure and realign its implementation, coordination and monitoring mechanisms for effective service delivery.

Clearly, now, more than ever before, is the time to collectively nurture, horn and proactively redirect the enterprising efforts of the Youth into the productive base of the national economy for rapid socio-economic development.

Deleted: nurture,

It is my hope therefore, that the policy is a reflection as much as possible of what you the Youth want and I challenge you to mobilize all your energies towards the realization of its objectives. Opportunities created by Government are abound and it is hoped that the Youth will optimally utilize them for self and national development. In the same token, I urge our various development partners and civil society in general to continue to redouble their interventions in support of the Youth particularly in the areas of employment creation and leadership skills straining and development.

I am delighted that the policy is coming at a time when there is heightened optimism and confidence in my Government as the custodian of the national development agenda for achieving Vision 2020. The policy is indeed a complement to our development drive as we march forward in unison to *transform The Gambia into a dynamic high-income country* as encapsulated in our Vision 2020 blue print.

Sheikh Professor Alhaji Dr. Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Youth Policy 2009-2018 is the third ten year policy that has been formulated for the Youth of the Gambia. This Policy will be used to invest in Youth for sustainable development. Investing in Youth is pertinent given the context of the Gambia. Gambia has a youthful population with 67% of the population being under 25 years of age (2003 National Census).

The policy defines Youth within the age bracket of 15-30 and specifically targets out of school youth, unemployed, rural youth, young people with disabilities and HIV/Aids victims as well as emphasising the needs of female youth. This target group is still relevant and is a key strength of this policy. Moreover, the policy has in-built flexibility to deal with young people who fall without its main age bracket.

This Policy Framework is the result of intense national consultations involving all seven regions of the Gambia and all major stakeholders. Youth as a sector and as a cross-cutting issue makes it important for this present policy to consolidate on the gains of the last policy whilst clearly moving into a new direction in terms of restructuring the coordination mechanisms and policies within the sector.

The consultation findings have brought out the fact that mainstreaming youth has encountered challenges during the implementation stage. The lack of effective coordination and monitoring has been a major factor in the failure to achieve some of the key objectives of the last policy.

The issues of employment, skills training, access to loans, leadership, participation and peace continue to be important issues for Gambian Youth.

The policy focuses on the fact that during the consultations, employment was number one in all the regions, followed by access to skills training and access to grants, credit and loans. The discussions also focused on leadership training and full participation in national life. This is an indication that these issues needs to addressed in the new Youth policy for the Gambia. If the Gambia is to achieve its development goals including Vision 20/20, The MDG's and its PRSP goals then the Youth have to be the key in any national investment plan, from economics to politics.

As a result this policy tries to focus on key sectors for better results during the implementation stage. The policy will assist the Ministry of Youth and Sports to restructure and revisit its coordination mechanisms in order to register concrete success in its processes to achieve overall success in the area of investing in Youth for sustainable development.

The Policy contains recommended objective strategies to address the following challenges: Economic Development, Skills and other relevant training, Capacity Building on Participation and Leadership, Mentoring, Advocacy, Financing and Partnerships. The

role of the different arms of MOYS and its partners in the implementation of the policy is also highlighted, as well as creating a framework for monitoring and evaluation.

PART 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

The Youth of the Gambia make up at least 47% of the population or higher depending on what age cohort is used to define youth. As a result, Gambia as a Nation has decided to invest in its Youth for sustainable development by ensuring that this new policy takes into account the critical issues concerning youth. The global financial crisis coupled with the global food crisis makes it imperative that the Gambia look inwards and especially at investing in its youth in order for the country to have a viable future. Without a vision, well educated, highly skilled, a healthy and patriotic youth dedicated to serving their nation and taking their citizenship seriously, Gambia will be hard pressed to achieve sustainable development.

With the key goals of empowering young people to be able to harness their potential for self-fulfilment and responsible citizenship, the policy crafts a comprehensive framework for youth development. However, even a casual observation of the situation of young people in the country would reveal that the goals set in the last **National Youth Policy 1999 – 2008** are far from being realised. Its review gave pointers to potential strategies for better implementation and also highlighted new areas of concern that may not have been of relevance during the drafting of the past policy but which have now become important and hence need to be addressed in this successor policy.

The National Youth Policy 2009-2018 is a blueprint for Gambian Youth that will engage them in a serious manner in national development. The overall objective of this policy is to mobilize youth and get them involved in all aspects of national development. The policy also seeks to empower youth through participation and mentoring. Despite the fact that the youth make up more than half of the population they have limited opportunities for viable employment, education and training, skills development, and access to health and social services. There is also a high incidence of drug use among Gambian youth as well as high criminal activity when compared to the rest of society. And it does not help matters that the majority of youth suffer from the “Babylon” syndrome---migration out of the Gambia by any means necessary.

The youth live mostly in the urban area and are more likely to be unemployed.¹ According to the second generation PRSP II/SPA II in the Gambia, the Gambia has a problem of youth unemployment which is estimated to be at 22% and a majority of them are classified as poor. Gambian male youth more than their female counterparts are more likely to be unemployed. Lack of livelihood skills, low motivation towards agriculture still poses a big treat to the development of young people, especially where the incidence of poverty and hunger is high, as in the Gambia.

¹ Source: CSD, 2003 Preliminary Census estimates

This burden on youth is made all the more heavier by the upsurge in the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among the 16 – 35 year olds in the country.² This is important in the context of the new AIDS figures of 2006 provided by the ANC Sentinel Surveillance, which show young men and women are contracting AIDS at a higher rate than older men and women. The highest rate in the contracting of HIV/AIDS is amongst young women in The Gambia.

The need to work on all these issues facing the youth in the Gambia and harness their full potential and focus on the positive aspects of their lives, underscores the importance of this policy. These issues became clearer during the consultations and the NAYCONF 2008 that focused on the issues of the national policy. The results of the dialogues have resulted in the specific focus of the policy.

1.2 Situational Analysis

According to the 2003 Population and Housing Census, the country has a population of 1.36 million and an annual population growth rate of 2.74%. The total youth population is estimated at 53.86% that is the age cohort between the ages of 10-39 years and this figure is expected to rise over the next few years.

The UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) report³ states that, the Gambia is among the poorest countries in the world, ranking 155 out of 177 nations in 2004 compared to 149 out of 161 in 2001. The 2003 Integrated Household Survey (IHS) indicated a poverty level of 61.2%. The Government recently developed a Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (PRGS) for 2007-2011 that merged the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II) with the Medium Term Plan, 2007-2011. The new strategy seeks to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty. The Gambia MDG status report has also further confirmed that poverty in the Gambia is mostly a rural phenomenon; the report further stated that urban areas (i.e. Banjul and Kanifing) have lower levels of extreme poverty (0.8 and 6.8) than the rural areas ranging from 10 and 30.5% in LRR and CRR-North respectively. Extreme poverty is reported to be lower among the urban areas because of the availability of employment opportunities, both formal and informal. Most of the rural dwellers depend largely on agriculture mainly groundnut for their livelihood. The population structure of the country has also shown that the country has a young population most of whom are living in the urban areas.

With a good number of youth within the child bearing age (15 – 39 years), the 2003 census indicated that the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) remains high at 5.4 children per woman, although it has dropped from 6.04 in 1993. This decline could partly be

² See sentinel survey for 2006 and The Joint Review Report of the Gambia HIV/AIDS National Response, June 2008” NAS, 2008.

³ See UN’s HDI 2007. The Gambia has consistently remained in the mid to upper 150s on this index. See WIKIPEDIA for the complete list of countries according to HDI rankings at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_Human_Development_Index Human Development Report 2004, UNDP, New York

attributed to delay in marriage and child birth due to high retention of females at secondary level education and the expanded use of contraceptives.

Adolescent fertility remains a problem with far-reaching social and economic consequences. The 2000 Adolescent/Youth survey indicated that 41.5% of youth aged 15-24 were sexually active, with approximately 15% of sexually active females reporting the occurrence of at least one pregnancy. Unwanted teenage pregnancies may compound the health risks and precarious socio-economic situation of girls and young women, particularly if they seek recourse to illegal abortions and school dropouts. Most adolescent and youth have very limited access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. This is because sexuality issues are surrounded with taboos and parents do not talk to their young ones of sex and sexuality issues. As a result they resort to their friends and peers for information who are not themselves adequately informed.

The Government of the Gambia and its partners has fully recognized the potentially devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on the economy and the population. HIV/AIDS is an emerging demographic and developmental issue that needs careful attention, with new figures showing upsurge among young people (15 – 24 years) particularly among the female youths. The estimated prevalence of HIV-1 dropped from a peak of 2.1% in 2004 to 1.1% in 2005, while HIV-2 rates fell from 0.9% to 0.6% over the same period.

According to the 2003 population and housing census, the Government has put in place initiatives to achieve universal access to Basic Education for all school-going ages which has culminated in the construction and strengthening of facilities, abolition of fees in Lower Basic Schools and the provision of free education for girls. Female literacy stands at about 37% with male literacy estimated at 60%. Access to upper basic education (grades 7-9) has also improved during this period, with an increase of about 25 percent in overall Gross Enrolment Rate (GER). Parity has now been attained at the basic cycle level (grades 1-9). At the senior secondary level the overall GER has almost doubled, though the disparity gap between boys and girls remains high. Though school enrolment has improved, retention and quality of education and training for boys and girls at all levels remains a challenge. The 2002/2003 Educational Statistics showed that the GER for the whole country was 91%.

At the level of vocational/skills centers in the country, they are not evenly distributed among the regions of the country. Even in areas where they are available most of them do not meet the required standards and do not have the right systems in place thus end up churning out graduates who are either not qualified enough for the employment market or do not have access to micro credit facilities to start their own enterprise.

1.3 The Ministry of Youth and Sports

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has been in existence since the Colonial period, but always as an addendum to education. The Ministry has been re-designated twice over the past four decades and has been challenged over the years to deliver quality services especially with a fast growing youthful population. This demand for services and

oversight has actually made the Ministry a crisis and intervention sector rather than one with a clear strategic direction and policy.

The Department of Youth and Sports, under the Ministry is the technical arm of Government for youth and sports matters established in 1973 under the then Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture. In 1997, a National policy for youth was drafted and approved in 1999. The National Youth Policy (1999 – 2008) charged the Department with the following roles:-

- a. To oversee the implementation of the Youth Policy
- b. To facilitate the monitoring of various programmes as articulated in the National Youth Policy
- c. To play an advocacy role for youth development and creation of opportunities
- d. To initiate the review of the National Youth Policy.

Set-up in 2000 by an Act of Parliament, the National Youth Council (NYC) is that arm of the Ministry that coordination all youth activities and associations. The Department of Youth and Sports has oversight over NYC and ensures implementation of its policies and strategies but due to the fact that it has not been functioning properly, that has had an impact on the implementation of the National Youth Policy 1999-2008, resulting in some of the policy objectives and plans not being carried out.

As noted earlier, the first youth policy was developed two decades ago—and a second one developed a decade ago. Both policies focused on making youth issues national issues with the just ended one focusing on mainstreaming. However, by the end of the policy the policy was overtaken both by national, regional and global trends. The Gambia had developed its PRSP II, ECOWAS had developed a new youth policy and the global trends have shown a sharp increase in the unemployment figures of youth worldwide. The trend in Gambia regarding policy issues on Youth followed the same global focus on mainstreaming youth which though critical needs to be part of a larger national investment program. The national policy did not take these investment issues into consideration, especially its key aspects in its preliminary policies and programs.

Subsequently, as the current policy was being reviewed the findings showed specific challenges were Youth issues are concerned. Key barriers, such as lack of economic empowerment, education, lack of sex education, jobs and other social and economic issues acted as obstacles in an effective response to youth issues.

According to the review of the 1999-2008 policy, the main concern of youths in the Gambia is employment— the youths are interested in any kind of employment including self employment. The Youths believe that education and training are relevant and critical in achieving this objective of employability. The access to resources including land, inputs, loans, relevant training, and leadership skills amongst others are critical in investing in youth program.

1.4 The Ministry of Youth and Sports Vision and Mission

With the new dispensation at MOYS, a clear vision has emerged and it is:

To be Perceived as the Centre/Platform for Empowering Youth as Effective Aggregates in National Development and for Excellence in Sports that Generates Value

To translate this vision into concrete actions, MOYS' mission is reflected below:

To deliver excellence in youth and sports development by ensuring that our youth are guided towards entrepreneurship, employability, leadership and encourage mass participation in sports for well being

This youth policy expresses this vision and mission, especially to ensure that, economic freedom, cultural development and capacity is built to enhance the lives of young people in the Gambia

1.5 Approach

Through a multi-sectoral, multi-level and an interdisciplinary approach, the issue of Youth and their role in development will be brought to the forefront of Gambia's development priorities. Taking cue from the ECOWAS Youth Policy which ECOWAS countries are encouraged to use as a guideline, the Gambia's policy will deal with some of the critical issues highlighted by ECOWAS but will look at National priorities, Policies and Programs as well. As a result, it is important in dealing with Youth issues that the spirit of interconnectedness given by a multi-sectoral approach be followed, especially since Gambia has a Vision 2020 and a second generation PRSP which incorporate all the sector policies of the Gambia.

In investing in Youth, it is not only youth who need to be empowered, but parents and policy makers alike. Because of the way youths are perceived by society-- that is as people who are irresponsible, unfocused and clueless --, they are not usually targeted when it comes to policy issues and when they are targeted it is usually as add on to policies rather than an integral part of the policy. Youths in the Gambia suffer from low literacy, attitudinal problems and a great affliction of going to the West. Therefore, this policy will look at how to invest in youth in a bid to foster attitudinal change, employability through appropriate training and a sense of pride and allegiance to the nation.

The Ministry for Youth and Sports in The Gambia has been aggressive, in its training campaigns through the National Youth Service Scheme (NYSS), The President's International Award (PIA) amongst others to ensure employability of Gambian youths. The young and females have especially been targeted.

Despite the low rate of implementation rate of the last policy, there is cause for optimism, in light of the fact that this is a new youth policy framework for the Gambia (2009-2018). The new policy will provide the opportunity for the critical youth issues which have been outstanding as a result of major shift in priorities to be put in the new policy.

1.6 Rationale for a Youth Policy Framework for The Gambia

The rationale for developing a third generation youth policy is based on the Gambia Government's commitment to creating an enabling environment for youth as an integral part of the national development. It is quite evident that, given the youthful population of the Gambia, this new policy formulated will give strategic direction to Youth issues and suggests intervention strategies in order to achieve sustainable development for Youth in the Gambia. The purpose of this policy is to define the main approach that the Ministry of Youth and Sports will adapt to address youth issues within the larger development goals of The Gambia.

The Gambia's official approach to working on Youth issues has been through mainstreaming. The National Youth Policy 1999-2008 states that, "the Gambia is experiencing a new epoch in which unprecedented efforts are being made to get youth into the mainstream of national development efforts."⁴

However, we have to note at this juncture that classic mainstreaming has not always worked, especially when it is misunderstood by the very people who are supposed to use it. Mainstreaming has also not encouraged other approaches that might have had more of an impact. At times it is better to engage from both the periphery and the centre where youth issues are concerned and this will be the approach of this policy framework.

This Youth Policy Framework will provide for the harmonising of the different interventions and work on a more concerted strategy on youths. This in turn will ensure that all the actors understand the youth issues and work toward a common approach.

The National Youth Policy will provide the Ministry for Youth and Sports and its partners with the needed support and guidance to take care of youth issues. The policy will provide a sustainable and responsive system to youth issues in the subsequent Ministry and its partner's strategic plans and their implementation.

⁴ The Gambia National Youth Policy (1999-2008), p. 1

PART 2: THE YOUTH POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR THE GAMBIA

2.1 Policy Goals and Objectives

The ultimate goal of this Youth policy is:

To function as a guide for the ministry for youth and sports and its partners to ensure that investment in youth takes place across sectors and in all national policies and programs

The Youth policy has the following objectives:

- **To invest in youths for national development;**
- **To create employment for out of school youth**
- **To enable the youth in the country operate within a wide variety of cultures as such a culturally sensitive approach with regard to mainstreaming the perspectives of youth in all national and local interventions.**
- **To ensure that the youth policy reflect the full participation of both male and female in National development-- not only to ensure youth participation, but to also increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Youth Council.**
- **To enable the National Youth Council to coordinate the implementation of youth projects and programmes based on a sound youth dimension with a view to investing in the future of Gambian Youth.**
- **To put in place institutional procedures based on policy guidelines which ensure that the needs of boys, girls, men and women are all met equitably in the national youth policy.**
- **To formulate a framework that measures and ensures that youth-specific issues are systematically identified and addressed.**
- **To ensure that data on beneficiaries is disaggregated by sex for needs assessment and programme planning and youth analysis is integrated into programme design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.**
- **To design strategies for capacity building in youth and investment mainstreaming as part of Institutional development programmes with special attention to staff training on youth mainstreaming and youth analysis.**
- **To ensure that reporting and accountability mechanisms for activities and results in youth and investment are put in place.**

2.2 Principles, Guidelines and Expected Outcomes

With regard to youth issues, the guiding principle for MOYS is to ensure that the national response benefit male and female equally, according to their different needs. MOYS also wants to ensure equal input and participation from male and female at all levels within the Ministry and amongst its partners.

In light of this the Youth Council is committed to taking the necessary steps towards achieving these objectives:

To factor in the social and cultural dimensions of youth and its impact on national development

To formulate the baseline to integrate the youth perspective of national development into the national programmes in order to improve the lives of all Gambians, especially, of the youth

To enable the country operate within a wide variety of cultures and as such take a culturally sensitive approach with regard to investing in youth and mainstreaming the youth perspective into National policies, programmes and projects.

2.3 Stakeholders and beneficiaries

Collaboration between NYC, the DYS, The Ministry and its attendant satellite institutions such as NYSS and the President's International Award, MoBSE, The National Assembly, Civil Society, Development partners among other stakeholders is called for in this policy framework.

The beneficiaries of this policy will be the youth of the Gambia and youth living in the Gambia.

Successful implementation of the policy framework with its proposed strategies for a national strategic plan on youth will require effective interaction between the stakeholders for a more effective implementation process and will ensure accountability on the part of all partners.

PART 3: KEY ISSUES AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The review of the Last Policy 1999-2008 clearly mirrors the findings of other documents written over the years on youth in The Gambia. The same factors that make people vulnerable, such as poverty, power relations, lack of economic power, low level of education, lack of or limited knowledge and a rapidly changing world order are also the key issues for youth. Key issues from the review that define the challenges of youth and the recommended strategies to address them are discussed in this section.

3.1 Socio-Cultural Development and the status of Youth

The Socio-Cultural development of Youth has been cited by the youth during the consultations as key to their participation in national development. They argued that looking at the status quo in the Gambia, especially in the context of power relations where older people are given priority, particularly in decision-making they have little input in the development agenda. As a result they argue that the status they are assigned in society is quite low. According to them they are perceived as the group in society with no sense of direction, no focus and highly dependent.

The youth recognize that they are a political force and their participation in political, social and cultural life is an inalienable right. However, due to some traditional power structures, their participation is limited.

The age pyramid in the Gambia shows the youth in the majority, it is then incumbent upon society to develop their socio-cultural skills which include involving them in decision making at household, community, district, regional and national level. This will assist them in acquiring skills of leadership, management and decision-making whilst at the same time encouraging them to respect the cultural and social norms of the Gambia rather than adopting alien cultures which will further alienate them from the development processes.

Patriotism is built and nurtured in the social development of the youth which in turn elevates their status as they become committed to national development. How is this done? Encouragement to love one's societal and cultural norms and being given the space to participate rather than observe, usually translates into commitment and participation at all levels of society which in turn impacts on the pace of development in the country.

In the case of The Gambia right away we recognize that the decision making role is mostly the purview of the male/elderly as women and youth become secondary in key decision making at all levels. In light of these conclusions the following strategies are being recommended:

Recommended Strategies:

1. Ensure that youth are empowered economically in order to contribute to national Development, make their own decisions, through interpersonal dialogue on youth issues.
2. Ensure that government takes up its responsibility of creating the enabling environment for youth to thrive and prosper.
3. That government takes measures to invest in youth and invest in the future through national budget support, projects and programmes at central and decentralized levels.
4. Have a deliberate policy to evenly distribute skills centres around the country in collaboration with the Ministry of education and the national training authority
5. Ensure that the national youth policy implementation give special attention to the rights and needs of youth who are disabled and allow greater participation in all areas of national development
6. Take measures such as affirmative action to ensure the participation of women in youth issues, and to enhance their role as participants in national development
7. Facilitate adult education classes for both male and female youth to ensure greater participation in national development
8. Promote mutually respectful and equitable gender relations for youth
9. Facilitate the participation of youth leaders in all the youth programming from the planning stages to implementation ensuring the success of the national and local programs
10. Encourage an integrated learning approach based on the suggestions of the youth and the expertise of the partners.
11. Provide an empowerment program for both young men and women dealing with socio-cultural issues, leadership issues and economic issues and the linkages between those in programming to encourage collective decision making.

3.2 Economic development and Employment

Poverty is a major issue when it comes to Youth issues. Studies have shown that poverty is increasing in The Gambia and affects mostly youth. The Integrated Household Survey of the Gambia, (December, 2006) classified 58% percent of the population as poor. However, it impacts differently on men and women, considering the socio-cultural, traditional and religious practices and beliefs.

The MDGs aim to promote access to education, gender parity, a decrease in maternal and infant mortality as well as poverty reduction. This fits in nicely within this current policy. More than 50% of the population is youth and more than 70% of them are poor. Majority of the Youth are unemployed because they lack the prerequisite skills to enter into gainful employment. This coupled with the pessimistic attitudes of youth make the majority of them unemployable.

Consequently, the interface between poverty and lack of education, skills and access to basic services are recognized in the poverty programs. It is understood that without a healthy and an educated citizenry little will be achieved in the way of alleviating poverty and creating vibrant societies.

Therefore it is critical that to achieve the government's objective of empowering youth and giving them economic freedom the following strategies be followed.

Recommended Strategies:

1. Improve the income earning capacities of youth and significantly contribute towards their economic empowerment which in turn will improve their level of involvement in making decisions affecting them at both the household and community levels especially since they are the future of the country.
2. Assist youths with farming inputs such as land, fertilizers and machinery.
3. Provide mentoring and training as an ongoing process.
4. Encourage financial institutions to provide low interest loans especially to youth as part of their corporate social responsibility.
5. Advocate for expanded poverty reduction programmes.
6. Facilitate access to means of production such as land for the poor men, women and youth.
7. Provide training for youth organizations in fund raising.
8. Increase loan size for youths who already have access to loans.
9. Encourage more young people to participate as fishermen, post harvest actors and vendors in the fisheries sector.

3.3 Power Relations: Decision-making, Resource allocation and participation

The analysis of the reviews and research in the Gambia has shown that power and authority entirely lies in the hands of the elderly, especially the men and they are the main decision makers within households. Power in this case has been analyzed as the degree/ability in controlling the decision making process regarding resource allocation and other family welfare activities/issues. There is a major need for equity in the Gambia and as youth become more empowered economically it is found that they will move gradually to being part of the decision making process. At the moment some of the youth are being consulted on family, community, district and national issues.

What is important at this stage is continuous sensitization especially of elderly, regarding youth's key role in national development. Elders must come to understand that they have a moral obligation and that youths have a right to and can effectively participate in decision making on issues that affect them at all levels in society.

Recommended Strategies:

1. Utilize research findings from studies in youth dynamics and power relations at the level of national, district and community levels and to organize public dialogues, and household advocacy involving traditional, religious and community leaders
2. Engage in intensive sensitization and training on production, processing and marketing for youth. There is also need to continuously strengthen the capacity of the youth groups engaged in agricultural production especially in the areas of group management, resource mobilization and financial management.
3. Promote youth rights and responsibilities and the role of youths in the management of the resources within the communities.
4. Provide support to youth so that their earning power can be improved enabling them to take their rightful place in the decision-making processes. Therefore, government should encourage and assist youth, to diversify and increase their revenues in off-season activities such as vegetable gardening, petty trading and skills acquisition
5. Ensure mutual understanding between elderly and youth when making decisions both at community and district levels and the full acceptance by all parties would help improve national development quite significantly.

3.4 Education and awareness raising

Youths have suffered from lack of knowledge and lack of access to information. As one of the most important measurements of human development, literacy, Gambian young women lag behind the young men with an illiteracy rate that hovers around 20-30%. This rate has a direct correlation to access, because if one lacks information, one cannot make informed decisions. This is critical, because youths are a highly vulnerable population who needs information on all aspects of life. As the future of the country, youths need information on all the issues that affect them be it health, access to basic services, education, skills training, sexual reproductive health etc. This is necessary so they will be better able to execute their role as future leaders of The Gambia.

In direct consequence, there is emphasis for youth to contribute to national development--this presumes a well-trained, highly skilled and youthful workforce. Youths are given access to basic education; however, the problems come after the basic cycle, because some of them leave school without skills or knowledge. As a result, out of school youths need post basic education skills training in addition to assistance to get them started in petty trading and small businesses. Therefore, guidance and counseling should start earlier in the educational cycle as limited access to information leads to dire circumstances for Youth. Youth might not know of certain options available to them for their decision-making.

Recommended Strategies:

1. Build the capacity of youth in skills training, financial management and governance for a higher level of participation in National development.
2. Encourage youth to continue with their education after the basic cycle and for those who finish at grade 12 let them have the option of a tertiary education.
3. Ensure that rural youth have access to skills centers as well as land to practice whatever skills they acquire.
4. Ensure access to information on HIV/AIDS for youths to make informed choices.
5. Advocate against cultural norms that do not allow youth the opportunity to participate fully in the development processes.
6. Educate women to provide them with skills for economic independence.
7. Conduct research on youths and use that information to do better programming for them.
8. Develop IEC messages to address issues of concern to the youth such as: unemployment, reproductive health, finance management etc.
9. Advocate for the eradication of FGM by educating the populace on the pros and cons of the practice.
10. Ensure availability, accessibility and affordability of post basic education across all regions and communities.
11. Emphasize gender based violence including rape of women and girls in training programs.
12. Address the issues related to sexual health.
13. Put in place strategies for youth dialogue across the regions.
14. Provide information to at risk youth about the dangers of migration.
15. Target youth who are disproportionately unemployed for skills training and low interest loans.

3.5 Youths with Disabilities

In The Gambia the number of disabled youths is steadily rising and because of different reasons they do not participate fully in society and are mostly relegated to a private space. Reaching them can be difficult and for those who are visible in public life they usually survive through begging. What youths with disability need is the opportunity to be full serving members of society through access to education, healthcare, counseling services, etc, so as to contribute fully to national Development.

Recommended Strategies:

1. Pay attention to disabled youth and facilitate their participation in all Youth activities.
2. Ensure the equal sharing of resources and benefits of youth interventions for the disabled.

3. Develop efforts aimed at instilling in persons with disability a sense of confidence and self-reliance through skills training and other services.
4. Mainstream issues of youths with disabilities in youth programming and ensure their effective participation in all youth activities.
5. Ensure that youths with disabilities equally benefits from youth interventions nationwide.
6. Develop programmes aimed at instilling in youth with disabilities a sense of confidence and self-reliance through skills training and other support services.
7. Ensure the involvement of DSW and DPO'S in the development and implementation of youth programmes.

3.6. Youth Mentoring: Preventing crime within the society

One of the key areas the youth are concerned about is the lack of mentoring within the society. Most young people opined that if they can get an older person who can mentor them they can and will do much better in life. Mentoring is important, especially in an investment programme for youths. Mentoring is one of the greatest investments for youth especially if they are to take their rightful place in society. There is little mentoring going on and it is mostly in the area of skills transfer.

The problem of crime among youth will reduce greatly with mentoring. Statistics show that young people constitute the most criminally active segment of the population. Most violent and petty crimes are committed by youths who use drugs and alcohol and come from vulnerable backgrounds. In order to make strides in these areas, the strategies will include the following:

Recommended Strategies:

1. Provide mentors to youth in addition to increased economic opportunities, education and professional training
2. Give priority to the establishment of after school programs and help young people engage in activities that control aggression, deal with conflict and encourage positive self-image.
3. Access to leisure programmes such as games, sports, cultural events, entertainment and community service will be ensured as it is key in preventing social ills such as crime, drug abuse and other negative behavior.
4. Efforts should be made to develop programmes designed to promote tolerance and better understanding amongst youth and with adults, with a view to eradicate ethnic chauvinism, religious bigotry and all other forms of discrimination.
5. Ensure the involvement of CSOs, religious organizations, volunteers, celebrities, politicians, well known authority figures in youth work.
6. Ensure that youth are active participants in peace building and peace negotiations.

7. Give priority to programmes that encourage youth to say no to drugs and yes to education, skills and self-employment.

3.7 Capacity Building and Research on Youth

It is extremely important for Management and Implementation purposes that certain studies are carried out and crucial training provided for the Ministry of Youth and Sports and their Satellite Institutions as well as their key partners in investing in youth, youth analysis and youth mainstreaming. The training will be very specific and should be tailor made for the specific needs of program and policy management. In terms of the studies economic development studies are critical especially in terms of getting results that will make it possible to target certain youth within the society. The root problems of most of the issues in The Gambia is the lack of economic development of the most vulnerable sector of our society, poor men, poor women, adolescents and children.

Recommended Strategies:

1. Train the personnel of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and its Satellite Institutions on youth issues and analysis both locally and abroad to enhance their project management, monitoring and evaluation and programming skills.
2. Develop tailor made courses in the Gambia and abroad for the staff and partners on youth research, project and programme formulation, organizational development and human resource management.
3. Encourage youth research on managing and preventing conflicts, migration and employment issues.
4. Promote and foster research on the Socio-Cultural Aspects of being a Youth.
5. Develop specific frameworks for each program area for youths across sectors.

3.8 The Information Highway: Science and technology

Science and Technology is changing the way we do business the world over and Gambia is not immune to these global movements. The lives of people, how they live, work, communicate, travel and relax have been affected almost day to day by technology and science. Science and technology offers new opportunities for young people as well as challenges.

However, the majority of Gambian youth do not have the access to science and technology due to lack of resources especially at decentralized levels. It is important that they make do with the changes the opportunities will afford them.

Recommended Strategies:

1. Promote science in schools, especially amongst female students.

2. Involve young people in the sciences by instituting award systems at all levels of education.
3. Provide mentors who are well known in science and technology for the young men and women.
4. Information technology should be promoted, especially in the rural area as it allows them access to new and appropriate technology.

3.9 Interaction/Networking

According to the findings of the review, the potential to eradicate poverty and improve living conditions of the masses is maximized by the formation of networks. Networking, allows for harmonization of resources and their efficient utilization. The following networks exist for the youth. The National Youth Council is the biggest network for youth in The Gambia and will be used effectively to achieve the goals and objectives of the policy.

Child Protection Alliance (CPA) is a network of youth and children's group who work on protection issues for youth and children and has been used effectively to advocate on behalf of youth and children. Policy implementation should ensure that their role expands to actual protection services in partnership with government and the private sector.

Networks were more visible at the level of **Civil Society** with the formation of Networks of Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) on youth self-sufficiency, skills training and awareness raising, such as YAFSEE, APGWA etc. The Gambia Family Planning Association, as a network in offering service friendly reproductive health services for youth and women remain quite outstanding. NGOs have demonstrated a structural and operational flexibility that sets them apart as Prime stakeholders in youth initiatives within the community.

The Private sector will be engaged to leverage its strengths. The potential of the private sector as an effective channel for promotion of youth and youth related services is critical and using this sector in reaching a wider sector of the population should be further explored.

Recommended Strategies:

1. Develop a vision and plan for strengthening existing collaborative networks.
2. Develop sustainability plan for the networks when donor funding runs out.
3. Develop a memorandum of understanding with networks.

3.10 Agriculture: The Key to investing in Youth

In The Gambia, agriculture is the backbone of the economy, yet few youth are found in this sector as they become disillusioned with their lives in the rural area and move to the urban area and eventually try to migrate to other countries. This rural-urban drift and the

illegal migration are not sustainable as it means that the potential of the youth are either lost or under utilized. It is important then that the policy targets agriculture as a priority area. With investments in agriculture for youth in terms of training, inputs, access and ownership of land Gambia will see a skilful workforce, a vibrant economy and sustainable development.

The Gambian President's "Back to the Land Initiative" can act as the precursor to attract both private and public sector to invest in youth and agriculture.

Recommended Strategies:

1. Emphasis should put on the creation of incentives for young people with regard to their development in the areas of trade/trades and agriculture.
2. It is important to provide the motivation and resources for youth empowerment and employment creation, with proper incentives for sustainability.
3. Best practices like the Songhai centre in Benin or the Rural Development Institute in Mansakonko can be used as a model for investment in agriculture for Youth.
4. Youth should be given land and trained in agricultural skills for effective use of the land.
5. Youths should have access to loans and inputs to contribute to the economy and provide food security for the Nation.
6. Mixed farming centres for youth in the regions should be set-up.
7. The creation of markets for the products of young peoples labour and skills is of crucial importance. This is one area where the government and partner institutions could step in to fill a void.
8. Government should actively participate in engendering demand for youth products, such as agricultural products, art products, and skill-related products.
9. As a point of emphasis, any strategy employed to invest in agriculture for youth must have a focused plan for the creation of incentives for targeted growth.
10. Government should encourage commercial banks in the creation of loan facilities to enable youths to actively participate in agriculture. If provided, this will not only motivate youths to get into agriculture, but also have the potential to improve productivity.
11. There is the need for government to assign and protect vast areas of land for agricultural purpose. This is particularly important during this period of serious land grabbing by individuals and estate developers.

3.11 Illegal Migration

One current socio-economic problem confronting Gambian youth is illegal migration. In addition to the curbing of illegal migration, the new youth policy will start making plans

for returning Gambian youth as western governments make immigration laws more stringent. It is important that this policy is proactive in this issue otherwise we would be faced with new problems in the future.

Recommended strategies:

1. Special attention should be given to illegal migration and special strategies employed to integrate these returnees into mainstream society and provide them with marketable skills to enable them become economically productive in a bid to deter them from taking the risk of going to Europe again.
2. The Department of immigration should work closely with the Department of Youth and Sports and other relevant authorities to launch an aggressive advocacy programme that will sensitise the youth on the dangers of illegal migration and teach them how they can legally migrate with the proper skills training.

PART 4: SUPPORT FOR AND FINANCING OF YOUTH PROGRAMMES

There is all evidence from the field to show that The Youth sector is not attracting donors other than its traditional partners, such as UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO. Most funding of the sector has been ad hoc and is usually donations from the private sector and individuals during annual activities. UNDP provides current assistance to the sector through GAMJOBS together with its sister institutions.

However for this policy, the Government of the Gambia will ensure that needed resources are made available, particularly from development partners and the national budget. Doing this on a regular and sustained basis will ensure increased and prioritized national budgetary allocations for youth development are made by the Gambia government and other relevant stakeholders.

PART 5: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Implementing Partners

1. Relevant government agencies and ministries- they will provide the technical lead in developing interventions on the different aspects of youth development
2. The private sector- the private sector will contribute resources, collaborate with government and other actors to implement the policy.
3. Development partners- they will assist in providing financial and technical support, materials and equipment for implementing the strategic plan, action plan of the policy, advocate and lobby for support and other relevant actions to youth development
4. Civil Society Organizations- will be responsible for building partnerships and networks with government, other agencies and communities in the implementation of the strategic action plan on youth and development
5. Youth organizations- they will be involved in developing, designing, planning and implementation of all youth programmes.

5.2 Role of the National Youth Council/Department of Youth/Sports

The main role NYC and DYS is its Coordination Role, however:

1. Lack of adequate human resources in both offices for coordination will make implementation difficult.
2. Lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities, expected inputs, outputs and outcomes with measurable indicators that can be monitored and evaluated for key stakeholders as happened with the last policy should be avoided.

5.3 Partners

Coordination of stakeholders is important for resolving conflicts while having a unified flow of the national policy with diverse and numerous partners.

Coordination needs to be at policy, international partnership, national, sectors and NGOs, intra-sectoral and Divisional/Municipal levels.

NYC/DYS is expected to be the organ that will coordinate, under the office of the Minister of Youth and Sports. The work should be neutral in nature to drive the coordination mission and build consensus on the overall national strategies.

Other coordination mechanisms through which inputs of key stakeholders are achieved include participation in joint Youth activities, for example, the Biennial Youth Week festival.

There was general consensus among key stakeholders that the NYC/DYS' role should be that of coordination and not implementation and yet there is also general reluctance on the part of some stakeholders to provide programmatic information/ reports regularly to NYC/DYS unless they are beneficiaries of funding coordinated by NYC/DYS.

5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The objective for monitoring the National Youth Policy is to ensure compliance with the guidelines and framework of the policy. Evaluation is concerned with assessing the extent of the achievement of the set goals and targets. Monitoring and evaluation is to ensure successful implementation of the policy.

Monitoring and evaluation of this policy will be carried at national, regional and local levels. Baseline research will be carried out at the beginning of implementation and will be followed by subsequent studies which will collect disaggregated data on gender, location, socio-economic status as well as special circumstances of youth in order to assess progress in specific areas of the policy. Appropriate M&E tools will be developed for this endeavor and a data bank established to fill the hiatus in the lack of data.

5.5 Mechanism for Monitoring

The strategic plan will spell out in detail the monitoring approach to be used but they will include the following:

1. The policy will be reviewed periodically at least every two years in order to include all relevant changes within the sector.
2. A monitoring and evaluation log frame will be developed per action plan developed from a strategic plan.
3. Timeframe for Monitoring and Evaluation will be determined by the stakeholders.
4. Clearly define roles for the Monitoring and Evaluation team will be drawn up.
5. Regional youth committees in collaboration with the youth officers will evaluate at regional level.
6. Compiled reports of evaluation and monitoring exercises should be submitted to the Department of Youth and Sports and National Youth Council.
7. Monitoring and evaluation log frame will be created.
8. Two monitoring visit within an year should be encouraged.
9. Mid term evaluation of the policy and end of cycle evaluation is a must.

In cognizance of the current problems of coordination that the sector is going through, a new management structure is being proposed for the National Youth Council for effective service delivery. There are quite a number of institutions under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The majority of the institutions do not seem to have clear mandates or their mandates clash with another institution under the sector. As a result, issues of mandates and responsibilities are not clearly addressed, causing fragmentation and making it difficult for clients and partners alike to know who is in charge. This is probably one of the reasons the sector has not been attracting key partners and funding.

To organize the sector and get it to work especially in the area of clarifying roles and responsibilities a new management structure is being proposed. The structure as it is envisaged will ensure proper coordination of all youth activities in the country. The new structure will ensure that research is undertaken to inform policy, projects and programmes. It will also ensure that youths get trained and employed and the issues of all youth will be taken onboard but its main focus will be out of school youth.

For the new structure to be implemented, the current structure of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and its attendant institutions have to be reviewed to see what Acts and policies need to be revised to arrive at a better coordination of the youth sector.