



**Global  
Partnership**  
for Effective Development  
Co-operation

## Country brief

### Gambia

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## A. Country Context

The Gambia is a low-income country in West Africa with a GNI per capita of \$1557 in 2013<sup>1</sup> and an HDI of 0.441, ranking at 172 out of 187 countries in 2013<sup>2</sup>. The country has a population of 1,882,450<sup>3</sup> in 2013 and an economy based mainly on agriculture and tourism. Vision 2020, the Gambia's socio-economic development blue print for the period 1996-2020, is aimed at raising the standard of living of Gambians by transforming the country into a middle income country by the year 2020. The Vision has been translated into a Medium-Term Plan and the MDG-based Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment – PAGE

The Gambian economy grew by over 5% during 2010-2013. Following the severe drought the country has experienced in 2011, growth decelerated to -4.4%. The economy rebounded in 2012 and 2013, growth averaging about 5.3% mainly driven by the recovery of agriculture sector and strong service sector growth. In spite of the relatively high average economic growth over the last five years, poverty reduction efforts were stalled in particular in rural areas - above 70% of the population living below poverty levels. According to the 2010 Income household survey, over 36.7% of the total population lives under severe poverty at national level. The economic situation seem to have further deteriorated as shown in the preliminary findings of the latest light poverty study undertaken by the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) where close to 40.6 % of the population responded that their situation has worsened from a year ago<sup>4</sup>.

Recognizing the critical role that international cooperation plays in The Gambia's development, the Government is taking tremendous strides to establish a sound aid and donor coordination mechanism that will enhance mutual accountability, transparency, alignment and harmonization in the way aid resources are delivered and managed. In the spirit of enhancing partnership and coordination the Government of The Gambia is implementing a number of interventions. Among them is the development of the Aid Coordination Policy and Action Plan which was supported by UNDP; Public Private Partnership Policy; and the establishment of the Aid Coordination and Public Private Partnership Departments under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA).

The Gambia relies heavily on Official Development Assistance (ODA) to implement its five year national development Plan. Full implementation of the PAGE is expected to cost Dalasi 27.5 billion (about US\$651, million) for which 65% is expected to come from ODA. The first year of PAGE implementation shows that only 50% of the expected external resources for its implantation have been made available. However, there are indications that it improved slightly in 2013. The development cooperation landscape in The Gambia is a unique circumstance where by large amount of the development aid is coming from only few development partners. Furthermore, aid to The Gambia in 2012 is dominated by four largest partners; EC, UN, IFAD, World Bank, and Global Fund. The World Bank was the largest donor, with total disbursements in 2007-2012 period of over USD 128 million, accounting for 36% of all disbursements<sup>5</sup>.

The current development cooperation scene in The Gambia presents a unique challenges and opportunities. This country brief aims at presenting the most up-to-date information on development cooperation as well identify challenges and opportunities for The Gambia.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR2013\\_EN\\_Statistics.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR2013_EN_Statistics.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Light Poverty Study (2014)

<sup>5</sup> [Development Cooperation Report 2013](#)

## **B. Development cooperation and partnership framework**

In 2012, the Government of Gambia adopted the PAGE as the 5-year medium term plan to achieve its 2020 vision and as a framework for development cooperation and partnership. The plan aims to address the major challenges, and contribute to the achievement of the “Vision 2020” and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The implementation of PAGE revolves around five Pillars. These are i) Accelerating & Sustaining Growth; (ii) Improving and Modernizing Infrastructure; (iii) Improving Human Capital & Social Service; iv) improving Governance & Corruption and (v) Enhancing Social Cohesion & Cross cutting Interventions. Following its adoption the government has called partners to align to Government priorities and support the acceleration of PAGE implementation. The PAGE since its adoption remained the sole framework for development cooperation and partnership.

The PAGE 2012-2015, is costed at US\$ 651 million over a four year period, of which Government committed to generate about 35% of required investments, with an expectation of the remaining to be funded by its development partners and public private partnership initiatives. These figures indicate The Gambia’s heavy dependency on external aid resources to achieve its development and poverty reduction goals as articulated in Vision 2020 and PAGE strategic documents. Thus, the enhancement of development effectiveness and donor coordination in this context remains a very high priority of The Government of The Gambia (GoTG).

## **C. Progress in Effective Development Cooperation**

The Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation was established as a direct result of the Bussan Partnership agreement. The Gambia is among the many African countries that has provided full support to the Bussan Partnership agreement and the Global Partnership for Effective cooperation. Its strong support to the development cooperation and effectiveness agenda puts the country in the forefront of the global development forum.

In line with the Bussan agreement, the Government of The Gambia (GoTG) and development partners have made noticeable progress in development cooperation in The Gambia over the last few years. The result of which is demonstrated by the modest increase in the aid flows to the country after 2012. The government on its part has done tremendous effort to coordinate aid under the framework of the PAGE. It has established two critical Directorate, namely Aid Coordination Directorate (ACD) and Public Private Partnership Directorate under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MOFEA). ACD will regulate, coordinate, monitor and manage aid delivery into the country and to be a focal point for government-donor liaison of all aspects of aid<sup>6</sup> while the PPP unit will create effective partnership with the private sector.

Although ACD stands as a unique and single interface for the recipient government vis-à-vis development partners, on all matters of aid acquisition and delivery, Development Partners and the government have agreed on the needs for a Development Partners Group (DPG) to interface and coordinate among themselves. It is envisaged that the regular and efficient functioning of the DPG will improve the effectiveness development support of partners in The Gambia. DPs have responded positively to the Government calls and alignment of agenda at the end of the national sectoral donor coordination consultation forum that took place in February 2014 with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Subsequently, DPs have re-established the DPG; and will reactivate Thematic Working Groups (TWGs) to promote the development agenda at the sector and thematic level.

In June 2014, the DPG was re-established to build a coordinated Development Partner (DP) response to foster and catalyze policy dialogue; and to coordinate and harmonise donor support in

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<sup>6</sup> This department was created in 2010.

the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of the Government's overarching framework-PAGE. The formalization of the DPG will move DPs towards increasingly close collaboration and improved internal coherence. This is essential for The Gambia where the DPG is small and some of the major partners are non-resident.

Furthermore, the Government and the DPs have reached an agreement to reconstitute the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). The DCF is the key structure for enabling mutual accountability and better policy dialogue between government and partners. The DCF builds on the existing forum by formalizing it. It is a biannual/annual forum led by the MoFEA at Ministerial level and co-chaired with DPG. The ACD of MoFEA is the Secretariat to the DCA. The dialogue between the government and the partners will be guided by evidence. In this regard, UNDP is supporting the MoFEA to strengthen its aid management system in 2014/15.

Despite the significant progress in the past future gains in development cooperation depends on continuous dialogue and engagement by both donors and GoTG. For instance, although there has been dialogue between the GoTG and partners, for large part it is irregular, ad-hoc and not systematic. The last Development Cooperation Report in 2012 highlighted a number of issues that require substantive discussions between the GoTG and the partners. Among others the following were noted: inadequate information on key aid/development effectiveness indicates limited capacity to coordinate aid, and insufficient alignment and harmonisation among various development interventions. In particular, government and donors must direct substantial efforts to improve ownership, alignment of aid with national priorities, aid predictability, results-oriented frameworks and mutual accountability.

One of the major reasons of poor performance in respect of Paris Declaration indicators in The Gambia has been the absence of well-defined mutual accountability framework, which would allow to closely and timely monitor results intended to have been produced by external aid flows. Such a framework shall specify responsibilities and obligations of both Gambian authorities and its development partners in the process of channelling and delivering aid.

Over the past years alignment of development partners programs and projects were reported to have been inadequate: only 33 % of external aid flows have been assessed as aligned to national priorities (DCR 2012). There seem to be no procedures or methods to measure and influence alignment by the Government, other than consultations on the development partners' assistance strategies at the onset.

The GOTG recognizes that further improvement of the PAGE in terms of better prioritization is necessary. In view of limited resources available for financing the PAGE, the current broad coverage of the country's needs in the PAGE weakens the focus of development partners to high impact programs thus making the PAGE vulnerable to unpredictable resources flows. In this regards, the government has initiated in July 2014 mid-term review of the PAGE which is supported by the UNDP.

In addition, predictability of aid is highly limited even in the medium-term perspective. In most cases, projects and programs are of one-year duration, and their budgets as well as disbursement schedules are made known to the government only during the final phases of their approval. Ongoing and ad-hoc resource mobilization for PAGE, is one example of unpredictable aid flows to The Gambia. Unpredictability weakens the government's capacity to plan its development budget by making almost impossible any linkage of international aid packages with domestic resource expenditure frameworks.

#### **D. Development Effectiveness Agenda**

The Government is aware of the many challenges it faces to achieve its development goals. Although a measurable progress has been made, much remains to be done to improve. Key among these are:

- (a) effectiveness of the aid utilized in the GOTG ministries and agencies, Non-State Actors (NSAs) and private sector implementing the development programs and projects;
- (b) practices of the development partners who need to harmonize their assistance and procedures to minimize burden on the limited capacities of implementing ministries and agencies; and
- (c) jointly work towards a greater transparency in the utilization of resources that are reported to have been disbursed to The Gambia.

Nevertheless, the enactment of the Gambia Aid Policy (GAP) will provide the institutional, regulatory, operational, and accountability framework for sourcing and managing external aid resources, especially grants and loans, that qualify as Official Development Assistance (ODA). More specifically, the policy will provide a framework for:

- (i) putting in place a more strategic, coherent, and better coordinated development assistance institutional framework to achieve higher absorptive capacity;
- (ii) strengthening collaboration between The Gambia's development partners and national stakeholders for results driven management of development assistance;
- (iii) enhancing transparency in development assistance operations through implementation of the AIMS;
- (iv) enhancing accountability both ways, between The Gambia and its international development partners.

The GOTG is committed to take the leadership in currently established discussion forum between DPs on one hand and the GOTG on the other hand, with the purpose to strengthen and drive dialogue that is better focused on priority needs. Key outputs anticipated from the work of the DPG and DCF are: review of the progress in programs and projects implemented by external support; enhance aid effectiveness through increased predictability and alignment to country priorities; identify gaps in funding and committing on allocations where and when possible; and proposing adjustments to allocations and implementation as required.

The formalization of the DPG and the DCF specially, will boost the partnership between the government and partners to higher level towards increased mutual cooperation and quality dialogue. The establishment of the DCF will ensure external resources contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction in line with the national development frameworks.

Information on aid flows provided by donors and implementing partners – national and international alike - is not regular and in general does not contain all the data necessary for meaningful analysis and monitoring of implementation progress. This irregularity and/or lack of relevant information reduces transparency and accountability, acting as an impediment to informed decision making and to the planning of development activities at large.

A proper and informed management of external aid requires tools and systems to record information necessary for decision making and reporting. Such a system was not established in The Gambia, unlike many other developing countries, including majority of African Nations. Nonetheless, discussion around Aid Management System (AMS) and its implementation are taking place on a high level.

A well designed, established and operational AMS will address many of the challenges and issues described above. AMS will inform largely the development of any document on development effectiveness. As well, an AIMS with properly defined and implemented functionality will play a



critical role in consolidation of information on domestic and external resources for the budget and medium-term expenditure planning purposes. Moreover, accurate and credible information reported on AMS can inform further adjustment of the AID Policy.

Government is committed to reforms to increase its revenue base and volume, ensure macro-economic stability and steady growth of at least 11% by the end of 2015 in order to increase the level of gross domestic investments. However for such a growth and change to attain, substantial external resources are required to complement currently limited domestic resources. Those resources play a critical role of supporting policies and programs to enhance economic development.

## **E. The Global Partnership and its contribution to the development effectiveness agenda at country level**

The Global Partnership has played an important role for the development effectiveness agenda in The Gambia. This was demonstrated in the effort The Government of The Gambia has done towards honouring its commitment for the MDGs. To this effect, it has been recognized as a champion for global partnership during the voluntary presentation that The Gambia has delivered at the ECOSOC, high-level segments in New York in July 2014 to report on the progress towards the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Global Partnership has a huge potential to contribute towards development effectiveness and cooperation like other international agreements such as the Paris Declaration, if it has a mechanism to instil real positive change among all parties at national level. For instance, the GAP is inspired by international best practices enunciated in the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development (2002), the Rome (2003) and Paris (2005) Declarations on Aid Effectiveness, Accra Agenda of Action (2008) and in the spirit of the Busan Outcome Document (2011). The GAP brings together the institutional, regulatory, operational, and accountability tools for sourcing and managing external aid resources, especially grants and loans, that qualify as ODA.

In The Gambia, the main contribution of the Busan Partnership and the ensuing Global partnership will be to push for increased inclusiveness in development cooperation and effective partnership. While effective partnerships take time to build, there has to be an international partnership mechanism which will ensure the existence of continuous engagement on key development challenges. This will help to redress the practical hurdles that could be faced at political level.

While there is a considerable activity of the Global Partnership at the international level, the processes at national level to follow through the agreements are not adequately clear. There has to be an advocacy about the development cooperation effectiveness and reminders on the international commitments that have to be implemented at the national level.

Finally, The Gambia expects that the Global Partnership to continue to be the plat form for effective dialogue. This is particularly important as all countries across the globe are coming up with a new framework that will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The negotiations on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) are now at their final stage. The Global Partnership could play a major role in upholding and enhancing the momentum gained during MDGs to sustain the gains beyond 2015. It should take a leading role in shaping the international debate on localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda and forging effective cooperation around it. In this regards, while The Gambia has done an excellent job in undertaking the first phase of consultations in 2013 to identify the potential issues and areas to be included in a post-2015 development agenda, the means of implementation and the institutional arrangement are now becoming more relevant. The Global Partnership could play a major role through knowledge sharing, advocacy for effective partnership among all parties following the endorsement of the SDGs.

## F. Conclusions and recommendations

Gambia depends on aid from international partners for its effective development. It is committed and taking big steps towards implementing an effective development cooperation scheme. Nonetheless, this scheme is ad hoc and not yet well founded.

The changing development cooperation landscape has increased the challenges to The Gambia as the development cooperation resources have become scarce. Even so, the country has the opportunity to strengthen the development framework if the following recommendations are considered:

1. The National Aid Policy and Action Plan should be adopted and implemented. The Government of The Gambia should apply the recommendations and guidelines highlighted on the aid policy and strategic activities enumerated in the action plan. A sound and realistic aid policy consistent with the Government's development policies is recognized to be one of the key instruments to drive processes, targeted to improved aid coordination and development effectiveness. Success in the implementation of the provisions of the policy will depend on the commitments of both the government and the development partners to the coordination, harmonization, and alignment efforts. The government should commit itself to the responsibility of assuming a leadership role in the implementation of this policy.
2. While it is increasingly important that information shared through various documents, events, missions, and on line debates, it is paramount importance to put in place a mechanism for follow up on global partnership agreements. This should be complemented with effective capacity development to the national partners. In the case of The Gambia strengthening the coordination mechanism Post-Busan at the national level is vital.
3. Development partners and Government should focus on mobilizing adequate resources for PAGE.
4. The government should implement an AMS that reduces transaction cost and increments development effectively. An effective AMS will allow government and partners to get reliable data for decision making and advocacy. Development partners should improve their compliance in terms of data reporting and accountability.
5. The coordination mechanisms such as DPG, and DFC should become institutionalized in order to strengthen quality of policy dialogue on different levels. In addition, other TWGs should become active and functional.
6. The government and development partners should endeavor to direct investment towards the growth and productive sectors of the economy to enhance job creation. This can only be achieved if there is ongoing active dialogue on critical development challenges.
7. There is need to build capacity to strengthen governance institutions in The Gambia to strengthen and consolidate the existing democratization and rule of law in the country. This will reinvigorate and nurture the democratic spirit, whilst strengthening respect and confidence in the rule of law and encouraging citizen's engagement in the governance of the country. A vibrant democratic system backed by respect for the rule of law can lead to greater ODA and private foreign/domestic investments for an accelerated implementation of the PAGE.
8. The Gambia should continue its reforms and programmes for institutional development and capacity strengthening. On the other hand, donors need to help build the capacity of key government agencies and departments and further engage in increased alignment and harmonization of activities for the Gambia to achieve the Bussan indicators.

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