

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY – 2015

This National Climate Change Policy is developed at a time of accelerating global climate risks, which combine with other international and national stressors to create a challenging developmental context. Climate change effects are evident in The Gambia, including increasing average temperatures and a rainfall regime that is decreasing in amount while increasing in variability. These changes affect the wellbeing of Gambians and the economy: increased flooding damages roads and infrastructure, decreased agricultural production reduces food security, and increasing heat and dryness threaten people's health. These impacts multiply the stresses associated with high levels of poverty and a fluctuating economy.

The Gambia has responded to the emerging climate threats, albeit largely through project-driven responses, given resource constraints, and within a fragmented policy context. There is inadequate consideration of climate change in sector policies, while skills and capacity levels to mainstream and decentralise the climate change response are insufficient.

It is therefore clear that an overarching policy framework is needed to steer the transition to a climate-resilient society, within a thriving low-emissions economy. That is the intention behind this Policy, which provides the framework for managing climate risks, building institutions and capacities, and identifying new opportunities for climate-resilient sustainable development in The Gambia. The National Climate Change Policy is grounded in the country's national development and poverty reduction frameworks, including the Government of The Gambia's Vision 2020 and the 2012-2015 Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE). It sets out comprehensive and crosscutting policy directions to implement national development strategies in a climate-resilient manner, drawing on all sectors of the population in a spirit of partnership and collaboration.

The Policy sets in place enhanced institutional arrangements for coordination and mainstreaming, outlines a new integrated approach to resource mobilisation, and develops a clear policy direction for human resource development. It focuses attention on policy priorities in four key thematic clusters, and emphasises the links between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Lastly, it outlines the approach to be followed to develop the implementation framework for the Policy, through the subsequent National Climate Change Response Strategy and Action Plan.

Policy framework: vision, principles and goal

The National Climate Change Policy represents The Gambia's determined and systematic response to the interlinked climate threats to sustainable development, wellbeing and ecological integrity set out in the preceding sections.

Accordingly, the Policy defines the following long-term vision for The Gambia:

Achieve a climate-resilient society, through systems and strategies that mainstream climate change, disaster risk reduction, gender and environmental management, for sustainable social, political and economic development.

The vision suggests that an effective Gambian climate change response requires economic, social and environmental interventions that integrate mitigation and adaptation elements within a developmental framework. This is the meaning of climate-resilient development, in the Gambian context.

Principles

The Gambia's response to climate change is guided by eleven principles, which are consistent with the existing national policy framework, aligned to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and have been informed by relevant international best practice.

- i. *Equity and social inclusion*: striving for a balance and fairness for all stakeholders, taking into account the need to address disproportionate vulnerabilities, capabilities, responsibilities and disparities, in a way that promotes social cohesion.
- ii. *Inter-generational equity*: responding to climate change for the benefit of the present and future generations of Gambians.
- iii. *Cooperation*: promoting a supportive and enabling system for participation and ownership by all stakeholders.
- iv. *Precautionary and preventive*: minimizing the known causes of climate change and offsetting predicted impacts through risk-averse approaches.
- v. *Polluter pays*: those responsible for emitting pollutants that affect the climate system should pay the costs for remedying such pollution and supporting consequent adaptive responses.
- vi. *Sustainable development*: recognizing the developmental needs of The Gambia and encouraging sustainable growth that does not adversely affect the environment.
- vii. *Environmental justice*: addressing social inequalities, particularly relating to gender, age, infirmity and socioeconomic status, which would be aggravated by climate change, and enabling access to justice for all.
- viii. *Informed participation*: enabling stakeholder participation in decision-making and enhanced action at all levels, through capacity building and enhanced communication of climate change impacts and responses.
- ix. *Evidence-based*: climate change responses should be guided by proactive planning that is based on credible scientific information.
- x. *Innovation*: research and technology for innovative and effective responses will be prioritised.
- xi. *Duty to maintain a decent environment*: emphasizing the inter-linkage between environmental integrity and climate resilience

These guiding principles inform this National Climate Change Policy, which underpins the country's overarching legal framework for responding to climate change. The principles should thus be taken into consideration in any future sectoral policy review processes.

Goal

The goal of the Policy is, by 2025, to achieve the mainstreaming of climate change into national planning, budgeting, decision-making, and programme implementation, through effective institutional mechanisms, coordinated financial resources, and enhanced human resources capacity.

Strategic Focus Areas:

Four strategic and integrated focus areas for priority policy intervention are identified in Climate Change Policy:

1. **Climate resilient food and landscapes:** Agriculture, food security, forestry and natural resources, including water, biodiversity and wildlife
2. **Low emissions and resilient economy:** Energy, transport, infrastructure, and the key economic sectors of tourism and financial services
3. **Climate resilient people:** Health, education, equitable social development, and human settlements
4. **Managing our coasts in a changing environment:** climate-aware Integrated Coastal Zone Management

1. Climate resilient food and landscapes:

Agriculture Sector

- Reliable private sector-managed seed production program producing seeds that are affordable for small farmers, and create adequate credit facilities to improve access to essential inputs
- Improve soil fertility, soil conservation and water management through farmer education, investments in low-input structures, agroforestry initiatives and incentives to national grower associations and community producer associations
- Promote the use of solar energy based irrigation and pumping systems in small scale and subsistence farming
- *Reduce dependence on groundnuts by encouraging agricultural diversification*, through horticulture, cashew nut production and livestock rearing.
- Select and promote crop varieties with short duration of maturity, and improved and stable yields with tolerance to stresses such as drought, pests, diseases and soil toxicities;
- Emphasize on-farm research as the most effective form of research because it leverages off farmer participation;
- Promoting access to community markets by improving climate resilience of infrastructure and transport through the rehabilitation and development of critical road and transport infrastructure;
- Establishing food processing and preservation plants close to communities and markets;

- Improving long-term planning and management through development of national and sub-national land use policies and plans for crop and livestock production; management of agro-pastoral infrastructure and control of transhumances; enrichment and management of rangelands and appropriate farm mechanization and establishing irrigation schemes.
- Support Academic Institutions (climate change related research grants) to carry out research in climate change and agriculture

Forestry

- Implementation of strategies for reducing the demand for firewood including improved fuel-efficient cook stoves and alternative fuels and techniques for cooking,
- Implementation of the ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) approach with a well-managed forestation and reforestation programme (including mangrove habitats) to reduce soil degradation, erosion risks and enhancement of CO₂ sinks;
- Study on improving value chain for community-based forest products enterprise
- Study on forest product consumption nationwide and trans boundary trade on forest products

Water Sector

- Increase adaptive capacity to lessen the projected change in river salinity regime due to climate change, through implementation of a Flow Regulation system;
- (Increase adaptive capacity to lessen the projected drop in the underground water column due to constrained groundwater recharge by climate change, through a cross-sector development strategy associated with a River Basin Management Plan (would require study),
- Develop small-scale rainfall capture and water storage through rainfall harvesting infrastructures (with maintenance and management plans) at community level,
- Engaging the private media and GSM companies in disseminating weather and climate messages
- Integration of climate change education into the national curriculum (Basic and higher education)
- Train National Climate Committee on economics of adaptation
- Meteorological Agency can be supported if there are capacity gaps (Training of new meteorologists)

Wildlife:

- Sustainable commercial and non-commercial use of forest resources ;(Sustainable livelihood for protected area dependent communities)

- Monitoring the response of species and critical habitats (mangroves) to climate change
- Restoration of mangroves wetlands in

Strengthening Institutional arrangements (strategic Direction):

- Designing of a strategy framework and action plan for the implementation of the national Climate change policy
- Designing of a Climate change Communication, training, and sensitization strategy at national level
- Supporting the newly created Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) at the Ministry of Environment (office equipment, Capacity building).
- Supporting the Secretariat at the Ministry of Environment will require equipment to support the start-up (limitation of \$20,000)

2. Low-emissions and resilient economy

Low emissions and resilient economy: Energy, transport, infrastructure, and the key economic sectors of tourism and financial services

Energy sector priority adaptation actions:

- enhancing reliability of fuel wood supply chain through renewable biomass production and improved forest management;
- energy-conservation through higher efficiency technologies and improved architectural design of new buildings;
- Develop a comprehensive low emission, carbon resilient development strategy
- Feasibility Study for NAMA intervention sites

Improve the urban and peri-urban infrastructure of the Gambia so that it is climate resilient, including

- developing and applying infrastructure construction and management codes/guidelines under climate change
- Construct climate resilient road infrastructure and drainage systems in major growth centers
- Sustainable waste management (Develop Waste management Strategy for Regions)

3. Climate-resilient people

Climate resilient people comprises the inter-linked sectors of health, education, equitable social development, and human settlements.

Measures to reduce climate change-related disease burden: control strategies are required for water and vector-borne diseases that factor in climate projections. A disease epidemic early warning system (EWS), involving health, meteorology and hydrology departments, will be an efficient means to cope with climate-related diseases in The Gambia. The system will include:

- surveillance at designated sites,
- monitoring anomalies on climate factors at epidemic-prone areas and
- Disclosing information for early warning and detection.

Climate Change Education is critical to foster understanding of the complexities and interconnections of the various challenges posed by climate change, and can significantly contribute to disaster risk reduction efforts in the sense that it prepares trainees to face natural hazards. *Climate change training programme*, with the following main objectives:

- I. Promote learning about the causes and effects of climate change as well as possible responses to climate change effects;
- II. Develop competences in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation, with the aim to promote climate-resilient development and reduce the vulnerability of communities in the face of an uncertain future; and
- III. Develop understanding of the links between consumption patterns and climate change in order to mobilize responsible actions contributing to reduced greenhouse gas emissions through more sustainable lifestyles.

Climate-resilient and sustainable human settlements should be pursued through promoting:

- participatory planning, management and governance;
- Pro-poor land and housing;
- Environmentally sound basic infrastructure and services.

4. Managing our coasts under a changing climate

Managing our coasts under a changing climate comprises the cross-sectoral area of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

Adaptation and mitigation strategic priorities¹

- *Clarify overlapping mandates* in the coastal zone through interdepartmental policy dialogue at a senior management level, and enact ICZM legislation to reduce conflict and enhance stakeholder co-operation in coastal areas.

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- *Update spatial plans* to reflect current conditions, risks and priorities, and to incorporate climate-resilient zoning into coastal land-use; revise standards for construction and set-back distances for coastal infrastructure.
- *Enhance institutional capacity* at all levels to respond to climate change threats in coastal areas, including through support from elected members to fund an action plan focused on coastal adaptation and capacity building.
- *Develop research and education capabilities for building national capacity in ICZM* and assessing the impacts of climate change on coastal areas, including through an operational faculty for coastal zone management at University of The Gambia, and an operational national advisory committee on ICZM research and coastal adaptation to climate change.
- *Improve ability of government departments to effectively mobilize financial resources* for implementation of their programmes, through programme management knowledge, attitudes and practices that meet GOTG financial standards
- *Enhance availability of credit and insurance facilities in coastal and inland communities to support disaster recovery*, through an operational framework for disaster risk financing and insurance.
- *Develop understanding of climate change impacts on the coastal zone and appropriate responses*, through awareness raising of coastal populations on threats and risks to livelihoods and resources, and by developing capacity to respond to impacts of climate change in coastal communities.
- *Increase capacity to use information & communication technology (ICT)* to ensure effective stakeholder dialogue for ICZM programme implementation
- *Enhance monitoring data* that is available for assessment of changes in coastal habitats and processes, maintain and analyse database to track changes in coastal areas.
- *Build readiness to address the impacts of climate change on weather patterns*, through improved management of rainfall run-off in densely populated areas, and prepare shelter and care locations for emergency situations.

Institutional Arrangements

With regards to the future institutional arrangements proposed in the recently validated National Climate Change Policy (2016), there is a proposal to have Gambian Ministerial Council on Climate Change (GMCCC) whose members will comprise of the Honorable Ministers of Environment and Climate Change, Energy, Local Government, Agriculture, Health, Forestry and Finance, and their role will mainly revolve around overseeing the successful implementation of the National Climate Change Policy.

There will also be an inter-ministerial committee on climate change, whose members will be the Permanent Secretaries, and Directors of the line ministries represented at the GMCCC, and their role would be to assist the GMCCC in carrying out its functions.

In addition to the above, a formal network of climate change focal points, located within the departments of each sectoral ministry, has already been created. These focal points are responsible for ensuring that climate change considerations are taken into account in the implementation of existing sectoral policies, and in the development of new ones.

Civil societies, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), and the private sector will also play a key role towards our climate change objectives, mainly in the areas of implementation and monitoring of integrated responses. Government intends to continue to forge and maintain effective partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, and Civil Societies to ensure that their capacity is harnessed in driving the transition to a climate-resilient, equitable and internationally competitive, lower-carbon economy and society.