



UNCCD

National Action Programme To Combat Desertification (NAP)

The Gambia

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

The Government of The Gambia

November 2000



FOREWORD

Preface

The Second National Forum adopted the “National Action Programme to Combat Desertification in The Gambia” in Banjul on the 27th of September 2000. Preparation of the National Action Programme (NAP) was coordinated by the Forestry Department, the Focal Point for implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in The Gambia (UNCCD).

Formulation of the NAP was the result of a broad, consultative process, involving central government and its line agencies, local government institutions, Non Governmental Organisations and, most importantly, communities all over the country whose perceptions, views and proposal were gathered in zonal and divisional meetings, numerous interviews and statements. At the First National Forum held in November 1998, five thematic areas were identified for in-depth consideration in the NAP. These included: Forestry and Wildlife Management; Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation; Livestock Production and Range Management; Population and Social Dimensions of Desertification; and Institutional Arrangements. Five separate sectoral studies were prepared by international and national consultants, identifying the key issues for each sector, progress made in the fight against desertification, and areas requiring immediate and medium-term action. Based on this analysis, the Second National Forum was held, and the final National Action Programme adopted.

Technical and financial support was extended by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, through the Deutsche Forstservice (DFS) GmbH, the United Nations Sahelian Office (UNSO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Secretariat of the UNCCD, and the Permanent Inter-State Committee to Combat Drought in The Sahel (CILSS).

The Gambia is, a small and poor country, but, nevertheless, has made substantial progress in key areas of relevance to The Convention. Headway has been made in The Gambia in reversing the trend of deforestation, and the future looks promising in these areas indeed. In fact, elements of the Gambia Forestry Management Concept are being taken-up in the Sub-Region and beyond.

The National Action Programme is structured with a brief introduction and presentation of background information on The Gambia in Sections 1 and 2. These sections set the stage for the discussion of the impact of desertification in The Gambia in Section 3. Section 4 covers the NAP preparation process and provides a synopsis of analysis provided by the five sectoral studies commissioned during the NAP preparation. Finally, the National Action Programme is detailed in Section 5, including guiding principles, priority measures, institutional and financial arrangements, and monitoring and evaluation of the NAP. A brief summary of the Second National Forum with key conclusions and recommendations follows. In Appendix A, a matrix summarises the key strategic areas requiring priority action. A full investment programme will follow in early 2001.

On behalf of the Government of The Gambia, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the numerous NAP contributors, namely, the Desertification Core Group, the Task Force on Desertification, the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Working Group, representatives from technical line agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), national and international consultants, donors, and above all, the invaluable input from the communities.

The Action Programme is by no means an end in and of itself, but a call for action. Success or failure will have to be gauged against perceivable and tangible improvements in the livelihood of Gambian communities. Hence, there is no "final version" of the Action Programme. NAP is a process, which involves continuous correction, revision and refinement.

All institutions, the international community and, above all, the Gambian public are encouraged to further contribute to the process through their critical participation.

Jato Sillah, MSc.
Director of Forestry
UNCCD National Focal Point

Foreword

Preface

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iii
List of Figures	iii
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	iv

Summary and Conclusions from the Second National Forum.....	viii
--	-------------

National Action Programme to Combat Desertification

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Country Profile.....	3
2.1	Physical Context.....	3
2.2	Socio-economic Context.....	5
3.	Present Situation	7
3.1	The Problem: Desertification in The Gambia - Causes and Consequences.....	7
3.2	Evolution of Desertification Concerns.....	11
3.3	The Institutional and Legal Setting	15
3.4	Progress to Date.....	21
4.	The NAP Process	24
4.1	Steps Undertaken in Implementing UNCCD to Date.....	24
4.2	Conclusions from the Sectoral Studies.....	26
4.2.1	Sector Study on Forest and Wildlife Management.....	27
4.2.2	Sector Study Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation	33
4.2.3	Sector Study on Livestock Production and Range Management.....	37
4.2.4	Sector Study on Population and Social Dimensions of Desertification	39
4.2.5	Sectoral Study on Institutional Framework	44

5.	The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification in The Gambia	49
5.1	Development Goal.....	49
5.2	Guiding Principles.....	50
5.3	Implementation Approach.....	51
5.4	Ranking of Components.....	52
5.4.1	Initiatives Identified in the Consultative Process.....	52
5.4.2	Setting of Priorities.....	52
5.5	Proposals for Action	53
5.5.1	Priority Measures.....	53
5.5.2	Information and Public Awareness	56
5.5.3	Support of On-going Activities	56
5.6	Institutional Arrangements.....	57
5.6.1	Focal Point.....	57
5.6.2	Consultations at the National Level	57
5.6.3	Implementation at the Divisional Level	58
5.7	Financial Arrangements.....	58
5.7.1	National Desertification Trust Fund.....	58
5.7.2	Revenue Retention Schemes	62
5.7.3	International Funding Lines.....	62
5.8	Monitoring and Evaluation.....	64

List of Tables

Table 1	Development of Forest Cover from 1946 to 1993	9
Table 2	Land Use Change in The Gambia (1980 – 1993)	10
Table 3	Implementation of UNCCD in The Gambia – Timetable of Key Events	21
Table 4	Summary of Consultations Forestry / Wildlife	28
Table 5	Gender Comparison of Socio-Economic Indicators	41
Table 6	Outline of National Trust Fund in Support of Local Initiatives to Preserve the Environment in The Gambia	55

List of Figures

Figure 1	Map: Administrative Divisions of The Gambia	4
Figure 2	Map: Land Suitability for Upland Agriculture	12
Figure 3	Map: Upland Agricultural Production and Land Reserve	13
Figure 4	Map: Forest Cover of The Gambia as of 1993	30
Figure 5	Proposed Institutional Framework for NAP Implementation	48

Appendices

Appendix A:	Summary Matrix of Priority Measures	66
-------------	-------------------------------------	----

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AATG	Action Aid The Gambia
AC	Area Council
AfDB	African Development Bank
AFET	Association of Farmers, Educators and Traders
ANR	Agriculture and Natural Resources
ASP	Agriculture Services Project
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CF	Community Forestry
CILSS	Comite Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Secheresse dans le Sahel
COP	Conference of Parties (to UNCCD)
CPR	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
CRD	Central River Division
CRDFP	Central River Division Forestry Project
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSDTC	Chamen Self Development and Training Centre
CYSARDA	Child Youth Support and Rural Development Agency
Dal.	Gambian Dalasis
DAS	Department of Agricultural Services
DCC	Divisional Coordinating Committee
DCD	Department of Community Development
DDC	District Desertification Committee
DDF	Divisional Development Fund
DDS	Divisional Desertification Secretariat
DFS	Deutsche Forstservice GmbH
DLGL	Department of Local Government and Lands
DLS	Department of Livestock Services
DOSA	Department of State for Agriculture
DPWM	Department of Parks and Wildlife Management
DSFEA	Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs
DSLGL	Department of State for Local Government and Lands
DSTIE	Department of State for Trade, Industry and Employment
DWR	Department of Water Resources
EC	European Commission
ECU	Euro (Currency of the European Union)
EDF	European Development Fund
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIS	Environmental Information System
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FD	Forestry Department
FFHC	Freedom From Hunger Campaign

FORUT	Campaign for Development and Solidarity
FP	Focal Point
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GAM	The Gambia
GARDA	Gambian Rural Development Agency
GBA	Greater Banjul Area
GDI	Gender Related Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAP	Gambia Environmental Action Plan
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
GFMC	Gambian Forest Management Concept
GGFP	Gambian-German Forestry Project
GGFPP	Gambian German Family Planning Project
GM	Global Mechanism
GNP	Gross National Product
GOTG	Government of The Gambia
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)
ha	hectare
IEC	Information, Education, Communication
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ISCD	Inter-Sectoral Committee on Desertification
ISRA	Islamic Relief Association
ITC	International Trypanotolerance Centre
IUCN	World Conservation Union
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Agency for Financial Cooperation)
km ²	square kilometre
KWNP	Kiang West National Park
LADEP	Lowlands Agricultural Development Programme
LGA	Local Government Area
LRD	Lower River Division
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
Mm	millimetre
MDFT	Multi-Disciplinary Facilitation Team
MSc	Master's of Science
NAP	National Action Programme to Combat Desertification
NBD	North Bank Division
NEA	National Environment Agency
NEAP	National Environment Action Plan
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
NEMC	National Environment Management Council
NFAP	National Forestry Action Plan
NFF	National Forest Fund
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPAP	National Poverty Alleviation Programme
NPP(SD)	National Population Policy (for Socio-economic Development)

NRM	Natural Resource Management
NWRC	National Water Resources Council
PO	Programme Officer
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Support Programme
PSD	Programme for Sustained Development
SDRD	Support to Decentralised Rural Development Project
SWMU	Soil and Water Management Unit
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
T&V	Training & Visit Extension
TANGO	The Organisation of Non Governmental Organisations
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCOD	United Nations Conference on Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNSO	United Nations Sahel Office
URD	Upper River Division
URDFP	Upper River Division Forestry Project
US	United States of America
VDC	Village Development Committee
VEW	Village Extension Worker
WB	World Bank
WC	Ward Committee
WD	Western Division
WDC	Ward Development Committee
WISDOM	Women In Services, Development, Organisation and Management
WWF	World-wide Fund for Nature

Summary and Conclusions of the Second National Forum

The Second National Forum, held from the 26th to 27th of September 2000, agreed to adopt the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification in The Gambia.

The Process

The Forum noted that, to date, more than 165 countries and institutions are Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). This means in essence that The Gambia, although a small country in terms of area and population, does not stand alone in its efforts but is a member of a growing international movement to arrest the menace of land degradation, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Forum expressed appreciation to all parties that have contributed to the process. In particular at the national level, The Government of The Gambia (GOTG), the farmers, special interest groups, and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) who made their knowledge and insights readily available. For their financial and technical support, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, through the Deutsche Forstservice (DFS) GmbH, played a key role as did the United Nations Sahelian Office (UNSO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Secretariat of the UNCCD, and the Permanent Inter-State Committee to Combat Drought in The Sahel (CILSS).

The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (NAP) was developed through a participatory process. The Gambia signed UNCCD in 1994 and subsequently ratified the Convention in January 1996. As a first step, the Agriculture and Natural Resources Working Group set up a specific Desertification Task Force to guide the process. A series of sixteen zonal level meetings were held all over the country in order to hear the views of the communities, their immediate needs, and their proposals for action. These zonal meetings were followed by consultations at the divisional level and then by the First National Forum in November 1998. The National Forum entrusted the Focal Point/Forestry Department (FD), to commission further investigations into five issues of immediate priority: Sectoral Studies for Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation, Livestock and Range Management, Forestry and Wildlife Management, Population and Social Dimensions as well as Institutional Arrangements.

It is against this background that the National Action Programme was established. The next steps in the NAP process include:

- Dissemination of information about the National Action Programme and sensitisation of all stakeholders to the process;

- Integration of the principles to combat desertification as overarching and cross-cutting themes in planning and management of natural resources;
- Implementation of priority measures;
- Continued national and international support to the process of arresting desertification in The Gambia and the sub-region as a whole; and,
- Continuous review and updating of the Action Programme.

Causes of Desertification and Main Problems

Zonal and divisional consultations, NAP commissioned sectoral studies, as well as previous studies clearly spell out that a multitude of causes and problems contribute to the process of desertification in The Gambia. In all consultations, communities have made three clear statements:

- Desertification has become a felt and visible problem threatening the production-base and livelihood of the Gambian population.
- It is perceived that “degradation of the land-based resources” is at the core of the problem, which includes decreasing vegetation cover, bush fires, encroachment on the remaining forests, declining soil fertility, and over-exploitation of the rangelands.
- Rapid population growth and its related pressure on arable and non-arable lands are seen as major causes of desertification and, at the same time, a hindrance to remedial initiatives.

There is a general understanding that problems are most severe in the semi-arid, Sudano-Sahelian zone of the country, which constitutes about 75% of the total land area, especially on the North Bank of the River Gambia. Satellite images of The Gambia clearly indicate that the desertification is at the doorstep – in fact, in the North Bank of the River Gambia, it has already taken its toll on the resource base (see report cover photo).

The Gambia has made considerable progress in addressing the causes of desertification. In many areas, the country has developed efficient tools to manage its fragile resource base.

The Department of Forestry has been in the forefront with providing a legal base for protecting the remaining forests through community participation. The introduction of community forestry and the joint management concept for state forests is widely considered a success story, as it enjoys overwhelming local support and wide international recognition. Significant progress has been made in reversing the trend of deforestation, and measurable improvements have been observed in areas under community forestry

agreements. In fact, in the longest running community forests, no or fewer bush fires and regulated use of forests products, has allowed considerable re-growth of the forest, and even for a closed canopy to return.

The Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP) has greatly contributed to institutional strengthening and the provision of effective coordination mechanisms.

The National Environment Agency (NEA) has developed detailed procedures, guidelines and regulations for conducting Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which are being applied at an increasing rate.

The Gambia has launched a major initiative to create awareness for population issues, notably family planning with a view to improve the well-being of families, women, and children. This initiative is an important step to address the underlying cause of rapid population growth.

Soil and water conservation measures have been successfully introduced and the Soil and Water Management Unit (SWMU) has built up capacity to disseminate simple and effective technologies at the national level. The measures are currently being applied nation-wide under the umbrella of the Lowlands Agricultural Development Project (LADEP).

Providing an environment conducive to community participation is of major concern to the sustainable management of natural resources. To date, decentralisation and devolution of power to Local Government Authorities ranks high on the national agenda. Local Government elections are scheduled for the near future.

However, these achievements are far from coping adequately with the increasing task of safeguarding the natural resource base. Reviewing the results of the sectoral studies, the Forum noted that despite considerable efforts there is a growing need to intensify participatory trials and research in conservation farming, agro-forestry, and rangeland management with a view to identifying solutions and approaches that would allow for larger-scale implementation. The Forum further noted that involvement of the private sector is almost completely lacking and that grassroots participation, to date, has been sorely lacking.

It is against this background that the Forum recommended a three-pronged approach to implement the NAP, based on priorities:

- **Continuation of capacity building with communities and stakeholders:** Dissemination of the NAP process has been insufficient to date and there is a need to strengthen capacities at all levels.
- **Intensification of pilot programmes related to land management in upland areas:** There is an urgent need to identify larger-scale interventions in the priority

areas of conservation farming, agro-forestry, and range management. All parties are called upon to address this task as soon as possible.

- **Implementation of priority measures:** In order to achieve immediate and visible impact and to maintain momentum, all partners to the process are called upon to provide support for the implementation of immediate measures, which are built on proven technologies and achievements.

Guidelines to Implement the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification in The Gambia

Taking stock of the widening gap between requirements and available funds and resources, the Forum has adopted the following principles for NAP implementation:

- Mobilisation of local resources wherever possible,
- Strengthening of private sector involvement and responsibility,
- Consolidation and/or reorientation of on-going projects and programmes,
- Focus on proven measures and technologies,
- Emphasis on awareness-raising, dissemination of information to the public and environmental education,
- Implementation of NAP and the National Action Plans under the Conventions of Biodiversity and Climate Change in a coordinated manner along with the principles of the Second Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP II),
- Sustained support to decentralisation and Local Government Reform,
- Enforcement of legal instruments already in place, notably Environmental Impact Assessment, and legislation of new laws, such as forestry, as appropriate, and
- Seek further Donor support for priority interventions.

Implementation Approach

The Forum identified priority measures, which are critical to The Gambia's success in the fight against desertification. In addition to actions required in the various sectoral areas, support is necessary in the realm of information and public awareness, support to on-going activities, institutional strengthening, and capacity building.

Priority Measures

Having reviewed the NAP sectoral studies as well as previous studies, the Forum calls on all parties to the NAP process to give highest priority to the implementation of the following initiatives. Preliminary project profiles for each priority measure are provided in Appendix 1. A thorough and formal investment programme will be prepared in early 2001, and will ultimately be attached as an Annex to the NAP.

Forestry

The Forum calls on Government of The Gambia, the National Environmental Management Council, and the Donor Community to declare the implementation of the Gambian Forest Management Concept (GFMC) and the Community Forest (CF) Programme in all Divisions a national priority. The National Forestry Action Plan, adopted in September 2000, identified five project profiles, which will serve as the foundation for funding requests to be presented in the Investment Programme.

As a matter of first priority, the Forum recommends that primary consideration be given to implementation of the “**North Bank Natural Resource Management Project**”. The North Bank Division is the area most affected by serious land degraded in The Gambia and serves as the entry point of desertification in the country. The proposed project aims at collaborative management of natural resources and reducing the scarcity of forest products.

Other proposed forestry interventions of high priority are the “**Collaborative Forest Management Project**”, “**Gambian Forestry Research Project**”, and a **Mangrove Resource Inventory and elaboration of a Mangrove Ecosystem Master Plan**.

The Forum further stressed the need to promote afforestation with fast growing trees, especially with those indigenous tree species disappearing at an alarming rate and to give more consideration to aspects of commercialisation of forest products.

Wildlife Management

The introduction of collaborative wildlife management is closely related to community forestry and can build on the forest experience to a large extent. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan outlines the requirements to establish collaborative wildlife management. The Forum therefore calls on **GOTG** to urgently adopt the “**National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan**” as a matter of first priority. The Forum further stresses the need to include local communities in the planning, design, and implementation of protected-areas management plans and to give emphasis to a decentralised approach, i.e. establishment and management of protected areas in the Divisions. Programmes in Forestry and Wildlife Management will have to take into account the need for trans-boundary management.

Livestock and Range Management

The Forum has taken note of the sectoral study and forthcoming developments in the sector, notably the “Livestock Development Project”. High priority should be given to the “**Support to Livestock Development and Rangeland Management Project**” with the purpose of establishing a comprehensive database to facilitate planning in the area of rangeland management and livestock production. Activities would, inter alia, include the conduct of a range resources inventory, identification of high-risk areas and participatory land-use planning.

Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation

The Forum identified three high priority activities in the sector:

- **Address poor land-use practices and to check the trend of soil degradation.** Main activities would cover training-of-trainers in integrated land-use planning, community based land-use planning and land-use improvement plans at the village level.
- **Check severe upland erosion and related siltation in the lowlands.** The programme would be based on pilot activities along with the conduct of surveys.
- Develop **extension tools** to address the issue of inappropriate crop production practices.

The Forum further supports the request to rally support for staff training and staff development.

Population and Social Dimensions

The Forum welcomes the initiatives to support integrated family planning under the NAP. These initiatives should be seen as an integral part of the IEC – Information, Education, and Communication approach.

Implementation of a **comprehensive reproductive health programme** with four main components is a priority:

- Access to reproductive health and contraception;
- IEC on reproductive health,
- Extension of “FANKANTA” to all Divisions of the country, and
- Youth development projects such as training-in-life skills, sensitisation on sexually transmitted diseases and viable income generating activities.

High importance must be given to activities controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Forum further welcomes the recent initiative of **GOTG** to introduce a comprehensive Youth Policy and calls for participation of governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned to actively participate in the Desertification Task Force.

Institutional Framework

The Forum identified four areas for intervention:

- Strengthen effective public participation in natural resource management
- Incorporate desertification concerns in existing laws and land management legislation
- Create an economic instrument for local funding of desertification control
- Improve monitoring capacity in environmental management

These items would be addressed through an **institutional support programme** to create an enabling environment for effective public participation in natural resources management.

The Forum calls on Government of The Gambia to establish a “**National Desertification Trust Fund**”. The Fund would contribute to the financing of community-based activities. In addition, funds would be made available for public awareness campaigns and environmental education. Contributions of the private sector, friends of The Gambia and both national and international agencies and NGOs would be the initial sources of funding.

Institutional capacity building for key stakeholders, especially at the divisional level, is also a priority.

A summary matrix of priority interventions is presented in Appendix A. A detailed investment programme will be developed in early 2001 and presented as an Annex to the NAP.

Information and public awareness

The Forum has taken note that information concerning land degradation, its causes, consequences and remedial strategies is perceived to be inadequate by the stakeholders at the local level. Moreover, there is a lack of effective feedback regarding the process of implementing UNCCD in The Gambia. Priority should therefore, be given to dissemination of the results and recommendations from the Second National Forum – particularly at the grass roots level. The Forum further recommends increasing media presence and investigating possibilities to promote dissemination through leaflets and cultural activities, e.g. music and drama. As a third step, environmental education should be addressed at both the formal and informal level.

Support of On-going Activities

Two initiatives were identified which deserve continued support.

Environmental Impact Assessment

Standardised Environmental Impact Assessment has been instituted in The Gambia, and is gaining momentum. Guidelines, inter alia, for large agricultural projects, tourism development and infrastructure have been established. It is necessary to create awareness among both public and private sector to provide a popular base to support adherence. GEAP II rightly stresses the need to ensure public sector compliance as a first priority and entry point.

Conservation Farming / Soil and Water Management

The Forum calls on Government and all development partners to the “Lowland Agricultural Development Programme (LADEP) to consider applying a more holistic approach to the programme’s second phase; for example, in the forthcoming mid-term review, components of upland conservation should be addressed along side lowland activities. There is an urgent need to implement pilot programmes in upland conservation farming in order to establish proven methods and technologies for wider dissemination.

Full use should be made of the possibilities available under the Rural Finance and Communities Initiatives Programme.

Institutional Issues

Two key institutional issues were highlighted at the Forum: local government reform and the national focal point. Coordination and harmonisation with the Second Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP II) is called to to enhance capacity building efforts of the country.

Support to Local Government Reform

On-going local government reforms provide the opportunity to promote a spatially integrated approach to sustainable natural resources management that originates at the grassroots level. The Forum fully supports this process. At the Divisional Level, all activities that fall under the auspices of UNCCD should be overseen by the Divisional Coordination Committees. The current initiative to introduce Multi-Disciplinary Facilitation Teams at the ward and village levels should be strengthened. Such an approach would allow for better integration of the various initiatives at the grassroots level, e.g. community forestry and decentralised rural development planning. The Forum calls on all parties to the NAP and line agencies to adjust implementation arrangements accordingly. Local Government Authorities should also be empowered to affect land reforms.

National Focal Point

The Forestry Department has been nominated as Focal Point for implementing UNCCD. This decision takes into account that the Forestry Department spearheaded participatory resource management and has a field organisation reaching out to the community level. At present, the Director of Forestry oversees all UNCCD activities. Whilst it is recommended that overall responsibility rest with the Director, capacity needs to be increased in order to cope with the implementation of the NAP. The Forum therefore recommends that a Programme Officer be made available at the earliest date.

Capacity Building

There is a clear and felt need to further strengthen capacity at the national and local level. The Forum calls for adequate provisions under the GEAP II. In addition, every effort should be made to mobilise resources from on-going programmes such as the UNDP supported Poverty Reduction Support Programme (PRSP) or forthcoming initiatives under UNDP/Capacity 21 and the World Bank supported "Strategy for Sustainable Rural Development".

The Way Forward

The Forum calls on all partners to maintain momentum and actively contribute to the implementation of the NAP. In particular, the following items, which represent "next steps", are critical to success and need to be addressed as soon as possible.

Forestry Department / Focal Point

- Disseminate results and recommendations of the Second National Forum at the district and community levels within two months. Prepare a popular version of NAP in local languages.
- Seek approval of GOTG to create a unit in the Forestry Department to serve as National Desertification Secretariat.
- Ensure that GOTG includes the priorities of the NAP as part of its overall Agriculture and Natural Resources Sector Program for presentation in the Donor Round Table scheduled to be convened in 2001. Prepare relevant funding requests.
- Disseminate results of the Second National Forum and NAP at the international level.

- Seek international support for NAP implementation and present NAP to major donors and to the fourth meeting of the Convention's Conference of Parties (COP IV) in December 2000.
- Seek support from EU/EDF funding sources in accordance with the Cairo Declaration and Cairo Plan of Action adopted by the Africa-Europe Summit (Cairo 3-4 April, 2000.)
- Seek GOTG approval for setting up a "National Desertification Trust Fund"; prepare statute, administration- and disbursement procedures, audit requirements, and implementation arrangements. Identify potential sources of funding.
- Establish a programme and cost estimate for public relations, public awareness and sensitisation campaigns, taking linkages with other related programmes into account. Identify sources of funding.
- Explore possibilities to make the services of a Programme Officer available.
- Establish and maintain a homepage of the National Secretariat on the Internet.
- Arrange for a NAP review meeting no later than two years after endorsement of NAP by GOTG to review progress and to update NAP.
- Seek Technical Assistance for NAP implementation.

The Government of The Gambia

- Endorse final draft of NAP.
- Entrust the National Focal Point with establishing a "National Desertification Trust Fund".
- Create enabling environment and consultative mechanisms to ensure incorporation of principles to combat desertification into ANR planning and implementation procedures.
- Establish Department of Forestry as National Secretariat of UNCCD. Appoint Programme Officer to oversee NAP.
- Ensure participation of National Secretariat in all relevant planning procedures.
- Entrust Focal Point / National Secretariat to assume function as Divisional NAP Secretariat.

Department of Parks and Wildlife

- Finalise policy and update legal instruments for community participation and collaborative management of biodiversity and protected areas, with special emphasis on revenue retention, access to resources, and incentive measures for biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use.
- Call on GOTG to adopt the “National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan” as a matter of priority in view of the Agriculture and Natural Resource Sector Donor Round Table scheduled to be convened in 2001.

National Environment Agency

- Harmonise GEAP II with results and findings of the Second National Forum and the sectoral studies developed under UNCCD,
- Make adequate provision for capacity building under NAP in GEAP II,
- Assist Focal Point in NAP implementation and media-sensitisation campaigns.

Department of Agricultural Service

- Investigate possibilities to include aspects of upland-conservation in LADEP Phase II implementation, building on the experience of the previous soil and water conservation projects.
- Pursue pilot activities in integrated watershed management and upland conservation farming.

Department of Livestock Services

- Seek harmonisation between NAP and the forthcoming Livestock Sector Study.
- Pursue silvo-pastoral pilot activities within the scope of the forthcoming Phase II of the Government of Germany/KfW-GTZ supported Central River Division Forestry Project.

Secretariat of the UNCCD / Global Mechanisms

- Facilitate and support dissemination of results and recommendations of the second National Forum.
- Support implementation of the NAP.

National Action Programme to Combat Desertification

The Gambia

1. Introduction

Degradation of land resources in The Gambia has reached a critical stage. The fragile equilibrium between man and nature is increasingly out of balance. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) provides a legal framework for cooperation among development partners in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification. These are developing and developed countries, donor agencies, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and communities at the grassroots level. Given the multitude of problems and constraints to development, UNCCD has singled out Africa as deserving special attention. To date, more than 165 countries and institutions are Parties to the Convention.

The Gambia signed the Convention in June 1994 and later ratified it in January 1996. Dating back to the Sahelian drought of 1972/1973, desertification has been a major concern in The Gambia. In 1977, The Banjul Declaration articulated the GOTG's commitment to protect The Gambia's flora and fauna. In the ensuing decade, Government employed a series of strategies and activities to deal with the persistent drought conditions. Strategies included actions broadly grouped as: community participation in resource management, institutional strengthening, research and development, extension, environmental education, and direct public investment programmes and projects. Notwithstanding these early efforts in combating desertification, environmental degradation continued at an accelerated pace.

To address the underlying causes of environmental degradation, GOTG enacted the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) in 1987 and later formulated and adopted the Gambia Environmental Action Plan. Under NEMA, two key institutions were created. The National Environmental Management Council (NEMC) is responsible for overall environmental policy coordination at the national level, and based on recommendations highlighted in the GEAP, the National Environment Agency (NEA) was created. NEA is mandated to coordinate all environmental related issues in the country and the implementation of the GEAP. The NEA subsequently established a number of Working Groups to facilitate consultation and coordination. The Agricultural and Natural Resources (ANR) Working Group was the first to be formed in 1994.

The GEAP provides the framework for implementation of the three international natural resource-related conventions The Gambia is a Party to:

- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD),
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

During this same period, an awareness was growing that Government could not to protect and manage the country's natural resources without the assistance and support of local communities. The community forest management concept was developed in response to this realisation, and Community Forestry (CF) was formally introduced in 1991 to compliment state-managed forests. Both the state- and the community forest management models were merged into one concept, and called the Gambian Forest Management Concept (GFMC). This concept, a major break-through in sustainable resource management, is currently being implemented in four of the five divisions of the country. Recently, The Gambia adopted the National Forestry Action Plan (NFAP), which is fully committed to further strengthening community involvement and collaborative management of the forest resources.

Following the signing of UNCCD in 1994, GOTG designated the Forestry Department (FD) as the Focal Point for its implementation, and established a Desertification Task Force as a sub-committee of the ANR Working Group to initiate the consultative process.

Initiatives to halt and combat desertification in The Gambia are being planned within the framework of the GEAP as well as on-going Local Government reforms aimed at decentralising power to the local level.

2. Country Profile

The Gambia is a sub-tropical country in West Africa with a total land area of approximately 10,689 km², a population of about 1,298,000 people and a population growth rate of 4.2% per annum. The country is divided into six administrative areas: Western Division (WD), North Bank Division (NBD), Central River Division (CRD), Lower River Division (LRD), Upper River Division (URD), and The Greater Banjul Area (GBA) (See Figure 1 Map: Administrative Divisions of The Gambia, pg. 4).

2.1 Physical Context

The climate of The Gambia is a Sudano-Sahelian type characterised by a rainy season (June to October) and a dry season (November to May). The average annual rainfall is about 900mm. Although there are indications of a reversal of the trend, there has been an average reduction of 27% in the annual average rainfall since 1951. The mean temperature is 25°C.

The Gambia has four major landscapes. These are the floodplain, the colluvial slopes, the lower plateau and upper plateau, with different soil types. The national drainage is centred on the River Gambia and its tributaries. The River Gambia, which is over 680 km long, originates from the Fouta Djallon Highlands in Guinea.

The country is divided into four main agro-ecological zones namely Sahelian (70.4 km² or 1%), Sudano-Sahelian (8,035.31 km² or 75%) Sudanian (2,070.37 km² or 19%), and Guinean (506.92 km² or 5%). The natural vegetation zone is woodland savannah. The following plant associations can be found in the country:

- beach sands and coastal scrub,
- coastal woodland,
- mangroves,
- variously brackish and freshwater swamps,
- salty mud flats and salt pans,
- riverine (gallery) forests and forests on river islands, and
- savannah woodland, parklands, and bush fallow.

Efforts to arrest desertification are aided considerably by two factors: Given the relatively small size of the country, efforts have a high likelihood of success, particularly as regards popular participation; and second, The River Gambia serves as a natural buffer-zone to slow the process of desertification. One need only look at a satellite image of Senegal and The Gambia to see the effectiveness of The Gambia River (see cover photo). Thus its geopolitical location in the largely semi-arid Sahel may afford

some strategic advantage, but the country is faced with a serious agricultural, food and environmental fragility that makes it highly vulnerable to desertification.

2.2 Socio-economic Context

With a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of US \$ 360, The Gambia ranks among the least developed countries in the world. The economy is characterised by its small size, relatively narrow economic base, low level of literacy, and overall skills. Redistributive trade, agriculture, and tourism make-up the main sectors of the economy. Other areas of the Gambian economy that have been expanding rapidly over the past years are the construction and telecommunication sectors. Trade and re-export are strongly influenced by trans-boundary-interactions with Senegal and sub-regional trade relations. Per capita income is approximately US \$300.

Agriculture and livestock production account for approximately 30% of GDP and employ around 70% of the labour force. While groundnut production was previously the major export crop (followed by sesame and cotton), agricultural diversification towards food crops (rice, coarse grains such as millet and sorghum, horticulture) has been promoted by Government and is being increasingly integrated into farmers' strategies in reaction to adverse international trade trends. Horticultural production has steadily increased during the recent years and already contributes to GDP at the same rate as the livestock sector (about 5%). Agriculture and livestock-production provide income for over 60% of the rural population. Attempts to improve the rather marginal fisheries and forestry sectors round up the current situation.

Tourism is an important industry in The Gambia. Between 1965 and 1998, the number of tourists visiting The Gambia has increased from 27,000 to 96,000 but has been on the decline since 1998. Efforts are underway to reverse this negative trend.

The Gambian socio-demographic dynamics combine one of the highest fertility (6.04 Total Fertility Rate) and population growth rates (4.2% annual growth) in the Region, with a low acceptance for modern contraception (7% use rate). The 1998 projected population estimate, using the 1993 census growth rate of 4.2%, figures at roughly 1.2 million persons. The population is expected to reach a total population of over 2.5 million by 2015.

With a population density of 108 persons per km², The Gambia ranks among the four most densely populated countries in Africa, which is clearly one of the most severe factors causing land degradation. Of particular importance is the age structure of the population. It is estimated that 80% of the total population fall into the age bracket of 31 years and below; while 71% are 24 years and younger. With such a youthful population, a natural population momentum or demographic pressure is guaranteed, whereby the population density is certain to increase, regardless of short to medium term efforts to control it. It is only when viewed in the long-term that in-roads can be made into

population growth. Clearly, youth will play a key role in determining the success or failure of any development effort.

This point is made even more clearly when one considers that the heavy out-migration from rural to urban areas is predominantly youth. They are coming to the Greater Banjul Area seeking better employment opportunities, largely related to the tourism sector. All the while, women, young children, and the elderly are left in the villages to farm and care for the land.

Women in The Gambia experience significant disparities ranging from life expectancy, educational attainment and income. Economically active Gambian women are commonly engaged in those sectors where incomes are low, such as lowland crop production and petty trading. According to the 1993 Household Economic Survey, the average Gambian male has an income nearly four times higher than women. Women in The Gambia are among the poorest of the poor.

3. Present Situation

Desertification is a global problem requiring local solutions. In general, it is understood as the degradation of dry lands. Desertification relates to the loss of physical and economic productivity in arable lands, forests and rangelands. Any frequent visitor to The Gambia would notice both the visible loss of vegetation cover and the increasing signs of soil erosion and -salinisation over the last two decades.

3.1 The Problem: Desertification in The Gambia - Causes and Consequences

Desertification is more than the loss of trees and vegetation. UNCCD defines the term in a holistic way: "Desertification means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors such as climatic variations and human activities." Land degradation is described by the Convention as a "reduction or loss, in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rainfed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns".

In an even broader sense, the process has been understood by many contributors to the National Action Programme as a social problem in which desertification is at the centre of a triangular relationship between people, poverty and food security. People are the main agents of desertification as they create the main causes and are, at the same time, the main victims of land degradation. However, people's actions will also be the determining factor in halting desertification and fostering sustainable development.

What is important in the long-run is people's vision for the future, their perception of well-being, and quality-of-life in an environment continually subject to change. And, to this end, communities in all consultations have clearly articulated three statements:

- Desertification is a felt and visible problem threatening the production-base and livelihood of the rural population.
- At the crux of the problem of desertification are a combination of factors, collectively referred to as 'land degradation' - decreasing vegetation cover, uncontrolled bush fires, encroachment of the remaining forests, depletion of soil fertility, and over-exploitation of the rangelands. Consultations revealed that there is a common understanding that problems are particularly severe on the Northern Bank of the River Gambia.
- Rapid population growth and the related pressure on the arable and non-arable lands are seen as both a cause and hindrance to remedial initiatives.

A multitude of causes and problems contribute to the process of increasing desertification, but zonal and divisional consultations, sectoral studies and previous investigations arrive at similar conclusions:

- The extraordinarily high population growth rate of 4.2% per annum at present has by far outweighed all efforts to increase economic growth. This not only refers to the Gross Domestic Product, but to all economic indicators: National cereal self-sufficiency, for example, has constantly declined from 58% in 1985 to 41% in 1995.
- The high population growth rate, however, is only partly attributed to domestic fertility. It is noteworthy, especially for the UNCCD partners in developed countries, that an estimated 20% of the present population are migrants from the sub-region in search of better economic opportunities, or refugees from other West African countries torn apart by civil strife. Silently, The Gambia has set a fine example of humanitarian aid in difficult times. This, on the other hand means that the degree of pressure on the country's resource-base is increasingly dependent on regional and even international developments, which can only partly be controlled at the national level.
- Unsustainable resource-use has augmented environmental degradation. Regular bush- and forest fires, decreasing fallow-periods in arable lands and overstocking/ imbalanced distribution of animals over the rangelands diminish soil fertility, carrying capacities, and stocking rates.
- Unclear land-tenure systems, being in flux at present, further aggravate the problem. The weak legal and institutional framework in The Gambia has so far counteracted all efforts to effectively address the problems of land degradation and its inappropriate use.
- Given the geographic position of the country, namely bordered on three sides by Senegal, it is impossible to seriously engage in remedial measures against desertification at a purely national level. This is especially true for the sensitive issues of migration and transhumance.

It is undisputed that the nation's resources are at risk of irreversible degradation if current land use practices continue. Initial stages such as changes in the vegetation and reduction in primary productivity of the land can be observed throughout the country.

Most obvious is the degradation of the Gambian forest habitat: About one hundred years ago most of the Gambian land territory was still covered by dense forests. The forests were rich in wildlife and provided the habitat for a variety of large mammals, which are nowadays rare (such as hippopotamus, waterbuck, roan, serval, and caracal) or locally extinct (such as buffalo, giraffe, elephant, lion, etc.). The main causes of the forest destruction are rampant fires, clearing of forests for agricultural production,

and commercial fuel wood exploitation. The process of forest deterioration was further accelerated due to a decline of the mean annual rainfall.

Table 1 illustrates the process of forest destruction based on the results of land use studies carried out in 1946 and 1993 in relation to the population density.

Table 1: Development of Forest Cover from 1946 to 1993

	1946	1968	1980	1993
Closed woodland (%)	60.1	8.0	1.3	1.1
Open woodland (%)	13.3	17.6	10.7	7.8
Savannah (%)	7.8	31.7	24.8	31.8
Total forest cover (%)	81.2	57.3	36.8	40.7
Population density (person per km²)	25.0	35.0	57.0	91.0

Source: NAP-Gambia: Sectoral Study on Forest and Wildlife Management (1999)

The total forest cover of the Gambian land territory (mangroves excluded) decreased from 81% in 1946 to 41% in 1993. This is an alarming development, particularly as regards the decrease in closed woodland. Back in 1946, 60% of the land was still covered by relatively undisturbed forest. In 1993 this forest type had decreased to a mere 1.1%. Although the forest cover slightly increased by 4% from 1980 to 1993, and despite the fact that The Gambia still has a valuable forestry resource, it is obvious that desertification control in the country stands and falls with the restoration and sustainable management of forest- and woodland resources.

Desertification does not only reduce the nation's vegetation cover. The Gambia is confronted with the familiar set of problems associated with environmental degradation: Salt water intrusion into the fresh water zone of the river system; salt water seepage into the upper aquifer of the fresh water system in the coastal areas; soil salinisation and -erosion, decreasing fertility of the arable land, and finally, migration.

Land use changes between 1980 and 1993 were recently monitored by the Forestry Department (see Table 2):

Table 2: Land Use Change in The Gambia (1980-1993)

Land Use Category	1980		1993		Change	
	(ha)	(%)	(ha)	(%)	(ha)	(%)
Woodland	14,400	1.3	12,000	1.1	-2,400	-0.2
Savannah woodland	121,600	10.7	88,800	7.8	-32,800	-2.9
Tree & shrub savannah	280,400	24.8	360,800	31.9	80,400	7.1
Sub-Total: Total Forest Cover	416,400	36.8	461,600	40.8	45,200	4.0
Agriculture with trees	84,000	7.4	85,200	7.5	1,200	0.1
Agriculture no trees	226,400	20.0	241,200	21.3	14,800	1.3
Fallow area	138,800	12.3	89,200	7.9	-49,600	-4.4
Mangroves	68,000	6.0	59,600	5.3	-8,400	-0.7
Others	198,800	17.6	195,600	17.3	-3,200	-0.3
Total	1,132,400	100.0	1,132,400	100.0	0	0.0

Source: NAP-Gambia: Sectoral Study on Forest and Wildlife Management (1999)

- The total area under forest increased. This is due to a reversion of former agricultural land (mainly marginal fallow land) into tree and shrub savannah. All Divisions, with the exception of North Bank Division (NBD), register an increase in tree and shrub savannah. The process is most pronounced in Lower River Division (LRD).
- Closed and open woodland was reduced by 3.1% per year due to forest degradation and conversion into agricultural land. Most severe degradation can be observed in LRD and Upper River Division (URD).
- Mangroves suffered a slight but nevertheless alarming decrease in total surface area; the causes are die-backs due to disturbed water exchange, illegal exploitation and conversion of tidal areas into shrimp- and fish farms.

- The fallow areas have decreased by almost 50,000 ha or 4.4% due to conversion into tree and shrub savannah, agriculture with no trees or to a lesser extent into agriculture with trees.
- Agriculture with trees remained relatively unchanged and agriculture with no trees increased by 1.3% per year.

The overall area under rangeland remained stable as well, but considerable changes in plant species composition can be observed. There is a general decrease in species of high palatability, such as *Andropogon* grasses and fodder trees such as *Pterocarpus erinaceus* and *Prosopis africana*.

This leads to the conclusion that virtually all arable lands are cultivated and virtually no arable land is left in reserve (See Figure 2: Land Suitability Map for Upland Agriculture, pg. 12 and Figure 3: Upland Agricultural Production and Land Reserve Map, pg. 13). As illustrated by Figure 2, the Land Suitability for Upland Agriculture map, the most suitable agricultural lands are located in the Western portions of the country (coloured in red). When upland agricultural production is factored into the equation, (Figure 3: Upland Agricultural Production and Land Reserve Map) it is clear that the areas most suitable for agricultural production are, for all intents and purposes, already being cultivated to their fullest extent (brown areas are under agricultural cultivation). Areas which may appear to be suitable (highlighted in red) are in fact either settlements or existing forests. Only land identified as fallow (coloured yellow) is potential arable land in this area. The Eastern portion of the country is by and large only marginally suited for agricultural production, hence more area is left uncultivated in these areas.

Hence, the steady decrease of the fallow lands poses a serious threat to soil fertility. As observed by the Sectoral Study for Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation, the fallow period has been reduced to four years on average and to zero in many areas under mono-cropping. At present, 64% of all fields fall under the category mono-cropped.

3.2 Evolution of Desertification Concerns

National concern with the threat of desertification was prompted by the 1972/73 major Sahelian drought. Coherent public policy actions to deal with its impact on the natural resource base commenced with the proclamation of the **Banjul Declaration** and the enactment of the Wildlife Conservation and Forestry Acts in 1977 and subsequently the enactment of the Water Resources Act in 1979. The Banjul Declaration articulated a coherent public policy for the conservation of nature (fauna and flora), which formed the basis for specific sub-sectoral policies and legislation in the natural resource sector. The legal actions to rationalize natural resource management functions resulted in the creation of a separate Ministry of Water Resources, Forestry and Fisheries with an Environment Unit from the Ministry of Agriculture in 1981, to be responsible for overall natural resource policy formulation and implementation. The technical Departments of

Water Resources, Forestry, Fisheries and, Parks and Wildlife Management developed sub-sectoral policies to guide their day-to-day operational management functions and rationalise public sector investment in the natural resources development.

The Government adopted an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in mid 1985 to address the looming macro-economic policy failures. As part of the implementation process of the ERP, the Government enacted the **National Environmental Management Act (NEMA)** in 1987 to address the underlying structural weaknesses and natural resources degradation of the country. The Act provided for the establishment of the National Environmental Management Council (NEMC) as the apex policy body for the environment. To consolidate the gains of the ERP, the Government adopted a Programme for Sustained Development (PSD) in 1990. Although these programmes succeeded in stabilising the economy, they failed to arrest the process of resource degradation.

In response to the underlying causes of environmental degradation, the Government formulated and adopted the **Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP)** in July 1992 as a national environmental policy framework. The National Environment Agency (NEA) was then formed in 1993 as the technical secretariat to NEMC and coordinating body for environmental management strategies, programmes and projects.

All the public agencies operating in the environment and natural resource sector of The Gambia are required to operate within the broad framework of the GEAP and in a decentralized administrative structure to adequately address the specific environmental and natural resource concerns of the individual divisions. The elaboration of the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification was therefore initiated within the established institutional framework of the GEAP process.

While the GEAP has registered visible impact in tackling environmental degradation, the underlying structural inadequacies and weaknesses of the economy continue to limit economic growth. In response, the Government formulated and articulated The **Gambia Incorporated ...Vision 2020** in May 1996. In October 1998 the new Forest Act and Forest Regulations were enacted, and to implement the agricultural and natural resources component of Vision 2020, the Government developed and adopted a Long-Term Agricultural and Natural Resources Sector Policy Objectives and Strategies 2001–2010 finalised in 2000.

At the national level the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Working Group, which was established in 1994 to facilitate the coordinating role of the NEA, assumed responsibility for the elaboration of the NAP. The ANR Working Group is to ensure that the NAP, like all other National Action Plans/Programmes, is in conformity with the GEAP. In this capacity, the ANR Working Group monitored the NAP elaboration process. Chaired by the Permanent Secretary the Department of State for Agriculture, the ANR Working Group is a permanent body with representatives from Government insti-

tutions and NGOs. The Working Group's mandate includes the development of a multi-sectoral natural resources management strategy that seeks to address issues raised by the GEAP and ensure that the development of Action Plans/Programmes for the Conventions on Desertification, Biodiversity and Climate Change are carried out within the decentralised process of the GEAP. The secretariat of the ANR Working Group is located in the National Environment Agency.

Following the signing of the UNCCD in 1994, the Forestry Department was identified by The Gambia Government as the Focal Point for the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. Since then, a Desertification Task Force chaired by the Focal Point was created as a sub-committee of the ANR Working Group. The mandate of the sub-committee is to facilitate the elaboration of the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (NAP) within the overall coordinating role of NEA. The Focal Point is the lead agency in all issues related to the Convention to Combat Desertification.

3.3 The Institutional and Legal Setting

Conservation, management and development of natural resources has been the shared responsibility of a multitude of actors since the passing of the Banjul Declaration in 1977. The main players include Governmental and Non Governmental Organisations along with numerous projects and programmes, supported by external Donors and Financing Agencies. Noteworthy is the almost complete lack of private-sector involvement.

On the side of Government, problems of environmental degradation are been dealt with at three levels:

- Line Departments of State and their technical departments,
- Local Government organisations, and
- Inter-sectoral staff agencies and co-ordinating councils.

Four line Departments of State and their technical departments are of particular importance for UNCCD implementation. These are the Department of State for Agriculture, the Department of State for Local Government and Lands, the Department of State for Fisheries, Natural Resources and the Environment and the Department of State for Trade, Industry and Employment.

Among the technical departments, five have been in the forefront of natural resource conservation during the last years:

- The Department of Forestry, spearheading initiatives to introduce community forestry and to transfer management responsibilities for State Forest to village-based organisations.

- The Department of Agricultural Services, responsible for the promotion of sustainable farming practices, agricultural extension and soil and water conservation.
- The Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, the custodian of protected areas and wildlife in The Gambia.
- The Department of Livestock Services, being charged with responsibilities for rangeland management and maintaining a sustainable equilibrium between carrying capacities and stocking rates, and
- The Department of Community Development, which serves as interface between rural population, social services, and the NGO-community.

All departments, in spite of remarkable efforts in the past, are constrained by severe budget problems, lack of qualified staff and responsibilities not being well defined. With the majority of operational funds being provided by Donors and projects, Central Government finds itself amidst the well known “dependency trap”. Reduced efficiency, insufficient outreach to the field-level and varying priorities according to the availability of (external) funds are the logical consequence.

At present, Local Government administrative structures fall under the responsibility of the Department of State for Local Government and Lands. In addition to the five administrative divisions of the country, the Banjul Administrative Area and the Kanifing Municipal Area comprise the Greater Banjul Area (GBA). The corresponding local government institutions responsible for natural resources management are the six Area Councils, headed by a Local Government Officer, at divisional level and Banjul City- and Kanifing Municipal Council for GBA. The eight councils are empowered to raise local revenues, execute infrastructure and development projects, including environmental preservation. The Divisional Coordinating Committee (DCC) is at the centre of decentralised development planning and is designated to assume a coordinating role in natural resource management and protection.

35 District Authorities, headed by Chiefs, and administrative committees in all villages, chaired by a headman or elder (Alkalo) form the lower strata of Local Government. While previously elected, the current committees and authorities were nominated and lack democratic authorisation. Undue political influence at all levels is one of the major problems for devolving power to the community level.

The role and function of Local Government is not well defined yet. Divisional offices of Central Government Departments, although linked to the DCCs, often maintain parallel implementation structures and dispose of greater resources. Major administrative and legislative reforms are under way to remedy the situation.

Inter-sectoral staff agencies and coordinating councils have been introduced with a view to streamlining and strengthening environmental activities at central and local government levels which cut across sectoral boundaries. The NEMC has overall responsibility for environmental policy making and coordination at the national level. The

National Environment Agency (NEA) serves as secretariat of the Council and is designated to coordinate implementation of policy decisions. NEMA, the National Environmental Management Act, has also vested enforcement responsibilities in the Agency. NEA's Agriculture and Natural Resources Working Group is responsible for the coordination and harmonisation of all cross-sectoral natural resources development issues and is therefore of immediate importance for desertification control.

A second, sector-specific coordinating body under NEMC is the National Water Resources Council (NWRC). NWRC is specifically responsible for overseeing the national water resource development policy and related projects.

Environmental management in The Gambia has been subject to a number of evaluations. One major issue is the fact that NEMC remained dormant for years and resumed its guiding functions only recently. Although it is widely acknowledged that coordination of inter-sectoral activities through NEA working groups has greatly improved, there is growing concern about the insufficient impact on resource management at the divisional and village levels. The problem is being addressed within the scope of the Second Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP II).

The involvement of NGOs in natural resources management has been on the increase in recent years. To date, about one third of the overall external development support to the sector is already administered by NGOs. Prominent among these are Action Aid The Gambia (AATG), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Association of Farmers, Educators and Traders (AFET).

Two sectoral programmes of Action Aid The Gambia: Water/Agriculture and Environment/Natural Resources are directly related to desertification control. AATG has been active in the support of tree-planting and farm-forestry activities.

CRS maintains two programmes with direct impact on natural resource conservation: Agriculture/Education and Micro-Finance. The Service was particularly active in supporting farm-forestry and gender issues in resource management.

Other NGO activities of relevance for UNCCD implementation include:

- Islamic Relief Association (ISRA): Community-based agriculture and teaching Islam and the Environment;
- Campaign for Development and Solidarity (FORUT): Farmer training programme in agro-forestry and water resources;
- The Gambia Rural Development Agency (GARDA): Forestry Environmental Education at grassroots level;
- Women In Services, Development, Organisation and Management (WISDOM): Women training programme in Environmental Protection;

- Child Youth Support and Rural Development Agency (CYSARDA): Programme in Soil Erosion Control with government institutions;
- Future in Our Hands and Stay Green Foundation are also both involved in promoting grass-roots participation in tree planting particularly with women and schools; and,
- Freedom From Hunger Campaign (FFHC) implements a programme in agriculture, water- and natural resource management with mainly women farmers.

In an effort to mobilise the rural communities to assume increasing responsibilities for their own development, the Government encouraged and facilitated the creation of a number of community-based institutions. These include, among others, Chamen Self Development and Training Centre (CSDTC) and Farmers Platform. Both institutions are involved, to a varying degree, in activities to maintain a sustainable production base in The Gambia.

For more than two decades and especially after the Rio Earth Summit, foreign Donors and Financing Agencies have launched initiatives to halt environmental degradation through a number of projects and programmes. The following list is by no means exhaustive and includes only the most important ongoing or recently completed interventions¹:

The **Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)** has been a key Donor through four main programmes:

- Support in the management of the country's **forest resources** dates back to the late 1960's. Policy reform, repealing forest legislation, testing and implementing community forestry and the Gambian Forest Management Concept (GFMC) in three divisions are the catchwords to describe FRG support in the forestry sector. The initiative has gained wide national and international recognition.
- **Soil and water conservation measures** have been introduced successfully and the Soil and Water Management Unit has built up capacity to disseminate simple and effective technologies at the national level.
- The Gambia and Germany have launched a major initiative to create awareness for **family planning** with a view to improving the well-being of families, women and children. The initiative is an important step to address the underlying cause of rapid population growth and hence desertification.
- The National Environment Agency was supported in developing detailed procedures, guidelines and regulations for conducting **Environmental Impact Assessment**. These have the potential of becoming effective

¹ The respective sectoral studies extensively chronicle natural resource management (NRM) and NRM related donor interventions in the country.

tools to mitigate undesirable environmental developments at the planning stage.

The **European Development Fund (EDF)** has played a central role in support of:

- **Local Government Reform** through the ‘Support to the Decentralised Rural Development (SDRD)’ Project. The Project purpose is to contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for decentralisation of power to the regional level by providing funds for micro-projects and community based initiatives, including resource conservation and management.

The **European Union (EU)**, through the EU/Tropical Forestry Budget Line, provides the following support:

- Concluded in June 2000, the EU provided support to spreading out **community forestry** and the **GFMC** to the Upper River Division. Activities in URD have picked up for continuation by SDRD under EDF (see above);
- A financing agreement has been signed to support a **North Bank project to spread Community Forestry**. Activity under this project is anticipated to commence shortly.

Building on long-standing assistance from various donors, **Soil and water management** efforts on a national scale are being continued under the umbrella of the Lowlands Agricultural Development Project (LADEP), supported **through African Development Bank (AfDB)** loans and by **IFAD**.

AfDB is further in the process of supporting the **livestock sector** through studies and projects, both in the intensive and extensive areas of livestock husbandry.

The **World Bank** has been the most important agency to support **agricultural reform** through extension, training, and applied research. **Institutional strengthening of the environmental sector**, environmental education and -information have been other recent funding priorities in The Gambia. The Bank contributed sizeable resources to the “Capacity Building in Environmental Management” initiative.

UNDP is a major contributor to decentralising environmental action within the scope of the **Capacity 21** Programme. As part of its activities, Capacity 21 facilitated the NAP process by supporting a number of participatory rural appraisals and zonal consultations in all divisions of the country.

FAO, besides its core-mandate of supporting sustainable agricultural production, is traditionally engaged in assistance to **coastal zone management** and **land use planning**.

These numerous Donor interventions proved to be a mixed blessing for sustainable resource management in The Gambia. On the one hand, they allowed for the transfer of considerable external resources, which the recipient country would have faced difficulties in securing internally. Even more importantly, they ignited durable reforms, especially in the forest sector, which enjoy widespread public support. On the other hand, various Donor interventions were commonly plagued by fragmentation, inefficiency, and duplication of responsibilities, whereby causing the implementation capacities and recurrent budgets of already weak line agencies to be overstretched.

Most important, however, is the alarming situation that relatively little effort has been made to mobilise capital flows from domestic resources. Private sector involvement in resource conservation and -management is almost non-existent, presumably because it has not been adequately or appropriately promoted.

The legislative situation in The Gambia, as far as management of natural resources is concerned, is characterised by a plethora of laws, acts and regulations, partly contradictory and often outdated. Clearly, legal reform has not kept pace with the rapid changes in the social and institutional environment.

In 1997, NEA compiled a reader with relevant environmental laws and regulations. The reader, containing only the most relevant laws, has a volume of more than 250 pages. Almost all potential fields of environmental conflict have been subject to legislation. Obviously, the problem is not the lack of legislation but lack of enforcement and the absence of community involvement in formulation and execution of the law. In this setting, where even the public sector finds it difficult to follow its own environmental regulations and procedures, be it because of a lack of knowledge, political will or a lack of means, it is difficult, at best, to raise a sense of public awareness and obedience.

Realising these deficiencies, Government has taken action to repeal and revise legislation in three major areas, all of which are of immediate importance to the implementation of the Convention:

- Reform of the Local Government System and Decentralisation Reform Programme, aims to create a local government system with a “high degree of autonomy” to which government functions and powers would be devolved to “facilitate democratic governance”. The District Authority, Alkalo (Village Authority) and the Council of Elders, Area Councils, Ward Development Committees and Village Development Committees (VDCs) would be the key elements at the regional and local level. The leaderships in the new institutional framework (Councils, District Authority and Village Authority) will be elected.

- Empowerment of Communities in a true sense. This encompasses the forest legislation and the closely related draft of the Biodiversity and Wildlife Bill. Both legal initiatives recognise that the main factor affecting success or failure in environmental protection is the degree to which local communities are empowered to control resources. Legislation hence aims at enabling community control over natural resources by sharing responsibilities and benefits. First experience with the new Forest Act shows overwhelming local support.
- Specific environmental legislation. NEMA, the National Environmental Management Act, provides a sound base for addressing resource degradation in The Gambia. What is lacking, are, most importantly, a) public awareness, followed by b) appropriate regulations and standards to translate legal provisions into action. NEA has started two initiatives in this respect. In autumn 1999, NEMC endorsed a comprehensive system to introduce Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) based on an understanding that in view of limited resources and economic constraints mediation and conflict resolution should be at the centre of the procedure. EIA guidelines for projects in all relevant sectors and detailed regulations and procedures have been developed. Secondly, solid waste regulations, and standards to assess the degree of public health hazards have been endorsed.

3.4 Progress to Date

The Gambia has undertaken considerable efforts to halt environmental degradation and to address the menace of soil erosion and desertification. The NAP process clearly revealed that the situation, despite all efforts, is critical. This statement is valid for both, the physical situation on the ground and for institutional reform measures. A crippling factor in the experience of community-based agriculture and natural resources related initiatives has been undue political interference. The success and sustainability of grassroots institutions were compromised by the high degree of political involvement in their management.

But fortunately, the picture is not entirely gloomy: Remarkable achievements have been realised over the last ten years. The state of desertification in The Gambia is critical, but lessons learnt have led to encouraging developments forming a sound foundation for further action:

- The Gambia has made significant progress in reversing the trend of deforestation. Largely attributed to recent changes in forestry policy and a shift towards community empowerment, the foundation for further action to combat desertification has been firmly established. Community forestry agreements have been developed for some 6% of the country's forests. The longest standing agreements have been in force for almost ten years and they have proven to be flexible and dynamic instruments that allow communities to develop a strong sense of stewardship for their

forests. No or fewer bush fires and regulated use of forest products have been observed in community forest areas, which allowed the first community forests to close their canopies again. Community forestry has become an undisputed and well-entrenched corner-stone of sustainable resource management in The Gambia.

- Recent land-use/land-cover studies have shown, that forest cover in some parts of the country is on the increase again, and tree regeneration in these areas has been substantial. In particular, pioneer species including some important firewood species have multiplied their regeneration from 1982 to 1997. This development is probably due to the decline in agricultural activities in remote parts of the country leaving formerly open lands to grow back to savannah vegetation.
- The 'FANKANTA' initiative, to enhance the living standard of the Gambian community through the promotion of responsible parenthood and manageable family size is gaining momentum. The initiative was successfully introduced to North Bank Division, and is now spreading out to Upper River Division. A mass media campaign is proving to be effective at sensitising communities throughout The Gambia as well as in neighbouring countries.
- There are well-established soil and water conservation practices ready for large-scale dissemination. The follow-on phase of LADEP will likely provide the opportunity to build on this experience and achieve a breakthrough in sustainable resource management by addressing three key elements: conservation farming, soil- and water conservation measures and salinisation control.
- The Gambia Environmental Action Plan has greatly contributed to institutional strengthening and the provision of coordination mechanisms. All three post-Rio conventions can benefit from the ground that was paved in the past and there is the chance to extend these mechanisms now to the local level.
- Environmental Impact Assessment as a standardised procedure in major development projects is - slowly but steadily - gaining momentum.
- The Local Government Reform is expected to create a favourable framework to improve the well-being of those, who, as regards environmental degradation, are both: "cause and cure" - the communities in rural and peri-urban Gambia.

Although there are encouraging signs, two major problems have not been addressed yet and require urgent attention:

- The loss of biodiversity through habitat destruction continues at an unchanged pace. The changes in the tree species composition of woodlands and savannahs indicate a clear trend towards more and more uniform forests consisting of only a few spe-

cies that cannot provide a diversification of habitats for the indigenous flora and fauna as the natural forests did in the past.

- Impacts arising from reductions in direct assistance to natural resource management from foreign sources will require that The Gambia successfully mobilises substantial increases in capital flows from domestic sources. Sustainable financing mechanisms for the environment need to be put in place over the near term. This calls for immediate and direct involvement of the private sector with a view to assuming a role beyond a mere “consumer” of nature, to a custodian of the environment.

4. The NAP Process

Combating desertification is a process that was started in The Gambia long before the country became a Party to the Convention. In this regard, the Action Programme is not to be understood as a “final version” but rather, as one of many milestones on the road to arrest natural resource degradation. The steps undertaken so far in implementing UNCCD and the main findings are summarised below.

4.1 Steps Undertaken in Implementing UNCCD to Date

An overview, indicating the most important events since The Gambia signed UNCCD in 1994 is given in Table 3.

**Table 3: Implementation of UNCCD in The Gambia –
Timetable of Key Events**

June 1994	UNCCD is set into force after the Convention was signed by the Inter-governmental Negotiating Committee.
June 1994	The Gambia signs UNCCD
Autumn 1994	Forestry Department is designated as focal point for UNCCD implementation in The Gambia.
Spring 1995	A Desertification Task Force is established as sub-committee of the ANR Working Group to initiate the NAP process. The Task Force creates a core group to facilitate the process at the national level.
Summer 1995	Government approval of the Forest Policy and the GFMC, start of expanding GFMC implementation.
January 1996	The Gambia ratifies UNCCD
1996	Participatory review of forest legislation
Summer 1996	Establishment of the National Forest Fund (NFF).
1996-1997	Development of 'FANKANTA' Initiative
February 1997	Government presents, with the assistance of FAO and UNDP, the ANR Sector Review resulting in the formulation of sectoral policy objectives and strategies.
March 1997	The first State of the Environment Report - The Gambia is published.
Spring/Summer 1997	Consultations on the 3 post Rio Conventions are held at the zonal and district levels, which led to the development of zonal strategies, divisional and national level through DCCs.

Table 3 (cont.): Implementation of UNCCD in The Gambia –**Timetable of Key Events**

October 1997	At the first Conference of Parties (COP) the FRG, having had a long-term partnership arrangement with The Gambia in the areas of natural resources management, was designated as the lead country to serve as facilitator for the elaboration of NAP.
Autumn 1997	Through Capacity 21, UNDP funds a three-day capacity building workshop in each division with emphasis on community and agro-forestry training.
Autumn 1997	Farmers undertake two study tours to northern Senegal and Guinea Bissau to enhance their knowledge on desertification and get first hand impressions of undisturbed natural forest types.
1998	Government elaborates Agriculture and Natural Resources Research Master Plan.
August 1998	First Plan of Operation for NAP preparation established.
October 1998	Plan of Operation for NAP preparation revised. Main Results: Setting national priorities, preparation of sectoral action programmes in a bottom-up process, start of implementation process. Status, cause and processes of desertification analysed.
October 1998	New Forest Act and Forest Regulations enacted.
November 1998	The First National Forum is convened and attended by representatives of farmers, CBOs, NGOs, local authorities, Donors and the Diplomatic Corps. Main purpose: To provide a platform for discussion of results of divisional and zonal consultations and to sensitise policy makers. Three thematic areas: institutional framework and local government reform, agriculture and natural resources, population and poverty alleviation. Endorsement of institutional arrangements, i.e. implementation through DCCs. The Forum commissions five sectoral studies.
March 1999	Draft Biodiversity / Wildlife Bill submitted to ANR Working Group
March 1999	NAP Sector Study on Livestock and Range Management submitted.
April 1999	Gambia hosts the International Workshop on Community Forestry in Africa.
April 1999	NAP Sector Study on Population and Social Dimensions of Desertification submitted.
May 1999	National report on the implementation of UNCCD published. The report contains a matrix of benchmarks and indicators for measuring progress in NAP implementation.
July 1999	NAP Sector Study on Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation submitted.

Table 3 (cont.): Implementation of UNCCD in The Gambia –**Timetable of Key Events**

August 1999	NAP Sector Study on Forest and Wildlife Management submitted.
November 1999	NAP Sector Study on Institutional Framework submitted.
Spring 2000	Draft National Action Programme circulated by FD.
March 2000	Draft GEAP II submitted to Office of the President.
August 2000	NAP First Draft Investment Programme submitted.
September 2000	National Forestry Action Plan launched.
September 2000	The “National Action Programme to Combat Desertification in The Gambia” is adopted by the Second National Forum in Banjul on 27 September 2000.

The sequence of events indicate that although NAP was prepared in a participatory, consultative way, community involvement centred on certain key-events, such as the zonal meetings in 1997 and the two National Forums in 1998 and 2000.

Interim results in the NAP process, especially the results and findings of the first National Forum, could only be relayed back to the local level within the scope of field work conducted during the sectoral studies. This is seen as a shortcoming. To date, available funds have been insufficient to conduct awareness-raising and local consultations at the local level for the NAP. All possible efforts will have to be undertaken to circulate and disseminate the National Action Programme all to communities in The Gambia.

4.2 Conclusions from the Sectoral Studies

The establishment of the National Action Programme was built on three pillars:

- The wealth of experience that is available with line agencies, local government institutions and the NGO community of The Gambia.
- Consultations at the zonal and district level for the purpose of the three post Rio conventions with communities and local representatives.
- Elaboration of five sectoral studies, which the First National Forum identified as being of priority desertification issues in The Gambia.

The sectoral studies were conducted from the period March to November 1999 and involved both national and international consultants, representatives of line agencies, local government and NGOs.

The purpose of the studies was to assess degree and seriousness of desertification and its causing processes in the country, to review the institutional framework, to summarise lessons learnt from previous interventions and to propose measures for priority action to be taken up in NAP implementation. There was the clear understanding that proposals for action should take into consideration ongoing activities and obligations, the availability of financial means, regional interaction and overarching national development goals, in particular the Second Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP II). Formulation of GEAP II coincided by and large with the preparation of the sectoral studies. The first National Forum pointed out that synergy in implementation of UNCCD and CBD and should be sought as a matter of priority.

Results and conclusions of the five sectoral studies are summarised below.

4.2.1 Sector Study on Forest and Wildlife Management

The study identifies forest- and vegetation cover as key elements in desertification control and the most important indicators to assess the status and development trends of land degradation.

The total forest cover of the Gambian land territory (mangroves excluded) decreased from 81% in 1946 to 41% in 1993. This is an alarming development, particularly as regards the decrease in closed woodland. Back in 1946, 60% of the land was still covered by relatively undisturbed forest. In 1993 this forest type had decreased to a mere 1.1%. Although the forest cover slightly increased by 4% from 1980 to 1993, and despite the fact that The Gambia still has a valuable forestry resource, it is obvious that desertification control in the country stands and falls with the restoration and sustainable management of forest- and woodland resources.

The peak of deforestation was in the mid-1980's and from this time the total forest cover has slowly increased. This increase however, can only partly be attributed to rising awareness. More important is the fact that groundnut production drastically dropped due to low world market prices, and consequently, fewer forests were cleared for extensive cash crop production. Portions of former agricultural lands were even allowed to regenerate to a secondary tree and shrub savannah. This positive development however, should not obscure the fact that the forest cover still undergoes severe degradation processes due to fire and uncontrolled exploitation. There are two alarming trends related to this degradation:

- The most common firewood species are being over-utilised to near extinction, and
- Due to repeated bush fires, more fire and drought resistant species have emerged, which have little to no market value.

Secondary tree and shrub savannahs cannot provide suitable habitats for many species. The reduced biodiversity in secondary forests limits the forest use, particularly that of non-wood forest products (e.g. honey, bush-meat, medicinal plants, fruits and edible roots) which significantly contributes to the livelihood of the rural population.

During the past decades, forest management in The Gambia was characterised by extensive state involvement that started with the state-owned forest park concepts in the 1950's. Government ownership of all naturally grown trees became statutory law with the enactment of the Forest Legislation in 1977 and the Forestry Department (FD) was entrusted with the overall management responsibility.

As a result of this increasing government interference in the traditional tenure systems, the local population that claimed traditional ownership of the forests on customary village lands developed a feeling of alienation. These negative feelings finally resulted in their unwillingness to protect and manage what used to be 'their forests'. As a consequence, forest utilisation practices became increasingly damaging. This behaviour was further aggravated by restrictive Forest Regulations, a lack of public concern, and illegal forest operations such as misuse of exploitation licenses and permits and the killing of trees.

The Forestry Department was unable to accomplish the task due to the tense relationship with the population and also because of lack of human and material resources. In the late 1980's when more knowledge and experience had been gained in natural forest management, it became clear that the Government would never be in the position to protect and manage the country's forest resources without the assistance and support of rural communities. This was the time when the initial community forestry pilot scheme was launched.

Based on these early experiences in state and community forest management models, the Gambian Forest Management Concept (GFMC) was developed, forest policy and legislation were reviewed, the organisational set-up of the FD was restructured, and finally a National Forestry Action Plan was developed. At present the GFMC is implemented in four of the five divisions with technical and financial assistance provided by the Federal Republic of Germany² and the European Union.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM) is mandated to conserve and restore natural habitats and their biodiversity within protected areas, and in recent years also to provide direct benefits to local communities through sound wildlife management practices and from eco-tourism. Due to the absence of adequate government support until recently, the DPWM could not contribute much to either the rehabilitation of the degraded fauna and flora within protected areas, little lone outside them.

² Currently being phased out.

Among the most prominent wildlife species to be found in large numbers these days are the birds, making The Gambia still an attractive a safari destination. Three of the country's protected areas are currently open to the public namely Abuko Nature Reserve, Tanji Bird Reserve and Kiang West National Park (KWNP).

Apart from KWNP, no other protected area has a management plan or any guiding document to assist in management. Unfortunately, the Department's activities are not yet backed-up by an adequate wildlife policy and legislation to assist them in coping with the changes and challenges of the decade. A new Wildlife and Biodiversity policy incorporating a legislative review was recently drafted with assistance provided by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and is awaiting approval.

The importance of maintaining the integrity of the forests and wildlife parks is evident when one looks at a satellite image of the Sub-Region. To the north of The Gambia, the Sine Saloum Region of Senegal has little primary vegetation cover remaining. While the River Gambia provides a natural buffer against the encroaching desert, it is no guarantee that desertification will stop at the River Gambia. With the combination of state forests, community forests, and national parks, there is an opportunity to fortify this "green corridor" and reverse the trend of deforestation already visible on the North Banks of River Gambia (See Figure 4, Forest Cover Map of The Gambia as of 1993, pg. 30).

For both, forestry and wildlife, government budget allocations are insufficient to effectively and properly manage the country's forests and protected areas and thus to stop and eventually reverse forest degradation and habitat destruction. While most of the political and legislative framework conditions and implementation strategies are in place or are being established, funds are urgently needed to strengthen the capacity of both departments and for initial development investments such as survey and demarcation of community forests and protected areas, establishment of necessary physical infrastructure, and sensitising and strengthening the capacity of local communities. Unless the Government further increases budgetary allocations, or donors are found to support the sectors, or other sustainable sources of funding can be secured, there is at present little hope that the sectoral policies, concepts and action plans will be adequately implemented. Because of past and present donor support and the possibility of retaining revenues in the National Forest Fund for reinvestment into the sector, the FD is at present in a better position to cope with the new policy mandates than DPWM, but still depends to a great extent on external assistance in order to bring some 230,000 hectares of forest land under controlled management as called for in the Forest Policy.

Consultations were held in all Divisions to obtain residents' view on strong and weak points of the sectoral approaches being implemented at present. Contrary to what is often believed, communities do not see forests primarily as a source of income or land reserve for agricultural production. Resource access and -use without interference from outsiders ranks first among peoples motivation. Although the traditional tenure system

is often a constraint to land development, the system has proven to be flexible enough to allow the entering of land tenure agreements provided that all the concerned stakeholders are involved. Local authorities play a key role in facilitating such agreements and in acting as arbiters in the case of disputes and conflicts.

Desertification control priorities identified during consultations with the DCCs and CBOs include:

- To reduce forest fires through sensitisation, strengthening the capacity of CBOs, establishment of fire breaks, providing fire fighting equipment;
- to introduce controlled/sustainable forest management practices by involving and empowering local communities and the private sector, and by reviewing the licensing system;
- to encourage private plantation/woodlot establishment in order to meet fuel-wood demand and to maintain regular rainfall;
- to promote on-farm tree planting/agro-forestry/composting systems in order to maintain soil fertility;
- to increase peoples awareness on environmental issues, desertification processes, and the importance of trees and forests for sustainable development;
- to improve livestock and range management by introducing controlled grazing and by planting fodder trees; and,
- to encourage tenure arrangements/contracts in order to promote tree growing on private lands, to reduce the clearing of forest lands, and to bring forest land under controlled management.

Comparing the policy vision of keeping 30% of the total land area under forest cover and the policy objective of putting 75% of this area under controlled management to the actual achievements of just some 12% of the target, it is obvious that major investments and efforts will be required.

It is estimated that up to the year 2010 the sector will require further support until GFMC has been implemented on a nation-wide level and until multiplier mechanisms are in place. At this time, external inputs could be greatly reduced since the Forestry Department, utilising NFF revenues, is expected to be in a position of safeguarding operational and maintenance works in the long-term.

Based on the analysis of the forestry and wildlife sector and the consultations with DCCs/ CBOs the study proposes the strategies to combat desertification as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Forestry/Wildlife Consultations

Forestry	Wildlife	Inter-sectoral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the development of forest policy and legislation implementation tools • Reserve, maintain, and develop forest land resources covering at least 30% of the total land area • Ensure that 75% of the forest land is managed by involving local communities and the private sector • Refine existing and develop further strategies for the prevention and control of forest fires by paying more attention to indigenous knowledge and local conditions • Ensure sustainable supply of forest products for urban and rural population • Increase number and qualification of forestry staff • Ensure co-ordination of all forestry activities at all levels within the FD and in collaboration with other organisations/ sectors • Support applied forestry research to acquire baseline data • Improve FD's physical infrastructures and equipment • Provide adequate funding for sector development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the development of wildlife policy and legislation implementation tools • Establish protected areas covering at least 5% of the total land area for the conservation, protection, management, and sustainable use of flora and fauna • Ensure that all protected areas are properly managed • Ensure active participation of local communities and the private sector in protected area management • Review the administrative structure of the DPWM and ensure the co-ordination of protected area management activities at all levels within the department and with other sectors/ organisations • Support and conduct wildlife inventory and research to acquire wildlife baseline data • Maintain a wildlife service with an adequate number of trained staff at all levels • Improve DPWM's physical infrastructures and equipment • Provide adequate funding for sector development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase environmental awareness of the public and promote sustainable land use practices and techniques • Strengthen the capacity of CBOs in sustainable resource management • Establish and implement concepts promoting the use of energy saving devices and the establishment of renewable energy sources • Support research to acquire baseline data • Introduce land use/ land development planning with the objective of maintaining a national forest cover of at least 30% of the total land area

Source: NAP Sectoral Study on Forestry and Wildlife Management (1999)

4.2.2 Sector Study on Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation

Agriculture is of similar importance in the battle against resource degradation as is maintaining the forest- and vegetation cover, since agricultural extension and changing cropping patterns have been primary agents contributing to the loss of land-based resources. There is a continuous conflict between the national development goals of food self sufficiency and increased agricultural production on the one hand and conservation of land- and water resources on the other.

From 1980 to 1993 agricultural land increased to 37% of the total land area, while fallow was reduced by 35%. According to recent FAO supported surveys, 407,000 ha of the land are suitable for agriculture; this threshold has already been passed. While another 147,000 ha are marked "suitable with classification", Gambian farmers have started to cultivate this land reserve.

About half the annual cultivated land is used for groundnut production. Groundnuts are a critical crop as regards soil conservation since they are cultivated on clean-weeded land that is then left bare after harvest. Average groundnut yields decreased by 20% from 1979 to 1996. This trend is commonly seen as a sign of decreasing soil fertility.

Monocropping, often in combination with inappropriate mechanisation practices, is on the increase. According to recent statistics 64% of all fields fall under the category monocropped, 15% are used for mixed cropping and only 21% of the arable land is left under fallow. This is bad news for sustainable farming in The Gambia.

Until recently, the backbone of agriculture was shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation practices utilise the land resources in order to restore soil fertility. A cultivation cycle of 3 to 5 years was succeeded by 20 years of fallow. Furthermore, cultivation used to be characterised by mixed cropping of mainly cereals and legumes. Land clearing through fire, today a major menace, was then an appropriate and labour effective method. In 1946, only 17% of the land surface was used for fallow cropping, i.e. continuous cropping did not exist at the time.

Rice is the second most important crop in The Gambia. The total production fell from 37,000 to 20,000 tons in the period 1979 to 1990, although average yields rose slightly. This phenomenon can be explained by the reduction of lands suitable for rice cultivation because of aggravating salt-water intrusions.

The study identifies several key-factors causing the breakdown of the traditional farming systems and the depletion of vegetation cover:

- The Sahelian drought: Rainfall rapidly decreased in the 1960's,
- Rapid population growth,

- High immigration rates due to rapid desertification in Senegal and political instability in the region,
- Farm mechanisation with draft animals, and
- Growing demand for more cash crops at the expense of mixed farming.

These problems have been well recognised by planners and agriculturists. However, in general, more emphasis has been given to improving production than to stabilising the production system. As a consequence, the focus of interventions has been on increasing yields through lowland development rather than on improving production capacity through upland soil and water conservation.

A holistic approach to food production needs to be adopted that takes into account the interlinkages between the uplands and lowlands, not only in terms of erosion and siltation, but also with respect to the integration of agriculture, livestock, and forestry into one farming system. Agro-forestry and conservation farming are at the centre of such an approach. The message can be spelt out in simple terms: "The Gambia needs more trees in order to protect the land resources against ongoing desertification". Trees have to be (re)integrated into the agricultural land be it as agro-forestry-, farm-forestry- or community-forestry systems.

Activities of the Soil and Water Management Unit (SWMU) are highly appreciated in the country and should continue, not only in disseminating technical improvements but especially in the extension aspect and the training-of-trainers. There is a standard "package" available that effectively serves the purpose of soil- and water conservation:

- Construction of multipurpose dikes to protect fields from saline tidal influence.
- Construction of water retention dikes in upland catchments not affected by saline intrusions.
- Construction of contour berms in the upland to reduce soil erosion.
- Introduction of new rice varieties.
- Protection of uplands by tree planting.

So far, 3,733 ha of rice fields have been identified for potential protection and improvement; to date, approximately 700 ha have been protected against soil erosion. Activities of the SWMU were observed to be a good combination of production and conservation activities. It is recommended that SWMU give more emphasis to upland conservation and guide more technicians in other areas and from other services in order to increase the output.

In the past, SWMU activities were supported by the Federal Republic of Germany. This support has come to an end but the Lowlands Agricultural Development Project (LADEP) the largest agricultural project operating in the country at present, has taken up the initiative (see below).

Extension is seen as the second important issue. The Gambia introduced the Training and Visit (T&V) extension system in 1985/86 with a production-oriented approach. At present there are about 180 government field extension staff engaged in agriculture and livestock production. Despite considerable improvements, especially under the Agricultural Services Project (ASP), conservation-related performance is still far from satisfactory.

The approach and achievements of the EDF co-financed "Support to Decentralised Rural Development" programme, currently being implemented in North Bank Division (NBD), Upper River Division (URD), and Western Division (WD), are noteworthy in regards to outreach. Multidisciplinary facilitation teams, comprising specialists from line departments and local government institutions, are the centre-piece of a new approach to community involvement, encompassing resource management. The programme puts emphasis on decentralisation and bottom-up planning. The Department for Community Development (DCD) in URD spearheaded the Multidisciplinary Facilitation Team (MDFT) approach. The MDFT comprises Agriculture, Livestock, Community Development, Forestry, Health, Cotton Development, Family Planning, Water Resources and the Sesame Growing Association, who come together at the ward-level to analyse the local situation and prioritise the needs, in order to work out a development programme. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) instruments are used for the analysis. Experiences gathered to date are positive, since for the first time all agencies, governmental and non-governmental, in agriculture and natural resources have come together in order to develop a comprehensive local action programme.

Reviewing the sectoral study on Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation, it is evident that a comprehensive intervention package has not been developed to the extent that nationwide implementation could safely be advocated and attract external support. There is an urgent need to intensify pilot programmes related to land management in upland areas. The sectoral study recommends a three - tiered approach:

Firstly, to continue with and build on on-going initiatives that show real promise. These are mainly the AfDB and IFAD-supported LADEP, and the MDFT approach. LADEP is composed of five main activities:

- Soil and water management schemes,
- Tidal swamp access schemes,
- Lowland Development Master Plan,
- Support services, and
- Program management.

It is apparent that LADEP interventions, aimed at alleviating poverty by improving food security, are to a large extent limited to the lowlands -- all partners are called upon to revise and expand the scope of LADEP, to include conservation farming activities.

MDFT should also be extended to support all NAP activities with a view to streamlining and harmonising extension approaches. The SWMU needs more partners in the field to increase the output. SWMU could play a consultancy role to these implementing agencies. The sectoral study supports the extension of the MDFT approach to all divisions of the country, which should also be seen as a clear sign in support of the local government reform. It further recommends that on-going initiatives should concentrate more on environmental aspects, especially watershed conservation. Possibilities should be explored to utilise the Divisional Development Funds (DDF) to finance land-use improvement activities.

Secondly, the study identifies a need for the Department of State for Agriculture (DOSA) in general and Department of Agricultural Services (DAS) in particular to develop, test and disseminate sustainable and production-oriented conservation-farming packages on the basis of participatory land-use planning: Mixed cropping (especially legumes and cereals) should be encouraged in order to protect the soil against wind and water. Crop residues should not be burned but left for mulching or be composted. Groundnut cultivation on ridges in order to reduce runoff should be tested. These are emerging elements of a sustainable farming system still to be developed. Land use planning should not be seen as the sole responsibility of government agencies. NGOs and Area Councils can play an important role in land husbandry as well. Greater cooperation with FAO should be sought. A detailed step-by-step approach to decentralised, participatory land use planning is provided in the study. In geographic terms, the starting point should be the North Bank of the River Gambia.

Thirdly, the sectoral study on Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation makes preliminary recommendations regarding institutional changes needed to improve natural resource management. These recommendations would require additional analysis and vetting at both the national and local levels. Chief among them are:

- It is necessary to improve the process of coordination with farmers – a farmer-centred approach needs to be strengthened. Production and environmental-oriented departments should be under one Department of State.
- Legal adjustments are needed to protect the production base. The study discusses the possibility to formulate and pass a Land Care Act. Under such an act, any land owner has the obligation to maintain a minimum of trees on his land and to reduce gully erosion. On the other hand, the proposed Act would provide, through a certificate of ownership, for the legal right of tree ownership and land improvements despite of the unclear land-tenure situation. The proposal is still in its initial form and merits further investigations.
- A review of the existing EIA guidelines concerning agricultural projects (e.g. minimum amount of trees per hectare, lowland activities call automatically for upland conservation activities etc.).

4.2.3 Sector Study on Livestock Production and Range Management

Rangeland and livestock production is a widely discussed issue in desertification research in the Sahel. Desertification is commonly associated with a feature of overstocking, overgrazing, and depletion of accessible water resources. Livestock husbandry has received its share of “bad press” with terms like “irrational”, “irresponsible” and “incomprehensible” -behaviour used to describe the practices of West African herdsmen:

- Livestock owners keep large herds for reasons of social status and prestige thus over-utilising available grazing resources.
- Livestock owners do not sell livestock even when prices are high (perverse market response).
- The combination of individual ownership of animals and communal ownership of land leads without fail to an overexploitation and degradation of the rangeland (“tragedy of the commons”).

A closer look however, shows that these views are, by and large, nothing but a misconception. Although desertification is on the increase, herd population in The Gambia has remained stable over the last two decade and irreversible degradation processes have not taken place on a large scale.³ However, there are numerous serious indicators that the risk of such processes starting is growing if nothing is done to change current land use practices. Initial stages such as changes in the vegetation and reduction in primary productivity of the land can be observed in numerous locations throughout the country.

The fact remains, however, that livestock husbandry contributes, with considerable variance in regional impact, to the pressure on the country’s natural resource base. There are three main reasons for this:

- Livestock agriculture in The Gambia is exposed to high climatic risk and high disease challenge. Most prominent risks are the drastic decline of forage quality on the natural rangelands as well as on harvested fields during the dry season. Likewise the high tsetse fly incidence presents a significant challenge in the more humid environments of the country, as does a dwindling water supply in the range areas. In order to be prepared for these risks, herds have to be of such sizes that even considerable losses can be experienced without jeopardising the reproduction base.
- The prevailing livestock production systems in the country can be classified as extensive and semi-intensive agro-pastoralism. A third system of higher intensity, a form of seasonal stall-feeding, is presently emerging.
- Over 60% of all animal feed stems from natural rangeland and stubble grazing, 15% from harvested crop residues and the remainder from household refuse and

³ Figures on cross-border movements of herds, however, are not available.

agro-industrial by-products. The regular annual shortfall of feeds and forage is estimated at approximately 20-25% of the national herd requirements, but is higher during the second part of the dry season. Suitable dry season grazing is limited to about 10% of the country's land surface, which typically falls in the same low-lying areas as rice cultivation. This competition for land often leads to conflicts.

Livestock husbandry in The Gambia is well adapted to environmental threats but is characterised by low productivity. Farmers' readiness for production-oriented investments into livestock is therefore extremely low. It is against this background that Donor interventions in the livestock sector have been few in the past when compared to other sectors and their overall success is judged to be minimal.

The Sector Study on Livestock Production and Range Management has no ready made solutions at hands either. There is the clear need, especially for the Department of Livestock Services (DLS), to increase action-oriented research and community-based extension with a view to developing intervention packages that are economically viable, socially acceptable, and environmentally sustainable.

Acceptable technical interventions in livestock and range management are, according to the sector study's conclusions, agroforestry, biological N-fixation, controlling of livestock traffic and livestock numbers, integration of livestock-farming and forestry, and in the fields of livestock management, livestock marketing and range management. Their common objective is to reduce the acute pressure on pastures and feed resources by better matching livestock requirements with the natural resource base and by increasing the efficiency of conversion of the natural resources into farmers' income.

Socio-economic and policy interventions need to aim at making the social, economic and legal framework for the livestock sector in The Gambia more conducive to long-term investment into land by communities and individuals. Revision of the current land tenure system, improvement of rural services and marketing structures, provision of a sound data base for country-wide land-use plans and regulations, development of rural income alternatives and protection of the Gambian livestock sector against subsidised imports are the most important issues.

Actions suggested in context with the Convention to Combat Desertification are not specific to this objective alone. The main task is not so much in devising specific instruments to fight desertification but to promote efficient, benign and sustainable use of the natural resource base, in particular in farming, livestock production and forestry, in an integrated effort.

It can be concluded from the sectoral study that large-scale interventions still have to be defined. This, any large-scale interventions must take into consideration the geographical situation of the country that makes "stand alone" interventions almost impossible and clearly requires a trans-boundary and regional focus.

The study identifies various priority interventions:

- Procurement of a solid database for future land use planning, i.e. establishment of a Range Resource Inventory. The inventory would comprise the analysis of range-land-density, vigour and biomass, the establishment of categories of rangeland, production potentials etc. It would serve as a base for land-use planning at the communal level.
- Development of extension packages for stratified livestock systems.
- The review of the land tenure system.
- Programme to intensify livestock enterprises (range management, biological N-fixation, feed gardens etc.).
- Livestock Sector Support (test and dissemination of technical interventions such as multipurpose trees, communal grazing areas, sinking of wells).

The study proposes that the AfDB supported Livestock Sector Study/Project take the lead in implementing these activities. Given the fact that AfDB houses the UNCCD Regional Coordination Unit, it is further suggested that the Bank supports DLS in coordinating sector-relevant interventions under the NAP. Another important agency for interventions in the livestock sector will be International Trypanotolerance Centre (ITC) that has currently launched a feed-garden programme in CRD and supports livestock-extension approaches.

4.2.4 Sector Study on Population and Social Dimensions of Desertification

The study highlights the relationship between people and environment. Drought and desertification are understood as socio-economic challenges that need to be addressed through socio-economic policy interventions. People should not only be seen as agents and victims of soil and water degradation but also as potential innovators and creators of sustainable land use and livelihood patterns. In particular, women and youth play a key role in this realm.

In The Gambia, socio-demographic dynamics combine one of the highest fertility (Total Fertility Rates or TFR at 6.04) and population growth rates (4.2% annual growth) in the region with a low acceptance for modern contraception (Contraceptive Prevalence Rate or CPR around 7%). The population estimate for 1998 gives a figure of approximately 1.3 million people, to double every 20 to 25 years. In 1963, the population was in the range of 320,000. Growth rate slowed down in the 1980's and went up again in the 1990's. This increase can be attributed to high in-migration, as economic hardships and civil unrest in the sub-region made The Gambia, a relatively stable country, more attractive. According to the 1993 Census international in-migration contributed 1.2% of the annual growth rate and an estimated 151,000 migrants aged seven and over were

resident in The Gambia (equivalent to 14% of the total population) by that time. The majority of immigrants have settled in the Greater Banjul Area (GBA). These immigrants were not always foreigners from other countries since migratory cross-border fluctuations have been a steady feature in the sub-region.

Seventy-one percent of the Gambian population are aged under 24 years, 80% under 30 years. Life expectancy stands at 54 years for males and 56.7 years for females. At birth, life expectancy for the rural population is 45 years, much lower than the average of 52 years for sub-saharan Africa as a whole.

A key issue in The Gambia is the “worrisome feature of the youthful nature of the population” (UNDP National Human Development Report). This has to be seen against the background that The Gambia is by all indicators a poor country, as a matter of fact one of the poorest countries in the region with a GDP per capita of US \$ 360. The UNDP report ranks the country as number 165 out of 175 countries on the Human Development Index. . The corresponding population density of 108 per km² places The Gambia among the four most densely populated countries in Africa. The presence of such a youthful population automatically creates a demographic pressure on future generations which means that population density will certainly increase. Clearly, an effective population policy is an important factor in the long-term success or failure in the fight to halt desertification.

Government’s recognition of the important role that youths in The Gambia play in national development is evident, as they have been included as an important partner in the National Population Policy. With improved education, increased access to appropriate training and better employment opportunities, they will play a key role in reducing fertility rates. They will also help to achieve a balance between socio-economic development and population growth and consequently protect the environment from further degradation.

While the overall country’s population density gives pause, it is only compounded by the high migration from the rural areas into the urban settlements, particularly in the coastal areas (e.g. Kanifing, Serekunda, and Sukuta). The 1993 Household Census found that 37% of the population residing in the Kanifing Municipal Area (68,000 persons) were migrants from rural parts of the country.

Gender disparities, particularly in rural areas, are a critical element, which must be considered. Given the considerable youth out-migration from rural areas of youth, women, elderly, and children are the primary labour force remaining in rural areas. As such, women’s role in natural resource management must be seriously addressed.

The Gambia is ranked 138th out of 146 countries included in the UNDP’s 1997 Gender Related Development Index (GDI), based on gender disparities in the life expectancy, educational attainment and income. Women are worse off concerning each of these

indicators than the average for women in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA), and on all socio-economic indicators, Gambian women are far worse of than Gambian men (see Table 5).

Table 5: Gender Comparison of Socio-economic Indicators

	Gambian women	Gambian men	Women in SSA
Life expectancy at birth	47.2	44.0	51.5
Adult literacy	22.7%	50.9%	44.4%
Combined educational enrolment (1994)	27.0%	41.1%	38.4%

Source: Sector Study for Population and Social Dimensions of Desertification (1999)

Although female-headed households in The Gambia do not appear to suffer a higher incidence of poverty, in general women are amongst the poorest of the poor in Gambian society. Women's multiple roles and responsibilities impact heavily on the time and physical constitution and lead to long and arduous workdays. While mechanisation has improved men's agricultural productivity, most tasks falling to women continue to be carried out with manual tools. Economically active Gambian women are commonly engaged in those sectors where incomes are low such as lowland crop production and petty trading. According to the 1993 Household Economic Survey, average male incomes are nearly four times higher than those of women.

The Gambian society is male dominated and therefore women's participation in development faces severe constraints. In general women are paid less, occupy menial jobs and their participation in decision-making is very limited. By the age of 21, most women in the rural areas have been married and have one or two children, making child-nurturing their prime responsibility. They provide around 70% of unskilled farm labour and are the major subsistence food producers of the society, despite the fact that they lack appropriate tools, face difficulties in acquiring land ownership and access to credit facilities.

The process of land allocation is patriarchal in nature. Women's access to land is always through men (marriage, inheritance from mother in-laws or borrowing from male relatives). Land ownership is generally achieved by clearing and preparing land for cultivation, which is a male task. Women are especially disadvantaged concerning land use rights in The Gambia. Women generally tend to be given access to lowland rice fields or other poor quality and more distant pieces of land. Their land is among the first which will be partitioned if need to subdivide land arises. This insecurity in land use rights in turn has the consequence that women tend to plant and harvest annual crops and avoid long-term investments.

In addition, the study identifies various social issues as being of paramount importance for desertification control as well. Most important is land tenure insecurity, one of the main reasons for the unwillingness on the side of poor groups of society to invest into long-term sustainable land use practices such as reforestation, agroforestry, soil and water conservation. The 1992 State Land Act states that all land belongs to the State and that all Gambians have rights of access to land. However, land in The Gambia has traditionally been under founding family (collective) control, empowering the village authority or the 'Alkalo' to distribute and (re-)allocate land for agricultural or other purposes. Only within the urban areas of Banjul and the Greater Banjul Area (GBA) private or collective rights are known.

The following classification of the (emerging) land tenure system can be made:

- Freehold - very rare private ownership in urban areas
- Leasehold - land that is granted by the Department of State for Lands and Local Government on differing conditions in urban and rural areas
- Customary tenure - universal land right for everybody limited by the influence of traditional authorities. The land may be passed on to heirs and descendants

In the case of range- and forestlands, where ownership is not clearly defined by the village authority, it is typically perceived that these areas are under "government ownership." Clear, legally binding arrangements between Government and communities, such as Community Forestry Agreements for example, are needed to regulate the share of obligations and benefits in these areas.

Other important issues are the high dependency on agricultural income and the problems in creating alternative sources of income. Although being a controversial topic, the careful development of the tourist sector is seen as a chance. Creating opportunities for alternative income must be seen as a necessary additional strategy to reduce pressure on the natural resource base as well as for alleviating poverty. Farmer's strategies to diversify agricultural production or attempts to create new avenues of income should therefore be strongly supported. Access to credit and extension services need to be improved, especially for women and youth. The credit component of the Skills Development Project should be closely examined for coordination in this area.⁴

Given the importance of the tourism industry, The Government should further explore possibilities to create avenues for spreading culturally acceptable, environmentally sound and economically viable forms of tourism into the whole country (Eco-tourism). This could create new avenues for income to the rural poor and add on to all efforts in combating desertification.

⁴ Although the overall project, implemented through the Department of Community Development, has been phased out, the credit component under this project is still on-going.

The National Poverty Alleviation Programme development goal is the improvement of the overall standard of living. Being aware of the fact that poverty constitutes a major obstacle to better land husbandry, and the necessity for the rural population to satisfy their immediate needs in terms of food and income, strategies to foster rural development and alleviate (rural) poverty have to be guided by the following strategic principles:

- Provide social amenities and improve living conditions in the rural areas,
- Improve services in basic health and education sector,
- Advancement of women's and youth's participation and contributions to development,
- Intensification and diversification of agricultural production,
- Creation of alternative income opportunities,
- Reduce rural-urban migration of youth,
- Creation of an enabling environment for sustainable land use,
- Support decentralisation efforts, and
- Strengthen information, education and communication (IEC) programmes.

However, desertification control in The Gambia stands and falls with successful attempts to re-establish a balance between natural resource base, economic- and population growth. The National Population Programme Framework has defined three pillars of intervention:

- Reproductive / sexual health and family planning,
- population and development strategies,
- advocacy/information, education, communication (IEC).

The sector study strongly advocates support to this approach under NAP, inter alia through taking up and further disseminating the 'FANKANTA' Initiative. The concept of the 'FANKANTA' initiative was developed in 1996 and 1997 through nationwide consultations of communities, health workers, religious and community leaders. The idea was to find a local word or concept to be understood by the major ethnic groups in The Gambia and to depict family welfare, health, protection, and prosperity. 'FANKANTA' was selected to stand for positive family values encouraging parents to have the number of safely spaced and healthy children they can adequately provide for. It possesses a much broader, more comprehensive vision than is reflected by family planning alone. Extensive sensitisation of community, political and religious leaders are carried out before officially launching in a specific region. The health personnel of the respective division are trained in counselling, communication strategies and provision of quality family planning services to meet the needs of the population.

The promotion of the 'FANKANTA' initiative has created a new dynamic process with the support of all relevant institutions using participatory approaches. Interviews and

focus group discussions at community level show that the initiative is understood as a comprehensive approach for socio-economic development. Intensive use of modern communication channels particularly the mass media increase people's awareness of the 'FANKANTA' concept. Standard 'FANKANTA' Initiative packages for implementation are available now. 'FANKANTA' was tested in the North Bank Division (NBD) and is now ready for country-wide dissemination and propagation.

The study points at the linkage between FANKANTA at community level and propagation through MDFT and the need to develop a widely accepted adolescent reproductive health strategy, especially for adolescents in urban settings.

4.2.5 Sector Study on Institutional Framework

UNCCD marks a conceptual break-through since it not only identify climatic, social and behavioural causes for the spreading menace of global desertification, as traditionally is the case, but lays equal emphasis on the need to create a conducive institutional framework.

The Gambia has been a forerunner in environmental awareness and adaptation of the country's institutional framework since passing of the Banjul Declaration in 1977. There are a number of the lessons learnt from more than two decades of institutional reshaping and reform.

- Although appropriate, the past natural resource-specific institutional initiatives were belated and inadequate and could not arrest natural resource degradation. Similarly, the agriculture and natural resource sector-wide institutional initiatives were opportune but could not be effectively sustained mainly due to political interference. To date, numerous institutions are dealing with management and preservation of natural resources in The Gambia. The burden of maintenance of these various sets of institutions on the public budget is becoming unsustainable.
- The key constraints limiting performance are understaffing, inadequate equipment and inadequate budgetary provisions. For example, the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) has only 12 qualified veterinarians out of a minimum staff requirement of about 35 professionals. The Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM) has a staff enrolment of 40 people of which only three are professionals, three are diploma holders and the rest are support staff of various categories and levels of education. The Forestry Department (FD) has only 7 professionals, 13 middle level staff, 36 low-level forest guards and 59 casual labourers.
- Parastatal type institutions responsible for agriculture and natural resource management on a sector-wide level have proven most disappointing.

- Different components of natural resources management are managed by different institutions and governed by different legislation. There is a need to establish a mechanism or framework for inter-sectoral coordination and cooperation on matters related to desertification at programme and operational levels. The National Environment Agency has achieved considerable progress in this field through establishing a network of working group and task forces. Although coordination processes proved to be lengthy and sometimes cumbersome, the overall result is positive. Information sharing and conflict resolution at an early stage have been greatly improved.
- The situation at the divisional and communal level is less favourable. An adequate institutional structure for the implementation of the NAP is one that takes account of the proposed Reform of the Local Government System and Decentralisation.

As regards legislation, different components of the natural resources are managed by different institutions and governed by different legislation. The phenomenon of segregated and often conflicting legislation is widespread. Progress in strengthening and harmonising legislation is still limited to date, although a working group on environmental legislation has been set in force.

The sector study on Institutional Framework concludes that an institutional strategy for NAP must hinge on four main strategic objectives:

- Effective institutional structures and legal framework;
- Wider participation of the population;
- Adequate institutional capacity including human and financial resources; and,
- An effective monitoring mechanism.

In spite of past efforts, the outreach to the divisional and community level has been insufficient and “decentralisation of action” must be the catch-word in NAP implementation. Sustainable arrangements at the level of local government institutions are therefore of pivotal importance.

The Divisional Coordinating Committee (DCC) plays a central role in implementing decentralised initiatives in resource management. There is currently a DCC in each of the five Administrative Divisions of the country.

Normally, the DCCs consist of representatives from area councils, local heads of government departments, and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) operating at the Divisional level. Local interest groups are allowed to participate on an *ad hoc* basis depending on the topic at hand. The chairman is elected and the Divisional Commissioner acts as secretary. Sectoral sub-committees may be formed, varying in number and scope from Division to Division.

The sector study strongly advocates linking NAP implementation to the present local government reform initiative, which is being planned within the framework of the Reform of the Local Government System and Decentralisation Programme. These initiatives recognise the need for local communities to be involved in the national socio-economic development process and be empowered to make their own decisions on matters pertaining to their development. This requires a radical change in the role of government functions and powers. However, it will certainly take time for Government to adjust to its new role as “facilitator of democratic governance”.

The constitution provides for an institutional framework comprising of the Councils (City, Municipality and Divisions), the District Authorities, and the Village Authorities. It is envisaged that development functions will be decentralised to the divisional, district and village levels through the following structures:

- The Commissioner;
- Line Departments;
- The District Authority
- “Alkalolu” and the Council of Elders;
- Area Councils;
- Office of the Council;
- Ward Development Committees (WDCs);
- Village Development Committees (VDCs); and,
- Coordinating Mechanism: the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which currently exists as the Divisional Coordinating Committee.

All the structural elements proposed under the decentralised administrative system are currently existing, with the exception of the Office of the Council, the WDCs and the VDCs. The VDCs were formally established village based development institutions, which will be accorded legal recognition as soon as the National Assembly passes the Local Government Reform Legislation. The District Authority, “Alkalolu”, the Council of Elders and the DCC are all legally established and recognised institutions.

Leadership for the key elements of the institutional framework (Councils, District Authority and Village Authority) will be elected and the Department of State for Local Government and Lands will be responsible for coordination and advocacy for these local authorities. The enactment of the proposed comprehensive legislative framework will repeal the different existing laws setting up the various structures.

The study arrives at the conclusion that the proposed institutional framework for the implementation of NAP must take into account both the proposed Reform of the Local Government System and Decentralisation Programme and the existing institutional arrangements adopted for the elaboration of the NAP proposals. The structural elements of such a framework include:

On the national level:

- The National Environment Management Council,
- The Departments of State for Agriculture; Local Government and Lands, Fisheries Natural Resources and the Environment and Trade, Industry and Employment,
- National Environment Agency and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Working Group,
- Forestry Department as national focal point, in collaboration with NEA and the
- Department of Planning.

On the divisional level:

- Divisional Forestry Offices acting as Divisional NAP secretariats,
- Divisional Coordinating Committees,
- Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Sub-Committees.

On the local level:

- District Authorities,
- Ward Development Committees and Village Development Committees,
- Multi-Disciplinary Facilitation Teams.

Figure 5 depicts a schematic presentation of the proposed institutional framework for the NAP implementation.

The study proposes to implement a number of institutional initiatives and capacity building measures. They can be summarised as follows:

- Strengthening of existing institutional arrangements adopted for the implementation of the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification,
- Strengthening of institutional capacities of agencies implementing the NAP,
- Strengthening of institutional capacities of Non Governmental Organisations involved in implementing the NAP,
- Establishment of a National Desertification Trust Fund, and,
- Strengthening of institutional capacities to monitor implementing of the NAP.

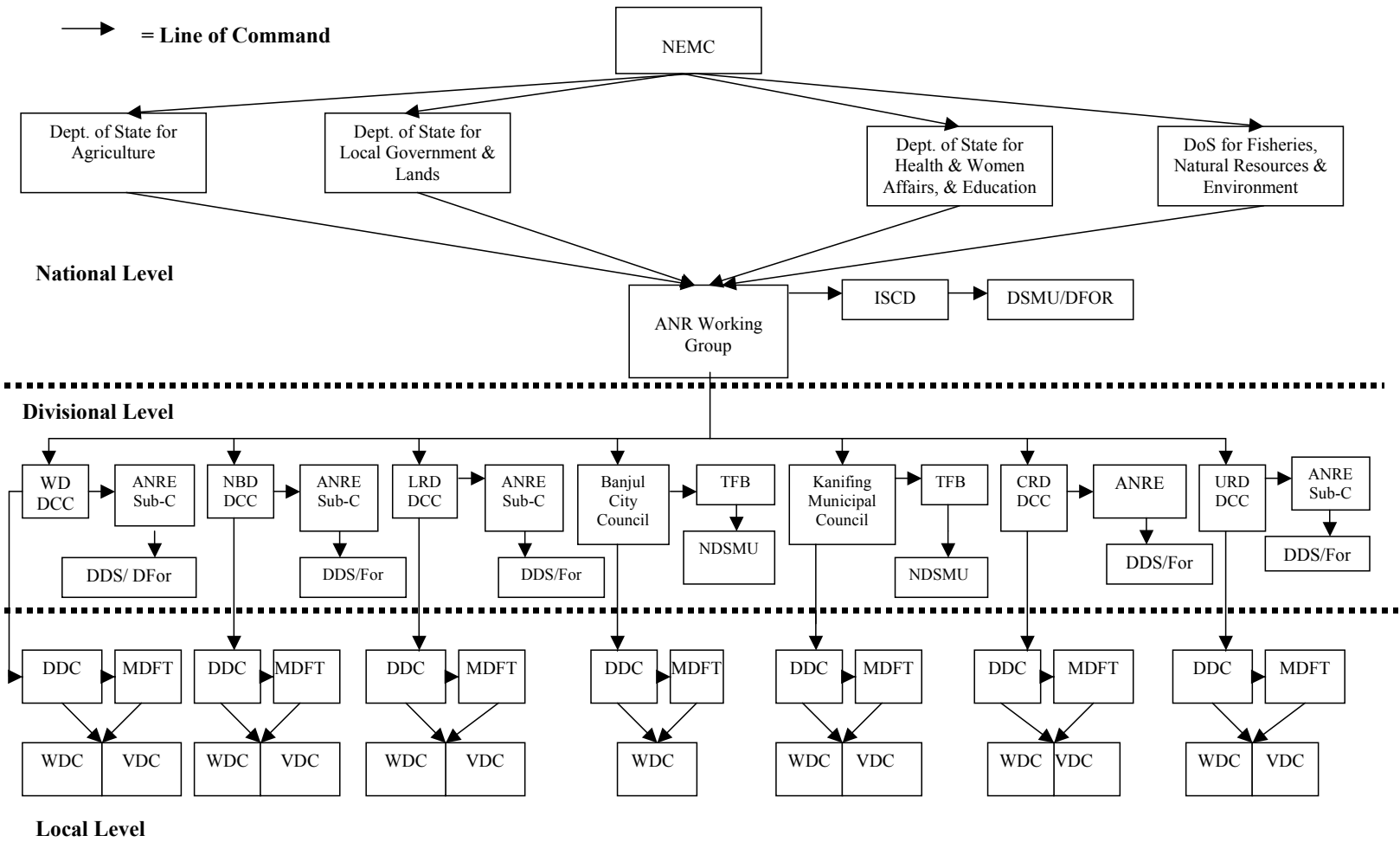


Figure 5: Proposed Institutional Framework for Implementation of the NAP

5. The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification in The Gambia

The NAP was developed as a comprehensive and integrated initiative, which takes into consideration existing national development goals and implementation principles as well as UNCCD guidelines and principles. A series of action-oriented priorities were identified which will serve as the foundation for all action in the next two-three years.

5.1 Development Goal

Implementing UNCCD is not undertaken in isolation, rather is part and parcel of three major national policy objectives and initiatives, set by GOTG:

Government has introduced the *The Gambia Incorporated . . . VISION 2020* development program in which it commits itself to conserve and promote the rational use of the nation's natural resources and environment for the benefit of present and future generations in a manner that is consistent with the overall goal of sustainable development. At the core of VISION 2020 is a recognition that accelerated economic growth will require increased investment and exploitation of the country's natural resources. In addition to new investment, however, sustained growth will also require successful incorporation of new technologies that are environmentally sound to increase productivity particularly among resource-based establishments.

VISION 2020 is built on two fundamental assumptions:

- There is a need to consolidate and deepen the private sector-led economic development programme, and
- As the level of private sector economic activity increases, so does the potential for negative environmental impacts. The Gambia must continue to improve its capacity to manage the environment and natural resources to meet this challenge.

VISION 2020 is in harmony with the **Gambia Environment Action Plan (GEAP)**, as well as the three post-Rio conventions The Gambia is a Party to. The GEAP is an umbrella framework, which serves to avoid duplication and segregation in the implementation of the various national action programmes. The second phase of the GEAP (GEAP II) has been prepared and is awaiting approval from the National Assembly.

At the centre of GEAP II is the commitment to ensure sustainable development by developing an effective and financially self-sustaining environmental management system for The Gambia. Areas of particular interest to the GEAP II Program include agriculture and livestock, natural resources, trade and investment, tourism and infrastructure, waste management and coastal zone management.

The Government of The Gambia recently endorsed a medium-term **Agricultural and Natural Resources Sector Policy Objectives and Strategies** for the period 2001 -

2005. Paramount among the sector policy objectives ranks the achievement of national food self-sufficiency, and security through the promotion of sustainably diversified food production programmes. Recognising the need to link productivity and sustainability marks a conceptual advance in formulating agricultural policy. This is very much in line with spirit and objectives of UNCCD.

However, the immediate-term policy problem of the agriculture and natural resources sector remains how to increase agricultural production while maintaining a rational exploitation of the natural resource base on a sustainable basis. This policy problem is manifested in low farm income, growing rural poverty and household food insecurity, accelerated rural-urban drift and rapid environmental degradation. The development of the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification is a first step.

5.2 Guiding Principles

In addition to the national policy objectives mentioned above, NAP implementation is guided by:

- The Convention to Combat Desertification,
- The Convention's Regional Implementation Annex for Africa,
- The conclusions and deliberations of the three Conferences of the Parties to UNCCD,
- The results of the two National Fora in The Gambia, and last but by no means least,
- The aspirations and initiatives of the communities in The Gambia having contributed to the NAP process.

The Convention and Regional Implementation Annex reject the notion that UNCCD is just another set of projects or a new funding line. Rather, both documents reiterate the understanding of the international community that UNCCD provides a platform for re-orienting national policies and making better use of available resources.

The Convention addresses technical, political, social, economic, and institutional causes of desertification on equal terms. UNCCD implementation offers the opportunity to foster self-help and policy dialogue at all national levels, to coordinate initiatives already in place and to rationalise the use of scarce financial resources. UNCCD calls for the observance of the following principles:

- To apply a cross-sectoral approach,
- To rationalise and strengthen the resources already allocated for combating desertification,
- To promote the use of existing financial mechanisms and arrangements,
- To build initiatives on already existing Environmental Action Plans - to be reviewed and improved if required, and
- To encourage popular participation at all stages of the process.

Taking stock of these principles and recognising the widening gap between requirements, available funds, and resources in The Gambia, the NAP has adopted the following principles to guide NAP implementation:

- Mobilisation of local resources wherever possible,
- Strengthening of private sector involvement and responsibility as a priority,
- Consolidation and/or reorientation of on-going projects and programmes,
- Focus on proven measures and technologies,
- Emphasis on awareness-raising, informing the public and environmental education,
- Implementation of NAP and the National Action Plans under the Conventions of Biodiversity and Climate Change in a coordinated manner along with the second Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP II),
- Sustained support to decentralisation and Local Government Reform,
- Enforcement of legal instruments already in place, notably Environmental Impact Assessment and legislation of new laws (e.g. Forestry Legislation) as appropriate,
- Seeking further Donor support for priority interventions.

5.3 Implementation Approach

All too often, Action Plans and Programmes result in “shopping lists” with the underlying purpose of the request being to bridge shortfalls in recurrent government expenditures or to provide incentives to the implementing agencies. Being aware of this danger and mindful of the fact that mobilisation of local resources will be crucial to the development of a sustainable approach to combat desertification, the NAP firstly calls on all national and international partners to **avoid duplication of efforts** and **segregation of planning and implementation** in on-going and forthcoming interventions in the agriculture and natural resources sector.

Secondly, The Gambia can proudly announce that combating desertification does not have to start from square one. The country has made visible and recognised progress in reversing the trend of forest destruction and depletion of the nation’s vegetation cover. Proven and accepted technologies are in place to serve the purpose of soil and water conservation in the country. These achievements can easily serve as an entry point and base for initiatives to come. Environmental legislation has provided useful tools in addressing degradation of the land-based resources. Last but not least, there are promising signs that enhancing family welfare through sensitisation and family planning is gaining momentum.

Being a small country with limited resources, The Gambia thirdly realises the need to manage the fragile resource base, mainly by carefully utilising available funding. It is for this reason that it is advocated that implementation of all sector relevant initiatives are concluded, first of all the three post-Rio Conventions, wherever possible.

Fourthly, Government clearly realises the need to set an example in its own camp. This refers to adherence to environmental legislation and regulations, the dissemination of policy objectives to the local government level and maintaining adequate budgetary commitments to line agencies and local government. This is seen both as prerequisite

and sign for the private sector to assume a more active role in resource management and conservation.

Lastly, NAP does not envision creating new implementation structures or implementing bodies. Responsibility for implementation should rest with the designated agencies or organisations at the central or local level.

5.4 Ranking of Components

Action measures were first presented in the Draft NAP, subsequently updated, streamlined, and discussed during the Second National Forum. It is noted that initiatives that were raised during the early phases of the NAP development process, but not selected for the highest priority, should be reconsidered during the next review of the NAP.

5.4.1 Initiatives Identified in the Consultative Process

A wealth of proposals for action emerged during NAP consultations. All partners, local communities and their organisations, NGOs, local and central government agencies, members of the Donor community and the private sector actively contributed to the process. Annex 1 to the Draft NAP, presented in February 2000, contained a series of project sheets indicating objectives, main activities, time span, implementing agency and, where possible, estimated costs and sources of funding. These proposals were screened for feasibility and viability. On the basis of these project sheets and preliminary sectoral consultations, a tentative investment plan, indicating strategy objectives, issues and gaps, output targets, main actors, time frame and an indicative budget was prepared in August 2000. Both documents were presented to the second National Forum in order to establish priorities.

On this front, the next step is to re-assess and -evaluate the proposed activities, to ensure efforts are not duplicative, financial requests are streamlined to mobilise existing resources whenever possible, and activities are designed to result in efficient use of human, financial, and material resources. This review process will be conducted in early 2001 and will be presented as an Annex to the NAP.

Some of the proposals for action fall under the mandate of UNCBD or UNFCCC. This is not considered a conflict of interest, but rather an opportunity to build synergy, unify approaches, and cut across sectoral boundaries.

5.4.2 Setting of Priorities

Priorities have to reflect a compromise between requirements, national objectives, proven technologies and the availability of funds. Therefore, the second National Forum adopted a clear set of objectives for the formulation and elaboration of the National Action Programme, namely:

- Realistic approach in terms of financial requirements and scope of interventions,
- Building on achievements and proven technologies
- Action orientation,
- Community orientation, and
- Mobilisation of national resources.

There is a common understanding among all partners to NAP that implementation should start in those fields where rapid and visible impacts can be expected and consequently, funds can be mobilised within a reasonable period of time.

It is against this background that the Forum has recommended a three-pronged approach to implement NAP on the basis of priorities:

- **Implementation of priority measures:** In order to achieve immediate and visible impact and to maintain momentum, the Forum calls on all partners to the process to provide support for the implementation of immediate measures, built on proven technologies and achievements.
- **Intensifying pilot programmes related to land management in upland areas:** There is an urgent need to identify larger scale interventions in the priority areas of conservation farming, agroforestry and range-management. The Forum calls on all parties to address this task as soon as possible.
- **Continuation of capacity building with communities and stakeholders:** Dissemination of the NAP process has been insufficient to date and there is the need to strengthen capacities at all levels.

5.5 Proposals for Action

During the Second National Forum, a wide range of proposals for action were considered. The following section describes the agreed upon priority measures.

5.5.1 Priority Measures

Having reviewed the sectoral studies and other relevant analyses, the Forum called on all parties to the NAP process to give highest priority to the implementation of the following initiatives:

Forestry

The Government of The Gambia, the National Environmental Management Council, and the Donor Community should declare the implementation of the Gambian Forest Management Concept and the Community Forest Programme in all Divisions a national priority.

The National Forestry Action Plan, adopted in September 2000, has identified five project profiles. From these profiles, the Forum recommends that first implementation priority be given to the “**North Bank Natural Resource Management Project**”, because it is the most degraded Division in The Gambia and serves as the entry point of desertification in the country. The proposed programme aims at collaborative management of natural resources and reducing the scarcity of forest products. Other projects of high priority are the proposed “Collaborative Forest Management Project” and the “Gambian Forestry Research Project”. A Mangrove Resource Inventory and elaboration of a Mangrove Ecosystem Master Plan is also of high priority.

The Forum further stressed the need to promote afforestation with fast growing trees, especially with those indigenous tree species disappearing at an alarming rate and to give more consideration to aspects of commercialisation of forest products.

Wildlife Management

Introduction of collaborative wildlife management is closely related to community forestry and can build on the forest experience to a large extent. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan has taken these requirements into account. The Forum called on GOTG to urgently adopt the “**National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan**” as a matter of first priority.

The Forum further stresses the need to include local communities in the planning, design and implementation of protected - areas management plans and to give emphasis to a decentralised approach, i.e. establishment and management of protected areas in the Divisions.

Furthermore, as any programmes in Forestry and Wildlife Management will likely intersect with wildlife populations and forest resources in neighbouring Senegal, all efforts must consider the need for trans-boundary management.

Livestock and Range Management

The Forum took note of the sectoral study and forthcoming developments in the sector, notably the “Livestock Development Project”. High priority should be given to a “**Support to Livestock Development and Rangeland Management Project**” with the purpose of establishing a comprehensive database to facilitate planning in the area of rangeland management and livestock production. Activities would, inter alia, include the conduct of a range resources inventory, identification of high-risk areas and participatory land-use planning.

Agriculture, Soil and Water Conservation

Having reviewed the sectoral study as well as the Agriculture and Natural Resources Strategy, the Forum identified three activities to be pursued with high priority under the National Action Programme:

- To address poor land-use practices and to **check the trend of soil degradation**. Main activities would comprise of training of trainers in integrated land-use planning, community based land-use planning and land-use improvement plans at the village level.
- To **check severe upland erosion and related siltation in the lowlands**. The programme would be based on pilot activities along with the conduct of surveys.
- As a third priority, **extension tools would be developed to address the issue of inappropriate crop production practices**.

The Forum further supports the request to rally support for staff training and staff development.

Population and Social Dimensions

The Forum welcomed the initiatives to support integrated family planning under the NAP. These initiatives should be seen as an integral part of the IEC – Information, Education, and Communication approach. A **comprehensive reproductive health programme** with four main components is required:

- Access to reproductive health and contraceptives,
- IEC on reproductive health, including maternal and child health, save motherhood, sexually transmitted diseases,
- Extending “FANKANTA” to all Divisions of the country, and
- Youth development projects such as population/family life education, training in life skills, sensitisation on sexually transmitted diseases and viable income generating activities.

High importance must be attributed to activities controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The Forum further welcomes the recent initiative of GOTG to introduce a comprehensive Youth Policy and calls for participation of Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations concerned with youth development to actively participate in the Desertification Task Force.

Institutional Framework

The Forum identified four areas for intervention:

- Strengthen effective public participation in natural resource management
- Incorporate desertification concerns in existing laws and land management legislation
- Create an economic instrument for local funding of desertification control
- Improve monitoring capacity in environmental management

These activities would be addressed through an **institutional support programme** to create an enabling environment for effective public participation in natural resources management.

The Forum called on Government of The Gambia to establish a “**National Desertification Trust Fund**”. The Fund would contribute to finance community-based activities. In addition, funds would be made available for public awareness campaigns and environmental education. The Fund should be administered by a Board of Trustees. Contributions of the private sector, friends of The Gambia and both national and international agencies and NGOs would be the initial sources of funding.

Institutional capacity building for key stakeholders, especially at the divisional level, is seen as another priority as well.

Appendix 1 presents a brief summary of the priority projects identified during the Forum. Building on preliminary project identification efforts, an exercise will be conducted in early 2001, to finalise a detailed investment programme. The final draft will then be vetted and reviewed by all key actors in the process to ensure a coherent, coordinated and streamlined approach to project funding.

5.5.2 Information and Public Awareness

The Forum took note that information concerning land degradation, its causes, consequences and remedial strategies is conceived as being inadequate by the stakeholders at the local level. Moreover, there is a lack of feed-back as regards the process of implementing UNCCD in The Gambia. First priority should therefore be given to disseminate the results and recommendations of the Second National Forum – particularly at the grass roots level. The Forum further recommended to increase media presence and to investigate possibilities to promote dissemination through leaflets and cultural activities, e.g. music and drama. As a third step environmental education, both at the formal and informal level, should be addressed.

5.5.3 Support of on-going Activities

Environmental Impact Assessment

Standardised Environmental Impact Assessment was introduced to The Gambia and is gaining momentum. Guidelines, inter alia, for large agricultural projects, tourism development and infrastructure have been established. What is needed now is to create awareness among both public and private sector to provide a base for adherence. GEAP II rightly stresses the need to ensure public sector compliance as a first priority and entry point.

Conservation Farming / Soil and Water Management

The Forum called on all Government and development partners to LADEP to consider a holistic approach in the programme's second phase, i.e. to include components of upland conservation. Full use should be made of the possibilities available under the Rural Finance and Communities Initiatives Programme. There is an urgent need to implement pilot programmes in upland conservation farming in order to establish proven methods and technologies for wider dissemination.

5.6 Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements of NAP implementation are based on four clear principals:

- NAP does not envisage to create new or additional implementation structures.
- The Forestry Department should remain the focal point of NAP in The Gambia and assume the functions of a National Secretariat of UNCCD.
- Implementation should be channelled through local government structures. This commitment is also understood as support to the democratic reform process.
- Consultations at central level through the focal point shall continue. NEA with its ANR working group and the Inter-Sectoral Committee on Desertification (ISCD), proposed to replace the temporary Task Force on Desertification, will remain the main partner.

5.6.1 Focal Point

The Forestry Department has been nominated as Focal Point for implementing UNCCD. This decision takes into account that the Department spearheaded participatory resource management and disposes of a field organisation reaching out to the divisional and district level. At present, the Director oversees all UNCCD activities. Whilst it is recommended that overall responsibility rest with the Director, capacity needs to be increased in order to cope with the implementation of the Action Programme. It is therefore recommended to make the services of a Programme Officer available as soon as possible. The Second National Forum called on GOTG to make its own provisions and, in view of current budget constraints, seek external funding for a period of three years.

The Divisional Forest offices will further liaise with DCCs and assume a co-ordinating and advisory mandate at the implementation level.

Reporting on NAP implementation will continue to be the responsibility of the FD. This includes reports to international partners and the UNCCD Secretariat, to national institutions and to a review meeting no later than two years after endorsement of NAP by GOTG to review progress and to update NAP.

5.6.2 Consultations at the National Level

Consultations on NAP implementation at the national level are an ongoing activity. Procedures are well established and should be continued. The ANR Working Group will remain the major coordinating body, taking into account that NAP implementation is part and parcel of GEAP implementation, which is the responsibility of NEA.

At present, the working group has delegated day-to-day consultations to the Desertification Task Force. Following the recommendations of the Action Plan on Institutional Framework, it is recommended to reshape the Task Force into an Inter-Sectoral Committee on Desertification in order to give it a more permanent status. Statutes of the Committee still have to be worked out by the Focal Point and NEA.

Evaluation of the NAP progress should be conducted within the scope of a review meeting no later than two years after endorsement of NAP by GOTG.

5.6.3 Implementation at the Divisional Level

Responsibility for NAP implementation will be transferred to the local government level. What is now the DCC will become the main implementing body. It is recommended that DCCs are empowered to propose, advise and screen / evaluate initiatives coming up from villages and wards. MDFTs are expected to assume the role of connecting link between communities and local government. Divisional FD staff is expected to act in advisory function and channel reports, requests and proposals to the Focal Point and vice versa.

DCCs would also be made responsible for administering funds. Provisions for “special purpose budget lines” and trust funds within the Divisional Development Funds will have to be made in order to allow for proper auditing and budget control.

Detailed arrangements still have to be worked out by the Focal Point in consultations with the heads of district authorities once local government legislation is enacted.

5.7 Financial Arrangements

With respect to financial arrangements, the NAP policy is simple and clear-cut:

- Emphasis is given to the mobilisation of local resources and to private sector initiatives.
- Moreover, there is a need to enlarge the operational possibilities of central and local government authorities through generation of direct revenues,
- All possibilities to draw on international sources providing specific funds for implementation of UNCCD should be exploited

5.7.1 National Desertification Trust Fund

Private initiative and contributions from the private sector do not play a significant role in nature conservation and management at present. However, against the background

of foreseeable and continuing difficulties on the side of Government to mobilise additional budget allocations, such contributions have to be seen as main source of providing sustainable finance in the future. GEAP II arrives at similar conclusions.

There are two possibilities. One option would be to levy taxes or fees on environmentally unfriendly activities or charge for “nature consumption” e.g. from the tourist industry. Given the fragile situation of the Gambian economy in general and tourism in particular, such an option is not advocated. Hence remains a second option, to focus on voluntary contributions as a starting point.

During the consultative process the idea has emerged to investigate possibilities to create a National Trust Fund, initially based on donations and voluntary contributions. An outline of structure, purposes and mechanisms of the proposed fund is provided in Table 6.

Table 6: Outline of National Trust Fund

Title	National Desertification Trust Fund in The Gambia
Purpose	To co-finance local initiatives of relevance to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and inter-linking initiatives of relevance to the Conventions of Climate Change and Biological Diversity
Initiatives Eligible for Funding (Examples mentioned during consultations)	Community- farm- and village forestry Communal / private woodlots Communal wildlife management Nature tourism Promotion of energy saving devices and utilisation of renewable energy sources Public awareness raising campaigns Environmental education Private initiatives in protected areas Coastal protection Preservation and sustainable management of mangroves Reproductive Health Initiatives
Possible Sources of Funding	Voluntary contributions of Gambians and foreigners (e.g. visitors) Voluntary contributions of enterprises with vested interests in nature conservation (e.g. tourism industry) Major enterprises based in The Gambia "Friends of The Gambia" abroad /tax-deductible donations) Donor Agencies Government of The Gambia (e.g. debt for nature swaps etc.) Donations at large
Organisational Structure	Board of Trustees with non-governmental majority of votes (private sector, NGOs, NEA, focal points of conventions, Donor agencies etc.) Secretariat (CEO, treasurer, environmentalist, no more than 2 administrative staff) Technical committee (in honorary capacity) to appraise and evaluate applications External auditors
Implementing Bodies	Community Based Organisations (CBOs) Non Government Organisations – also in advisory capacity to CBOs Private initiatives Local Government on contract base Central governmental line agencies on contract base

Table 6 (cont'd.): Outline of National Trust Fund in Support of Local Initiatives to Preserve the Environment in The Gambia

Distribution of Funds	Maximum of 25% for overheads and administration 75% for physical investments / activities
Funding Mechanisms	Full grants for catalytic activities ("seed money"), public relations and environmental education Partial grants of up to 75% for investments Revolving funds and guarantees (collateral)
Funding Principles	Against substantiated application Beneficiaries contribute a minimum of 25% in cash or kind to investments No advance payments Payments in instalments against certification of progress No funding of recurrent GOTG expenditures No funding of training / capacity building for GOTG personnel
Public enterprises	Eligible to apply if direct beneficiaries are communities
Remuneration of GOTG services	Against certificates of performance issued by independent body
Conditionalities	Earmarking of funds for specific purposes and external audits / evaluations are accepted
Legal Set-up	To be determined, e.g. foundation

There are two options for utilising contributions to the Fund: Either to deposit donations in an interest bearing bank account and to pay out accumulated interest only or to use the capital. This decision is left to policy makers and consultations with institutions experienced in administering such funds (e.g. IUCN, GEF etc.) are recommended.

First investigations as to the acceptance of a National Desertification Trust Fund have shown mixed reactions. There are widespread scepticism and doubts regarding accountability and transparency. Reservation with respect to undue administrative costs have been voiced as well. It is clear that if the Fund will succeed, focus has to be on direct physical investments and transparent auditing procedures. "Hidden funding" of recurrent Government expenditures has to be avoided by all means. The same is true for training and capacity building measures. Although the need for such activities is acknowledged, alternative sources of funding will have to be explored.

Obviously, the Trust Fund will have to operate independent of government but at the same time has to involve government institutions.

NEA should investigate possibilities to incorporate contributors to the Fund into the Environmental Award Scheme.

Plough back mechanisms such as compensation for environmental damage and service charges should not be utilised to support the Fund, since this may result in public reservation. Such proceeds should be directed to sectoral revenue retention funds.

Details as to statute, disbursement procedures and regulations still need to be worked out. The Forestry Department is requested to prepare a comprehensive proposal to Cabinet within six months after formal approval of NAP by GOTG. Intensive consultations with organisations experienced in the management of Trust Funds and Technical Assistance will be required.

5.7.2 Revenue Retention Schemes

The Forestry Department has pioneered the concept of revenue retention schemes. Parts of the proceeds from licences, royalties and service charges are retained in the National Forest Fund, which, within limits, is at the disposal of the Department for operational purposes. Conservative estimates arrive at the conclusion that proceeds will suffice to cover operation and maintenance in the long run once initial investments into implementation of the GFMC will no longer be required. The Action Plan on Forest and Wildlife Management provides details about structure and disbursement procedures.

A similar model is under consideration with DPWM and NEA has started to set up an environmental fund as well.

NAP encourages initiatives to establish revenue retention funds. If government agencies assume the new role of service providers, there is a clear need that, firstly charges for such services be raised and secondly be ploughed back to the respective institutions.

The Forestry Department should advise on modalities and procedures and assist the respective agencies in the initial phase.

Local government is entitled to retain a percentage of certain taxes and levies, e.g. livestock taxes. Earmarking of these proceeds for sector-specific purposes requires attention and should be an issue to be dealt with in NAP implementation.

5.7.3 International Funding Lines

At present, the bulk of operational expenditures for conservation and sustainable management of natural resources in The Gambia is been provided by bilateral aid and through assistance of international financing agencies. Longstanding partnerships, especially with the Federal Republic of Germany, the European Union, the World Bank, UNDP, IFAD, AfDB and FAO have been established. It is envisaged that these part-

ners will continue to extend support to initiatives in natural resources management and participate in Donor Consultations.

There are two lines of funding which specifically serve the purposes of supporting activities related to the three post-Rio conventions. These are the Global Mechanism (GM) and the Global Environment Facilities.

GM is the funding wing of the UNCCD Secretariat, being housed and administered by IFAD. The mechanism is frequently used to finance catalytic activities and public relation campaigns. The Forum requested that the Focal Point call on GM and the UNCCD Secretariat to contribute to disseminating NAP and the results of the Second National Forum. COP 3 recently passed a number of decisions with a view to enlarge the financial range of GM. Again, the Focal Point is requested to secure support in order to facilitate the NAP process.

In addition to GM, IFAD operates both a lending and a non-lending programme. The Fund has actively contributed to the establishments of National Desertification Funds. Especially NGOs can benefit to a considerable degree from IFAD funding lines.

GEF supports projects in four focal areas:

- Conserving biodiversity (65% of funds at present),
- Saving energy and open up markets for renewable energy technologies,
- Addressing the degradation of open waters, lakes, wetlands, and rivers, and
- Assisting in phasing out the use of chemicals that deplete the ozone layer.

Of specific interest is the Operational Programme 1, which is devoted to arid and semi-arid ecosystems.

Carbon sequestration has been an issue of growing interest to GEF and is becoming, especially since the Expert Group Workshop in Dakar (1996), a major theme. COP 3 and GEF Secretariat reiterated the commitment to linkages between UNCCD and GEF in the field of arresting land degradation, particularly desertification and deforestation.

The Focal Point is requested to explore funding possibilities for projects and programmes in The Gambia eligible for GEF funding:

- Implementation of the Gambia Forest Management Concept (carbon sequestration),
- Preparation of management plans for protected areas,
- Farm forestry initiatives.

There is also the possibility to fund rangeland rehabilitation projects under GEF.

In March 1999, a new GEF initiative: "Land and Water Initiative for Africa's Sustainable Development" was launched. Under this initiative, it is proposed that land conservation

and soil fertility enhancement as well as water resource management will be dealt with in a comprehensive manner.

GEF has also launched a major new operational programme for integrated ecosystem management that simultaneously addresses the cross-cutting issues of land degradation, watershed management, climate change and biodiversity.

GEF disposes of a voluntary fund which also provides catalytic financial and technical assistance and can support enabling activities. There is a need for The Gambia to participate more actively in implementation of the Global Environment Facilities (GEF).

UNDP / UNSO and CILSS have facilitated the NAP process in the past and the Second National Forum called on all three institutions to further extend support.

UNSO could also play a role as facilitator for the mobilisation of financial resources and in attracting new donors as well as in the presentation of the NAP and technical assistance for the organisation of round table meetings. Mobilisation of local resources could be stimulated by both the Focal Point in cooperation with UNDP. UNSO could also provide technical assistance to increase capacity at institutional level and to assist in the formulation of a sound monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

5.8 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of NAP implementation is a joint obligation of all parties to the process. NAP will be monitored within the framework of the GEAP. The purpose of the GEAP M&E Strategy is to provide on-going feedback to decision-makers, GEAP implementing agencies and the Gambian public regarding the effectiveness of GEAP activities and programmes so that improvements can be made and future plans incorporate lessons learnt from current experience. The objective of the strategy is to develop a user-friendly monitoring and assessment system, presenting the relevant indicators, appropriate measures, baseline, targets, assumptions, data sources and collection methods.

This strategy is based on the assumption that regular reviews will be conducted, which will provide essential monitoring information to decision-makers and feedback to the public at large. The data collection for these regular reviews would also be used to assess environmental quality and trends. This type of assessment, referred to as a State of The Environment Report, is to be carried out in The Gambia every five years, and will provide a general overview of environmental conditions, highlighting outstanding issues and provide a framework for guiding environmental management. Periodic formal evaluations of individual programmes will also be carried out. Information collected on a routine basis for monitoring purposes of individual programmes will facilitate efficient and effective valuations of the GEAP process. In order to ensure that data provided through routine data collection are accurate, and more importantly, reflective of the opinions and realities of local populations, periodic local level consultations are

catered for in the strategy. The approach being used is characterised by the following principles:

- Existing data sources are used to the extent possible;
- Established and accepted data collection techniques will be relied upon to the extent possible;
- Data are designed to fit into existing reporting structures and procedures;
- Indicators attempt to capture both process as well as physical impacts; and,
- Data sources are drawn from all aspects of Gambian society, including government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), rural communities, and the private sector.

Equally important to what is contained in the M&E Strategy is how the Strategy is used. The results obtained would contribute to:

- Routine progress reviews;
- A framework for questioning hypotheses about how to best conduct environmental management in The Gambia;
- The development of subsequent phases of the GEAP;
- Analysis for the State of the Environment Report;
- Enhanced coordination efforts by identifying key actors and roles and responsibilities for data collection;
- Periodic evaluations, and
- Inclusion in the Environmental Information System (EIS).

Certain components, e.g. the performance of the National Trust Fund will be monitored by external auditors and through independent evaluations.

Monitoring of changes in vegetation cover is expected to be a major activity. Regular procurement and analyses of remotely sensed data will be required. Possibilities for a regional initiative (e.g. CILSS) should be investigated.