

REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA



NATIONAL FORESTRY STRATEGY
(2019 to 2028)

FIRST DRAFT

Compiled by:
Falie CK Baldeh

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANRP	Agriculture and Natural Resource Policy
CBFFM	Community-based Forest Fire Management
CBM	Community Based Management
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CCSF	Community Controlled State Forest
CEPA	Community Education and Public Awareness
CFMAs	Community-based Forest Management Associations
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
CPF	Collaborative Partnership on forest
CRR	Central River Region
CSA	Climate Smart Agriculture
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
Dof	Department of Forestry
DPWM	Department of Parks and Wildlife Management
EbA	Ecosystem Based Adaptation to Climate Change Project
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations
FLR	Forest Landscape Restoration
GBA	Greater Banjul Area
GBOS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAP	Gambia Environment Action Plan
GFMC	Gambia Forest Management Concept
GFP	Gambia Forest Policy
GHG	Green House Gas
GNAIP	Gambia National Agricultural Investment Programme
GOTG	Government of The Gambia
HDI	Human Development Index
HR	Human Resource
HRD	Human Resource development
IFFM	Integrated Forest Fire Management
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JFPM	Joint Forest Park management
LGA	Local Government Area
LRR	Lower River Region
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MA&D	Market Analysis and Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MDI	Management Development Institute
MoLRG	Ministry of Land and Regional Government
MOECCNR	Ministry of Environment Climate Change and Natural Resources
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOTIE	Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment
MPTS	Multiple Purpose Tree Species
NA	National Assembly
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NARI	National Agricultural Research Institute
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NFA	National Forestry Assessment
NFF	National Forestry Fund

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSAs	Non-State Actors
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
PAGE	Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment
Pas	Protected Areas
PCFMAs	Participatory Community-based Forest Management Associations
PFM	Participatory Forest Management
PME	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation
REDD +	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SER	State of the Environment Report
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
TACs	Technical Advisory Committees
TANGO	The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
TOC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
URR	Upper River Region
UTG	University of The Gambia
VDC/P	Village Development Committee/Programme

Foreword

Acknowledgement

Our profound gratitude to the Country FAO Representative Madame KatepaKalala MS Perpetua M; and the Project Coordinator of Community-Based Sustainable Dryland Forest Management Project, Mr. KebbaSonko; for providing funds for this strategy development through Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The consultants for the Assignment gratefully wish to thank all the stakeholders for their invaluable supports in developing this strategy. We are indebted to the Regional Governors and their sector staff, Councilors and local communities who participated in the regional consultations for sharing with us their experiences and insights on this national forestry strategy. We greatly appreciate the time these persons gave to us.

We wish to extend special thanks to Mr Muhammed Jaiteh, Director of Department of Forestry and staff, particularly those in the Regions for being very instrumental in facilitating the conducts of both national and regional consultations on this Strategy. This strategy benefited from expert reviews of both Technical Group, and ANR Working Group. Thank you for sharing with us your knowledge and experiences.

Consultants:

1. Falie C.K. Baldeh– Lead Consultant
2. Dr. EbrimaNjie- Co-Consultant, UTG
3. Mr. OusaineyTouray – Co-Consultant, Parks and Wildlife
4. Mamma Sawaneh – Co-Consultant, UTG

Resource Person

1. Lamin KM Fatty -UTG

Executive Summary

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background: The Purpose of the Strategy

The Government of The Gambia (GoTG), through Department of Forestry (DoF) is supported by Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations Country Office (CO) with funds provided by Global Environment Facility (GEF) to prepare this forestry strategy plan. The primary purpose of the plan is to determine DoF strategy directions on sustainable dryland forest management and restoration during the next ten years, and provide a framework for programming, learning and resource allocation. The strategy will further define our scope and institutional capacity in order to exercise our mandate to the fullest. With communities, partners and supporters, it reflects our commitment to respond to the outrage of deforestation and desertification in the country, and facilitate Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) programmes to the highest possible standards to the benefit of resource users. The strategy brings with it new and distinct momentum in sustainable dryland forest management and restoration process by bringing change in the lives of poor and marginalized communities. It is deeply rooted in our vision and mission to reverse desertification in The Gambia.

There are several reasons why DoF felt the need for this strategy - to systematically review our role and align our strategies to our context. The global and national context in which we are operating have undergone substantial changes in the last few years. The most significant change has been from centralized to democratic governance in The Gambia, and then to sustainable human development and socio-economic transformation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The department is committed to sustainable dryland forest management and restoration, and this provided new avenues for us in programming. The Gambia's development framework provided opportunities for long-term sustainable natural resource development. This has led to a redefinition of the role of both the state and markets, and consequently a rethinking on our role as DoF. Therefore, there are compelling pressures from the rapidly changing operating environment for this strategic planning.

There are equally important internal pressures demanding for this strategic plan in order to compliment the desire of our organizational transformation, transition to new programme methodologies and growth. DoF is designing this strategy to transition away from the traditional notions and approaches towards longer-term engagement in sustainable dryland forestry management and restoration. Therefore, we must re-organize operational and programming structures for effective programming. It is intended to transform DoF into a more professional organization to meet our national obligations and discharge our mandate. The organic roles and functions in programming will thus be in accordance to sustainable forest management. Improved learning within DoF will be a priority, especially at the programme level. In the new programme direction, we will have a key role to promote such learning, and coordinate best practices for local level policy advocacy and influencing.

Revenue growth will be DoF's noble priority to maintain both the momentum and fulfill the existing program needs, as well as provide space for new initiatives and innovations. Within this re-adjustment of the overall programme balance, there is an opportunity for an enhanced programme approach. Partnership engagement and alliances of various forms will become an increasing feature of programming in our complex and challenging context.

This strategy plan is meant for both internal and external audiences as it provides the rationale for all our work. For the internal audience (including MoECCNR, partners, supporters and staff), it helps build a shared understanding of our organizational priorities. More importantly, it has helped instill a sense of ownership among DoF staff, in shaping the future course of our

work in the country. For all external audiences it presents a comprehensive picture of our commitment to our mandate and willingness to implement the ratified international conventions.

1.2 Global Proclamation on the Role of Forests

International efforts towards sustainable management of Global forests is significant, despite the challenges of climate change on the environment over the last two decades. There is an international consensus to combat climate change; and the obvious role of forests in these efforts cannot be undervalued. It has been recognised that viable forests are capable of storing carbon, and large quantity of CO₂ emissions could be avoided if deforestation is halted. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2007), deforestation and forest degradation are the second leading human cause of CO₂ emissions contributing to global warming. It is estimated that deforestation and forest degradation account for approximately 17 percent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions¹. Forests are also providing habitat for biodiversity, as well as livelihoods for over a billion people worldwide including many living in extreme poverty (OECD, April 2016).

1.3 Regional Forests – Climate Change Nexus

At regional level, Africa has an excellent opportunity to pursue sound forest development strategies going forward. Many of its countries are seeking to pursue the trio goals of development (poverty reduction and economic growth), environmental protection and combatting climate change. One of the biggest environmental challenges facing Africa is the reconciliation of its development needs with the sustainable management of its natural resources. There is an urgent need to break the so-called cyclical and downward spiral of the poverty-environment nexus.

Throughout Africa, poverty remains the main cause and consequence of environmental degradation and resource depletion without significant improvement in the living conditions and livelihoods of the poor². The important role of its forest-rich countries can play in combatting climate change by reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation is of major interest to the international community. There are currently many new initiatives and programmes working at the forefront of the development/climate change nexus. However, environmental policies and programmes are many, but these are poorly designed and implemented to achieve meaningful success.

1.4 The Gambian Forestry Sector

In earlier inventories in The Gambia, ‘forest’ was defined at a lower forest coverpercentage. For example, *tree and shrub savanna* (one of the largest categories in all of The Gambia accounting for 31% of the total land use area in the 81/82 inventory), while defined as “tree and shrub vegetation on freely drained soils with less than 10% tree cover or tree heights less than 11 meters” is considered to be “forests” in the overall inventory analysis from that period. Therefore, in comparing results between years, it becomes necessary to group categories according to previous definitions and include the broader “forest” definition (e.g. including *tree and shrub savanna*).

Area comparisons between the 1981/82 inventory and the 2009/10 illustrate the following: The results of the 1981/82 inventory indicate 505,300 ha of total forest area, or 44% of total area of Gambia (1,130,000 ha). The NFA conducted from 2009-2010, if adjusted to include the same

¹ IPCC, 2007

² NEPAD 2003

classes identified as “forests” in the 1981/82 inventory (including tree and shrub savanna forest area which is considered as nonforest in the 2010 NFA) indicates roughly 423,000 ha, or 37% of the total area of The Gambia. This means that since 1983, 7% of forest cover has been lost. One of the most significant losses (accounting for 73% of the overall forest loss) has occurred in mangroves, which were previously estimated to be approximately 67,000 ha, and are now estimated to be 35,700 ha for a total loss of roughly 47% of their previous cover. In yearly terms, this translates to 1,080 hectares of mangroves lost each year, an alarming rate of decline over the last 30 years,

The NFA of 2009/10, further showed that the total area of Forest and Otherwooded land summed up to 423,000 ha while the 1997/98 NFI revealed that the total area for Closed woodland, Savannah woodland and Tree and Shrub Savannah summed up to 520,000 ha. These results therefore indicate that there is a net decrease of 97,000 ha of forest and other wooded land from 1997/98 to 2009/10. It is assumed that the main factors responsible for the decrease could be attributed to the following: 1) Agricultural expansion; 2) Bushfires; 3) Drought; 4) Settlement/encroachment; and, 5) Road construction (NFA, 2010).

The major part of the country is of Sudano-Sahelian agro-ecological zone with a long dry season from November to May; and the natural vegetation zone is woodland savannah. Nearly 70% of these forests are degraded and desertification became major environmental issue for The Gambia, particularly the northern and southern banks of the Gambia River.

1.4.1 Global Commitments

The Government of Gambia responded to global and regional commitments by ratifying several International Conventions which are related to sustainable management and utilization of Forest resources. These are:

- i) The Convention on Biological Diversity
- ii) The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
- iii) The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild Fauna and Flora
- iv) The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar)
- v) The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

1.4.2. The Department of Forestry

Created in 1976, the Department of Forestry (DoF) is the responsible government institution under the purview of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources (MoECCNR) in charge of forestry administration - ensuring sustainable management, utilizations and protection of all forest resources in The Gambia (excluding private natural and plantations). The forestry legislative frameworks gave DoF the mandate to govern the affairs of forest resources in The Gambia, while soliciting active participation of the rural population and other stakeholders.

In addition, it shall be responsible for co-operating and liaising with national and international organizations and bodies all over the world on forestry matters in The Gambia.

DoF focuses on building its own capacity and the capabilities of local communities to address the critical needs of resource-users. Building local capacities and meeting the needs of vulnerable and underserved people ranks very high in government’s development agenda. DoF is prepared to improve coordination with other stakeholders while mainstreaming new integrated approach to the dryland forest resource management, and develop a clear strategy direction for programming. It will focus attention on its programme priorities and underscore linkages among partners and stakeholders in the implementation of this strategy.

1.5 Forestry Strategy Perspective (a vision 2028 and beyond)

Forests in The Gambia are of multiple benefits, providing economic, social and environmental values. They offer habitats for wildlife and plants, mitigates climate change and provide other livelihood benefits. Also, our forests offer a wide-range societal benefits, including human health, recreation and tourism. Gambia's dryland forests, if sustainably managed can contribute towards halting desertification. The sector is reported to contribute to about only 1.2% of the national GDP, and is of great significance to rural livelihoods³. Strong and healthy ecosystem services are important for continued progress in sustainable agricultural and livestock production in the country, thus providing hundreds of thousands of rural jobs. Wood is still a vital source of income for the rural population. So the strategy will also look at the rural forest-based industries, subject to ANR policy.

As demand for ecosystem services from forests is increasing, the department is challenged to strategically optimize its capacity and mitigate climate change, conserve biodiversity, safeguard wildlife habitat and protect land and watersheds. Currently, DoF is anxious to manage our remaining dryland forests in a sustainable manner; and shall promote integrated forest management and landscaping approaches in the next decades. DoF shall engage in partnerships with new stakeholders, and be at the fore front in all the management of our forest affairs. The roles that DoF will play in this strategy, are described in the following sections, particularly in our "Institutional Linkages and Strategic Approaches in forestry". Thus, DoF is poised to make a significant contribution to strengthen local capacities and overcome the obstacles to sustainable forest management by providing reliable information, policy advice, and technical assistance.

DoF is considering forestry as a broad, multi-disciplinary concept encompassing social issues, policies and institutions, the production of goods and services and the jobs associated with them, and livelihoods and markets related to forests and trees outside forests in this strategy. By this view, the department is taking into consideration the complexity of the many different forest ecosystems, as well as the social and ecological complexities of the broader landscapes within which forests and trees exist. It is all about people including city dwellers who are involved in urban forestry, and farmers which are involved in agro-forestry.

1.6 The Strategy Development Process

A team of consultants comprising lead consultant "an outsider" with intimate knowledge of Natural resource sector, and international experience in NGO leadership provided guidance and motivation for the entire national forestry strategy preparation process. The other consultants include resource persons from University of The Gambia and department of parks and wildlife with backgrounds in ecology, climate change science and Parks and wildlife management who served as facilitators in developing the strategy and helped place the department's thinking in the larger country context.

To a large extent, this strategy was informed by the contextual data gathered during the meeting at the national DoF office, desk reviews, organizational assessment and key stakeholder consultations. The desk review was complimented by a comprehensive national and regional consultation on issues and major development trends in dryland forest management. The process involved a cross-section of stakeholders including DoF staff, and other key stakeholders (ANR Working groups at the regional level, Regional Governors, CBos, civil society organisations, Youth Mobilisers, timber merchants and NTFP traders at national and regional

³ Project document on Community-based Sustainable Dryland Management, The Gambia, 2016

levels) that stimulated discussions on the strategic directions. This approach was embraced by all stakeholders (including forest dependent communities) as their comments and concerns were found useful in shaping this strategy.

PART ONE: STRATEGY CONTEXT

Chapter II: Country Context

The Gambia, a small West African country with a population of approximately 2.14 million inhabitants, which 66% is under 25 years of age, is one of the least developed and low-income countries in the world. There was a change of government in The Gambia on January 19th, 2017; and the new government is now struggling to secure the desired economic growth and stability. It will require significant efforts to achieve this. Agriculture and natural resources (ANR) contributes significantly to the foreign exchange earnings required to secure supplementary food supplies from external sources; makes up about 30 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employs over 70 percent of the active labour force, generates foreign exchange earnings and provides two-thirds of total household income (ANR, 2009 - 2015). The ANR sector has a key role in helping achieve Government's objectives for economic growth and development. However, agriculture has not recovered under vision 2016. Fiscal reports showed that the country has steadily performed well, registering a growth rate of 4.7% in GDP, primarily driven by developments in tourism, inflow of remittances and re-exports.

2.1 The Physical Environment

The Gambia is located in the drought stricken Sahel on the northern coast of West Africa between latitudes 13° & 14°N and longitude 14° & 16.30° W. It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the west and by Republic of Senegal on the north, east and south. The Gambia has an 81km open coastline bisected into the North and South Banks by the River Gambia, which has its source some 680 km upstream in the Fouta Djallon Highlands in Guinea (UNDP, 2010). The River Gambia is saline enough for mangroves to grow up to 150km from the open coast. An analysis of current environmental trends show that The Gambia is characterized by increasing deforestation, land degradation, loss of biodiversity linked to loss of habitat, and coastal degradation.

Environmental vulnerabilities range from high population densities, the fragility of the land coupled with adverse impacts of natural hazards worsened by the emerging impacts of climate change. The upland watershed ecosystem has been disturbed and degraded largely due to population pressure on available natural resources, numerous gullies caused by high water runoff rates, drying of inland valleys and river tributaries, water stress for crops and livestock, illegal logging of forest trees, and rampant and indiscriminate burning of forest land were among the issues raised during consultations. The Country is highly vulnerable to recurrent droughts, floods, forest fires; and about one in three Gambians are vulnerable food insecurity.

2.2 The Socio-Economic Environment

The country has an annual growth rate of 3.3 percent (GBoS, 2013), and a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.452, ranking the country 173 out of 183 countries in in 2016⁴. The economy is

⁴HDI, 2016

predominantly based on rain fed subsistence agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood for the majority of the population⁵, and the GDP per capita is of USD 450. According to the 2013 census, 50 percent of the country's residents live in rural areas, and women constitute 50.5 percent⁶ of the total population.

About 48.6 percent of the population live on less than USD 1.25 per day⁷. Rural poverty is on the increase, as 60% of rural households living in poverty in 2003 have increased to 62.1% in 2010⁸. Food insecurity is affecting mainly those residing in rural areas. The 2016 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)⁹ revealed that food insecurity has increased with about 5.6% since 2011. Lower River Region, Central River region, and Upper River region, were found to have the highest number of food-insecure households in the country, ranging between 12% to 18% of householders.

2.3 Dryland Scenario in The Gambia

The country has a Sudano-Sahelian type of climate characterised by long dry season of seven months (November to May) with average annual rainfall ranging 800 mm to 1200 mm (Yaffa, 2013), and increasing surface temperatures at 25°C, with a maximum of 33°C and a minimum of 18°C; added by wildfires and occasional floods¹⁰, which are exacerbated by climate change vagaries.

2.3.1 Scope and Nature of Environmental Challenges

Since the late 1960s, the country has been experiencing prolonged droughts of all forms: meteorological, ecological, agricultural and hydrological droughts¹¹.

a) Land use patterns

The country has an estimated area of 11,000 km² stretching along the River Gambia valley from the Atlantic coast 480 km inland to the east. Almost half of this is considered arable land, a large portion of which is being claimed by increasing desertification and rendered unsuitable for crop production¹². Arable lands are characterised by widespread wind & soil erosion, sedimentation, water stress, soil acidity and salinisation¹³. An analysis of current environmental trends showed accelerated land degradation, loss of biodiversity linked to loss of habitat, coastal erosion, and the increasing effects of climate change. Over 100,000 ha of close and open woodlands have been converted to subsistence agricultural land. The rate of desertification has been estimated at 1.3% or 14000 ha per annum¹⁴.

The patterns of land use in The Gambia, to a large extent, correspond to the vegetation zones across the country. The vegetation zones in turn are largely determined by the rainfall patterns in different parts of The Gambia. In general, the wetter western half of the country (Greater Banjul Area, the entire Western Region and Kiangs) which receives above 1,020 mm of rainfall have thicker land forest covers of bigger tree species. These areas attract greater human settlements with the residents mainly engaged in both crop farming and logging. The drier hinterlands,

⁵ 2016 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis.

⁶ GBOS, 2013

⁷ 2015 Integrated Household Survey.

⁸ MDG Accelerated Framework MAF, 2010

⁹ Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), 2016

¹⁰ National Forest Assessment 2008-2010

¹¹ The hazard profile of The Gambia, UNDP, 2007

¹² National Forest Assessment 2008-2010

¹³ MANR, 1999

¹⁴ The hazard profile of The Gambia, UNDP, 2007

especially the North Bank of the River Gambia are covered mainly with shrubs and Savannah grasses. These lands are used for crop production and extensive livestock rearing and grazing.

The topography of The Gambia, which is another major determinant of land use showed three distinct zones: a) the river with its associated tributaries and mangrove vegetation; b) the extensive lowlands forming the river's floodplain; and c) the upland plateau, which extends into Senegal. The mangrove zone is largely unsuitable for any farming but commonly used for logging and oyster collection, which contribute to the degradation of mangroves. Generally, land quality is constrained by fragile soils, land tenure system, salinization and erosion.

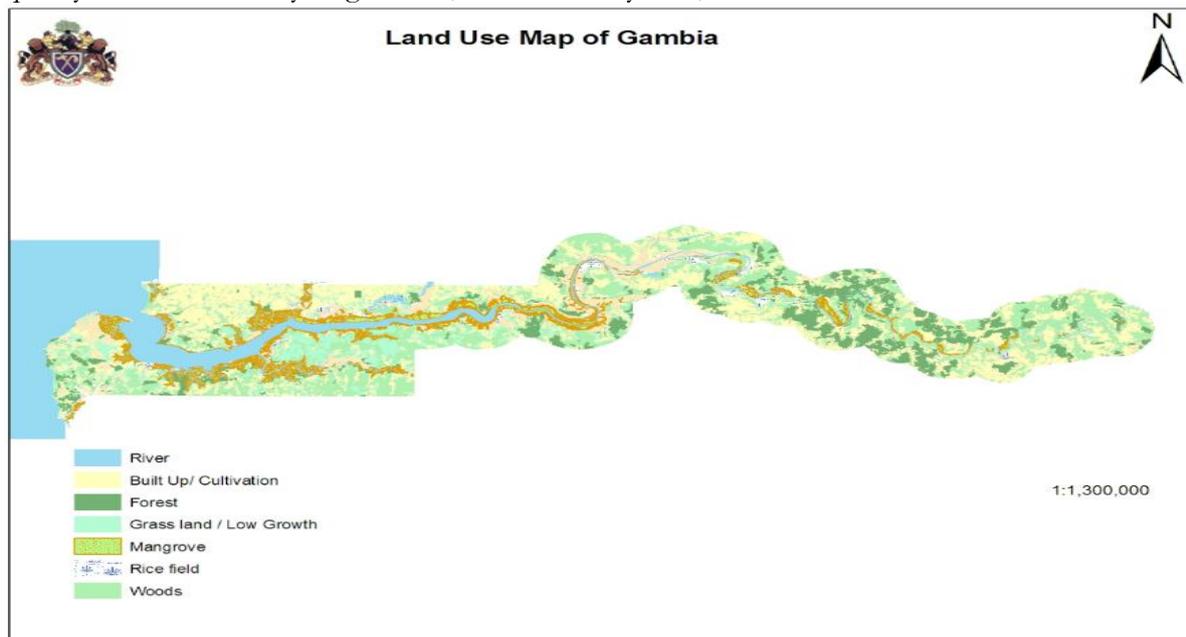


Figure 1: Land Use Map of Gambia, 2010

b) Forest Resources

The following land cover categories constitutes the forest of the country: i). ‘Closed Forests’- defined as woodlands with canopy cover exceeding 50% and tree height of at least 11m; ii) ‘Open Forests’ with a crown cover of 10 – 50%; and iii) ‘Savannah Areas’ with a crown cover of below 10%. These forest resources are of multiple benefits to us, serving economic, social and environmental purposes: providing habitats for wildlife and plants, and can provide a major role in mitigating climate change and other environmental services. The forest biomass is the single most important source of renewable energy for rural households, and accounts for over three-quarters of the country’s total renewable energy consumption. Forest products include timber, palm oil, wild fruits, honey, woodcarvings and fuelwood, the latter providing nearly 90 percent of all household energy needs. Forests also provide important potential revenue sources through eco-tourism, forest-based enterprise development including wood and non-wood products, and habitats for wildlife and fish.

The Gambia had a total forest area of 423,000 ha in 2010 as compared to 520,400 ha in 1998, representing a reduction of 18.7 percent equivalent to 97, 000 ha¹⁵. This decline is largely caused by increasing population, and there is an alarming increase in the demand for forest products, particularly firewood and charcoal for household energy. Recent studies clearly indicate trends of deforestation; showing current annual rate of deforestation at 7 per cent (Sillah, 2007). This constitutes a significant deterioration compared to the figure of about 5.3 per cent deforestation

¹⁵National Forest Assessment (NFA, 2010),

rate as reported in the *State of the Environment Report* (SER, 1997, p.40). The Forest Policy (1995-2005) aim to preserve 30 percent of the forest cover, which will be sufficient for maintaining an ecological balance necessary for sustainable economic growth. The policy offered 75 percent of this woodland to be managed by involving local communities and private sector actors. Of the total forest area, State forest is the largest proportion (78%), including 40,000ha constituting 66 gazetted forest parks; and 41, 682.32 ha as community forests, while rest of the inventoried land areas do not obtain clear designation.

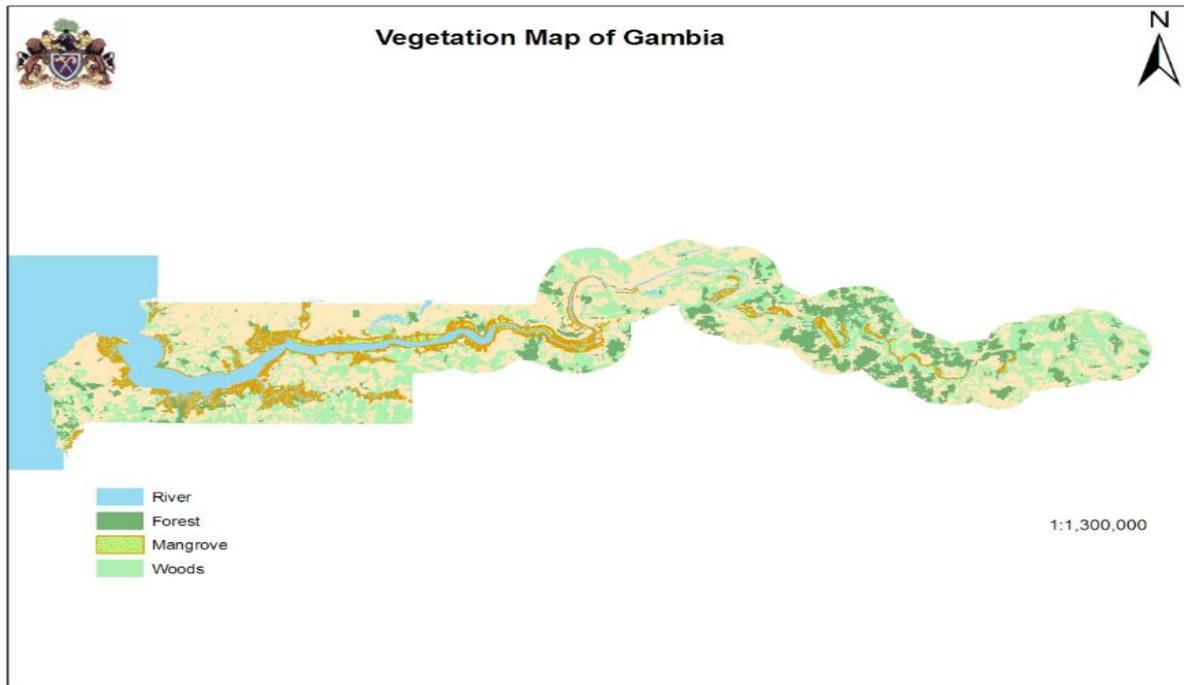


Figure 2: *Vegetation map of the Gambia, 2010*

The policy aims at increasing protection of forest lands through community involvement, targeting about 200,000 hectares of which 43,000 hectares are for Joint Forest Park Management between government and local communities¹⁶. Community-based initiatives such as the introduction of community forest management programmes, reforestation, restoration, capacity building etc are being supported to attain these targets.

c) Forest Fires

The NFA report, Department of Forestry 2010, showed that 151,000 ha (i.e. nearly, 50% of total forest cover) has been burnt during the 2010 fire season. Also, bush fires claimed 55,000ha out of a total of 123,000ha of Other Wooded Land, and 105,000ha out of 589,000ha of Other land. There were many bush fire incidents around the country-side; but the provincial regions (URR, CRR and LRR) were appearing most problematic, damaging nearly 60% of the forest cover in 2010. According to NFA, 2010, the primary causes of bush fires include slash & burning farming, hunting, wild honey harvesting, presence of “fire trees¹⁷” etc.

Records showed that annual bushfires have been recurrently damaging the flora and fauna, burning down more than 60 percent of the forest, rangeland and fallow lands. Both young and mature trees are killed, leaving out only fire climax species. Bush fires are particularly destructive given the large proportion of open savannah with heavy grass underlay. Also the disturbed woodland and savannah vegetation accumulates a considerable amount of combustible material

¹⁶Country programme strategy for the gef- small grants programme 2011 – 2014 (GEF OP 5)

¹⁷ Locally believed that some tree species explode to cause fire when they are overheated in the forest

during the rainy season and therefore succeeding fires set in the dry season tend to be violent. Annual hot fires eradicate most of the natural tree regeneration which further opens the forest, induces additional grass growth and, thus, accelerates the vicious circle of forest destruction. Annual bush fires are the principal cause of accelerated wind and soil erosion damaging productive arable lands.

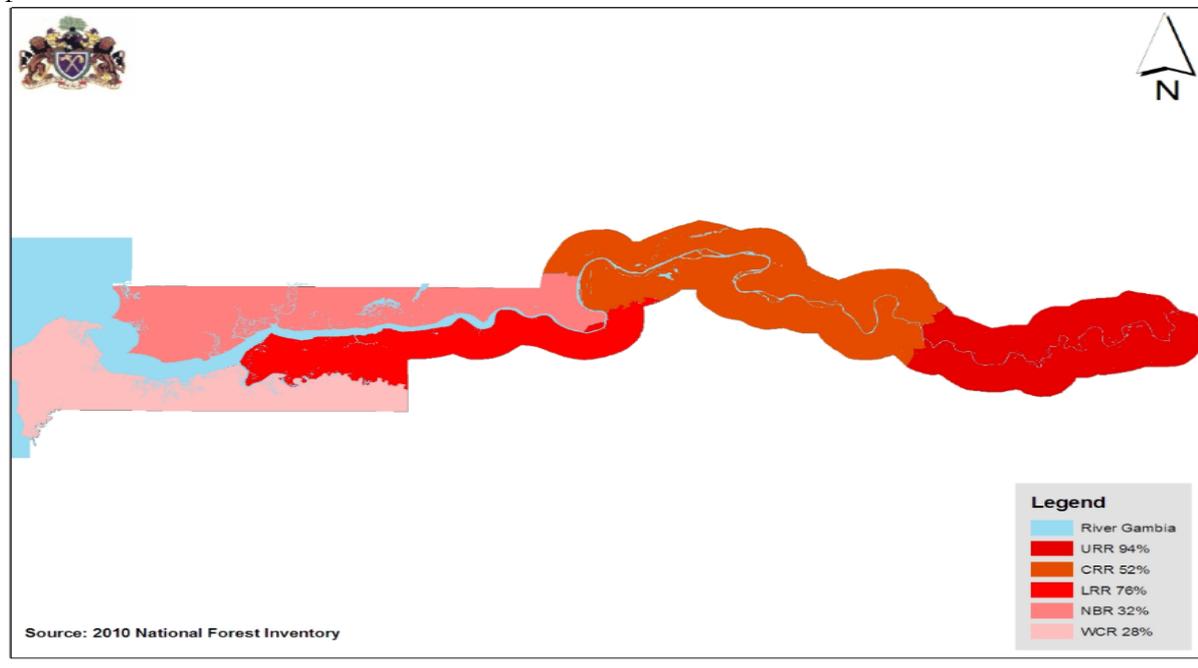


Figure 3. Percentage of total land burnt by Forest fires in different administrative regions of the Gambia, 2010

d) Integrating Parks and Wildlife in Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)

The Gambia placed high premium on the conservation of national parks and wetlands of significant habitat for Wildlife in sustainable forest management. Currently there are twenty-two (22) wildlife Protected Areas, occupying total area 94,064 hectares, which is approximately 9.4% of the Gambia’s total surface area (DPWM, 2017). The total land area for the 8 national parks and reserves is estimated at 89,205.9ha, which are co-managed with permanent representation of the surrounding communities in the decision-making process. The fourteen (14) wildlife community protected areas occupied 4,858.1 hectares under the mandate of the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPWM).

Conservation measures in The Gambia (including the establishment and improved management practices) are mainly covering the Protected Areas (PAs). Even though national parks and reserves are well protected and managed, in-situ conservation and protection outside national parks and reserves are constrained by limited investment in human and financial resources. Many wetland areas of high conservation value endure some human interference/use, and would therefore require vigilant protection activities. Gambia’s parks and wildlife management accords to the Convention of Biological Diversity; adaptive in approach with collaborative and partnership efforts, linkages and overlapping programming with other subsectors including forestry, land and environmental management. High value is placed on local ecological knowledge and adequate stakeholder consultations in the management is prominent in the intervention approach.

The wildlife and forest subsectors combined output is principally constrained by frequent and uncontrolled bushfires, drying of streams and other drinking points contributing to the

disappearance of natural habitats and indigenous traditional wildlife species; high cost of forestry and wildlife development, inadequate human and financial resources, deforestation and weak involvement of local communities and private sector investment in the forest and wildlife management.

2.3.2 Challenges and Opportunities

i) Challenges:

The Gambia forest sector continues to be affected by the rapid pace of degradation. The primary driver for degradation of dryland forests in The Gambia is the increasing population pressure on forest resources accelerated by; i) Slash and burn agriculture, and rapid expansion of pump rice irrigation and introduction of animal traction/semi-mechanization in rain-fed crop agriculture; ii) increased timber trade in the country; iii) unsustainable and uncontrolled resource extraction; iv) Forest fires and; iv) proliferation of estate development especially in the West Coast Region.

The recent Illegal and /or unsustainable logging and harvesting of forest products seriously undermine national efforts to improve sustainable forest management in the country. DoF lose significant amount of revenue a year as a result of uncollected taxes and royalties. Recent estimates suggest that up to 65% of internationally traded *Pterocarpus erinaceus* (“KENO”) might originate from illegal sources. Rare tree species and those with high value for timber or non-timber forest products are often in danger of becoming locally extinct.



Badumebkuta, Jarra West landing site

ii) Opportunities:

Majority of the rural populations depend to varying degrees on forests for their livelihoods, e.g. fuelwood, medicinal plants and forest foods. Forests play a key role in the rural economy, and urban areas often depend on forested areas for their cooking, heating and benefit from the multiple environmental services of forests and trees. The introduction of community forestry and sustainable forest management (SFM) models are presenting new opportunities. Forestry has become more people-centered, and people’s perceptions of forests have undergone significant changes with increasing emphasis on the environmental, social and cultural values of forests.

Interactions between other sectors such as construction and the forest sector are increasingly understood to be the source of both problems and opportunities. Also, there is growing recognition of the linkages of forestry with agriculture, energy and water. In complement, special initiatives exist that ensure that wood and non-wood forest products are available in a sustainable way to meet national requirements, ensuring multiple use of forests and forest resources/products for food and nutrition security, incomes, employment and investment. Forest as a source of bio-energy, and its role in climate change mitigation and adaptation will be carefully addressed in this strategy development. The department of forestry will also articulate the significant contributions of forests and trees to sustainable livelihoods and eradication of hunger and poverty in the strategy.

There has been significant growth in some non-timber forest products (NTFP) markets in the country; growing interest in products such as herbal medicines, wild foods, handcrafted utensils, and decorative items; and therefore, entrepreneurs focused on production and trade of NTFPs. These NTFPs are vital to the livelihoods of the poor, and with some value additions, there are potentials to create large and reliable markets for the products.

Civil society and private sector players could play an important role in management of forest products, reflecting the public's desire to secure a range of ecosystem services from forests. Consequently, multi-stakeholder processes are becoming significant in sustainable forest management. They can become important agents of change in forestry.

2.3.3 Key Issues and Constraints

There were several initiatives/programmes implemented in the country to address the continuous degradation of forests. Current activities are working towards the right direction, but fall short of providing concerted and sustainable solutions to improve dryland forest management and at the same time maximise the forest-dependent sustainable livelihood potential.

The current forest policy highlighted the following critical constraints and these are still the major concerns in dryland forest management: (a) population pressure and the inability of the natural resource sector to meet the increasing resource demand; (b) the inability of various users to take full responsibility of balancing supply and demand for forest resources; (c) inaccessibility to land and difficulties in securing extended tenure (to match the long-term benefits of investment in forest resource development) for private foresters; (d) uncoordinated/poor marketing system for forest products; (DoF is still tinkering with these constraints as they constitute major challenges to sustainable forest management¹⁸. Progress towards sustainable forest management remains uneven and cross-sectoral, and integrated management and landscape approaches are often underutilized. Other key constraints are:

a) Limited institutional capacities & inadequate technical assistance to local communities

The Department of Forestry (DoF) was restructured in 1995 to decentralize forest management authority into the regions where forest resources are located; and the forest legislation was revised to include the Forests Management Concept for sustainable management of forest reserves. Despite these reforms, the department is faced with inadequate number of well trained staff and insufficient logistic support due to low public funding. Government efforts in financing forest management have been low, on average less than one percent of the total government recurrent budget. With the institutional capacity gaps at the local level, technical assistance provided to CFs and local communities are still inadequate.

In terms DoF staff capacity, there is sufficient knowledge on dryland forests and the linkages with the ecosystem services, and the relevance to other sectors. However, staff and partner CBOs at regional levels have significant capacity gaps in silvi-cultural practices and techniques, agroforestry principles and practices, bushfire management, water conservation techniques, and forestry-based enterprise and value chain development. Also, staff involved in CF extension in many cases lacked clarity in all the principles and steps of CF tenure transfer and JFPM agreement creation. Other relevant government institutions in the country have a very limited understanding of the CF concept and tenure transfer principles, and dryland management issues in the context of their sectoral mandates. This is a significant barrier for adopting an integrated and inter-sectoral approach. At CF level, the capacity barriers are related to the knowledge/skills of the CFCs on the steps of CF tenure transfer, monitoring mechanisms and record keeping of monitoring activities.

b) inability to stimulate adequate private sector response to investment in forestry

¹⁸ Forest Policy (2010 – 2019)

Private sector participation in harvesting and marketing of forest products is currently limited to only processing and selling of wood for construction and furniture production. However, there is growing markets for non-timber forest products (NTFP) such as herbal medicines, handcrafted, and Eco-tourism. Government is encouraging increasing private sector involvement in economic development and has provided investment incentives including no importation tax on agricultural machinery and inputs; no export tax on agricultural products; etc. Despite these incentives, many private sector actors do not have sufficient start-up capital to meaningfully invest in forest enterprises, wary towards forestry business as it is considered a risky and unsustainable venture. Commercial banks are reluctant to provide loans for these types of investments. This is evidenced by the few private entrepreneurs operating in forestry.

c) Limited value-additions and poor market linkages in small scale forest enterprises

Small scale forest enterprises provide opportunities and are of great value to local economies, providing alternative livelihoods. In the existing CFs, there are a number of functioning small scale forest enterprises (products: timber, firewood, honey, fruits and nuts, handicrafts, etc) with limited technical skills in extraction, post-harvest handling and value addition and management and administrative skills¹⁹. The enterprises are poorly connected to support services (e.g. access and effective linkages to microcredit institutions, access to markets, etc) and are poorly organized within and among the enterprises.

d) Inadequate framework and guidance for effective dryland forest management:

Although at national level, there exists multi-sectoral coordination mechanism for natural resource management sector, the ANR platform, and a working group consisting of representatives of government entities and NGOs having mandates or working on issues related to natural resource management, as well as Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) at regional level, they do play limited coordination role. Lack of a specific multi-sectoral coordination mechanism, under the ANR Working Group, focusing on dryland forest ecosystem issues on the ground is a key barrier to sustainable forest management.

Chapter III: Institutional Service Linkages (*Fundamentals of the strategy*)

The natural resource sector is facing a fragmented service delivery system, with overlapping mandates and programmes among the core agencies, coupled with uncoordinated programming of non-state actors and the private sector. Shared roles and responsibilities among the core agencies are not well-defined, and there is virtually no integration in planning and budgeting processes of the recurrent and development budgets. As a result, the relevant subsectors are experiencing poor linkages in policies and priority programming. Harmonised planning, programmeline linkages and effective interdependence of subsectors and likely ecosystem projects will provide a good economic sense in sector programming. For instance, inter-sectoral synergies between DoF, EbA and the department of Parks and Wildlife, which is implementing the UNCBD on expanding conservation areas, and establishing Ecologically and Biologically Sustainable Areas (EBSA's) are of mutual benefits to three core agencies.

3.1 Inter-agency Collaboration and Linkages

Forestry and related sub-sectors/entities (e.g. Parks and Wildlife, Climate Change players, etc.) comprises a number of actors and stakeholders with ongoing interventions being supported by various sources of funding. Therefore, effective institutional arrangements for coordination and management, and for building synergy and alignment among programmes are required. Likely challenges in ensuring complementarity and coordination among entities may include lack of

¹⁹ Project Document: Community-based Sustainable Dryland Management – Gambia (2016 – 2021)

willingness or capacity to collaborate among stakeholders from different sub-sectors/entities; and insufficient emphasis and prioritization in natural resource management from high-level authorities. Subsidiary challenges may include delayed or dishonoured donor pledges; slow disbursement of funds; weak management information systems and poor communication among programmes/ projects, which is essential to align and track progress; unnecessary duplication of mandates and resources; weak management capacity of respective programmes.

This strategy will provide mechanisms for the coordination, management, monitoring and evaluation systems essential for its success. Coordination and management structures will work directly through existing Government decentralized structures: regional, district, ward and village development committees) thus avoiding parallel structures. Mainstreaming management and coordination of forestry interventions through Government institutional arrangements will build national ownership and capacity of existing structures, as well as strengthen sustainability. Relevant partners and operators in forestry such as NGOs, private sector, timber merchants and entrepreneurs in non-timber forest products have all expressed interest in participating and supporting this strategy. Some of them also expressed support to mainstreaming their ongoing interventions along this strategic framework, and working with DoF to better align their ongoing and future activities embracing sustainable forest management.

3.2 Institutional and policy frameworks

The forestry legislative frameworks such as the Forest Act and Forest Regulations of 1998, Forest Policy, 2010 and Community Forestry Implementing Guidelines, 1998 provided both the legal and strategic frameworks on forestry programming in The Gambia. The national policy objective of the forestry sector was to (a) maintain 30 per cent of the total land area of The Gambia under forest cover; and, (b) manage 75 per cent of the land under forest cover for environmental and socioeconomic development by the year 2005.

A number of programme frameworks were also prepared to define the goals and provide the roadmap for achieving the policy objectives. Among these are the National Action Programme (NAP) to combat desertification which seeks to prevent and mitigate land degradation and its impacts through systems and practices of sustainable land management; and the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) which prioritizes a list of activities/initiatives including community forestry.

Other national policies and strategies that supports the institutional framework of DoF are the ANR Sector Policy and the Gambia Environment Action Plan (GEAP), among others. Despite these supports and reforms, the sub-sector is faced with inadequate number of well trained staff and insufficient logistic support due to low public funding. Government efforts in financing forest management have been low, on average less than one percent of the total government recurrent budget. Therefore, if human resource capacity is not enhanced, DoF will unlikely cope with the demands placed on it by the communities. Also, the government must continue to encourage the creation and expansion of private forests with recruitment of extension agents who could be hired by government, projects, NGOs or private sector, and the communities to help in sustainable forest management initiatives including community forestry projects.

3.3 Macro-sectoral Strategic Framework

The Government of Gambia responded to global and regional commitments by ratifying several International Conventions which are related to sustainable management and utilization of Forest resources. To fulfil the department's commitment, there are established necessary legal, institutional and policy frameworks for the management and conservation of forest resources.

This strategy plan is aligned to these conventions and rooted in the umbrella strategy of MoECCNR, which is supporting all other relevant legal and policy frameworks as an instrument to implement DoF's commitment.

This strategy is grounded in the national development and poverty reduction frameworks, including Government of The Gambia's Vision 2020, and the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment, 2012-2015 (PAGE I). It is also aligned to the SDGs and focuses on building the capabilities of the citizens. This led us to review the department's role in the national development efforts. With the launch of National Development Plan (NDP) overtures from the government to DoF are already visible.

The Sustainable Development Goals underline the need to balance objectives and potential trade-offs between poverty reduction, growth and sustainability. Goal 15: "Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss" and Goal 13: "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact" place forest management and sustainability into national development framework and underscore the importance of these objectives in this strategy plan. The Gambia Incorporated Vision 2020, the national blue-print identified agriculture and natural sector as top priority. Sustainable natural resource management programmes are included in the development agenda. The National Development Plan (NDP, 2018 - 2021) showed government's commitment to strengthening environment and Climate Change-friendly policies, programmes and awareness at all levels for resilience through sustainable management of natural resources, and appropriate land use. The strategy is also, is also informed by the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE), 2012-2015. It is imperative that the strategic plan is consistent with these national development plans, in as much as sustainable forest management and availability of a sound ecosystem is a prerequisite to much of the envisaged development efforts outlined in these national development plans.

Since 2009, there also, exist strategic frameworks on the sustainable management and utilization of forest resources in The Gambia. The Gambian Forest Management Concept (GFMC), 2000, and the National Forestry Action Plan (NFAP), which are DoF's blue-prints for Participatory Forest Management (PFM), and Community Based Forest Enterprise Development using the Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) Approach were the technical documents for programme implementation. Other concepts including the Joint Forest Park Management Concept (JFPM), Community Controlled State Forest (CCSF) Management and guidelines for Community Forestry Implementation of 2002 were the key guidelines. In addition, National Forest Assessment, 2009-2010 and detailed inventories of various forests (Gazetted Forest Parks) under the control of the DoF are useful references in forest planning.

PART TWO: STRATEGIC APPROACH

Chapter IV: DoF Organisational Profile

4.1 DoF Organisational Highlights and Functions

With more than 40 years of experience, DoF's role in forestry continues to evolve. The challenges in forestry have ever been multi-faceted. Together with actors in the private sector and non-governmental organizations, the department has been dealing with these challenges and other numerous forest issues. The department experienced several organizational changes; and are now adapting culturally to best practices in forestry. The department also embraced integrated approach to forestry with a focus on dryland forest restoration; providing technical support to promote appropriate forestry technologies, catalyze change and build effective and strong institutional capacity for sustainable forest management. There were several major changes in strategy towards integrated interdisciplinary and innovative approaches to bear on our work in the forest sector, and engaging other key sectors that have an impact on forests. DoF's profile is increasing, and this have open new doors for strategic partnerships with private sector and civil society organizations in order to underpin department's work at local level.

Community forestry has been the hallmark of department's programming, seeking to facilitate and catalyze dryland forest restoration processes at local level. Communities and other CSO partners were supported to strengthen the systems and processes required in actualizing their goals in community forestry. Overall, DoF's past performance reflects clear strengths in supporting and working with rural communities – particularly in Participatory Forest Management (PFM), and Community Based Forest Enterprise Development using the Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) Approach. Programme diversity will remain the feature of DoF's operations in the country. The practical demonstration of blending forestry and participatory programming and other such methods in programme design is now widely recognised. Planning, monitoring and reporting systems are developing, and core accountability systems are being established. The quality of staff supervision and staff commitment to their work is high. However, the recruitment and retention of senior staff, low academic qualifications; and over-ambitious planning were posing some organizational challenges.

The approach in the new strategic direction will provide long-term perspectives and leadership in the administration of forest affairs while working in partnership with the private sector, civil society organisations and communities, and alliances with related sectors and agencies where joint actions are needed. We shall be undertaking policy advocacy and influencing functions to mobilize the political will for sector financing, promote evidence-based best practices to achieve sustainable forest management, while facilitating linkages with related sectors and supporting projects that impact on the forest. Research and development shall be supported for forest technology generation; disseminate and apply information and knowledge in forest development and conservation.

Drawing on the achievements in community forestry, DoF is proposing a strategy that focuses on learning from experience, maximizing programme impact, and leveraging knowledge and resources to match the needs of forest communities. Innovation can be a powerful force multiplier when combined with other investments. Targeted investments in partnership, resource mobilization and impact measurement can generate larger development in forestry. DoF will also embrace a new model of doing business to improve its programming methods, and it will strive to find new and innovative ways to engage and work with partners.

The strategy is based on four imperatives:

- (i) Strong governance of our forest resources
- (ii) Learning and innovation in programming
- (iii) Investing in new partnerships with resource users
- (iv) Teaching impact for mutual accountability

The new business model will be underpinned by DoF's commitment to measuring results. To this end, DoF will upgrade its capacity to engage donors and raise funds, develop its new community forestry model, monitor and measure programme outcomes.

4.2 DoF Organizational Area of Excellence in Forestry

Organizational excellence defines the strategic competency that DoF must build to achieve its mission. The department is more active in Participatory Forest Management (PFM) and community forestry, and these are the areas where it must excel in dryland forest management efforts. Ideally, area of excellence does not preclude DoF from having strong competencies in other areas relevant to sustainable forest management and restoration – *maintaining a stable forest land base, and promoting methods to use forest resources in a sustainable way, and with clear social and economic benefits for present and future generations*. Rather, it simply outlines where DoF strive to be the best. DoF found its area of excellence in **participatory forest management** where we are addressing the linkages between value-chain forestry programming, biodiversity, and social development / poverty reduction.

The strategy will optimize institutional capacity to help mitigate climate change, conserve biodiversity, safeguard wildlife habitat and protect land and watersheds. As DoF gradually increase its integrated approach to community forestry, it realized the need to embrace sustainable forest management to addressing poverty at all levels.

This strategy places people rather than inputs at the centre of policy and practice, addressing the interface between forestry, poverty reduction and biodiversity. This encompasses strengthening rights, capabilities and reducing vulnerabilities among traditional/indigenous communities whose livelihood depend on forests resources; while capturing emerging opportunities and strengthening governance of existing dryland forests. The strategy provides a basis for designing forest management interventions, and selective programmatic approaches in addressing aspects of timber harvesting, agroforestry, non-timber forest products, protected areas, local indigenous uses, and more. The approach will offer pathways of bringing people together in community forestry to generate income from sale of forest-derived products and build on their existing networks. This strategy will further propose some techniques, technologies and procedures that optimize the social and environmental contributions of forestry and minimize the negative impacts.

DoF Area of Excellence

Participatory forest management to secure thriving forest ecosystem goods and services

The underlying principles of this strategy are that communities and private sector have a role in forestry, and if provided the opportunity, they can become powerful actors in sustainable dryland forest management and restoration. The approach is partnership-oriented with the communities, private sector and local governments, underscoring people's rights in sustainable forest management. DoF will also, employ Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) approach to generate active and informed participation of communities and stakeholders in SFM. Public awareness raising and communication activities play a critical role in educating the public, thereby allowing them to effectively participate in SFM decision-making. To work with different groups of stakeholders, CEPA are crucial instruments to build trust, understanding and shared agreements for action and to reduce conflict. CEPA is needed to help people work together and innovate, and spread information, knowledge, values and goals. CEPA supports capacity development so that various actors can take responsibility for forest biodiversity.

People are primary stakeholders in the process due to their likely multiple roles and responsibilities in SFM, while we become a facilitator with the responsibility of assisting on jointly negotiated terms. The strategy emphasizes empowering local stakeholders in forest restoration

and sustainable management in dryland forests lands that are highly vulnerable to environmental degradation. DoF aim to promote service delivery that is sustainable not just by infrastructural, but also institutionally, socially and ecologically. DoF's area of excellence is critical for its becoming effective in dryland forest programming. For this reason, it must ensure to provide space for communities and private individuals to become primary stakeholders to impact all its programming.

4.3 DoF Theory of Change in Forestry

The continuing loss of forests due to widespread forest fires and forest degradation in The Gambia, especially in the northern region of River Gambia is posing critical challenges to sustainable development. Rural livelihoods continued to depend on the dwindling forest resources, which is supporting rural employment and incomes. Population pressure and increasing demand for food, timber and fuel is triggering substantial unforeseen land use changes, including large-scale forest clearance. DoF must clearly articulate a vision of long-term progress (or theory of change), define and measure the delicate balance between forest resources, poverty reduction and other social goals. DoF theory of change (ToC) is all about Sustainable Forest Management, and that is in line with government's vision based on the sustainable development of our natural resources. It also meets the legal obligation of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources set out in the Forest Act, 2018. The strategy will thus have a dynamic mission and vision of its own.

This Strategy presents the vision, orientations, objectives and actions for dryland forest management and restoration initiatives. The economic viability of forest industry, maintenance of a good quality environment, the social acceptability of forestry practices, and equitable sharing of the benefits of forest management are just some of the underlying principles of the Strategy. It lays a framework for rallying all stakeholders around a shared vision of maintaining a stable forest land for today and tomorrow. The strategy is proposing increasing community involvement in forest management and defines a management approach that is environment- and biodiversity-friendly while contributing to economic growth. Furthermore, it proposes potential economic solutions to halt deforestation and reverse desertification. In this perspective, there is a need to go beyond traditional approaches and adopt a short, medium, and long term economic vision for increasing the value produced from forests.

Programmes in DoF are aiming to decrease deforestation rates and balance carbon reduction with national development goals, and DoF shall strive to formulate clear and coherent models of change. The strategy underscored the potential trade-offs between climate objectives and broader development benefits; give due consideration to the 'co-benefits' of reducing the pace of desertification and advance climate change adaptation, which should be more explicitly defined in the programme designs. DoF will further promote sustainable livelihoods for populations living in or near forest areas and address land-use issues as a necessary step in reducing deforestation rates. It is believed that drivers of deforestation are often factors outside of the forest sector, and therefore programmes designed to halt or reduce deforestation must address a broader range of related issues, including: land tenure, agricultural systems, the potential for climate smart agricultural practices, alternative livelihoods, livestock and grazing practices, urban expansion, and other social and economic drivers of deforestation and change in land use.

Illegal logging and over-harvesting of non-timber products such as wild fruits (main feed for wildlife) are issues of concern. DoF must "close doors" to such bad practices, requiring transparent legal actions and effective policy enforcement. In many years of work in forestry, DoF discovered evidences of forest resource depletion that are very much rooted in illegal exploitation and unjust use of resources. Attacking deforestation without understanding types

and levels of resource exploitation, and their relative nature will not bring durable solutions. Analysis and actions will therefore, take much greater cognizance of not just the symptoms but also the causes of land degradation. In doing so, DoF will employ stronger regulations to protect land resources. It is believed that these solutions, in whatever form, must eventually become the responsibility of the local populations and DoF to translate into effective actions. The increasing frequency of annual bushfires remains a key contributing factor to accelerated land degradation. Unregulated access to trees and forests and unsecured tenure rights have contributed to traditional and short-term oriented farming practices including hysterical burning and clearing of forests for crop agriculture as they attract more financial benefits to farmers than forest conservation. DoF is optimistic that both privatization and decentralization of control over forests, forest management services and enterprises; together with other forms of liberalization and structural adjustment will remove perverse incentives that are acting against sustainable forest management. This will possibly create a wider range of “willingness to stewardship” of forests, providing some rights and powers for communities to protect the remaining dryland forests and prevent reoccurrence of bush fires.

DoF theory of change calls for a multi-sectoral approach in forestry, requiring joint efforts with other organizations engaged in rural development. Hence, the need for co-ordination, alignment and leadership of the multiple actors in the sector. Thus, policies and programmes in forestry will become more holistic in addressing a broader range of issues rather than maintaining a narrow focus on protection. The complexity of the multi-sectoral approaches working to halt deforestation, and the intricate dryland forest management involving multiplicity of institutions and financing mechanisms requires greater levels of co-ordination among players. Therefore, active leadership in the sector is considered essential to provide the impetus in collaboration and ensure harmonisation of approaches between actors. This is based on the belief that these institutions will discharge their responsibilities to provide the pre-requisite services towards natural resources management. It is further believed that sustainable forest management will depend on the strengths of community participation and ownership. Therefore, the main focus of DoF's policy and practice will continue to increase access and ensure relevance of programmes to forest communities and their CBOs.

4.3.1 Enablers and Drivers of Change in Forest Resource Management

The department of forestry's aim to reduce degradation of dryland forest can happen if there exists stable economy and cooperation of forest communities in the sustainable management and utilisation of forest resources. Willingness and the commitment of the government to increase forestry sector financing will be essential. The following conditions of change are fundamental to sustainable forest management efforts:

Condition 1: Strong forest governance:

Accountable and committed Government discharging its sovereign right to protect, use, manage and develop the forest resources, ensuring that human activities do not cause damages to the environments in The Gambia and that of other countries. Effective Local Government Area (LGA) Authorities committed to sustainably manage the forest resources and forest lands to meet social, economic, ecological and cultural needs of now and future generations demonstrated by increased sector financing, effective coordination and policy support. Also, existence of effective decentralized regional forestry programmes demonstrated by efficient systems and processes: transparent roadmaps, policies and budgets; public, community, and forest stakeholder participation encouraged; effective monitoring, land-use planning and coordination; improved programme quality and learning; and policy implementation and enforcement. DoF will contribute towards creating this condition by effectively discharging its mandate as well as ensuring equitable access to quality forestry services.

Condition 2: Strong Partnership with the private sector and market linkages

Existence of strong private and CSO sectors working in partnership with DoF, LGA authorities and forest communities with demonstrable sound policies and good forestry practices providing focused region wide equitable and inclusive social services taken to scale. This can be attained with committed staff force in the organization, and by ensuring that non-timber products, wood, recreational and ecotourism remains an economic driving force, especially for local communities and private individuals (interested in private forestry); while respecting the productive capacity of the dryland ecosystems and taking into account the interests and concerns of the different stakeholders. Trained and empowered youth and women that are self-employed (adding market value to non-timber products) in marketing. Wealth generation will also require greater forest product mobilization, particularly in private forests.

Condition 3: Empowered forest communities and social forestry:

Empowered forest communities and their organizations demanding their rights as primary stakeholders in their community forestry, and actively taking collective actions in ecotourism and non-timber marketing. DoF will contribute towards this condition by working with poor and marginalized people, enabling them to gain control over productive resources **to secure their basic rights in community forestry.**

Condition 4: Stable funding sources for forestry programming:

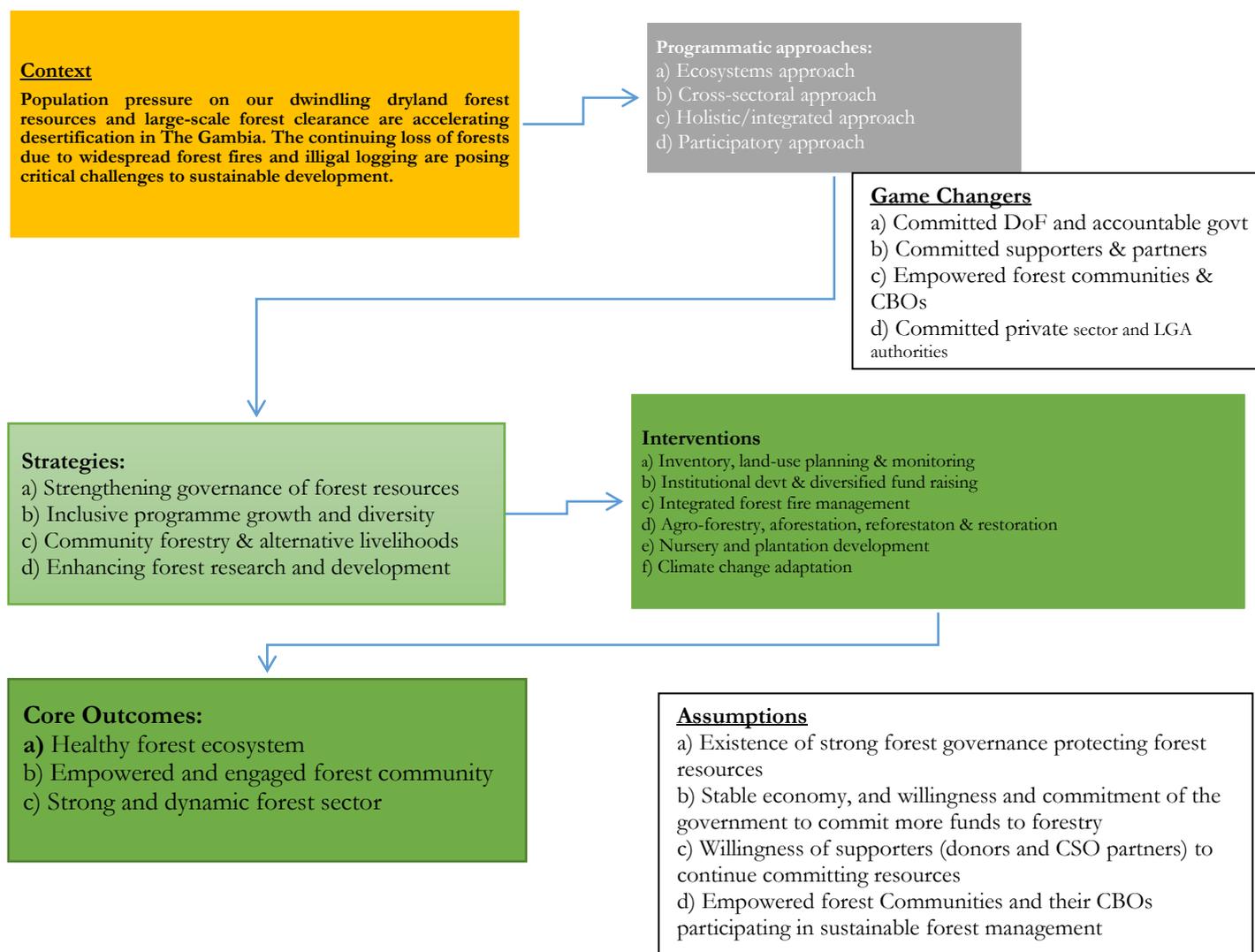
Existence of the political will, and commitment of government to increase budgetary allocation for forestry programming. Willingness of partners and donors continuing to support capacity building initiatives for sustainable forest management is a critical condition. DoF will contribute towards this condition by working with supporters and partners to secure donor and government contracts, and ensure that sufficient funds are available to enable us engage on sustainable management of forests and trees.

DoF will also embrace a new model of doing business to improve its programming methods, and shall find new and innovative ways to engage and work with supporters and partners in contributing towards creating the above conditions. The new business model will be underpinned by the four pillars of sustainable dryland forest management and development: strengthening governance of forest resources, inclusive programme growth & diversity, enhancing forest research and development, and community forestry and alternative livelihoods. DoF will further demonstrate its commitment to measuring the core outcome of each pillar. Therefore, DoF will upgrade its capacity to increase engagement with local partners (communities, CSOs and private sector), international partners and donors; diversify fund raising and develop new cross-sectoral and integrated approaches, monitor and measure outcomes, ensure equity in community forestry, support and learn the best practices in sustainable forestry.

4.3.2 The Strategy Pathway

The pathway in securing a thriving forest ecosystem goods and services is to strengthen DoF's institutional capacity and integrate dryland forest management into policy, planning, and practices; strengthen governance of forest resources; implement diversified and inclusive programmes; expand and enhance forest research and development. The following pathway can be ecologically sensible.

The Pathway



4.4 Public – Private-sector Partnership

In line with the Supplementary Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy (ANP), this strategy will capitalize on government's initiatives on creating partnership with the private sector. The liberalization of investment regulations and removal of unnecessary restrictions on forest products is a welcoming initiative. The policy initiatives providing appropriate incentives (e.g. tax free on importation of timber and charcoal, and exportation of non-forest products) will attract and promote quality investment, and galvanize the growth of small and medium enterprises (SME) of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP). The initiatives will further encourage private sector partnership with local associations of resource-users (e.g. CBOs in eco-tourism, etc.) in joint-ventures that expand market outlets for non-forest products. Although this will require substantial efforts and resources, it will create new employment opportunities and output in the forest product markets.

4.5 Competitive Value-chain and Market Linkages

Informed by the ANR policy, this strategy recognised the challenges within the fragmented value chain and market linkages of forest products from small-scale rural activities to high-productivity commercial enterprises due to absence of a business culture, particularly for non-timber products. The strategy aims to improve market accessibility of forest products through increased investment in eco-tourism and processing facilities for non-timber forest products (NTFP). Promote formal financial services among value-chain actors in NTFP; and improve their skills and knowledge in a bid to link them to relevant markets. The aim will be to build and commercialize the value chain initiatives using various approaches including cooperative schemes that link private sector and small-scale actors in an effort to increase productivity & household incomes. Specific areas include:

- i. Strengthen CBOs of forest communities to access services, and facilitate their partnership with private sector entities for eco-tourism;
- ii. Develop a business culture along the value chains of forest products to facilitate value addition and link producers and vendors to input and output markets;
- iii. Develop and improve knowledge of market information systems and quality control measures and standards; and
- iv. Develop appropriate institutional arrangements to extend credit to actors in the subsectors; create awareness among the value chain actors of appropriate financial sources; and establish credit guarantee schemes for producers and cooperative organizations.

Chapter V: The Strategy

5.1 The foundation

This strategy advocates for a paradigm shift in forestry – from narrow inspectorate and protection functions to the holistic delivery of all forest functions and values. It will set out a sustainable management approach of forest resources, policy directions, and objectives applicable to forest lands, in particular with regard to ecosystem management. It also defines the mechanisms and means required for its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The strategy is intended for government officials, private sector, NGOs, donors and others; and it focuses on the importance of harmonizing the conservation of biodiversity and poverty reduction in forest communities. It will cover a range of forest situations: protected areas, production forests, agroforestry and dryland forests for restoration. It focuses both on the tools needed for sustainable forest management, and the role of other actors with whom interaction is needed, from local communities to national level players.

With the above mainstream thinking, this strategy has been formulated after careful assessment of country context and the role of forest communities on the one hand, and DoF own mandate and core competencies on the other. The strategy is designed to make the fullest use of our mandate in the administration of our national forests. In keeping with our mission therefore, our main business will be reversing the current trends of deforestation and desertification, while empowering forest communities, and conserving the ecosystem. This will be carried out directly and indirectly, with the object of engaging the forces that facilitate or hinder the process of sustainable forest management. The scope of the strategic programming will – depending on the nature of intervention – extend to local and national levels. The programmatic methodologies will include: a) ecosystems method, b) cross-sectoral approach, c) holistic/integrated approach, and d) participatory methodology in forest resource management. Also, promoting ways to use forest biodiversity in a sustainable way, and with clear social and economic benefits for the poor will be underscored in DoF's programming. DoF shall be pursuing three strategic elements: a)

grassroots capacity development - institution building and resource development; b) advocacy and influencing increased financing for the forest subsector (especially by the government and donors) to balance the ecosystem; and c) effective partnership and collaborative alliances with related sectors and supportive project – none of which are mutually exclusive. The role of DoF in relation to these elements would be primarily complementing its mandate.

5.2 Vision

Consistent with Gambia National Development Plan (2018 to 2021), the overall vision of this national forestry strategy is a secured country that upholds a stable **Green Economy**: ‘An existence of thriving forest ecosystem goods and services that fulfil ecological values, and provides economic and social benefits for society’.

5.3 Mission

To conserve Gambia’s forest resources from degradation and take urgent action on climate change; while promoting methods of utilising forest resources at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, improve productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potentials for environmental values, social and economic benefits for present and future generations at local, national, and global levels, without causing damage to other ecosystems.

5.4 The strategic Intent

The Government of The Gambia, through DoF is committed to the conservation and sustainable use of forest biodiversity through comprehensive programmes. DoF programme activities were promoting poverty reduction and creation of sustainable livelihoods. Priority programmes addresses the linkages between forestry, biodiversity, and development / poverty reduction. This strategy is showing how biodiversity and sustainable economic development can go hand in hand. It introduces public decision-makers to some techniques, technologies and procedures that optimize the social and environmental contributions of forestry and how forests minimize negative impacts of climate change. This strategic approach recognizes our active role, while emphasizing the responsibilities of the state and society towards sustainable forest management. DoF will continue to **learn and increase experiences** of working with forest communities, while addressing key challenges that is degrading land resources and accelerating desertification in The Gambia.

DoF is further committed to reforming the forestry subsector and provide the highest quality of technical services to the population, while building a governing system that will respond squarely to the depletion of forest resources. The common task is to conserve Gambia’s forest resources from degradation by promoting sustainable production, use and management of forest resources, and taking urgent action on climate change, so that available forest cover can support the needs of the present and future generations. This core intent articulates the aims of DoF, which encompasses two goals that are believed to be inextricably linked. The first focuses on resource-users and their livelihoods, and the second is the sustainable management of forest resources.

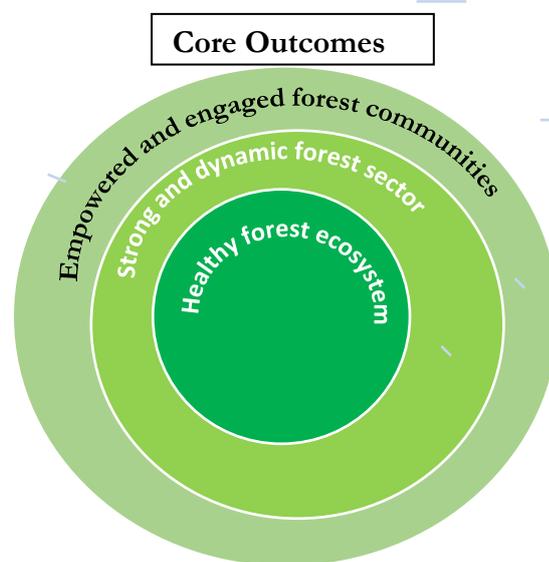
The Core Outcomes: Given the mission defined for DoF, results are identified that must drive towards in order to achieve the vision. These are called the core outcomes, and they clarify DoF’s understanding of what needs to be in place and enable DoF secure its vision: **thriving forest ecosystem goods and services**. As shown in the circular diagram below, the core outcomes are inter-linked; they are all essential parts of the impact DoF wish to have. Based on changing context, DoF will position itself to achieve:

a) Empowered and engaged forest community

Forest conservation supports sustainable development efforts and requires the active participation of forest communities. But, limited access and user rights have been barring rural communities practicing forest conservation. DoF will continue to champion community forestry by critically engaging rural communities in sustainable forest management, while building and strengthening their CBOs to demand and meet their basic needs and rights to their forests and trees. DoF will enable these institutions to reflect critically on their situations and help them obtain necessary information needed to interact with intermediary organizations and private sector in forestry. Also, DoF will support women’s and youth groups to build wider linkages with local, regional and international markets for commercial forest products.

b) Strong and dynamic forest sector

Forests are essential for human survival and well-being. They provide us with food, oxygen, shelter, recreation, and spiritual sustenance, and many other commercially-traded products, ranging from pharmaceuticals to timber and clothing. DoF will advance sustainable management of our forest resources in order to strike a balance between these goods and services, a prosperous and dynamic society, and a high quality of life for current and future generations. To achieve this balance, choices must be made in a complex, ever-changing conditions of dryland forest, which is unable to keep pace with the demands of the increasing population. The biodiversity of forests—the variety of living things—underpins the goods and services provided by the forest ecosystems, and is the basis for long-term dynamics of the forest sector. Promoting ways to use forest biodiversity in a sustainable way, and with clear social and economic benefits for the forest communities can result to a strong and dynamic forest sector.



c) Healthy forest ecosystem

DoF shall design programmes that will maintain and increase the health and vitality of Gambiaforest ecosystem; and restoredegraded dryland forests by silvicultural means where possible. DoF shall extensively be monitoring the health of forest ecosystem, assessing key biotic and abiotic factors such as pests, overgrazing and overstocking, forest fires, and damaging climatic factors that can potentially affect the strengths of forest ecosystems. DoFshall make best use of natural structures and processes such as preventive biological measures to improve the strengths of dryland forests wherever feasible. Adequate means of conservation shall be encouraged to enhance the stability and resistance capacity of the forests. DoF will employ appropriate practices such as reforestation and afforestation with traditional tree species in sustainable forest management.

5.5The Key Guiding Principles

The GoTG, through DoF is responsible for the sustainable development and management of forests in public domain. This responsibility is regulated by the Forest Act, 2018, which is supported and implemented by forest policies, management concepts and guidelines; and complimented by GEAP and ANRP. This strategy is informed by these instruments, and has introduced numerous approaches to the governance offorest.Aligned to the ANR policy,

DoF's relationship with others in the forest sub-sector shall be governed by the following principles:

- i) Stable Forest Governance:** the state through DoF have the sovereign right to develop, manage use its forest resources and must ensure that activities do not cause damages to environments of neighbouring countries.
- ii) Sustainable forest management** and the multifunctional role of forests, delivering multiple goods and services in a balanced way and ensuring forest protection;
- iii) Community Empowerment and Participation:** optimising the contribution of forests and the forest sector to rural development, growth and job creation by active involvement of local communities in sustainable production and consumption of forest products.
- iv) Partnership and synergy,** forging sustainable linkages and networks between sub-sectors; and private sector, development partners and community-based organizations to enable broad-based management, ownership, and sustainability of forest resources.
- v) Decentralization:** A uniform and transparent framework for transferring responsibilities, capacities, and resources from the national level to the regions, from local governments to community levels.

Chapter VI: Strategy Orientation

The strategic alignment and supporting plans presents how DoF will focus over the next ten years in contributing towards the core intent, core outcomes and area of excellence. This strategy promotes a coherence, holistic view of forest management, integrates internal and external forest issues, and covers the multiple benefits of forests, while addressing the whole forest value-chain. It prioritises reversing the current trend of deforestation of dryland forests and desertification of productive lands. It is meant to strengthen forest management programmes, and improve competitiveness and job creation, in particular in rural areas, while ensuring forest protection and delivery of ecosystem services. To deliver on the mission and improve coherence and synergies, coordination with and between related sectors is important. Networking opportunities and ways of exchanging information and best practices will be developed. DoF is committed to sustainable forest management and the multifunctional role of forests, delivering multiple goods and services in a balanced way and ensuring forest protection; and resource efficiency, optimising the contribution of forests to rural development, growth and job creation. Resource efficiency in the forest sector means using forest resources in a way that minimises impact on the environment and climate, and prioritising the forest outputs that have higher added-value, create more jobs and contribute to a better carbon balance.

6.1 Strategic choices and priorities

DoF intend to promote people's social and economic rights to their forests with due considerations to the environmental values, while aligning programmes to the national strategic frameworks and sustainable development goals. DoF will further expand its partnership model by making communities and their organizations primary stakeholders in forest management. DoF will prioritize partnership and linkages with private sector, and other game-changers that have potential to solve the challenges of deforestation and desertification. The new business model shall prioritise the following environmental, social and economic commitments in sustainable forest management.

a) Conservation of environmental values

Forests and woodlands provides diverse habitat for wildlife. The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity will be essential in sustainably managing the forests. DoF will therefore, establish additional protected forest areas in balancing the ecosystem. Protected forest areas are an integral part of sustainable forest management. DoF will advance greater awareness raising on the co-

benefits of protected forest areas, and this will be essential in forest conservation to generate public and political support.

b) Enhancing the social values of forests

The potential contribution of the forest sector to sustainable development by providing rural employment and incomes, renewable resources and the protection of local environments is significant. DoF will therefore continue to prioritise participatory forest management – community forestry to enhance the social and economic benefits of sustainable forest management. DoF will employ effective forest extension mechanisms – both formal and informal – that will encourage communication between different interest groups and enable stakeholders to become actively involved in forest development.

c) Promoting the economic benefits

DoF recognised that sustainable forest management can be best achieved through a combination of public and private investments and effective public and private partnerships. However, investments in the forest sector is not very attractive as in other sectors because of the multi-functional and long-term nature of forestry. The sector does contribute to social and environmental goals, but the provision of such public goods and services is rarely recognised by markets, even though the external costs and benefits, such as those from carbon sequestration and storage, biodiversity and water supply are significant to life. DoF shall employ certification of private forests to promote private sector participation in sustainable forest management. As a market-based mechanism, this will complement Government action as long as it is open to all and is not implemented as a barrier to trade.

6.2 Strategic Directions: (clarifying road map in the next ten years)

The strategic direction and intent articulates what DoF wish to achieve with this strategy that will contribute towards the vision - “*thriving forest ecosystem goods and services*”. As such, it implies three fundamental elements that are believed to be inextricably linked: a) the ability and willingness of government to discharge its moral obligation to increase financing (budgetary allocation) the forest sector; b) the ability of DoF, and willingness of related sectors to promote sustainable forest management; and c) the abilities of forest communities to successfully implement their community forestry, which underpin the fundamental belief of the department’s work in bringing about sustainable change in their lives. These signify the ultimate goal of the strategic directions as we are collectively tackling the challenges of climate change, deforestation and desertification in The Gambia. DoF’s theory of change and strategic intent articulated the strategic goals, which presented the road map for the next ten years. It presented four mission-related strategies as follows:

	Direction	Meaning
Mission-Related Strategy	Pillar I: Governance of forest resources	Strengthening governance systems and capabilities that drive the outcomes we seek in sustainable and equitable dryland forest management
	Pillar II: Inclusive programme growth and diversity	Fostering sustainable forest management that integrates the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources and provides environmental social and economic benefits.
	Pillar III: Community forestry & alternative livelihoods	Empowering and engaging local communities on sustainable forest management in their customary lands, providing them with alternative income sources and/or livelihood prospects.
	Pillar IV: Research and development	Engaging on participatory research to develop relevant technologies and provide information that minimizes social, economic and ecological risks to investments in sustainable forest management

The primary aim in forestry over the strategy period is to secure thriving ecosystem goods and services - for the sector to become a source of higher incomes for the rural population, ensuring that the benefits are shared equitably, and that adequate environmental and other regulatory safeguards are in place to ensure sustainability.

DoF aims to balance conservation, community and commercial uses of forest resources by a) conserving protected and important biologically diverse areas, with an emphasis on providing sustainable livelihoods for forest communities, and promoting tourism; b) using community forest management techniques to identify viable economic opportunities from forest resources for the communities, and providing extension and technical assistance in community forest management; c) enhancing environmental benefits from protected forest areas through climate change adaptation initiatives; and d) developing commercial forestry, while encouraging value-added forestry products as a significant source of revenue generation and growth for the economy.

The Government (through DoF) will undertake community-based natural resource management reforms that focus on boosting economic activity through the sustainable utilization of forest resources, and agro-forestry products, while also improving environmental management and conservation. DoF will establish practical mechanisms to enable communities become directly involved in forest management and to participate in the equitable sharing of benefits. It will conduct market and value chain analyses to identify likely forest products that could be promoted through community and, Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) forest activities. The department will make special efforts to create new opportunities for women in the forestry sector and will also explore the potential for environment-related industries such as eco-tourism, game ranching, and recreation areas. These activities are meant to increase rural incomes, reduce poverty and build local capacity to maintain and restore forest coverage in the country. To do so the Government will enhance coordination between DoF and other sub-sectors.

6.3 Strategic Pillars:

This strategy revolves around four pillars that were found appropriate for our newly defined mission insustainably managingdryland forests. These pillars are stirred by sustainable forest management criteria, i.e., the environmental, social, and economic components above.

Strategic Direction		Priority Interventions
Mission-related Strategy	Pillar I: Governance of forest resources	Strategy Goals:Strengthening governance of forest resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building effective and coherent organisation of DoF at national & regional levels • Strengthening policy and institutional capacity, & institute results-based management • Strengthening institutions involved in sustainable forest management. • Institute strong protection mechanisms to minimisedamages to the forest resources • Increase national budgetary allocations fordryland forest management. • Use economic instruments & tax policies to promote sustainable forest management • Impact measurement and organisational learning, and develop databases for DoF • Discourage overuse, waste, excess and inefficient manufacturing. • Fund raising, andreinvestment of income from forest goods and services inDoF
	Pillar II: Inclusive programme growth and diversity	Strategy Goals: Sustainable management of forests and trees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote conservation and enhancement programmes of dryland forests • Establish, a coherent ecological network of climax, primary and other special forests to re-establish ecosystems that are threatened, including plantations • Raise awareness of the ecological, social, cultural and economic roles of forests, and use planted forests and native species to restore degraded lands and to re-establish native forests

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop & implement mechanisms for financing & encouraging forest conservation. • Establish additional protected forest areas in balancing the ecosystem
Pillar III: Community forestry & alternative livelihoods	Strategy Goals: <i>Communities in sustainable forest management</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable forest owners, private sector, and local communities to participate in forest conservation initiatives, and in planning and managing protected areas. • Promote the participation of all stakeholders, including local communities, forest dwellers and women in planning and implementing national forest policies. • Promote alternative livelihood initiatives in forest communities • Establish public education and awareness programmes emphasising the importance of sustainable forest management and conservation of biodiversity • Implement policies and mechanisms to secure land tenure and to promote fair and equitable sharing of benefits from forest goods and services. • Encourage urban forestry through establishment of green belts and woodlots in urban and semi- urban areas for landscaping and recreational purposes • Enhance the involvement of women in forestry.
Pillar IV: Enhancing research and development	Strategy Goals: <i>Improved Program quality, learning and documentation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage periodic assessment of the effectiveness of protected areas in maintaining forest biodiversity and ecological values. • Adopt education and training systems to secure a highly skilled workforce. • Promote and improve health and safety standards and practices. • Encourage studies on gender aspects of forest policy and practice. • Analyse the environmental impacts of forest products and their substitutes.

6.3.1 Pillar I: Strengthening Governance of Forest Resources

Competing demands for food, fuel and profit are driving the loss and degradation of the remaining forests of the Gambia. Government, the private sector and citizens are struggling to manage the conflicts between these priorities while protecting long term public interests. For example, the large scale conversion of forests to agriculture can generate short term income for government, the private sector and communities. If unchecked, these trends will lead to loss of national wealth, natural habitats and livelihoods – particularly for forest dependent communities. Many of these challenges stem from underlying weaknesses in the way forest resources are governed. Poor forest governance in The Gambia is typically characterized by illegal trade in timber/wood, low levels of transparency, accountability, and participation in decision- making; and inadequate capacity and coordination in forest management and administration. These manifest in high levels of corruption, pervasive illegal and unplanned forest conversion and use, and conflicts over forest ownership and access rights. There is widespread agreement that improving governance of forests will be essential in order to manage competing demands on forests fairly and effectively.

Gains in community ownership of forest as an alternative governance style are evident in The Gambia. This concept has drastically reduced depletion of resources in community owned forests around the country, as well as raised the capacity of the communities in sustainable forest management. Also, the implementation of Joint Forest Management Concept has proven efficient and productive. The private sector involvement and ownerships is being tested; and there are evidences elsewhere that the approach could be a great option to diversify governance and improve funding opportunities in the forestry sub-sector. Furthermore, the government subscribed to the current negotiations to reach the new international climate agreement. The proposed mechanisms for “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries” (REDD) is an opportunity for improving forest governance. DoF recognise the political momentum behind the REDD debate, and shall lobby for the potential incentives and support for tackling entrenched governance problems.

DoF will continue to strengthen its internal control systems in order to promote its operational efficiency and effectiveness, safeguard the remaining dryland forests, and provide reliable financial and programmatic information at all times. DoF shall ensure adherence to prescribed forest policies and compliance with forestry regulatory requirement, provide reasonable check and balance, while ensuring forest resources are efficiently used and traded. DoF will promote enterprise risk management aiming to institutionalize it as a key function in the organization. The existing governance structures are to be strengthened under the dispensation of this strategic plan.

Aligning to this strategy, DoF shall re-organize both its operational and programming structures aiming for cost-effectiveness and organisational efficiency. DoF will continue to develop its structure, strengthening and building capacities of regional structures. During this strategy period, the Operations Unit will be created combining administration (covering communications, asset management and logistics) and HR functions that will handle legal issues, human resource development, and both transactional as well as transformational human resource management.

In the long term, DoF will work to achieve a more balanced funding mixed with traditional government funding representing 60%; and official donor and institutional contracts/grants at 40%. DoF will aim to build constructive relationships by becoming part of collisions on climate change mitigation and adaptation; and improving partnership management for enhanced grant acquisition - donor retention, compliance and performance. A Business Development Manager responsible for fund raising shall be recruited to ensure effective project cycle management and enhance DoF's reputation to strongly influence donor commitment for continued funding. The department will further ensure timely response in donor communication, and establish integrated management systems to support DoF's grant acquisition.

DoF impact assessment and organizational learning approach will be designed to promote the development of knowledge, and the synthesis of on-the-ground learning to inform programme design and practice. The aim is to develop knowledge and document evidence base practices in order to improve the quality of forestry programming. The main activities will include piloting new research and evaluation methods; demonstrate evidences with regards to integrated approach to sustainable forest management, and educate stakeholders including communities on equity approach to community forestry. DoF will disseminate and spread promising and proven practices as well as multiplier effects of innovations; and organize trainings, workshops and inter-agency sharing and learning.

Strategic Goal: Strengthening governance of forest resources

<i>Strategic Outcome</i>	<i>Performance measures</i>	<i>Time frame</i>
Strategic Objectives: Organisational effectiveness and coherence at national and regional levels for SFM		
Strong and dynamic forest sector	a) Strong organizational systems and structures in place	By 2020
	b) Policy and institutional capacity of DoF strengthened	By 2019
	c) Results-based sustainable forest management instituted	By 2022
	d) Vibrant programme pipeline in place and revenue growth	By 2025
	e) Improved grant portfolio that explores and maximizes all funding sources	By 2024
	f) Strong protection mechanisms instituted	By 2023
Healthy forest ecosystem	g) Unsustainable and Illegal timber trade & excessive use of forest resource reduced	By 2021
	h) Forestry is mainstreamed in national development plans & processes	By 2026
	i) Trends of deforestation and, in desertification reversed	By 2028

6.3.2 Pillar II: Inclusive Programme Growth & Diversity

In concurrence with the ANRP and forest policy, this Strategy is the foundation of our new forest regime and indicates how DoF intends to put it into practice. Through the strategy, DoF together with its partners and forest users, shall be promoting the newly defined mission and strategic goals to be accomplished; and the actions to be taken to foster sustainable forest management, which is based on the following measures:

- a) The conservation of biological diversity and protected forests
- b) Improved forest ecosystems and enhanced productivity
- c) Promoting Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) in rural communities
- d) A vibrant forest ecosystem contributing to major ecological cycles
- e) Optimising the socioeconomic benefits society derives

In line with the ANRP, this strategy aspires for a **green economy** that is more inclusive and achievable to create jobs and generate decent incomes for

resource users. DoF will promote an integrated approach to sustainable forest management by involving all relevant stakeholders in the development of forest programmes. We are committed on addressing deforestation to reduce CO₂ emissions in order to combat climate change and its impact on dryland forest. DoF is interested, and would want to participate in programmes on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+). DoF shall design and implement programmes to slow-down desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and reduce biodiversity loss in the country.

DoF (through the MoECCNR) will seek political commitment to sustainable forest management, and the participation of the private sector in forest-related enterprises. DoF shall design and implement forest programmes that integrates the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources with relevant policies within the context of our socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental circumstances. DoF will improve its institutional structures and communication systems to ensure effective participation of all stakeholders in working towards sustainable forest programming.

DoF will encourage the establishment of representative natural forest and, where possible, the restoration of natural forests on appropriate sites. DoF shall develop management systems that will favour natural processes and preferably plant native species that enhance the productivity and resilience of the forest. The department will manage planted forests in ways that benefit biodiversity, both within the planted forest itself and in areas of natural forest that are retained within the planted forest landscape (e.g. establish planted forests on degraded sites and retain areas of high biodiversity value protected). DoF will encourage farmers to practice agroforestry planting a wide range of working trees on their farm lands and in rural landscapes. Among these will be fertilizer trees for land regeneration, fodder trees that improve smallholder livestock production; soil health and food security; medicinal trees for pest and disease control; fruit trees for nutrition; timber and fuelwood trees for shelter and energy. Many of these trees are multipurpose, providing a range of benefits.

DoF will negotiate and engage forest communities and private forest owners on forest landscape restoration (FLR) activities by planting native species and creating corridors on degraded land to increase habitat and allow species to move between fragmented natural forest patches. FLR will be encouraged on areas protected for watershed management and nature conservation, tree buffers along River Gambia and tributaries to protect against flooding and erosion, and agroforestry systems, among others. FLR involves the participation of key stakeholders in forest management, including local farmers, forest communities, related government sectors, private forest owners.

Resources within gazetted forest parks will be conserved while allowing forest communities to sustainably and profitably use the peripheral natural habitats through innovative management approaches such as community forest, collaborative forest management, Joint Forest Park Management, development of ecotourism, etc.

The department will further share experience with partners/colleagues in Senegal and other neighbouring countries, encouraging provision of mutual support in the development of cross-border forest programmes, and share experience of implementing such programmes. DoF shall plant new forests and restore degraded forests by using the social, cultural, environmental and economic considerations in programming. The main thrust of the strategy is to contribute towards economic growth through the forest resources that is sustainably managed and used as sources and enablers of growth driven by government (through DoF) in Partnership with the Private Sector and civil society through the provision of appropriate institutional supports and services as well as a conducive environment in which to operate.

Strategic Goal: Sustainable management of forests and trees

Strategic Outcome	Performance measures	Time frame
Strategic Objectives: To reduce forest degradation and increased contributions of forests and trees to improve livelihoods and contribute towards climate change mitigation and adaptation		
Healthy forest ecosystem	a) Improved public awareness of ecological benefits	By 2020
	b) # of additional protected forest balancing the ecosystem established	By 2027
	c) # and types of national and regional ecological networks established	By 2022
	d) Climate change mitigation and adaptation activities adopted	By 2025
	e) # of threatened ecosystems in NBR & CRR north re-established	By 2024
	f) # of forest sites conserving biodiversity and genetic resources	By 2023
Strong and dynamic forest sector	g) # of forest communities benefited from livelihood activities	By 2021
	h) Sustainable management of forests and trees broadly adopted	By 2024
	i) Reductions in deforestation and forest degradation	By 2025
	j) # of degraded lands restored and native forests re-established	By 2026
	# of farmers practicing agro-forestry in their farm lands and landscapes	By 2021
	k) # of plantations and private sector forest sites established	By 2028
	l) Hectares of natural forests under restoration with native plant species	By 2022
	m) # of communities and private forest owners engaged on forest landscape restoration (FLR) activities	By 2023
n) # of communities and their CBOs engaged on ecotourism	By 2020	

6.3.3 Pillar III: Community forestry & alternative livelihoods

Community forestry (CF), where local communities are engaged on sustainable forest management in their customary lands had been welcoming initiatives around the countryside since in the 90s. This was based on the understanding that forestry activities are interconnected with farming activities including livestock husbandry, and so are inseparable. CF ‘increases the welfare of local communities through the introduction of ecologically adapted natural resource management practices’. It provided access, tenure and user rights for rural communities to practice forest conservation. It also provided an opportunity for local communities to make maximum use of the manifold forest products, providing them with alternative income sources and/or livelihood prospects. Community forestry provides local communities with the access to all benefits of forest products within the designated forests on their customary land. Community forestry enhances local communities’ managerial and technical skills necessary for managing their forest resources; and assist them in adapting traditional land use systems. They are now acknowledging the value of trees and forests as they gain vested interests in the protection of community forests as permanent sources of income and/or livelihood.

In line with the Community Forestry Implementation guide, DoF will continue to champion and expand community forestry in the country. The department is committed to the initiatives and shall be supporting interested communities to establish their community forests. Programme staff will engage communities to identify their CF sites, guide them through the three CF phases: preparatory, preliminary and consolidation stages; train and equip them with relevant skills and techniques to manage the forest in an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable way.

With additional CFs in the countryside, DoF shall extend its technical and supportive roles in coordinating and monitoring the overall CF programming, supporting the divisional forest officers in the implementation process, while ensuring appropriate procedural and legal methods. DoF will regularly monitor and evaluate the country-wide CF development and implementation procedures especially in terms of its sustainability and adherence to the guidelines; coordinate and facilitate collaboration with other organization; and process PCFMAs, CFMAs, and subsequent agreements which may be made between local communities and DoF. The department will further solicit and encourage effective participation of all relevant stakeholders including regional local governments in CF; and assist in identifying, developing, and testing silvicultural techniques appropriate to community forest management.

Strategic Goal: Communities in sustainable forest management

Strategic Outcome	Performance measures	Time frame
Strategic Objectives: To increase community forest cover areas by 116,000ha for employment creation and sustainable livelihood		
Empowered and engaged forest community	a) # of additional communities and CBos established Community Forests	By 2020
	b) # of communities with forest management plans & bye laws for their CFs	By 2027
	c) # of CF management trainings workshops and seminars conducted	By 2019
	d) # of CF Committees trained and number of participants trained	By 2025
	e) # of youth (male & female) trained in entrepreneurial skills in NTFP trade	By 2024
	f) # of CF Committees with effective leadership and management capacities	By 2023
Healthy forest ecosystem	g) # of additional community forest sites and hectares of land cover	By 2021
	h) # of village nurseries established for the production of forest tree seedlings	By 2024
	i) # of CFs with 20-metre-wide green-belt around the forest for fire prevention	By 2025
	j) # of CFs with silvicultural and other productive trials	By 2026
Strong and dynamic forest sector	k) Enhanced social and economic values & livelihood benefits of forests & trees	By 2022
	l) Improved markets for forest products and services	By 2025
	m) % age of youth and women self-employed in wood and NTFP trade	By 2024
	n) # of communities established and operates the local forestry fund.	By 2021
	o) # of rural vendors/families trading wood and NTFP & income levels	By 2028

6.3.4 Pillar IV: Enhancing Forest Research and Development

Successful forestry programming, including plantations, protected forests, parks and CF establishment is highly dependent on selection of suitable species, use of high-quality genetic planting material, site-species matching, application of proven silvicultural techniques, availability of technical capacity and adoption of appropriate business models. This Strategy recognizes these important factors and consequently proposes research and development in the priority areas, while building complimentary capacity to process and disseminate relevant information through an effective extension system to foresters and other information users. Forestry and natural-resources extension programmes provide direct support for disseminating research findings to appropriate users. However, DoF has no scientific research personnel and our national learning institutions are not providing such services.

DoF is opting for a comprehensive research to provide the relevant data and information to minimize economic and ecological risks to investments in forest plantations; build the critical mass of the required technical and managerial expertise; and provide the essential extension support. The department is aiming at developing technologies and providing information on site-species matching, propagation methods, tree improvement, tree and stand management techniques, site productivity management, establishment and regeneration of trees on farms, identification and evaluation of suitable tree species for incorporation into farming systems, generation of tree management techniques on farm and assessing the productivity of such systems. There are currently low investments in research and development and gaps in key data relevant to forest plantations and parks development in the Gambia. Therefore, the established National Forest Fund will endeavour to provide support to the above priority research areas. The key focus of research in the short to medium term will be seed and tree improvement.

The purpose of this area of research is to optimize the availability of tree seeds of high quality, and to provide relevant seed information for afforestation, reforestation and agro-forestry programmes in the country. Programmes that involve establishment, certification and management of improved seed production areas and seed orchards (seed stands) for plantation tree species, research on the genetic improvement of selected tree species (indigenous and exotic), identification and certification of seed collection areas for indigenous species and general seed biology would be undertaken.

This strategy recognises the value of research and information systems in enabling forestry practitioners to improve outcomes. DoF will prioritise the following research activities in the next ten years:

- Consider new ways to secure/obtain research funding.
- Seek and utilise local knowledge in indigenous tree species, and develop appropriate local capacity in relevant research activities.
- Involve all key stakeholders in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating prioritized research programmes.
- Conduct participatory research into climate change and its impacts on our forest ecosystems.
- Assess technological requirements necessary to achieve sustainable forest management.
- Extend research into the social aspects of forestry, forest inventory, monitoring, and the valuation of forest goods and services.
- Strengthen forestry extension system to transfer knowledge from researchers to foresters, policy makers and the public.

Other priority research and investigation areas include:

- Tree pest and disease identification, control and management
- Research on the causes of forest fires especially the presence of “fire trees” and vehicle’s exhaust pipes in the dryland forest
- Development of best management practices and silviculture for key indigenous/exotic species and their mixtures
- Growth and yield studies and prediction for the prioritized and potential tree species
- Mapping - production of broad site-species maps for prioritized species for the country
- Economic calculations and Cost-Benefit Analysis on the profitability of each prioritized species for various site qualities and scales of operation using the best available growth, cost and price information to guide the choice of species by current and potential investors
- Market research – demand and trends in demand, competition and market forecast.

DoF will further facilitate ecological research and monitoring systems (including long-term monitoring plots) with the aim of providing useful guidance on forest dynamics, regeneration and genetic diversity of valuable tree species.

Collaborate to collect, synthesize, analyse and share data on forest biodiversity based on permanent forest plots, inventories and other sources and make these accessible to forest planners, forest managers and other stakeholders.

Strategic Goal: Improved Program quality, learning and documentation Strategic

<i>strategic Outcome</i>	<i>Performance measures</i>	<i>Time frame</i>
Strategic Objectives: To establish research and information systems in enabling forestry practitioners to improve outcomes in sustainable forest management		
Healthy forest ecosystem	Data on forest biodiversity from permanent forest plots, inventories and other sources accessible to foresters and other stakeholders	By 2019
	Local knowledge in indigenous tree species documented	By 2027
	Mapping - broad site-species mapping for prioritized species for the country conducted	By 2022
	Growth and yield studies of prioritized and potential tree species conducted	By 2025
Strong and dynamic forest sector	Adaptive research capacity on high-quality genetic planting materials developed at DoF	By 2021
	Participatory research on effects of climate change on our forest ecosystems.	By 2024
	Economic analysis - Cost-Benefit Analysis on the profitability of prioritized species to guide on choice of species for investors	By 2025
Empowered and engaged forest community	Guide on management practices and silviculture for key indigenous/exotic species and their mixtures developed	By 2023
	Periodic market research – demand and consumption trend analysis on NTFP conducted for market forecast	Annual

Chapter VII: Our Core Programmes

7.1 An Overview of Core Programmes

DoF’s approach towards national forest administration is based on long-term experience in forestry as the department continues to learn from the communities and range of partners. Based on the needs and priorities of society as a whole, and its demands on the dwindling forest resources, DoF extend its interventions to establish forestry programmes: protected forest management, integrated forest fire management, agro-forestry, nursery and plantation development, etc. DoF long-term commitment allows the department to work on the basis of mutual trust with the communities to innovate, and together take on challenges presented by dryland forests to establish community forests. The department is able to learn from a valuable diversity of partners and grassroots experience, giving distinctively robust perspective on the causes of land degradation, and the opportunities to address them at local and national levels. The approach to tackling these challenges will be holistic, seeking to understand and act with an integrated approach based on the overall national needs, and the aspirations and circumstance of forest communities. To drive this change and deliver lasting solutions is supported by three values aiming to strengthen the foundation of positive forest outcomes: climate change resilience, ownership rights and participation, and institutions and governance.

7.2 Programmatic Approach and Technologies

DoF will consolidate its gains from its long-term engagement in the sector, and establish a new flexibility in forestry programming aligned to the global strategic aims and approach.

The approach to tackling deforestation and desertification will be holistic, seeking to understand and act on the overall context, as well as the needs, aspirations and circumstance of the forest communities. DoF shall prioritise applied research on appropriate technologies and approaches to inform knowledge and innovations in sustainable forest management. DoF's commitment to self-sustaining and cost-effective methods will give the department significant credibility with partners and donors. Thus, DoF will scale-up the impact of its programmes through partnership work on the ground, carefully designed to influence central government decisions and donors, whether through replication of the successful models or through wider policy change.

This Forest Strategy is organized around four interconnected pillars (as discussed above) that will necessitate Government to: (1) harness the potential of forests in a sustainable manner to reduce poverty, (2) effectively integrate the contributions of forests into sustainable economic development, and (3) protect the vital environmental services and values of forests. The preparation of this strategy for the next ten years was guided by an in-depth assessment of the forest policy as well as detailed analysis of the increasing demands on forest resources. Sustainable forest management is the hallmark of the programme approach and to achieve this, DoF must be an active player, as well as seek to become a facilitator to catalyze the transformational change process in the forest sector. The department shall employ four broad approaches to programming:

7.2.1 Capacity building approach:

DoF shall strengthen its institutional capacity to improve governance at all levels. It will encourage participatory decision-making involving forest stakeholders in the development of forest policies and legislation, thereby enhancing an enabling environment for investment in forestry and forest enterprises. DoF will solicit integration of forestry into national development plans and processes, considering interfaces between forests and other land uses. The department will further seek effective collaboration with related sectors to extend an integrated approach to forestry for common benefits. In this way, DoF shall be committed to translating this strategy into actions that strengthen their capacities. Together, see beyond individual organizational efforts, and identify the department as a force for change in dryland forest —changing theories of change (ToC) into actions.

Through programme cycles, performance review and learning on forest-related interventions, DoF will develop its operational knowledge-based in programming. Such evaluations will systematically capture and disseminate new knowledge to inform programme design, as well as determine appropriate mid-course corrections if necessary. Also, DoF will work with partners and donors to improve the effectiveness of forest-related funds, to reduce transaction costs and increase the impact partnerships to support its new business model. The Department will place special emphasis on partnerships that can provide operational support to communities and businesses through coordinated efforts. Continuous dialogue and exchange with civil society and other groups will remain central to the implementation of this strategy.

At the grassroots level, DoF shall engage on local capacity building – promoting the development of local structures for the management of community forests, while undertaking programmes that are responsive to the ever changing needs and conditions of forest communities. The department shall engage communities on forestry programmes in which their potentials and multiple roles can be fully harnessed to maximize their development. Community organizations will then become agents of local forest development. Thus, communities become self-reliant to assume more self-management responsibilities in their community forests. Participatory approaches practiced with communities reflect DoF's fundamental commitment to the innate worth and capacity of the people and their right to lead their lives on negotiated terms.

This made the department believe that transformational change in dryland forest can come from within the communities. They also give meaning to DoF's conviction that forest communities themselves can be the main actors in forest development

7.2.2 Service provision

DoF shall combine service provision with policy enforcement, ensuring that policy and practice affecting forests and forestry are based on timely and reliable information on appropriate technologies in its programming. DoF will seek to serve as an authoritative source of information on forests; prepare and disseminate research findings and results of periodic Forest Resources Assessments and reports on the conditions of dryland forests. DoF shall support regional forestry offices in their monitoring and assessment initiatives, including interactions with other sectors through integrated land use assessments; and effectively share knowledge and information through timely, high-quality extension system. The department shall strengthen linkages between national and regional processes, including decentralised roles of regional forestry offices; and provide leadership for the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), including developing joint programmes, and accommodating active partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

7.2.3 Sustainable forestry development

Forests in the Gambia support the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people, mostly the poor and vulnerable who are often remote from market opportunities. This strategy aims to support investments in sustainable forestry with a priority on optimizing the potential of natural forests in order to generate cash and non-cash income, and to create jobs and economic opportunities for forest-dependent people. It supports tree planting activities and plantations to respond to growing demand for timber, fiber, and fuelwood while reducing pressures on natural forests. It also supports investments in degraded lands - restoration and promotes sustainable value chains through small and medium-size forest enterprises.

7.2.4 Integrated Landscape Approach

The Department of Forestry aims to support its stakeholder/clients' pursuit of a forest-smart development trajectory through an integrated landscape approach. This approach clarifies the dynamics between various land uses, including forests and agriculture. Supporting forest-smart interventions will not only ensure that adverse impacts on forests and their biodiversity are avoided or minimized, as it also identifies increasing opportunities of productivity and resilience of other sectors. For example, there are enormous opportunities tied to agroforestry for agriculture, forest-based watershed management for hydropower and clean water, or mangrove protection for flood control. This approach supports and seeks synergy and minimizes trade-offs between competing land uses (including agriculture, energy, ecosystem services, and biodiversity).

Policy advocacy and influencing will focus on lobbying the government and donors (for increased funding to challenge the effects of climate change on dryland forest), encouraging related sectors (for active involvement) and private sector (for more investment in forestry); and supporting the communities in strengthening the appropriate systems and processes required to actualize sustainable forest management. This will shift the course for DoF from being dependent entirely on annual budgetary allocations to a pro-active self-sustaining government institution providing quality services. DoF will approach sustainable forest development at three levels:

a) At community level, DoF will promote participatory approach in building local capacities and work with partners (mainly related sectors and NGOs) to empower communities become primary stakeholders in managing their community forests. DoF will support related sectors (Agriculture, Parks & Wildlife, Water Resources and Department of community development) in responding to local forestry needs. DoF will employ participatory management approach to enable CBOs and their communities understand and demand their tenure rights, while holding DoF and related sectors accountable for their actions.

b) At Regional level, the decentralised structures will work with the LGA Authorities and influence formulation of forest management plans and strengthen capacities that will enable delivery of equitable and sustainable forest services.

c) At national level, DoF will work with the related sectors to develop local capacities and strengthen systems and processes to cover many more degraded lands with SFM. DoF will advocate for mainstreaming forest management in government development agenda providing evidences of underlying causes of land degradation; and influence all service providers to address the challenges.

While local capacity building is central in our programmatic approach, DoF shall promote and emphasize holistic and community development models, research, documentation and spread of best practices in programming. Promoting sustainable forest management as the focus in all the department's work. DoF is not just a player, but will remain a referee, a role model, and a catalyst in leading the transformational change in the dryland forests.

7.3 Developing Core Programme Areas

As the world warms and its population grows, forests are facing many decisive challenges: sustaining agriculture; reducing the impact of droughts, floods and frequency of storms; regulating water cycle and the effects of climate change; protecting infrastructure, providing timber, paper, energy; and housing, and securing critical biodiversity. Pressures on forests are likely to continue in the next several decades. In fact, population growth along with rapid urbanization is expected to sharply increase the demand for food, fiber, energy that often drive large-scale land use changes at the cost of forest and tree cover. Addressing these challenges will require a coordinated multi-sectoral approach, because threats to dryland forests are manifold and often interdependent. The approach should ensure that activities in other sectors such as agriculture, transport, construction and trade are undertaken in ways that limit negative impacts on forest integrity while maximizing the development benefits. Thus, forests will become an integral part of national development agenda and better recognized for the embedded opportunities.

In DoF's theory of change and core intent, DoF expressed the three core outcomes: Healthy forest ecosystem, strong and dynamic forest sector, and empowered and engaged forest community. To achieve these, the department has defined the following core programme areas to focus and intensify its resources

7.3.1 Integrated forest fire Management

During the long Gambian dry season, forest fires are a common feature of the rural landscape and more than 70% of the country's forests and grasslands suffer yearly through bushfires²⁰. Majority of forest fires in the country are caused by human activities usually associated with land-use practices and changes. Many land-use systems are vulnerable to forest fires. Widespread and

²⁰The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015 – 2020)

uncontrolled burning is common and has been destroying large areas of rangelands, woodlands and forests. Some fires are started deliberately by livestock owners seeking to promote a green flush for their animals, by hunters clearing vegetation to catch their prey more easily, by people creating firebreaks around their homes and orchards or seeking to improve visibility, or simply by pyromania. The fires are also ignited by people clearing land for cultivation, smoking out beehives and wild honey collection, making charcoal, cooking or trying to keep warm, cross-border fires etc. The uncontrolled fires can spread accidentally from their sources into the distant surrounding bushes, often crossing into different vegetation types.

After decade long of frequent, sustained and intense forest fires, many woodlands in the Gambia are now at permanent state of damage and becoming deserts. This is exacerbated by timber extraction, opening up the woodland canopy and allowing burning fires to reach the herbaceous layer, thereby accelerating desertification. Fires kill the more fire-sensitive trees and suppress the regrowth of the more resistant species. This is preventing the re-establishment of the woodland canopy that can suppress herbaceous production and reduce fuel loads, fire frequency and intensity. There is an urgent need to design new strategic frameworks that recognize and adapt to current thinking and practices in forest fire management.

The approach to forest fire management should acknowledge the following considerations:

- ❖ **Reasons:** forest fire is a spatially and temporally disperse phenomenon. It is difficult to have a centralized control system. Therefore, forest fire management must be well organised.
- ❖ **Objectives:** rational, ecologically compatible, sustainable and safe use of fire is very important.
- ❖ **Impediments:** Some difficulties encountered in identifying the causes and sources of forest fires.
- ❖ **Entry points:** mechanisms, methods and policy instruments (e.g. incentives) to encourage communities to assume control and “ownership” over fire management.

During the recent past, several technical co-operation projects were implemented in the country, funded bilaterally or supported by international organizations (e.g. the German government (GTZ), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), etc. Many projects were implemented in partnership with relevant government institutions to reduce fire hazard and improve fire suppression capabilities. Experience showed that local people, who are main agents and victims of forest fires were partially involved with limited participation in designs and implementation of fire management projects.

This strategy underpins the underlying concept of Integrated Forest Fire Management (IFFM). Also, referred to as Community-based Forest Fire Management (CBFFM) approach, IFFM is forest fire controlling mechanism that engages local people as key stakeholders in land-use and vegetation management systems. Definition and design of IFFM approaches clearly depend on the complex configuration of local cultural, social, economic, political and environmental conditions. However, a dialogue and negotiation process among all stakeholders, from local to national levels, must first be established. IFFM objectives can be successfully realized only if all stakeholders involved in fire management agree on the distribution of responsibilities, decision-making power and resources.

The process of negotiation and consensus building in fire management requires careful consideration of different stakeholder perspectives and the complexity of the legal context. Existing rules are often of different and sometimes contradictory origins (e.g. laws and administration rules governed by centralised legislation, traditional rules that may not be legally recognized, or weakening influence of traditional structures and customary laws).

Strategic orientation

- Improve forest policies and regulations, strengthen forest governance, value and monitor forest ecosystems, and address the causes and sources of forest fires
- Support improved forest fire management, including through community-based approaches;
- Maintain and enhance forest cover to ensure fire prevention, planting of fire resistance tree species and effective monitoring during the dry season while integrating sustainable forestry practices.
- Strengthen forest genetics conservation (tree species diversity) and diversity within species in protected forest areas, community forests and plantations.
- Enhance forests' adaptive capacities and resilience by building on fire prevention actions proposed in the Forest Management Concept
- Active involvement of the local people has been recognized as a condition for the successful implementation of fire management programmes, especially at the interfaces between forest lands, agricultural perimeters and residential areas.
- The early-dry-season control burning method of fire hotspots proved considerably successful.
- Providing appropriate technical and material supports is essential to enable communities assume a central role in fire management.
- Establishment of a 20 metre-wide green-belt around the desired forest areas combined with controlled early burning.

7.3.2 Development of Agro-Forestry Practices

Agroforestry is the intentional integration of agricultural and forestry-based land-use systems to provide tree and other crop products, and at the same time protect, conserve, diversify, and sustain vital economic, environmental, human, and natural resources. Four key principles in agroforestry are: (1) trees and/or shrubs are deliberately combined with crops and/or livestock; (2) land use is intensive; (3) biological interactions are increased; and (4) benefits are optimized. Agroforestry includes windbreaks planted into production agriculture systems, but it also includes the intentional growing of an understory high-value specialty crop under the protection of forest cover. Agroforestry is "working trees"-the right trees and shrubs planted and/or managed in the right place to do a specific job.

Agroforestry have lasting economic, environmental and social solutions on the environmental problems confronting us, and it has the potentials to support sustainable agricultural and natural resource development. As part of ecologically-based land management system, agroforestry practices do contribute substantially towards generating the ecosystem diversity and processes significant to long-term sustainable agriculture. As a considerable environmental benefit, agroforestry landscapes have higher biodiversity per unit than agricultural landscapes, and they offer habitats to numerous rare species. Integrating agroforestry practices in watershed and landscape management can transform agricultural lands into stable, resilient, diverse, aesthetic, and sustainable agricultural land-use systems. Agroforestry practices increases crop production, control soil erosion and sedimentation, provide multiple benefits including wood products, sequester and biodegrade excess nutrients and pesticides, moderate microclimates, and diversify habitats for wildlife and humans. Agroforestry systems sequester carbon and serve as a renewable energy source. Agroforestry can further support rural economies by enhancing the production capabilities of agricultural lands.

Domestically, there is a groundswell of interest in agroforestry as testified by the recent approval and ongoing implementation of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) projects in Agriculture, Forestry and wildlife conservation departments'. That interest is expected to increase with the growing attention to land resources management and environmental protection in agro ecosystems. The potentials of agroforestry providing substantial economic, environmental and social benefits to agro-ecosystems is rapidly being recognized by state agencies, civil society organisations, local farmers' associations and conservation organizations. In spite of its potential, there are numerous barriers impeding the development and application of agroforestry. Current agroforestry application and extension activities are limited, unconnected, and minimally funded in relation to the need and interest.

Strategic orientation

- Technology generating, disseminating and systems integration in agroforestry; as well as applying information and knowledge including technology transfer to agriculture and natural resource professionals, and technical assistance to landowners.
- Providing and offering options in agroforestry systems, and advice to improve the social, economic, and environmental aspects of agroforestry development and conservation.
- Agroforestry practices include windbreaks, alley cropping, tree/pasture systems, life-fences, riparian forest buffers, tree/specialty crop systems, forest/specialty crop systems (forest farming), wildlife habitat, and fuelwood plantations.
- Providing technical support to promote technology transfer, catalyze change and build effective and sustainable local capacity for sustainable agroforestry management.
- Strengthen partnerships and cooperation among agencies, and form alliances among stakeholders: university, local communities and private sectors to develop, disseminate, and apply agroforestry technologies.
- Interagency cooperation and concerted efforts is necessary between the forestry, agriculture and related subsectors to efficiently/effectively implement agroforestry.
- Closer linkages are required between ongoing agricultural systems and natural resources extension programs in order to be successful and effective.

7.3.3 Enhancing Community Forestry (including forest enterprise development & Marketing linkages)

The degradation of the forest cover continues to be a major challenge in The Gambia. This is also compounded by the erratic and decreasing rains and climate variability since the late 1960s. As a combined mitigation and adaptation measure, community forestry was aimed at enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems through the management of forests systems and resources for continuous supply of products for sustainable livelihood. It is a process of empowering the communities with legal rights, skills and necessary knowledge to sustainably utilize their natural resources and conserve the remaining biodiversity.

DoF employed FAO's Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) approach to assist communities in the creation of income generation activities from the Community Forests, in line with the Gambian Forest Management Concept (GFMC). The MA&D methodology was piloted in Western Region in 2001. The list of products selected in the pilot sites included honey, timber/logs, handicraft and splits from rhun palm, *Borassusaethiopum*, firewood, ecotourism, tree nursery, kembo, *Prosopis Africana*, poles. After encouraging results from the pilot implementation of MA&D, the Department decided to extend the approach to two more regions through FAO/DoF Technical Cooperation Programme signed in 2003. The project included extensive capacity building MA&D initiatives involving DOF staff to provide extension services on the methodology to facilitate the development of community-based enterprises utilizing products,

resources and services from community forests. In order to institutionalise the approach, MA&D module was included in the National Forestry School curriculum to develop capacities of new Forestry and wildlife staff. Demand for MA&D approach in participatory forest management is now high as local communities recognized that community forest can be permanent sources of income and/or livelihoods. Thus, community forestry is more broadly adopted, leading to reductions in deforestation and forest degradation and increased contributions of forests and trees to improve livelihoods and to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Strategic orientation:

- Enhance Social and economic values and livelihood benefits of forests and trees; and facilitating linkages between producers and national, regional, and global levels
- Market analysis of forest products and services to increase contribution of community forestry to local livelihoods, thus making it more economically viable land-use option;
- Analysis and knowledge of social and economic factors in community forestry resulting in increased innovation and investment;
- Bringing integrated interdisciplinary and innovative approaches to advance community forestry, and analysis of production, consumption and trade of community forest products;
- Provide technical assistance and guidelines for community-based forest management, forest-based enterprises that improve livelihoods and reduce poverty;
- strengthen and encourage bee keeping enterprises providing high profit margin for community level beekeepers to reduce pressure on other forest resources while creating economic incentives and benefits for the entire communities;
- Working through strong partnerships and alliances in community forestry and where joint action is needed.
- Promote ecotourism in community forestry

7.3.4 Nursery and Plantation Development

The Gambian forest is visibly degraded and the biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate. The impact is severe on the livelihood of the rural population. Key publications such as the National Forest Assessment (2008-2010), and The Gambia Forest Policy(2010 – 2019) indicate that a large and increasing number of forest ecosystems, populations and species are threatened or being lost due to the loss and degradation of forest habitats, and that this reduction of forest biodiversity will be aggravated by the effects of climate change. Forests are vulnerable to climate change, hence, the need to maintain and enhance their resilience and adaptive capacity, including through plantations and other adaptive solutions. At the same time, plantations and sustainable forest management can mitigate effects of climate change if forests' role as sinks in the carbon cycle is maintained or improved and by providing bio-materials that can act as temporary carbon stores or as 'carbon substitutes', replacing carbon-intensive materials and fuels.

Anthropogenic factors such as population increase and unsustainable agricultural practices also affected The Gambian environment and natural resources. Growth-oriented development and competition in trade (re-export of timber to China) and investment have materially contributed to the exploitation of natural resources beyond the capacity of the ecosystem. At the same time, management capacity and policy tools such as the database, regulations, law enforcement, and economic instruments have not been utilized efficiently. This has led to the depletion of natural resources and deterioration of the environment, thereby, affecting the overall balance of the ecosystem (NBSAP 2015) to the extent that the quasi totality of the timber that was re-exported to China was from the neighboring countries particularly Senegal ([see map](#)). In The Gambia, the national forest policy has the important instrument in order to focus on the forest resources management. According to the supplementary Agriculture and Natural Resources policy 2017, a

forest cover of 30 percent of Gambia's total area will be sufficient for maintaining an ecological balance necessary for sustainable economic growth. This target appears to be unattainable with proliferation of Estate Agencies progressively taking their shares of the remaining potential forest lands.

Reduction of forest resources and ban of charcoal burning have led to decline in domestic timber supply and resulted to wood importation from neighboring country (Senegal). According to the recent CITES report, the trend of round wood demands as raw material in The Gambia is getting higher and higher. To satisfy such demand for round wood for consumption in the long run, the government is in a bilateral negotiation with Senegal (on behalf of the timber dealers' association) for wood supply from the Senegalese southern province of Casamance, particularly for re-export trade to China.

Meanwhile DoF is advancing sustainable forest management; and promoting private sector participation and investment in forest plantation management, aiming to restore and increase forest cover for the benefit of present and future generations. This approach recognizes the importance of forest restoration both at site scale and landscape scale to provide multiple benefits to rural communities. Experience showed that restoration do enable a range of ecosystem services, including regulating services such as carbon sequestration and pollination, and provisioning services such as food and energy (MEA 2003²¹). Landscape scale restoration provides multiple benefits such as regaining ecosystem services including climate mitigation (Stanturf et al. 2015); biodiversity conservation; and biomass production (Ciccarese et al. 2012).

DoF is also, promoting public, private and community nursery establishment. Tree nurseries are a key success factor in many forestry and agriculture development interventions. The purpose of the nurseries is manifold: a) commercial biomass production, b) land rehabilitation and forest conservation, and c) local capacity building and livelihood enhancement. Nursery production in the Gambia focused on timber species of multiple purpose tree species (MPTS), ornamental species (flowers and grass) and fruits and nuts (citrus, mangoes and cashew nuts). DoF established many such nurseries to support local foresters and orchard plantations; some evolved from project support to become independent self-sustaining commercial enterprises (e.g. SARO nurseries). SARO Nurseries had been the main source of seedlings for many farmers, NGO and project staff, community workers, extension agents and researchers contributing to land rehabilitation and livelihood enhancement

Strategic orientation:

- Providing long-term perspectives and leadership in monitoring and assessing trends in forest resources and services, and the production, consumption and trade of forest products.
- Establish a forest management plan, which balance and trade off different restoration functions and solicit the involvement and support of multiple stakeholders with cultural as well as biological drivers.
- Implement forest management plan in which biodiversity conservation is prioritise in each area of forest under management. Actual, potential and emerging threats to biodiversity must be identified and addressed.
- Manage planted forests in ways that benefit biodiversity, both within the planted forest itself and in areas of natural forest that are retained within the planted forest landscape (e.g. Establish planted forests on degraded sites and retain areas of high biodiversity value protected).

²¹Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2003

- DoF will promote private forest plantation areas by a) distributing seedling, and open-up new areas for renewable energy, and b) promoting inter-planting economic trees in bare agricultural lands.
- Locate production forests at a landscape scale and plan harvesting blocks in ways that do not disrupt the continuity of mature forests. Protect populations of, and maintain the genetic diversity of valuable timber species and populations of seed trees.
- Promote specialized courses and training activities in tropical forest taxonomy, ecology and biodiversity management in Kafuta Forest Training School and University of The Gambia (UTG)
- Coordinate actions of forest owners, users and managers across landscapes to best ensure the maintenance of sufficient high quality connected habitat for species.
- Through the recently launched EbA and the SLM project, the DoF has projects to promote an individual farmer to plant forest plantation by supporting subsidy and conditioned planting long rotation trees and planting short rotation trees which are worthwhile investment and give high benefit.
- Sustainable management of natural forests and development of efficient production from private forest plantations in order to increase forest area according to the National Forest Policy.
- Build strong private sector enabling environment through the liberalization of private sector investment regulations and removal of other restrictions (e.g. exempt investors from royalties) in establishing private forest plantation. This will attract private sector investment and allowing smaller businesses in forest to thrive. Also, reform the investment climate, attract and promote quality investment, and galvanize the growth of small and medium enterprises in private forests.
- Improve ecological knowledge and ensures forest functions such as pollination, seed dispersal and nutrient cycling are catered for. Areas of forest and other habitats that provide important ecological functions should be identified and protected.
- Promote protection of plantations (national forests), restoration of disturbed watershed areas and re-forestation of disturbed forests;

7.4 High Level Success Measurement

The Gambia is now of a complex operating environment. Therefore, DoF's programme direction of sustainable forest management initiatives demand the use of evaluation as a crucial tool to inform programming, and enable programme and management make hard choices based on available best evidences. Knowledge, assessment and monitoring (e.g. understanding ecosystem functioning, forest classification system, assessment methods, data and information management) shall be an integral component of the new programme direction.

7.4.1 Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (PME)

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are integral parts of efficient and effective management of investments in forest development. However, performance monitoring and evaluation (PME) in forestry had ever been challenging to DoF. Moreover, the increased focus of donors on impact has resulted in a high demand for excellence in M&E. Based on this background, the Department of Forestry has established its M&E unit since 2000 to help planners, programme and management teams to discharge their functions. DoF will develop a framework that is flexible and can accommodate shifting priorities over time. The framework will focus on monitoring progress toward desired conditions of key resources (biological diversity; land [ecosystem] health and vitality; soil and water; social benefits; economic benefits; and infrastructure capacity).

Programme staff shall be collecting and analysing information on the outcomes of the programmes as a basis for judgments, to improve effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about DoF existing and future programmes. DoF shall engage on performance management (Managing for Results) with a systematic process of monitoring achievements of programmes; collecting and analysing performance data to track progress toward planned results; and using such information in designing future programmes, pro-forestry policy advocacy and influencing while the department communicates the results to promote organizational learning with its partners, supporters and other stakeholders.

Monitoring of results and evaluation of impact of programmes will be underscored in the next ten years. The Results Framework (FR) [discussed above], will present outcomes of the strategic actions, aligning and building into achievements towards the core outcomes. The framework will show the hierarchy of outcome indicators with cause-and-effect linkages between the intermediary results and the next level objectives. This M&E framework of the core programmes will be rolled-out during the first three years of this strategy period to increase accountability, inform decision-making, improve programme management, and contribute to learning through operational and programmatic work. The process will be structured to generate, share experiences and practical knowledge gained from the implementation of the core programmes and inform next planning cycle. Grounded on results based management, the inter-connected objectives of good planning, monitoring and measurement will support the accountability process in DoF, and prompt corrective actions, while ensuring informed decision-making and enhancements to institutional and organizational learning.

All the learning gathered from implementation at the grassroots level will inform the upstream policy dialogue and advocacy at the national and regional level. Given that DoF aims to close its accountability gaps in both management and programming, a four-tier M & E system (input, output, outcome and impact) will be undertaken to assess the performance, relevance and impact of the core programmes. Joint monitoring involving all the stakeholders will be undertaken through regular field visits, and when possible with government officials and members of Legislature in the regions; so that there is a direct dialogue between policy and practice.

7.4.2 Impact Measurement and Learning:

Impact assessment and organizational learning approach will be designed to promote the development of knowledge in the programme, and the synthesis of on-the-ground learning to inform DoF programme design and practice. The main activities will include piloting new

The aim is to develop knowledge and document evidence-base practices in sustainable forest management in order to improve the quality of programming.

research and evaluation methods; demonstrate evidences with regards to programmes as a learning institutions in order to influence their inclusion in national policies; share learning with

other stakeholders, and educate policy makers; disseminate and spread promising and proven practices, as well as multiplier effects of initiatives and innovations; and organize trainings, workshops and inter-agency sharing and learning.

a) Organizational Learning: DoF will promote organizational learning and coordinate best practices to provide space for new initiatives and innovations. The Directorate will establish internal data warehouses (databank) to support current and future organizational data requirements; build staff analytical capacity and establish a strong impact assessment and learning office; and facilitate the conduct of programme reviews.

b) Mid-term strategy evaluation: During the planned period, DoF will conduct a mid-term review of this strategy: measuring changes (outcome indicators/results as set in the Result Framework) attributable to interventions. This mid-way performance evaluation will determine how the strategy plan is being implemented; how it is perceived and valued; its relevance, and whether expected results are occurring in the respective communities; and other issues that are pertinent to DoF programme direction in the country.

7.4.3 Reporting

Biennial reviews of existing programmes will be undertaken and progress will be measured against the indicators (to be included in the results framework). Monthly reporting system will be strengthened, and this will inform the Annual progress reports that will be prepared and shared with all stakeholders:

Key Strategic Action:

- Set-up a critical M&E function for impact assessment and programme learning, that is responsible for the management of DoF in-house databank, while ensuring relevant data are translated into user-friendly documentations for organizational learning.
- Develop general classification of forests on various scales in order to improve the assessment of status and trends of forest biodiversity
- Develop an effective monitoring and evaluation framework for DoF to maintain the growing commitment in reversing the catastrophic forest loss.
- Establish a Research and Development Unit in the department to conduct all research related activities
- Improve knowledge on methods of assessing the status and trends of forest biodiversity, and improve understanding of the role of forest biodiversity and ecosystem functioning
- Involve local communities in forest monitoring and management as a strategy to improve biodiversity conservation efforts and local livelihood in the Gambia.
- Improve the infrastructure for data and information management for accurate assessment and monitoring of forest biodiversity.

PART THREE: ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES

Chapter VIII: Organisational Development Plan

The department of forestry (DoF) has witnessed significant progress both in scale and scope especially at decentralized level. With highly motivated staff, DoF's experience in involving the communities in forest management is high though its capacity to effectively advocate and influence donors and government decisions is still modest due to complexities of the administrative tasks. Cognizant of this fact, DoF needs to build further its experiences of the local situations, capitalize on the creative potential of the staff, and extend its learning opportunities and influence through strategic partnerships. At the same time, the department need to develop coherence and harmony around the organizational vision and mission. With strong and inspiring leadership, the desire to increase cost-effectiveness and accountability through the consistent application of best practices and ethical standards will be attained in sustainable forest management. This can be achieved collectively as united fronts to maximize its profile, influence and have an impact in programming.

DoF will continue to grow as a vibrant government institution that is committed to its culture that is to safeguard sustainable utilization of natural resources by the resource users. The department cannot do this without the involvement of the communities. Thus, people-centered practices reflect DoF's organizational structure, systems and processes. DoF will further develop

effective systems and processes that will support execution of this strategy, develop programs, organizational learning and performance.

8.1 Organizational Capacity Development

The effective implementation of this strategy, institutional and physical measures requires capacity building initiatives to all actors engaged in forestry management. These capacity building programs will involve activities such as material support, technical trainings as well as sharing local and international experiences. The interdisciplinary nature of the suggested measures require integrated and inter-sectoral needs assesment as well as cordinated capacity building planing and implementation. The capacity development will be required for various actors rainging from the department of forestry at the natioanl leevel down to community implementing units.

8.2 Human Resource Development (HRD)

The execution of programmatic plan, and the improvements in human resources will be supported by enhancing employee ability to manage and effectively engage on sustainable forest management. DoF will further help staff to understand the new program demands, help them know their responsibilities and use information to take effective actions. The department seeks to better equip staff members with leadership and people management skills at multiple levels to lead and manage organizational performance. DoF will develop the skills of staff to specialize in the thematic areas of deparmentprogrammes; these include, but not limited to governance, integrated forest management, agroforestry, environment, and livelihood diversification. Thehuman resource strategy will continue to focus on recruiting and developing highly skilled and motivated individuals to create diverse and high performing teams.DoFshallengage the University of the Gambia to train forestry staff to high level program ranging from Bsc to PhD level.

8.3 Implementation Arrangement

The successful implementation of the strategy at national, regional and community level presupposes strong coordination among all relevant stakeholders across all levels of organization which in most cases is a challenge. Thus, this strategy provides an opportunity for a concerted effort among sectors (particularly livestock, agriculture and parks and wildlife) to sustainable manage and utilize natural resources at all levels. The challenge will be addressed through ensuring an effective coordination among the core sectors in the planning and implementation stage. A strong coordination among the ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of environment, climate change and natural resources, and ministry of fisheries and water resources, MOTIE, MOF, MoLRG, is crucial for the realization of forestry strategy in the country.

The implementation of the strategy will use an integrated approach to forest management, as well as an inclusive participatory, partnership-based approach that actively involves all relevant stakeholders (NGOs, CBOs, the private sector, as well as development partners). The implementation arrangement will also use an integrated forest management approach which entails the coordinated management of the forest resources in a manner that optimizes the long-term productivity of these resources and at the same time maintains or enhances the quality of the environment.

8.3.2 Stakeholders and their roles

A broad range of stakeholders will participate in the negotiation, implementation and monitoring of thisstrategy to ensure its effective implementation at all levels. The stakeholders include representatives of the implementing agencies, development partners, members of the ANR

working group, steering and technical committees, the private sector, NGOs, media organizations, and community forest networks at all levels. The table below describes the key stakeholder groups, their member entities, as well as their functions and roles in the cooperation framework.

Table 1: Stakeholders and their roles in the implementation of the strategy

Key Stakeholder	Who They Are	Their Roles
1. Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Government, Legislative (NA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to budgetary allocation to sustainable forest management Approval and strategic supports
2. Department of Forestry & Other relevant ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DoF, MoECCNAR, DPWM, MoA, MOF, MoTIE, MoLRG, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formulation of appropriate ANR policies and strategies within the overall national development framework Strengthen community-based institutions in order to facilitate their participation in decision making and policy implementation Promote community forestry and strengthen rural finance institutions to better manage investments and development finance at community level vis-à-vis loan appraisals, disbursement, monitoring, recovery, programmatic audit and overall accountability Promote participatory community development (including VDCs) process in forestry management Promote and popularize energy saving devices Promote and support school nursery development
3. Communities & Community Based Organizations (CBOs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest dependent communities, small-holder farmer Associations, VDCs, Regional forest representatives, Forest trade Associations under the GoTG's decentralized framework, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize and articulate issues at community level Prepare action plans to address these issues Implementation of various activities at community level Mobilize members for advocacy and influencing policy Liaise with other stakeholders on behalf of their members especially in policy design and implementation support various village level development committees and coordinate development assistance and activities of all partners in their fields of operations. Support Forestry outreach programme including both formal and informal education
4. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society (including CBOs)	Local and international Non-State Actors (NSAs) registered and operating under an Umbrella – TANGO (The Association of Non-Governmental Organization)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy advocacy and influencing at national level Provide orientation for CBO mobilization and organization towards research Defining priority actions for development programming within human rights-based context Provide moderate social services to prove new ideas for sharing with other stakeholders
5. Private sector	Also, a Non-State Actor for business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment and enterprise development for small, medium and large business portfolios especially for non-timber forest products (NTFP) Contribute to corporate social responsibility(CSR) in the communities
6. Finance institutions	Investment banks, micro finance institutions,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support investment project on sustainable forest management
7. Research and training	University of the Gambia (UTG),	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training and research including technology development for

Key Stakeholder	Who They Are	Their Roles
institutions	Kafuta training Institute, Management Development Institute (MDI), Rural Development Institute (RDI), National Research Institute (NARI)	the forestry staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help review and evaluate the implementation of the strategy
8. International development partners	Multi-lateral, bi-lateral donors and international development agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial and technical assistance to implement the strategy • Support the mobilization of resources to implement the strategy • Support international advocacy for implementation of forestry strategy in The Gambia

8.4 Communications

Promotion of knowledge generation, strengthening public awareness and carrying out information sharing, will support the execution of this strategy. Therefore, it will be crucial to strengthen DoF learning, packaging/documentation and communication systems and processes by developing a comprehensive communications strategy that will be aligned with the strategic directions. DoF will continue to strengthen the close collaboration between DoF and the communities/CBOs and other stakeholders for advocacy and influencing efforts. Program staff will identify and document the best practices relevant for dissemination to key stakeholders-government and other service providers, existing and potential donors, the media and other key audiences. Learning (M&E) and communication function will support this link by developing innovative and impactful communication and knowledge products towards achieving programme and advocacy goals.

To make the communication very instrumental in the implementation of the strategy as well as in the area of profiling and positioning the department of forestry at all level in the country and beyond, the framework of information and communication technology will execute the following:

- Establish a documentation and information Centre responsible for collecting, managing and disseminating reliable information on all forest related activities in the country
- strengthen All Gambia Forestry Platform (AGFP) and link with other national platform especially livestock and Farmers platform that will organize online/radio discussions on current and emerging forest issues in the country
- strengthen DoF “**out of forest annual newsletter**” and other communication concepts that will keep all actors informed on sustainable forest management issues
- Conduct annual retreat involving all the key stakeholders
- Involve both the private and public media in the activities of the DoF

8.5 Learning and Innovation

Taking positive action to promote and sustain an organizational culture that encourages innovation, learning and sharing will be a fundamental success factor in enabling DoF to

respond to a rapidly changing and challenging context. This will require us to invest in staff and CBO partners to equip them with new skills and tools on the one hand, and incentives and space to learn and innovate on the other. This means that constraints and boundaries of unnecessary bureaucracy must be removed.

8.6 Risks and Sustainability

During the implementation of this strategic plan, the DoF is likely to face a number of risks that can undermine and or slow down the effective implementation of the well-outlined strategic actions. Some of these risks are:

- Inadequate capacity to implement the strategic plan owing to the weak agency staffing (in quality and quantity)
- Inadequate funding is also an important risk as, without enough resources, the department will not be able to translate the strategy into concrete actions.
- Insufficient inter-sectoral coordination in the planning and implementation
- Inadequate external assistance to ensure sector performance.
- Powerful internal and external players continue to act in isolation, jeopardizing the application and implementation of this strategy.
- Inadequate monitoring and follow-up resulting in non-adherence to strategy provisions, or underutilization of both financial and human resources.
- Proliferating priorities and political pressures compromise the implementation of the strategy.
- Inadequate implementing capacity slows down operations despite political commitment, support of development partners and availability of resources,
- Inconsistent subsector leadership and decision-making reduces the credibility of the strategy

However, giving the high commitment of government and the donor community these risks could be minimized.

Chapter IX: Resources Mobilization

As part of the implementation of this strategy and to secure long term funding, it is essential to establish an appropriate and sustainable funding mechanism. To do this the following options are provided:

9.1 Government Funding

For resource mobilization, the government budget is very important for successful implementation of the strategic plan. It will illustrate government's strong commitment to sustainable forest management. It should support efforts responsible for implementing the activities of the DoF through internal mobilization of financial resources. A budget allocation could be provided annually in the budget planning to support not only operating costs but also activities in the field. Two important ways can be pursued: 1) To take advantage of available resources by incorporating some of the activities of the plan into the regular annual budget of government 2) the DoF can develop bankable projects on a sectoral or integrated basis on identified themes in this strategy and its action plan and submit to government and technical and financial partners.

9.2 Private Funding

Mobilization of additional resources from development partners and the private sector for activities that could not be incorporated in the government budget should be pursued for implementation.

9.3 Contributions from Local Communities

a) Local authorities: they must provide margins in their annual budget programme to support the financing of certain activities in their localities.

b) Local communities: their contributions could be negotiated in a flexible manner with other stakeholders involved in implementation of activities of the DoF. Synergy must be created with other ongoing projects or programmes in the country.

9.4 External Funding

The DoF will organize mini roundtable discussions with its development partners and other stakeholders with a view of informing them about the programmes of the strategic plan and identifying possibilities for partnership and financing.

9.5 Professional grant management

States' contributions (voluntary or statutory) and regional institutions could be considered and taken into account in the resource mobilization strategy. Adequate funding is required to steer the activities of the forestry department. To achieve that, the DoF will develop a grand style of grant management process as follows:

- Manage the National Forestry Fund (NFF)
- Organize Round Table with Government and Donors
- Properly supervise revenue-generating Forestry Activities to Increase Revenues
- Improve Management Techniques for Forest Parks to Create Income
- Report to donors in a professional way (narrative and financial reports)
- Publicize DoF's good work through communications.

BUDGET

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