

Project Briefing

The Government of the Gambia through the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources (MECCNAR), in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) secured funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to implement a 6-year project entitled "Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation Project in The Gambia: developing a climate-resilient, natural resource-based economy

The large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) approach to natural resource management is a cost effective and low-risk approach for building climate resilience of poor communities in Lower River, Central River South, Central River North and Upper River Regions by improving rural landscapes and sustainable management of Gambian natural resources in a commercial manner. The delivery methodology entails:

- Restoring degraded forests and agricultural landscapes with climate-resilient plant species that provide goods for consumption and/or sale; and
- Facilitating the establishment of commercially viable natural resource-based enterprises
- To be managed by community-based organizations.
- Policy support, institutional strengthening and knowledge generation to support large-scale implementation of EbA in The Gambia.

Environmental resources (e.g. forests, wildlife and fisheries) are essential sources of livelihoods for people in both developing and industrialised countries in providing energy and serving as sinks for gases emitted especially from oil and gas extraction. The continuous supply of environmental services and goods is threatened by increasing pressures on the fragile natural resources. For instance, the unsustainable land management practices in the woodlands, savannas, wetlands and mangroves of The Gambia are reducing supplies of ecosystem goods and services that underpin the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of rural Gambians. These include benefits from natural ecosystems as well as from agricultural landscapes. The majorities of rural households is impoverished and are heavily dependent on the marginal returns from subsistence-scale agriculture and fishing. In general, these rural households do not have the financial or technical capacity to adopt alternative or supplementary livelihoods. Widespread poverty and population growth are leading to increasing rates of resource extraction from natural ecosystems.

Climate change effects are predicted to greatly exacerbate the above-mentioned environmental and socio-economic problems. In particular, climate trends for 1960–2009 show a decrease in rainfall at an average rate of 8.8 mm per month per decade. Additionally, there has been an increase in the variability of the dates of rainfall onset and cessation, as well as in the length of the wet season. This has resulted in more frequent and severe droughts, resulting in:

1. Reduced productivity of agricultural land
2. More extensive saltwater intrusion up the Gambia River
3. Decreased supplies of ecosystem goods and services from natural ecosystems.

These effects are predicted to worsen in the future. Considering the reliance of the rural population in the Gambia on rain-fed agriculture, fishing and natural resources, this climate related effects will continue to increase the vulnerability of local communities to climate change.

Although these signs have manifested decades ago albeit the country's efforts to minimize its impact starting with the Banjul Declaration (1977) there is the urgent need to support and strengthen the Gambia's structures (institutions and systems) to address the impacts of climate change on the country's environment and socio-economic development.

In the Gambia like in many least developed/industrialized countries, climatic events like flooding have in the past decades become less predictable, and more severe and frequent. Extreme weather conditions due to climate variability and related climate episodes have led to occurrences of different forms of hazards which have been very injurious to lives and livelihoods, environment, food security and the wider national economy. These negative consequences have impacted poor Gambian communities, largely dependent on weak local economies which rely heavily on climate sensitive natural resources and related enterprises.

Although not a significant contributor to climate change, The Gambia has been included in the International Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) critical list of 100 countries most vulnerable to climate change and also most at risk from its projected impacts.

Problem Statement: Gambian local communities and major economic sectors remain vulnerable under conditions of Climate Change.

Outcome: Reduced vulnerability of local communities and sectors of The Gambia to Climate Change impacts.

