

A new PAGE in development

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**PAGE is The
Gambia's
development
strategy and
investment
programme for
2012 to 2015**

The Government of The Gambia has been committed to reducing poverty and improving the well-being of its population since designing its first development strategy in 1994. This commitment is driven by the government's long-term strategy, Vision 2020. Vision 2020's goal is to transform The Gambia into a financial centre, a tourist paradise, a trading export-oriented agricultural and manufacturing nation, thriving on free market policies and a vibrant private sector, sustained by a well-educated, skilled, healthy, self-reliant and enterprising population, guaranteeing a well-balanced ecosystem and a decent standard of living for all, under a system of government based on the consent of the citizenry. Vision 2020 is being executed through a series of five-year development plans.

Last December, the government of The Gambia launched its national development blue print for the period 2012/ 2015: the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment, also referred to as PAGE.

The Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) is The Gambia's development strategy and investment programme for 2012 to 2015. It succeeds the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme II (PRSP II).

It is based on five pillars: accelerating and sustaining economic growth; improving and modernizing infrastructure; strengthening human capital stock and enhancing access to social services; improving governance and increasing economic competitiveness; and reinforcing social cohesion and mainstreaming cross-cutting issues.

In terms of poverty reduction and the improvement of popular welfare, the achievements of the country's last two strategies – the Strategy for Poverty Alleviation II and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II – were mixed, mainly because of external shocks and the lack of financial resources.

PAGE 2012-2015 draws on lessons learned from the execution of past strategies to strengthen The Gambia's achievements. PAGE 2012-2015 is based on Vision 2020 and various sector strategies, and is the execution template for the government's long-term vision. Consistent with the Paris Declaration's resolutions on aid efficiency and the ownership of development, PAGE acts as the main interface between the government and The Gambia's development partners.

The PAGE is fully aligned with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). PAGE's principal objective is to accelerate growth and employment in order to sustain recent economic achievements and reinforce gains in welfare over the past five years. PAGE takes the new domestic and international economic context into consideration.

The Gambia's Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs coordinated the preparation of the large participatory PAGE in several steps.

First, the ministry set up a national task force in charge of assessing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) II, reviewing Vision 2020 strategies, and suggesting new areas of intervention to accelerate The Gambia's socioeconomic development.

During the preparatory process, the ministry created a six-member coordinating team. Each coordinator facilitated meetings of thematic groups and conducted technical supervision to ensure adherence to PAGE frameworks. The groups were made up of the representatives of public sector institutions, private sector entities, development partners, and civil society organisations. The themes of the groups corresponded to 13 strategic areas of intervention including government institutions and public financial management; tourism; business; agriculture; energy; information and communication infrastructure; health; transport infrastructure; decentralisation.

The thematic groups were tasked with reviewing and aligning strategies and sector policies to PAGE, setting standards for production and service delivery, identifying annual performance targets, developing a monitoring framework and indicators, and establishing timelines and prioritising interventions. The findings of the thematic groups were reviewed with all stakeholders in review and validation processes. The reviews aimed to authenticate and ensure country ownership of PAGE.

The review and validation exercise was undertaken by stakeholders such as the Government of The Gambia's High Level Economic Committee, development partners, civil society organisation/ non-governmental organisations, and private sector entities.

To capture perspectives at the community level, community consultations on the Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment and the focus for the Programme for Accelerated growth and Employment took place in all local government areas.