



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment

**THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY AND
STRATEGIES 2010 - 2014**

March 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACRONYMS	2
1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY 2010-2014	3
1.1 Summary findings of the performance review of the NEP and NEAP 2003-2008	3
1.2 The Rationale for the National Employment Policy	7
1.3 Mainstreaming the Employment Policy in Vision 2020 and the PRSP II	8
2.0 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY	10
2.1 Policy Goals	10
2.2 Objectives	10
2.3 Principles of the Policy	11
3.0 STRATEGIES OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY	13
3.1 Enabling Macro & Sectoral Policies	13
3.1.1 <i>Accelerating growth and development of the private sector especially MSME as strategy for employment creation.</i>	14
3.2 Skills and Entrepreneurship Development and Training for Employment Creation and Linking TVET to labour market requirements	15
3.2.1 <i>Mainstreaming Special groups – Promoting Employment for Youth and Women</i>	17
3.3 Promotion of Public Works Labour Intensive Programmes	17
3.4 Strengthening the legal and Institutional Framework for Labour Administration and Employment Policy Implementation	18
4.0 LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR LABOUR ADMINISTRATION	19
4.1 Improving Working Conditions, Occupational Safety and Health	20
4.1.1 <i>Strengthening Labour Inspection Services</i>	21
4.1.2 <i>Minimising Child Labour</i>	21
4.1.3 <i>Controlling HIV/AIDS in Workplace</i>	22
4.2 The Labour Act	22
4.3 Industrial Relations	22
5.0 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, COORDINATION AND MONITORING	24
5.1 The Role of Government	24
5.2 The Role of Employers and Workers Organisations	25
5.3 Donor Contribution and Coordination	25
5.4 The Role of NGOs and Civil Society	26
6.0 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION	27
6.1 Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment	27
6.2 The National Inter-Sectoral Committee for Employment and Poverty Alleviation	27
6.3 National Programme Office	27
6.4 Platform for Employment Networking, Dialogue and Action (PENDA)	27
6.5 Role of NGOs	28
6.6 Donor Coordination	28
6.7 Programme Monitoring and Evaluation	28
6.8 Resource Mobilisation Strategy	29

ACRONYMS

ADB	African Development Bank
DTEVT	Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training
FASE	Fight Against Social Exclusion
GAMJOBS	The Gambia Priority Employment Programme
GBOS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GCCI	Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GETFUND	Gambia Enterprise and Skills Development and Training Fund
GNTUC	Gambia National Trade Union Congress
GSQF	Gambia Skills Qualification Framework
GIPFZA	Gambia Investment Promotion & Free Zones Agency
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LGA	Local Government Area
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOTIE	Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration & Employment
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NACCUG	National Association Cooperative of Credit Unions of The Gambia
NAISECPA	National Inter-Sectoral Committee for Employment and Poverty Alleviation
NEAP	National Employment Action Plan
NEP	National Employment Policy
NTA	National Training Authority
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PURA	Public Utilities Regulatory Authority
VISACAS	Village Savings Schemes
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

PART I

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY 2010-2014

The Government of The Gambia formulated the **National Employment Policy (NEP)** and the **National Employment Action Plan (NEAP)** 2003-2008 to address the acute unemployment and underemployment problems in the country especially amongst youths and women. The issue of high unemployment has great consequences in the drive towards reducing poverty. The NEP and NEAP therefore provided the framework to support poverty reduction activities through the creation of decent and productive employment opportunities, within the context of PRSP I & II.

The policy and action plan which expired in 2008 were subjected to a performance review initiated by Government through The Gambia Priority Employment Programme (GAMJOBS) to identify achievements, shortcomings, constraints, challenges and recommend solutions. The outcome of the review including the findings and the lessons learnt were to form the basis for the updating of the NEP and the NEAP which are to be anchored to current macro-economic framework and realities and development focus of Government. The performance review report was submitted to government and the NEP and NEAP 2010-2014 represent a sequel to that report and was prepared in conformity with the terms of reference for the updating exercise.

1.1 Summary findings of the performance review of the NEP and NEAP 2003-2008

The performance review of the NEP and NEAP showed that whilst there were some achievements, most of the policy objectives and performance indicators were not achieved; and several key policy and operational gaps were noted.

While GDP grew on average by 5 percent per annum during the implementation period of the action plan, unemployment and underemployment actually increased. According to The Gambia Bureau of Statistics, unemployment rate of the labour force increased from 5.8 percent in 2003 to 7.9 percent in 2008. This state of affairs confirms the point that economic growth as a goal in itself is not sufficient to address the problem of massive unemployment and poverty in the population. In order to make a positive impact, employment policy and strategies have to be fully mainstreamed and treated as one of the core-objectives of macroeconomic and sectoral policies.

The growth in GDP rate was mainly contributed by the services and low manufacturing sectors of the formal modern economy and accounts for about 10 percent of the employment of the labour force. This growth however has not sufficiently expanded to generate adequate employment opportunities to absorb the increasing urban young job seekers most of whom have little or no employment skill and are highly concentrated in the Greater Banjul Area.

The agricultural sector and fisheries which are the dominant sectors in terms of employment and have the highest propensity to absorb labour especially the poor, increased only by 1% in terms of employment.

The scale and scope of the programme/project approach (short term, focusing on a limited number of issues) applied for many of the public sector projects during this period were very narrow to have a great impact on employment creation, income generation and poverty reduction. People living in poverty actually increased during the PRSP II period. The Poverty Assessment Report of the World Bank (2008) indicates that there was marginal improvement in the poverty situation since 2003. The combined estimated impact of the sector per capita growth rates and the disaggregated inflation rate, was a reduction of poverty head count ratio from 2003 to 2008 by only 2 percent point.

One of the main strategies for the realisation of the national employment policy objectives was the promotion of a well educated, trained, skilled and self-reliant and enterprising labour force with the view to increasing employment especially for the youth and women. The training was to be relevant and matched the skills that are in demand in the labour market. The performance review analysis done, shows that enrolment figures in technical vocational education training (TVET) increased substantially in 2006 (8,345) and dropped in 2007 and 2008 (7,869 and 5,711 respectively). Likewise the number of graduates also declined. The decline in the enrolment figures could be explained by the closure of sub-standard centres by the National Training Authority (NTA).

The proliferation of business and information technology private training centres before the Gambia Skills Qualification Framework (GSQF) was introduced, suggests an increasing demand for TVET in these relevant employable skills being sought by the labour market. This is however not the case for the other skills; there is generally limited capacity in technical training institutions programmes to produce the required level and numbers of trained and technically skilled manpower in comparison to the level of certified and qualified manpower required by the labour market.

The review also revealed that the lack of reliable and current labour market information is a major constraint and a serious setback in the TVET system. Improving the feedback on information about the labour market outcomes will be an important step towards orientating the TVET system to outputs rather than inputs. The provision of labour market information to trainees will not only help in influencing their occupational choices but also directing them to employment opportunities.

The critical task for the NTA is to maintain and sustain TVET reform process and expand the GSQF to further include other sectors of the economy, develop more skills and standards, carry out assessment and certification, quality assurance processes, and improve training delivery.

Besides the programmes, the performance review also looked at the institutional set up and actors involved in the coordination, implementation and monitoring of the progress in implementation of employment policy and programmes.

The review revealed that many of the institutions that were to be set up to undertake these responsibilities were never established. E.g. the National Employment Commission, whilst the Employment Division of the Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment and

responsible for actively promoting employment and coordinating the action plan lacked the capacity and resources to effectively carry out its functions.

To support operationalisation of the NEP and NEAP through a minimum package of priority areas to create and promote gainful employment opportunities and other income generating activities, The Gambia Government with the support of the ILO and UNDP launched The Gambia Priority Employment Programme (GAMJOBS) in 2007. In its overall objective, the programme tries to demonstrate the centrality of employment creation for poverty reduction and advocate for an employment intensive economic growth as a key operational strategy for implementation of the PRSP and other national action plan.

The GAMJOBS priority action plan consists of four key areas:

- Mainstreaming employment in macroeconomic sector and social policies.
- Strengthen labour market policies and institutional reforms.
- Establish a Gambia Enterprise and Skill Development and Training Fund (GETFUND) for employment and job creation.
- Promotion of labour intensive technologies in public works/programme to create employment and sustainable livelihoods.

The GAMJOBS which was launched in the last year of the NEP and NEAP was not covered by the performance review exercise, however a mid term review of the programme which was completed recently will identify its achievements in terms of jobs created and its shortcomings and the challenges ahead. The findings of the mid term review will subsequently guide the future operations of GAMJOBS.

The final section of the performance Review Report contains recommendations for updating the policy strategies and project profiles of the 2003-2008 Employment Policy and Action Plan. The majority of the strategies and programmes in the NEP/NEAP are still relevant and since implementation was minimal they will be maintained in the updated NEAP. However, the new policy strategies and programmes recommended have been incorporated in the new NEP/NEAP to ensure effective implementation and eventually achieve the target of increased employment through enhanced skills development and entrepreneurship.

The recommendations for updating the NEP/NEAP included the following:

1. For employment issues to be given prominence in the development agenda, the updated NEP/NEAP must be effectively mainstreamed in the PRSP and become core objectives of macroeconomic and other sectoral policies, strategies and programmes – employment should be a key outcome of programmes and projects particularly in the public sector.
2. An integrated employment strategy should be developed particularly for youths and women focusing on the following:
 - Appropriate skills development
 - Entrepreneurship

- Access to finance
- employability
- equal opportunity
- employment creation

The integrated approach will stress on both demand and supply factors to ensure maximum employability of youths and women.

3. There is need to establish an effective national coordinating and monitoring mechanism involving both state and non-state actors to enhance employment promotion and creation.
4. An effective donor coordination mechanism to be put in place to facilitate the funding and implementation of the updated NEAP.
5. Development of a funding strategy for the funding of employment creation by government and donor partners is pertinent to the successful implementation of the employment programme. To encourage donor funding The Gambia Government should ensure that substantial funds are provided in the national budget.
6. The credit constraints that have impeded employment intensive development during the implementation of the NEAP will have to be addressed in future programmes i.e. access to funds to MSMEs.
7. Incentive schemes to MSMEs for job creation should be developed to enhance self employment.
8. There is need to develop labour intensive public works programmes targeting youths both at central and local government levels.
9. Develop an advocacy programme for job seekers and job creations and self-employment.
10. Institutions and organisations involved in employment promotion and coordination should be capacitated, for effective management of the employment programme.
11. Updating of the National Minimum Wage.

1.2 The Rationale for the National Employment Policy

With a high population growth rate of 2.5 percent, an open employment level of 27 percent, widespread under-employment particularly in the rural areas and in the urban informal sector and a youthful population constituting 63.6 percent of the country's population and more than half of the workforce, the need for an employment generation and promotion policy is clearly evident.

The magnitude of the problem of open unemployment, particularly the educated youth, makes the pursuit of a national employment policy imperative. With increased educational opportunities for the majority of young men and women, many young people after completion of school enter the labour market with little or no hope of finding formal sector employment and in most cases without the skills and necessary resources to become self-employed.

According to the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) the employment level (number employed) for youths with the age group 16-30 years is estimated to have declined between 2003 and 2008. A decline of minus 7 percent was registered. However for youths in the age group 25-30 years their employment level has increased (12%) between the reference point.

The estimated rate of unemployment among the youths is recorded to be three times higher than among other adults. The problems of unemployed young women are particularly acute. Employment figures for 2008 shows that more males were employed and the percentage increase was much higher (31%) than females (18%).

The key to a prosperous Gambia is in the hands of the young generation. The youths constitute a major component of the country's human capital and if they are effectively utilised through gainful employment, they will be the dynamic drivers of poverty reduction through long term economic growth that create more employment. Increasing employability of the youths through investment in job creation can provide massive returns. It is estimated that halving the rate of youth unemployment in The Gambia can add up to 15% to GDP.

Data provided by the 2003 Integrated Household Survey and Population Census confirms that the labour force (age group 15-64 years) consist of 48% of the population, about 30% of the employed are in the urban areas and the remaining 70% are in the rural sector. About 66% of the unemployed are concentrated in the urban area and 33% are in the rural areas; those in wage employment account for less than 20% of total employed, whilst self-employed persons account for about 70% of employment.

The information confirms that the public sector accounts for over two thirds of total wage employment and those in self-employment over 93% are without employees. The general conclusions derived from the available information are:

- the dominance of rural sector in providing employment
- the concentration of unemployment in the urban areas
- the dominance of self-employment
- the primary role of the public sector in providing wage employment

The phenomenon of unemployment is inextricably linked to that of poverty and in the circumstances of The Gambia, the latter constitutes a more relevant and major source of concern. The overwhelming rationale for the adoption and implementation of a national employment policy in The Gambia is the acute need to alleviate poverty since people today are generally poorer than they were when the employment policy was launched in 2003. Employment promotion does not only contribute to increase in production and national income, but helps reduce poverty, facilitates access to food and other basic needs and thus promote an equitable distribution of income, a major objective of the PRSP II.

1.3 Mainstreaming the Employment Policy in Vision 2020 and the PRSP II

The updating and the formulation of a comprehensive national employment policy and strategy are designed to consolidate into one integrated and coherent document containing proposals which will facilitate the attainment of employment generation objectives. The employment and poverty challenge facing The Gambia is quite critical and there is awareness by government, employers and workers organisations of the urgent need for an adequate response and comprehensive integrated approach to address the employment problem. The updating of the employment policy and programme is designed to emphasise that employment promotion is a national priority which should receive increased and intensified national attention immediately and in the years ahead.

The premise of the revised and updated employment policy and programme is that the best option open for promoting productive employment in the country is through a multi-pronged employment generation strategy which recognises the need to reorient the entire national development strategy (PRSP) so that it becomes more employment intensive. In this respect, it is expected that all sectors of the economy will emphasise employment promotion in their development programmes and employment generation is identified as one of the important milestones of the programmes. In this regard, employment promotion will be strengthened and instituted both at the central and local government levels. It also recognises that while seeking to improve the overall enabling environment for accelerated economic growth and employment promotion through the adoption of appropriate policies and institutions supportive of employment promotion, the government will need to initiate or implement specific priority action programmes designed to accelerate the creation of more employment opportunities.

The employment policy is aimed at the promotion of more rapid growth of the productive employment sectors. It is expected to achieve more employment intensive economic growth through a more appropriate macro-economic policy environment, support for more labour intensive and labour absorbing economic sectors, particularly agriculture, fisheries, tourism, construction and the informal sector through greater support and incentives for the private sector, and access to credit for productive investment.

Linking education and training for employment, pursuing more appropriate strategies for employment promotion, mainstreaming youths and women, improving working conditions and environment, strengthening, and better coordination of institutional framework for the promotion of employment and sustainable livelihoods are addressed in the policy and programme. The role

of improved employment statistics and labour market information system are also covered aimed at monitoring employment and labour market development.

PART II

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY

2.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

It has become increasingly evident that economic growth does not necessarily alleviate or eliminate unemployment and inequitable distribution of income. Experience in many countries has in fact confirmed that growth may lead to employment disparities and certain types of growth are employment inelastic, particularly if economic progress is confined to the modern sector. Although there is a clear relationship between economic growth and employment, since it is much more difficult to achieve employment objectives under sluggish or stagnant growth, there is adequate evidence in many countries that economic growth as a goal in itself is not sufficient to address the problem of massive unemployment and poverty in the population. Prosperity generated by growth does not automatically trickle down to the masses, as learnt from the lessons of the impact of structural adjustment programmes in many developing countries

It is a well-known paradox that the application of free market principles within the framework of economic reform programs leads to the marginalization of some sections of the population; such vulnerable groups must be provided for through adequate safety nets. It is the responsibility of government to protect and assist those who for one reason or another cannot cope with the demands of market forces and have been marginalised by their inability to compete. These vulnerable groups, usually comprising women (especially women in the rural and urban informal sectors) youths, elderly persons, those with disabilities and the unemployed need to be assisted with special compensatory and well-targeted programmes.

2.1 Policy Goals

The overriding policy goal is to promote full employment as a priority in national, economic and social policy and to enable the economically active population to attain and secure sustainable livelihood through full productive and freely chosen employment and work by the year 2020.

2.2 Objectives

The National Employment Policy seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- 1) To stimulate economic growth and development, reduce the coincidence of poverty and improve the levels of living by minimising the rates of unemployment and under-employment; unemployment to be reduced at least by 5% per annum through the planning period to include sustainable livelihoods and informal sector employment.
- 2) To promote a well educated, trained, skilled versatile, self-reliant and enterprising labour force with a view to increasing employment. Further to promote the development of relevant manpower/human resources that will continually meet the needs of the nation.

- 3) To pursue poverty reduction policies through labour intensive programs and improvement of the labour environment.
- 4) To improve and strengthen the existing labour administrative system for promotion of decent work, worker participation in decision and an efficient industrial conflict resolution mechanism in the labour market.

2.3 Principles of the Policy

To accomplish the desired results, national employment policies should be mainstreamed, coordinated and implemented within the framework of the national economic and social policy. In this respect, the National Employment Policy will be consistent with the overall development strategies of The Gambia as outlined in PRPS II and should equally conform to the long term goals and policies prescribed in Vision 2020. The principles underlining the policy are consequently presented below:-

First, the employment issue is multi dimensional and permeates every major development sector, and is inextricably linked to the problem of poverty, inequitable distribution of income and the economic empowerment of women and youths in particular. Consequently, employment policies should be mainstreamed and effectively coordinated and implemented within the framework of the national economic and social policy.

Policies and strategies designed to alleviate poverty must equally be harmonised with those of employment. In this connection, the national employment policy will be consistent with the overall development strategies of The Gambia as outlined in the provisions of Vision 2020 and the PRSP II.

Second, the government considers the private sector, both domestic and foreign as the engine of sustainable growth and development. Consequently, the national policy for employment creation, in conformity with the principles of current development programs and strategies, will emphasise the provision of a favourable environment for private investment and job creation. This strategy involves:

- a) Maintaining stable and favourable and flexible macro-economic policies.
- b) Investment in human resources development.
- c) Provision of basic infrastructure and development of relevant institutions with an appropriate policy environment needed to effectively undertake their catalytic and promotional roles.
- d) Provision of appropriate incentives to promote private sector development including provision of appropriate infrastructure and institutional support for MSMEs and informal sector support.
- e) Increased investment in productive enterprises, and national promotion of an “enterprise culture” which induces self-reliance, risk taking and,
- f) A national environment, which rewards effort initiative and entrepreneurship.

Third, in conformity with the present policy of promoting grassroots empowerment through decentralisation and participatory development, individuals, groups and communities at large must assume some responsibility for employment creation. They should be ready to create their own jobs and would need to move from a culture of “job seekers” to “job creators” and self-employment.

The national employment promotion policy rejects the relevance of certain restrictive, deep-seated cultural beliefs and traditions, which impede productive employment and skill acquisition and upgrading e.g.

- a) Certain occupational pursuits should be confined to members of specific social caste groups; and
- b) Informal sector and “blue collar” occupations do not command high social esteem unlike better-remunerated prestigious formal sector wage employment.

Fourth, the application of free market principles, needs to be extended to the labour market through the application of the principles of collective bargaining and more regular linkage and adjustment of wages to price and productivity changes.

Fifth, the pursuit of the policy of private sector led growth and sustainable development and the application of market principles in employment and job creation, inevitably results in the marginalisation of some sections of the population viz. the vulnerable groups – women particularly those in the rural and urban informal sector, youths, elderly persons, those with disabilities and the unemployed. The national employment policy emphasises the need to assist these groups with special compensatory and well-targeted initiatives and incentives such as those being implemented through the national strategy for poverty alleviation.

Sixth, to meet the employment challenge through well-targeted policies and programmes, it is imperative to regularly generate detailed, reliable, and comprehensive information, on the size, structure and dynamics of the labour force. Employment planning and promotion is currently seriously restricted by the dearth of statistical data on the labour market.

Finally, Government will continually build the capacities of relevant institutions and organisations responsible for the coordination of all national and international efforts aimed at achieving the objective of full employment.

PART III

STRATEGIES OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY

3.0 STRATEGIES OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Employment is a multi-dimensional issue and its active promotion is the concern of all sectors. The strategy for employment promotion adopted in this policy will consequently cover the following areas:

- a) To implement a more employment intensive macroeconomic and sectoral policies.
- b) To promote micro and small enterprises both in the urban and rural areas through incentive packages including fiscal incentives and access to term lending.
- c) To link education and skills training to labour market requirements.
- d) To establish a Special Fund for enterprise and skills development training and start-up capital.
- e) To promote labour intensive technologies in public works/programmes both at the Central and Local Government level targeting youths and women.
- f) To improve working conditions and labour productivity.
- g) To strengthen the institutional framework and mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of employment generation strategies on a continuous basis.

In brief the strategies outlined above maybe succinctly group into four separate but related cluster areas.

- 1) Enabling macro and sectoral policy environment
- 2) Skills and entrepreneurship development and training related issues.
- 3) Promotion of labour intensive technologies in public work programme to create employment and sustainable livelihoods targeting urban and rural youths and women.
- 4) Improving and strengthening the legal and institutional framework for labour administration and employment policy implementation.

The above strategies are further elaborated in the ensuing sections.

3.1 Enabling Macro and Sectoral Policies

The magnitude of the employment and poverty challenge demands vigorous and determined national response at both macro and sectoral levels. To meet the challenge, the policy framework must pursue accelerated economic growth as the best means of sustaining increased employment opportunities and reducing poverty in The Gambia. There is a clear relationship between economic growth and employment since it is much more difficult to accomplish employment objectives under sluggish or stagnant growth. There is nonetheless clear evidence that rapid economic growth as a goal in itself is not sufficient to alleviate unemployment and poverty. Empirical evidence suggests that for economic growth to reduce poverty productive employment needs to expand sufficiently to spread the benefit of growth and employment must become the core objectives of economic policy.

Macroeconomic and financial policies, investment policies, business climate, trade policies, labour mobility are key factors that influence market expansion, affect aggregate demand and corresponding dynamism of the private sector and its prosperity to create more decent jobs. Therefore, to achieve an employment intensive growth, requires a policy-mix that promotes/enhances growth and investment in the productive sectors of the economy under condition of monetary and fiscal stability.

3.1.1 Accelerating growth and development of the private sector especially MSME as strategy for employment creation.

Employment is a cross-cutting issue and its active promotion and creation is the concern of all sectors. Therefore to fully employ the country's human resources, the employment policy and strategies should be mainstreamed and become a core objective of macro economic and sectoral policies.

Private sector development that creates employment is a must if we are to attain the Vision 2002 goals. The Government therefore taking cognisance of the importance and positive impact private investment (both local and foreign) can have on employment and growth in the economy, has adopted additional measures to further enhance the friendliness of the business environment during the implementation period NEP/NEAP 2003-2008. Such measures included:-

- a) The implementation of the Gambia Investment Promotion Act by the Gambia Investment Promotion and Free Zone Agency facilitating the establishment of both domestic and foreign investors and the provision of special incentives for investments in identified priority sectors.
- b) The Competition Act which is meant to enhance competition was enacted in 2008 and a National Competition Commission established.
- c) The Government continues to maintain fiscal and monetary policies in an effort to curtail government's domestic borrowing requirements in order to maintain low interest rates to enhance private borrowing and access to finance.
- d) The Public Utilities and Regulatory Act establishing the regulatory agency (PURA) in 2004 in order to enhance competition in the utilities sub-sector.
- e) Establishment of the Industrial Tribunal and the Alternative Dispute Resolution.
- f) MSME National Policy and Action Plan to guide and enhance the growth of the sub-sector. (MSMEs are seen as some of the main engine of growth for alleviation of poverty and generating employment).

Although during the implementation period the country has witnessed a steady increased in MSMEs contributing to growth and employment, the sector is still constrained by many factors including poor access to appropriate credit facilities, lack of sufficient technical and business managerial skills, inadequate promotional and support services and high energy cost.

In the light of the above, the following policy strategies will be pursued during the new plan period 2010-2014.

- 1) To provide a very enabling business environment for private sector operations.
- 2) Facilitate easy and equal access to finance particularly for MSMEs.
- 3) Increase support programmes that would promote and expand MSMEs with the objectives of further increasing employment and productivity in the sector.
- 4) Provide special incentives to MSMEs.
- 5) Establish a number of business incubators with adequate facilities and financial capital.
- 6) In collaboration with the private sector provide number of training and business advisory services (for both technical and business management for MSMEs).
- 7) To promote micro, small-scale and informal sector enterprises both in the urban and rural areas through incentive packages including fiscal incentives and access to term lending.

3.2 Skills and Entrepreneurship Development and Training for Employment Creation and Linking TVET to labour market requirements

A critical challenge that we are faced with today is to increase employment, sustained economic growth and social inclusion in the economy. Technological changes, changes in financial markets, the emergence of global markets, new business strategies, new management practices, and new forms of business organisations and the organisation of work are among the more significant developments that are transforming the world of work.

Many of these developments are dramatically increasing the importance of the application of training and skills to economic activity, both from the point of view of the enterprise as economic actor and from the individual as worker.

In the last decade the Government is increasingly seeing vocational training and skills development as integral parts of broad economic strategies to further develop the economy and promote employment opportunities; hence the National Vocational Training Authority (NTA) was created in 2003. As a result Vocational training and skills development has expanded in the last five years. However, this notwithstanding, The Gambia still has much to achieve when it comes to skills training and skilled workers. Enrolment in TVET has dropped substantially from 8,345 (with 6,361 graduates) in 2006 to 5,711 (with 4,375 graduates) in 2008.

The technical and vocational skills development suffer from weak links with the job market as well as shortages of qualified staff and ill adopted programmes. There is need to make vocational training more relevant for the skills needs of the private sector where young graduates will seek employment. And there is a need to improve technical and vocational education to equip the labour force with the skills needed to drive the productive sectors of the economy.

Apart from regulating, organising and supervising the sub sector, NTA has also succeeded in developing The Gambia Skills Qualification Framework (GSQF) and establishing a Labour Market Information Unit.

The new concept of competency base training is the basis on which the Gambia Skills Qualification Framework (GSQF) developed by NTA is built. It calls for skills quality management and assurance. This model is centred on a tight regime composed of the following processes and procedures such as registration and accreditation of training providers, trainers,

assessors and verifiers, development of standards, surveying of labour market on employment and other demographic trends, assessment and certification and quality assurance. Quality assurance and quality development are also crucial to the implementation of the GSQF.

The critical task for the NTA is to maintain and sustain TVET reform process, expand the GSQF to further include other areas of the economy (develop more skills standards), carry out assessment and certification, and quality assurance processes, and improve training delivery.

In order to maintain and sustain the momentum, institutional capacity building is very paramount. Staff capacity building through short term programs and internship will inevitably improve their skills and experience to better dispense their duties and responsibilities.

The GSQF is a new approach in the reform for TVET in the Gambia and its implementation has not been an easy task. Processes and procedures entail in it required qualified, competent and experienced personnel. With the existing inadequate staff at the NTA, there is urgent need to recruit more personnel.

Technical and vocational training is urban bias, the majority of the training institutes are located in the Greater Banjul Area and the role of the informal economy is not acknowledged, which is the largest employer.

The policy will therefore attempt to address these short comings in the area of vocational training and skills development through the following policy objectives.

- 1) To equip the youths with skills that will improve their employability in more productive and decent work.
- 2) To provide more skilled workers that are relevant to private sector needs.
- 3) To ensure that TVET is linked to market demands through collaboration between vocational training institutions, private sector and the NTA.
- 4) To ensure that vocational training institutions/centres are located in the rural areas to provide demand driven and community based training for employment generation.
- 5) Introduce technical and vocational training into entrepreneurial development and ensure that national policy on vocational training is revised to incorporate entrepreneurship development in all vocational and technical institutions.
- 6) Introduced a more structured industrial attachment and apprenticeship programme; the industrial attachments which vary from 3-6 months, will be replaced by a National Apprenticeship Scheme and trade testing programme/scheme.

3.2.1 Mainstreaming Special groups – Promoting Employment for Youth and Women

Youth unemployment and its corollary under-employment has become a major challenge to youth and women empowerment.

Investment in job creation and increased employability for young men and women could provide massive returns. Creation of employment for unskilled youth should be a priority in order to sustain economic growth. In recent years unemployed youths have resorted to engaging in mass illegal migration to Europe and many a time endangering their lives by travelling through hazardous means, with many of them perishing either on land or at sea. In order to stem this tide of illegal migration to Europe, youths should be trained and provided with the appropriate skills to become gainfully employed.

The youth and women comprise the majority of the population and also are disproportionately over-represented in the rank of the unemployed and underemployed. Although in the last several years, attempts have been made to reduce unemployment through programmes that provide access to women and youth to employment opportunities these need to be further enhanced. The policy will therefore pursue the following policy objectives during the plan period 2010-2014.

- 1) To contribute to the creation of decent employment for both youths and women.
- 2) To promote youth and women entrepreneurship in order to create more employment opportunities both in the informal and formal sectors.
- 3) To ensure access to finance for youth and women.
- 4) Women and persons with disabilities will be accorded affirmative action through the creation of specific quota to ensure their mainstreaming and participation in TVET programmes, in order to address access and equity considerations.

3.3 Promotion of Public Works Labour Intensive Programmes

In order to ensure that Gambians have access to employment opportunities particularly unskilled youths, labour intensive and environmentally friendly schemes have been established in the last decade which include mainly the GAMWORKS Project. These projects and programmes should be enhanced and more funding provided to facilitate employment creation.

To achieve the above objectives, the following strategies will be introduced.

- 1) Labour intensive feeder roads repairs and construction programmes.
- 2) To develop labour intensive schemes in collaboration with municipalities and local government authorities particularly in the area of solid waste collection and disposal.

- 3) To enhance the capacity of the youths and increase income earnings and small enterprises opportunities.
- 4) Create a labour market intermediation centre to match demand and supply of labour.

3.4 Strengthening the Legal and Institutional Framework for Labour Administration and Employment Policy Implementation

The dearth of timely and reliable data on the labour force makes it difficult to properly plan future needs and provide training and skills development to meet demand.

Timely, reliable and detailed data on the skills profile of the workforce or new entrants in the labour market on the supply side, and the type of skills and competencies required on the demand side are critical for optimal utilisation of the country's human resources.

To improve the collection, processing and analysis of statistics on the economically under-employment and other labour market information on a regular and timely basis.

The following strategies and activities will be undertaken:

- 1) Promote collection of comprehensive and reliable employment statistics and labour market information through the conduct of surveys.
- 2) Government shall ensure the collection and dissemination of gender and age desegregated employment statistics and other labour market information
- 3) To reflect the full extent of the work of women and their contributions to the national economy.
- 4) To facilitate the design of focus programmes and activities consistent with the identified needs of vulnerable groups.
- 5) A Labour Market Information System (LMIS) will be established to monitor the regular collection, analysis and appropriate dissemination of required information.

The system will involve all relevant agencies and stakeholders to ensure efficient and participative management of the system.

PART IV

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR LABOUR ADMINISTRATION

4.0 LABOUR ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

The Labour Administration System in The Gambia comprises several major actors including:

- a) The Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment (MOTIE) responsible for matters related by employment and human resource development;
- b) The Department of Labour responsible for inspection, maintenance of standard and conflict resolution;
- c) Trade Unions and Employers.

The Department of Labour works very closely with several other organisations and boards, involved in labour administration to improve industrial relations, to monitor and develop employment services and to promote occupational health and safety. The most prominent bodies established by law under the Labour Act, include:

- a) The Labour Advisory Board;
- b) Joint Industrial Councils;
- c) Factories Board; and
- d) The Injuries Compensation Fund/SSHFC.

The enhancement of the institutional and management capacities of agencies that will be closely involved in employment promotion and labour administration is a pre-requisite to the successful implementation of a national employment policy. To achieve this objective, the capacity of the Labour Department in particular will be significantly strengthened to ensure that it plays a substantial role in:

- a) The improvement of working conditions, occupational safety and health;
- b) Promotion of collective bargaining, advocacy for decent work;
- c) The delivery of an effective labour inspection service; and
- d) The establishment of a viable and efficient labour market information system and employment services function.

The Labour Administration system in The Gambia has many players including

- a) The Labour Advisory Board;
- b) The Injuries Compensation Fund (SSHFC);
- c) The Factories Board; and
- d) The Joint Industrial Councils, each of which is engaged in some aspect of labour administration.

The major constraint faced by the system, unfortunately, is the absence of effective, meaningful coordination of the activities of the various institutions and structures that have significant roles to play in labour and employment administration. This is compounded by the inadequacy of resources (human and material) necessary for effective discharge of the labour administration functions. Very often, there is no collaboration between institutions and this result in costly duplication of efforts and resources. To effectively address this constraint, the National Employment Policy will implement the following measures: -

1. The Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment will spearhead the establishment of an appropriate co-ordination mechanism.
2. The Labour Administration System will be decentralised to facilitate efficient application of laws guaranteeing worker safety and ensure widespread compliance with labour Laws, particularly in the areas of recruitment and resolution of disputes.
3. Periodic surveys will be regularly undertaken to establish a reliable and up to date labour market information system, which would be disseminated to agencies closely involved in employment generation and placement services.
4. Institutional collaboration between the Department of Labour, and the National Training Authority will be intensified. Similarly, coordination of the relevant policies and programmes of local agencies involved in employment promotion will be enhanced.
5. Through effective decentralisation of labour administration, industrial tribunals will be set up in Regional headquarters, to ensure that the provisions of the Labour Act are effectively enforced.
6. The Technical, professional and management capacity of the Department of Labour will be significantly strengthened and training of human resource development and provision of logistical support will be accorded high priority.

Since implementation involves the Employment and Human Resources Development Unit, Department of Labour and other relevant agencies, it will be imperative to strengthen the Institutional and Human Resource capacities of collaborating agencies. In addition, efforts should be made for the establishment of National Employment Platform. The Platform shall be the highest advocacy, monitoring and evaluation body and shall be headed by a Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Employment and the Employment Human Resources that will serve as its Secretariat.

4.1 Improving Working Conditions, Occupational Safety and Health

It is an undisputed fact that improving working conditions, maintaining labour standards monitoring labour standards and promoting occupational health and safety not only ensure the health of workers but also enhance productivity, work motivation and job satisfaction. It also contributes to overall quality of life of individuals and society. This is why it is imperative that strategies for promoting decent work in general and in particular, the improvement in working conditions, occupational safety and health should be fully integrated in a viable national employment policy.

The maintenance of good working conditions in all work places is the responsibility of the Department of Labour, the Department of Health Services and the National Environment Agency. The Department of Labour has an Inspectorate Unit that undertakes periodic visits to examine working conditions and verify complaints. This Unit needs to be strengthened and well resourced.

Unfortunately, there is dearth of data or studies to establish the nature of working conditions. Lack of institutional capacity and resources have consistently precluded regular inspections or collection of data relevant to this subject though labour laws have made provision for the establishment of factories Board, responsible for maintenance of healthy and good working conditions in factories and industrial plants. An Injuries Compensation Fund administered by the Social Security and Housing Finance Corporation (SSHFC) and the Department of Labour is also fully operational and is utilised to compensate workers for industrial injuries.

4.1.1 Strengthening Labour Inspection Services

Improvements in working conditions, occupational health and safety will only be achieved through efficiently functional labour and factory inspection services. The policy will take measures to provide inspectors with adequate logistical support, better technical training to improve their effectiveness and impact.

The National Policy will introduce measures designed

- 1) To strengthen existing policies for occupational health and safety.
- 2) To support the planning and design of healthy and safe work environments that are conducive to physical, psychological and social well being.
- 3) To ensure more efficient functioning of labour and factory inspection services.
- 4) To promote research studies that will monitor and evaluate working conditions in industries.

4.1.2 Minimising Child Labour

The Government of The Gambia subscribes to the principles of the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. Though child labour has not been well documented in The Gambia, it is by no means a negative social problem. It is not totally absent and must be addressed by the employment policy. Children need to be relieved of work that inhibits their proper development and education. The policy will seek to minimise child labour through:

- a) Increase awareness campaigns;
- b) Aggressive promotion of basic education
- c) Aggressive skills development programmes for children;
- d) Enhance implementation of the ILO Convention on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour which The Gambia ratified; and
- e) Collection and analysis of data on the subject.

4.1.3 Controlling HIV/AIDS in Workplace

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a growing threat in The Gambia and its impact on the productive labour force though not documented can be serious. With the collaborative support of international agencies and NGOs, the government is intensifying efforts through awareness campaigns and improvement of reporting system to alleviate the spread of the pandemic. The policy will support and re-enforce existing policy measures on HIV/AIDS prevention and will minimise discrimination against HIV/AIDS patients in the workplace.

4.2 The Labour Act

The Labour Act 1990 was updated and revised in 2007. The revised act promotes the activities of Trade Union and Employers Organisations in the fields of industrial relations and employment generation. The Act provides for the establishment of Industrial Tribunals in regional headquarters.

The act also provides for the registration of Trade Unions and Employers organisations provided not less than fifty workers have applied to do so.

4.3 Industrial Relations

The government is committed to the development of a sound industrial relations system and has been working actively with employers and workers to accomplish this objective. The government has facilitated the formation of an umbrella trade union organisation i.e. the GNTUC and a trade union platform called Gambia Bureau of Trade Union (GNBTU). Trade Unions have an important role to play in national development on the grounds of equity, human rights and participatory development.

Unfortunately effective participation of Trade Unions in National Policy formulation has been extremely limited mainly as a result of fragmentation of unions and serious capacity problems within union management. These deficiencies have severely restricted the expansion and consolidation of trade unionism in The Gambia for good industrial relations; unions must be strengthened and must effectively participate in the formulation of national policies. It is through such participation that workers and employers organisations may better appreciate the consequences of their actions (such as excessive wages demands, low productivity and strikes) on the national economy.

PART V

5.0 INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION, COORDINATION AND MONITORING

The National Employment policy is designed to contribute to the acceleration of employment growth and move the country towards full employment and poverty eradication. This goal can be achieved only if the policy is vigorously pursued and fully implemented. Being a dynamic exercise, the policy will have to be reviewed regularly and revised to ensure its continuing relevance to government's development agenda.

Given the multi-dimensional nature of the employment challenge, the implementation of the national employment policy requires the active participation and involvement of many actors both state and non-state and their effective coordination.

5.1 The Role of Government

The multifaceted nature of a national employment promotion policy implies that implementation demands effective action and attention by all agencies of government, if the goal of full productive employment is to command high priority in national economic and social policy. Government agencies will be required to integrate into their policies and programs, the objective of maximising productive employment; this requires clear identification of the employment implications of investments and continuous encouragement of utilisation of labour intensive technologies where feasible. A central role of government will be creating an enabling environment for employment growth and creation where the private sector will play a key role

The Ministry of Economic Planning and Industrial Development will have the primary responsibility of ensuring that the goal of full employment and productivity becomes truly a priority in national economic and social policy. The Ministry will ensure that national development programmes are conceived in such a way as to result in progressive reduction in the gravity of the unemployment and underemployment problem overtime, thus positively contributing to poverty reduction efforts of the government.

Given the multi-sectoral nature of employment promotion policies and programmes, an effective networking arrangement and national coordination machinery will be established to guide, streamline and coordinate national efforts towards promoting the goal of full employment. The central institutional mechanism for the formulation of this policy is already in place and is the responsibility of the Human Resources Division of the Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment.

The policy will be implemented under the leadership of the Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment as the government institution entrusted with the employment portfolio. Given the multi-dimensional nature of employment and its attendant issues, and the host of institutions / agencies that impact or influence its creation and sustainability, a national

body composing all key stakeholders will be set up as the main consultative body on employment in this country.

This body will be called the **Platform for Employment Networking, Dialogue and Action (PENDA)**. The Platform will be a partnership framework of state and non-state actors that will be engaged in a process of permanent dialogue in building coherent positions on the mainstreaming of employment at all levels of national development, particularly for youths and women. It will be responsible for advocacy, networking coordination and vigorous monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Employment Policy and Action Programmes.

Its membership will include key stakeholders from the public, and private sectors, and civil society organisations. The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Employment will be the chairperson of the platform and the employment unit will serve as the Secretariat.

In addition to the National Employment Platform, Regional Employment Committees will be established under the leadership of Regional Governors and Municipal Mayors, will be responsible for the monitoring of the policy at the grass-root level. Grass-root participation is essential to the successful implementation of the policy; hence the content of the policy and the Action Programme will be sufficiently disseminated in the mass media for education and sensitisation purposes.

5.2 The Role of Employers and Workers Organisations

Employers' Associations, Trade Unions and joint industrial councils will be required to cooperate closely with government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Trade and Employment to achieve the National Employment Policy objectives embodied in this document. Joint industrial councils will be re-activated to pursue their mandate more effectively particularly in the areas of productivity enhancement, improvement of conditions of service and workers welfare, maintenance of industrial peace and protection of children from labour exploitation. Collective bargaining mechanisms will also be improved.

5.3 Donor Contribution and Coordination

To accelerate the role of economic growth and self-sustaining development, which is essential for employment promotion, external donor assistance will continue to be mobilised. To achieve the objective of pursuing a more employment intensive development strategy, there is an acute need for donors to shift the composition of their aid towards more employment intensive sectors and projects and to encourage promotion of labour intensive technologies.

Better coordination of donor interventions and more effective linkage of donor activities within national development and employment objectives will be intensified. The possibility of establishing a pooling of donor funds into one basket under the proposed Basket Funding Mechanism will be explored.

The Role of NGOs and Civil Society

There are almost 100 registered NGOs (local and international operating in The Gambia) and most of the active ones are involved in programmes and activities which are designed to alleviate poverty, to improve health and educational facilities particularly for girls, women and youths to promote food security and the empowerment of vulnerable groups.

The NGO sector plays an important role in supporting employment and income generating activities in both rural and urban areas. Central and local government agencies will be required to intensify their collaboration with the NGOs especially at grassroots level where the latter have demonstrated comparative advantage. By strengthening the role and capacity of the NGO Affairs Agency, government must ensure more effective coordination of NGO activities with national employment promotion efforts, so as to maximise the contributions and impact of NGOs in this area.

NGO agencies and civil society at large will be encouraged to sensitise the population to the need:

1. To dispel socio-cultural barriers which impede employment promotion;
2. To respect the value and dignity of the occupations of artisans and skilled craftsmen;
3. To support strategies and programmes that address the employment needs and concerns of the disabled; and
4. To promote and support population reduction policies and strategies.

PART VI

6.0 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Ministry of Trade, and Employment

The Ministry will be responsible for employment policy and will coordinate employment policy in the country by relating activity of each sector with the growth of employment and labour productivity.

It will also promote the maintenance of a conducive environment necessary for the creation of sustainable employment.

The Human Resource Division of the Ministry will be strengthened to carry out this function.

6.2 The National Inter-Sectoral Committee for Employment and Poverty Alleviation (NAISECPA)

The NAISECPA set up in 2005 responsible for inter-sectoral coordination and provision of overall guidance and direction to the action programme will be reactivated.

It is expected that the NAISECPA will work closely with the PENDA.

6.3 National Programme Office

The National Programme Office set up under the GAMJOBS will be further strengthened and in addition to the four priority areas identified under the GAMJOBS priority action plan, the programme office will coordinate and monitor on a day to day basis other priority areas identified under the NEAP to be integrated in the programme in the third year of the policy period..

6.4 Platform for Employment Networking, Dialogue and Action (PENDA)

The National Employment Platform under the Chairmanship of the Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment will have the following responsibilities:

- Provide advocacy and networking platform.
- Coordinate, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the employment policy.
- To relate the implementation of other national policies with the objectives of the employment policy in order to facilitate implementation in an integrated manner.
- To seek the political support needed for more government resource allocation to employment promotion.
- To spearhead policy mainstreaming.
- Advise on resource mobilisation strategies for policy and programme implementation.

- Research and develop innovative ways/schemes of employment promotion.
- The membership of the Platform will include the relevant Ministries, GCCI, NGOs, LGAs, NYC, Trade Unions and employment agencies research institutions development partners.

6.5 Role of NGOs

NGOs have an important role to play in NEAP implementation. It is also expected that several projects and sub-projects of the NEAP will be implemented by NGOs. Thus, selected NGOs, the NGO Affairs Agency, TANGO will be co-opted in all the structures that are to be set up under the programme coordination. In addition, NGOs, because of their experience and proximity to the grass root will be specifically charged with delivery of certain project activities, monitoring and evaluation. NGOs and other civil society organisation will therefore be an integral part of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the NEAP.

6.6 Donor Coordination

The implementation of the NEAP will inevitably require considerable donor input and support and effective donor coordination will consequently be instituted to ensure that;

- Their interventions are employment intensive and that this goal becomes a major criterion in the design and formulation of programmes and projects
- Donors targeting of employment intensive ventures
- Donor interventions accord high priority to the development of MSMEs target the informal sector because of their potential to provide productive employment opportunities for the majority of the labour force

The NEP and NEAP will form part of the donor conference on the SPA II. The Ministry of Trade, Regional Integration and Employment in collaboration with MEPID and Ministry of Finance, will work closely in identifying potential donors to fund all or some of the components of the NEAP. The Ministry of Trade & Employment will also work directly with the UNDP and ILO in the resource mobilisation for programme implementation. Every effort will be made to avoid duplication and ensure optimal resource utilisation.

6.7 Programme Monitoring and Evaluation

Success of many employment promotion projects has been hampered by the insufficient employment growth, employment in-elasticity of growth, and the rapid labour force increase. Thus, an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism will be established to ensure that targets and expected outputs are achieved in a timely and cost effective manner. PENDA will play a crucial role in ensuring that the employment programme is actively monitored and evaluated.

6.8 Resource Mobilisation Strategy

NEAP will be mainstreamed in the PRSP II and NEAP will be part of the major areas of intervention of the PRSP. Thus, the resource mobilisation strategy shall include:

- The Gambia government allocations in the annual budget through programme budgeting;
- Use of bilateral/multilateral contacts with countries and organisations whose mandate has a strong element of support to employment and skills development such as the ILO, UNDP, WB and the ADB;
- NGO resource mobilisation; and
- Private sector contribution directly to the various schemes e.g. the national training levy.