

## THE GAMBIA

Capital : Banjul



Area : 11 300sqkm  
Population : 1 426 000 inhabts  
Density : 134,2 ctzns/km2  
Average growth: 2,9

### FOCUS

*Poverty alleviation continues to be the main strategic focus of the government and of the development partners' technical assistance in the Gambia. The interventions in the governance field have therefore stressed the links between strengthening of democratic institutions and poverty alleviation. The National Governance Programme, adopted by all stakeholders in 1999, remains the frame work of the nation's aspirations to improve democratic processes and strengthen representative institutions, but the difficulties faced by government and its national and international partners in reducing the depth of poverty continue to present the major threat to the gains acquired in the political and institutional reforms being put in place. Unemployment, especially of youths, population growth, illiteracy, widespread poverty, especially in the rural areas, gender inequity, a narrow tax base for the state and the subsequent challenges in the delivery of quality educational and health services, and the improvement of physical infrastructure constitute the economic scenario that governance institutions in the Gambia have to face with admitted insufficient technical capacity. To encourage participatory government and a balanced development, Government shall pursue an intensive political and Institutional decentralization process. This will contribute to Poverty Alleviation and diffuse the different socioeconomic tensions that spring out of rapid population growth, rural-urban drift, un-employment and regional disparities in Economic Development. However, the main challenge Government has to face in conducting development policies are to strengthen institutional capacities for the implementation of development programmes and to enhance access to goods and services more oriented to the priorities of citizens, particularly the poor.*

## GENERAL INDICATORS

<b>Human Development</b>	HDI	0,452		
	Total GDP (millions \$US)	2 799		
	GDP/per capita (units of \$ US)	1 903		
	Annual Growth	7,7		
	Life Expectancy	55,5		
	Literacy (%)	Men	47,8	
		Women	32,8	
Access Internet/1000 ctzn)	18,83			
<b>Decentralization</b>	Communalized Population	100%		
	Average Communal area			
	Urban Population	26,1		
	Local Government	8		

### I- The decentralisation policy

#### **Evaluation :**

*The governance system is established and covers all the country with a consistent legal framework. However, the administrative arrangements are still dominated by central government accountable agencies.*

#### **Indicators:**

- 1.1. Establishment of the LG system : ↑↑
- 1.2. Consistency of the legal framework: ⇒
- 1.3. Consistency of administrative arrangements: ⇒

#### **Establishment of the Local Governance system**

During the last decade, the Gambian context in terms of governance has varied positively and significantly. The second General elections since the 1994 coup were recognised internationally as peaceful and fair. As a result, the process of democratising the country was being supported by the development partners and, in particular, by UNDP. The National Assembly passed a new local government law based on decentralisation (the Local Government Act 2002) which was tabled by the Government in April of the same year. More recently, in March 2006 a complementary legislation which grants councils the authority to allocate and spend local, national and international public funds, (the Local Government Finance and Audit Act) was also passed by the National Assembly. Furthermore, significant progress has been achieved in the implementation of the PRSP, called the Strategy for Poverty alleviation II (SPA II).

The Local Government Act 2002 was promulgated in April 2002 and the complementary Local Government Finance and Audit Act was enacted in March 2004. The new Local Government law has subsumed all other previous legislations such as: The Provinces Act, The District Tribunal Act, The City of Banjul Act, and the Kanifing Municipal Council Act. On the same day in March 2004, when the Local Government Finance and Audit Act was enacted, parliament also enacted the Local Government Amendment Act 2004 which sought to amend sections of the parent Act by establishing more clarity in certain functional, procedural or structural provisions in that Act for ease of implementation of the law and also in line with the required constitutional prescriptions. In the same vein further amendments were again enacted in March 2006 called the Local government Amendment Act 2006.

#### **Legal framework for decentralization**

The Gambia has now established a common arrangement for the viability of decentralization. The local governance system is based on a certain number of texts:

- The constitution of the Republic 1997 which provides for local government spheres running alongside central government in the state,
- The local government Act 2002,
- The Local Government Finance and Audit Act 2004.

The constitution prescribes organic roles and functions for local government

### **The Administrative Organisation**

The legal text for decentralization prescribes geographic and demographic categories for eight local government boundaries depending on the urban/rural characteristics of the local government area concerned: City and Municipal councils refer to the urban councils, area councils refer to rural councils. The texts also establish executive councils linked with Ward and Village Development Committees at the respective levels of governance and planning. The law recognises five of the local government areas covering four administrative divisions as central government territory each of these is headed by a divisional governor. One of the divisions is covered by two area councils while the two urban councils of Banjul City Council and Kanifing Municipal Council are local

authorities in accordance with the rule of law, and it provides directives for the identification, devolution and implementation of competences from central to local government territories. The local Government Act 2002 establishes a new local government system based on decentralization, and provides the legal framework for the regulation and implementation of the new system. The constitution, Local Government Act 2002, Local government Act 2004 and VISION 2020 were all formulated based on wide consultations with all sections of Gambian society.

government units without any direct central government representative.

The divisions are made of a varying number of districts with the average being ten. There are thirty six districts in all. The districts are deconcentrated administrative units which tend to follow former ethnic communities. The chief (Seyfo) is the head of the district and works under the governor. The district is composed of villages headed by an Alkalo under the direct responsibility of the Seyfo. There are about two thousand villages in the Gambia. Under section 133 (1) of the Local Government Act 2002, the Seyfo is appointed by the President in consultation with the Secretary of State for Local Government and Lands. The (Seyfo/Chief) is removed by the President in accordance with Section 136 of the Act.

**Table 1 : Administrative and territorial organisation**

Territorial Division		Local Govt..	Constituency	Delib. Organ	Executive Organ	Supervision/Control
Name.	Number					
Divisions	5	No	Yes		Area Admin.	Sect of State Local Govt.
District		No	Yes		Seyfo	
Local government	8	Yes	No	Council	Chairman/Mayor	Sect of State of Local Govt.
Ward	114	No	Yes	Committee	Chairman	Local Government
Village dev. committee	1,500	No	Yes	Committee	Alkalo	Ward committee

Source: Department of State for Local government/Directorate of Local Governance, 2006

### **Special status**

Local Government categories depend on the urban characteristics of each locality: City and municipal council refers to urban councils, Area Council refers to Rural Councils. Furthermore the country is subdivided into a total of five Divisions:

Western, Lower River, Central River, North Bank and Upper River) each division is made of a varying number of Districts, the average being 10. These are deconcentrated administrative units which follow the confines of former ethnic

communities. At the helm of the management of a District is a Seyfo (Head chief). The District is composed of villages headed by an Alkalo under the direct responsibility of the Seyfo. In section 133 (1) of the Local Government Act, the Seyfo

shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the Secretary of State for Local Government. He/ She can also be removed by the President in accordance with Section 136 of the Act.

## **II- The implementation strategy**

### **Evaluation:**

*The transfer of competences is left at the discretion of line ministries. The implementation policy is not clear. The liaison between decentralisation and special planning needs to be built up. The support provided by the Ministry in charge of LGs is below the sufficient line.*

### **Indicators:**

- 2.1. Implementation planning : ↓
- 2.2. Transfer of competencies and sector-based policies: ↓
- 2.3. Structuring of decentralization and spatial planning: ⇒
- 2.4. Technical support and M&E of the process: ⇒

### **The decentralisation implementation planning**

The Government envisages structural reforms of the Local government system. The reform is expected to have wide ranging impacts on public administration in the country. This will request increased resources to be allocated to all local governments and the enhancement of sectoral decentralisation. The Government is also expected to designing a long term capacity building programme to address capacity gaps identified at the local level. Need for a Standard Council Planning Manual As the planning system in the Gambia is changing from a centralized “top down” development approach to a “bottom up” participatory system, it was recommended that a Standardized Council Planning Manual be developed for use by both central and Local Government Officials engaged in planning activities. This manual has not been prepared yet

but it should be in simple and uncomplicated language and be easily understood by all. Such a manual will ensure a uniform procedure in the preparation, execution, monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes from the village level upwards to the approval of Councils and the linkage to national policy. The objective of the manual are to: Provide operational guidelines for district level planning, Enhance the capacity of all district development institutions to facilitate the bottom up planning process, Support the planning process at the Centre with relevant data, Promote decentralized planning, Influence the development of a uniform planning process at the local level, The major users would be decentralised community structures NGOs Donor Agencies and Area Councils.

### **Transfer of competencies and sector based policies**

The local government law which is in place has been made consistent with the principles of local autonomy as laid down in the constitution. It defines the extent and scope of local government authorities and separates the powers and responsibilities of central government in a decentralised arrangement.

The areas in which the law acknowledges local competences are as follows: Education, Agriculture, Natural Resources, Health, Roads, and Land properties. In

practice however, no competences have been transferred as yet. The main reason is that at present, none of the councils can exhibit the required absorptive for such devolution of responsibility. Also the sensitization process needed to disseminate the decentralization added value to the wider public for has not been initiated. The responsibility for the coordination of advocacy for the councils as well as policy issues has been assigned under the Loan government

2002 to the Department of State for Local Government and Lands. To carry out these tasks, the Directorate of Local Governance was created with the remit for policy planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Quality control, Resource mobilization, Capacity Building and Public sensitization and engagement. Since its creation, the Directorate has had staffing problems and as yet its full potential and full complement of qualified personnel have not been available. Apart from the Director there are only three other professional officers responsible for capacity building quality control and resource mobilization.

However, the system is based mainly on the discretion of central government. Competences that have been transferred cannot be clawed back, except in cases where the central government agency deems that the competences transferred have been improperly exercised by any local government Authority. Besides, the exercise of transferred powers is subject to a very strong administrative supervision of central government. In the system of transfer of competences chosen by the new legislation, two methods have been retained:

- A Secretary of State may, after consultation with the Secretary of

***Institutions in charge of technical support and monitoring***

The department of State for Local Government and Lands was entrusted by a cabinet decision with the responsibility to administer the legal, policy and administrative texts on decentralisation, which provide for a number of innovations in the area of local democracy as a departure from the top down local government system that was in place before decentralisation.

The laws guiding local government decentralization have now been made consistent with the principles of local autonomy as laid down in the 1997 constitution. The Department of State for Local Government and Lands is responsible through its Directorate of Governance for:

- Enforcing the local government texts, the observance of commitments by all stakeholders

State for Local Government pass a decision on the powers that its department wishes to transfer to the local governments. In this case, the transfer may take place only if three conditions are met: (i) the agreement of the Local Government Authority, (ii) the concomitant transfer of resources (technical, material, property and financial) and (iii) the sensitization of the populations on the changes that the transfer will entail.

- Every local government may request the transfer of a competence exercised by a Department of State. The latter may approve the request.

Transfers are carried out in this manner are not irreversible. The authority which accepted to transfer a power may also withdraw its decision and take back the control of the transferred power if it is of the opinion that this power is not properly exercised. The local government in question has to provide beforehand explanations for its improper exercise of the transferred power.

The local government may also delegate some of their functions to the districts.

and ensuring that local rights are observed,

- Putting the enabling legislation into action,

Translating broad policy and the enabling legislation into practical results on the ground is a challenge now facing the decentralisation process. The Local Government Finance and Audit Act places responsibility on the councils the exact implication of which may not be fully understood, and nor may the individual Councils be prepared for the additional responsibility. To help the transition proceed smoothly, much of the enabling legislation needs to be converted from general principles into more precise guidelines that are understood by all stakeholders. As a first step, the administrative procedures for the implementation of the provisions of the

F&A Act (eg, budget approval, government subventions, personnel management and

pensions) will need to be clarified and defined.

### ***Decentralisation and spatial planning***

At the National Level, the Directorate of Local Governance, is expected to be equipped with a council planning coordination unit to which each Council Planning Unit will be linked. The Council Planning Coordination Unit (CPCU), which will serve also as a link to other Units across the country. This Unit will also have a three person team, comprising An Economic/Social Planner, a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer and a Physical Planner/Engineer. This unit has not been set up yet.

The Policy proposes the following as the responsibilities of CPUs (1). Serve as the technical secretariat of the Area/Municipal/City Council (2) Collect and compile the Local Government Area (LGA) statistics Assemble LGA demographic, social and economic profile (3) Support community development workers to prepare Village and Ward Plans, integrate these into council plans and programmes, (4) Design projects and prepare necessary documentation (5) Monitor implementation and assess the impact of implemented projects. The CPCU is responsible for : (1) Ensure an appropriate fit for council plans within the national and sector budget and priorities through the preparation of guidelines for plan formulation. (2) Advise on the recruitment of competent professionals for the CPUs, (3) help to build their capacities of these, until an acceptable level of competence is achieved in the council concerned, (4) Identify sources and liaise with donors and government in securing funding for council development programmes, (5) Secure technical support from NGOs and others for project implementation and disseminate information on areas of donor support, (6) Prepare standard formats for programme support documents required by donors, provide other miscellaneous information required by CPUs, (7) Organise relevant joint training and orientation courses for staff of CPUs, government departments, NGOs and

others, (8) Circulate reports and work plans of CPUs within the development management community and establish routine channels of communication, (9) Prescribe a single reporting format for CPUs, WCDs and VDCs and other implementing agencies to ease compilation of reports. Although the Act gives responsibility to DOSLG&L for coordination of Local Government activities, it was recommended that this specific area of divisional coordination CPCU be located at the Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs (DOSFEA) and for this department to undertake coordination activities. The reason is that DOSFEA has traditionally prepared socio economic development plans and is the line department responsible for the preparation and Coordination of the PIP/PEP and is well positioned to oversee line divisional planning processes. SPACO will also be involved in this process.

The process of identifying priority development issues will commence with CPU in conjunction with other development agencies operating in the area obtaining data and other relevant information which will be analyzed and form the basis for the identification of community needs. The exercise will commence at the village level in a participatory process involving community members assisted the CPU, and collected at the ward level at which the Councilor of the ward will participate. The various ward plans will then be compiled into a common divisional plan to be approved by the Council and the CPCU to see that it conforms to national policies.

The DOSFEA has responsibility for the monitoring and evaluating projects in the PIP and the budget of the CPCU is located in that Department, then it would be the logical agency to monitor and evaluate progress on such projects. However DOSLG&L will also have a role to play in the evaluation process.

### III- The local government structures and management

#### **Evaluation:**

*Local councils and Executives are in place and holds sessions according to the regulations. Lack of skilled personnel is worsened by the Central government reluctance to operate the transfer of HR to LGs.*

#### **Indicators:**

- 3.1. Functioning of the political organs : ↑↑
- 3.2. Quality of the technical organs: ↓↓
- 3.3. The level of the State control: ↓↓

#### **The political organs**

##### *The legislative organ*

Self administration under decentralisation in the Gambia goes hand in hand with the appointment of a proportion of the members of local organs. The constitution provides for the administration of decentralised territorial units by local governments. The Local Government Act 2002 provides for the appointment of a proportion of the members of local organs. Councils are heterogeneously composed, each with a Chairman/Mayor and councillors. Apart from the Mayor/Chairman, there is a representative for each Ward elected by universal adult suffrage, a representative of traditional chiefs, who is elected by the later. (Not applicable to the urban councils of Banjul and Kanifing), an appointed representative of the youth, an appointed representative of women, in cases where more than 2/3 of the elected members are men. With the approval of the Secretary of State for Local Government, the

Mayors/Chairpersons have appointed a number of representatives of the economic and socio-professional organisations based on the proposal of interested organisations. In accordance with the Act, their numbers do not exceed 1/5 of elected members. The term of the council is 4 years.

Councils are required by law to establish the following committees: finance, establishment and development. They are not allowed to establish any further committee. The decision-making process within councils is through a committee structure that makes recommendations to general council for ratification.

##### *The executive organ*

Councils are led by mayors elected through direct adult suffrage using the first-past-the-post system. They report to their council. The position of mayor is full-time with commensurate remuneration set by the Parliament.

#### **The technical and administrative organs**

For each area of competence, the law provides for the setting up of a Local Committee. This organ is made up of:

- A chairman appointed by the council,
- The head of central government/deconcentrated service in the given area,
- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Council,
- Nominated Members, not more than one fifth of elected members from civil society, local commercial and interest groups.

Each local authority recruits and manages its staff. Central government can also deploy staff to councils from time to time. The law doesn't require local government to have particular officers. The office of the head of paid service is performed by the chief executive officer. Typically, the CEO is the head of the administrative staff. Directors (finance, administration, services and planning development) are second tiers. Third-tier staffs are the section heads to whom the general staff work.

#### **The control of Local government by the central government**

The exercise of transferred powers is subjected to a very strong administrative supervision of central government. The system has established a centralised administrative control of local authorities. Decisions of councils are forwarded to the Secretary of State in charge of local government. The latter may request the opinion of the Attorney general on the

legality of the received decision. When the latter is deemed illegal, in line with the constitution, the decision is conveyed to the local authority with the attendant consequences. When it is not, the Secretary of State returns it to the local authority with the comment "approved". The local authority may then start its implementation.

#### **IV- The Human Resources**

##### **Evaluation:**

*Despite the cohabitation between elected and nominated members, the local council faces the problem of qualified personal.*

##### **Indicators:**

- 4.1. The qualifications of local agents : ↓
- 4.2. The transfer of the human resources: ↓
- 4.3. The LG contracting power: ↓

##### **The existence and qualification level of local agents**

Inadequate human remains the most important constraint to the process of decentralisation. The provisions of The Local Government Finance and Audit Act 2004, which prescribes the regulations of local government financing through fiscal decentralisation have not yet been put into practice. Without the necessary funds, it is difficult to guarantee the availability of

qualified staff in the councils. Various capacity assessments, which were carried out indicate that in almost all the councils with the exception of Kanifing Municipal Council, the minimum institutional and human resources capacity does not exist in any council for the implementation of the decentralisation as provided in the Local Government Act 2003.

#### **V- The Local democracy**

##### **Evaluation:**

*The elections are regular. However, their fairness is always questioned by observers. Measures have been taken to diversify the sociological representation of local organs. However, local authorities are gender-imbalanced. Accountability and transparency mechanisms are put in place, but their effectiveness is really questionable.*

##### **Indicators:**

- 5.1. Fairness of the electoral system:
- 5.2. Level of citizen political participation: ↓
- 5.3. Transparency and accountability of local authorities and management: ↓
- 5.4. Sustainability of the municipal movement: ⇒

##### **The electoral system**

Local Government Elections take every four years. The system is arranged as follow: Village development committees comprise all adult villagers. Each ward committee comprises representatives from

the village and each ward elects by universal adult suffrage its representative to the local council. The local executive is also elected through direct universal adult suffrage

##### **The representativeness of the local authorities and the local participation**

Appointments to councils may infringe on the principle of Self administration. But paradoxically it helps in ensuring a

representation of the sociological diversity of the local government. The measure ensures at least a minimum representation

of the youth, women and the socio-economic forces. Further the law presents a system of exercise of local competences, which ensures a large participation of local stakeholders in their diversity. However, less than 5% of the elected councillors are women. Participative local democratic structures women organizations in the local government

### ***The local participation (relation between municipal organs and the civil society)***

Local communities' participation in democratic and other decision-making, planning, coordination, and implementation of projects and programs in the process of Economic and Social development in their areas is increasingly taking place. Under these arrangements local communities are expected to participate in democratic and other decision making that affects the process of economic and social development in their areas, through periodic broad based elections and participation in planning, coordination and implementation of projects and programmes. In line with this, accessible and quality channels of communication are expected to be available to local communities in an

include the establishment of committees to interact with civil society organisations. As prescribed by the constitution, local contribution to development is an essential component of National Development and an important means of achieving Good Governance. A woman representing

environment of which encourages self expression and discourages voicelessness in the national development process. The infringement on the principle of self-administration through the appointment of some members of the council is expected to help (paradoxically) in ensuring a representation of the sociological diversity of the Local Government Area. Through this system, the council ensures whatever the case may be, a minimum representation of the youth, the women and the socio-economic forces. Furthermore, the law organizes a system of exercise of local competences, which ensures a large participation of local stakeholders in their diversity

### ***The transparency and accountability system of local management***

At the national level, the transparency and accountability of the Local authorities is insured by a independent scrutiny system provided by two bodies: the internal audit and the Ombudsman as enshrined in the constitution and various legal instruments.

Councils approve their budgets. Each council shall have an internal audit unit but external audit is the prerogative of the auditor general. At least 60% of a council's annual budget must be to development. The hand over of authority to the local level is being implemented in an environment characterised by low levels of human and financial resources (the LGAs are already facing huge budget deficits) and with little experience to guide decision makers. In particular the transfer of full responsibility for financial management will most certainly strain local capacity; adequate preparation for this is not demonstrated in any council so far. The

Country Financial Accountability Assessment which was done under the auspices of government in collaboration with UNDP. EC, DFID World Bank has highlighted management problems at LGA level: unrealistic budgeting, cash based transactions, delays in the preparation of accounts etc. For the Councils to be able to achieve an acceptable level of accountability and transparency, they will have to tackle these issues individually. However, in conformity with its statutory role as the supervisor, the Department of State for Local Government and Lands will assist by establishing the accounting policies and procedures to guide the LGAs.

An accounting manual has been developed, but the CFAA indicates that it will need revisiting if it is to conform to accepted international standards. Also in addition, a more comprehensive set of guidelines, setting out the accounting

policy and establishing and explaining the various legal and procedural steps would serve to guide the Councils and ensure some degree of conformity across the different LGAs. This will facilitate the Department of State in its supervisory role, as well as improve operational efficiency and effectiveness at the periphery.

### ***The municipal movement and the decentralised cooperation***

The Association of Local Government Authorities (GALGA) and the National Association of Area Councils (NAAC) have been set up as Local Government Associations. Both were set up in pursuance of Chapter XV of the Constitution, the Gambia which enacted the law on decentralized local government system, which led to the election of Area Councils for the provinces and Municipal and City Councils in Kanifing and Banjul respectively. The associations constitute the Gambian municipal movements which seek contribute in reinforcing the Local Government environment nationally and internationally. Facilitate dialogue on local

The Act sets out a Financial Advisory Body to regulate and oversee the LGAs. This is located in the Department of State but this has not been set up yet, its constitution or its precise nature and the form of its responsibilities have not been defined yet.

government issues with development partners, private sector operators NGOs Civil society and Government, Build capacities of members in Negotiation, Local Management, Advocacy, Networking, Public speaking and decentralized cooperation, as reflected in the constitutions of both. GALGA is a more established than NAAC. It already has a visible office with a skeletal staff. NAAC has no office and is not affiliated to any world body yet while GALGA has already been affiliated to a number of international local government bodies including the common Wealth Local Government forum, and CGLUA.

## **VI- The Local finances**

### ***Evaluation:***

*The sources of local finance are diversified but remain very small in terms of revenues for LGs. The intergovernmental transfer is institutionalised. However, the LGs quote-part is not able to reduce the gap. Great efforts are being made to sustain the LG's association.*

### ***Indicators:***

- 6.1. Consistency of intergovernmental transfers : ⇒
- 6.2. LG performances in locally generated resources: ↓↓
- 6.3. The economic and financial weigh of LG: ↓↓

### ***Intergovernmental transfers***

The principle of a concomitant transfer of competences and resources is mandatory under the legal texts.

Section (6) (1) of the local government finance and audit Act 2004 says: The President may in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of the Gambia cause to be presented to the National Assembly proposals of moneys to be paid out of the consolidated fund to the councils for each financial year as : (i) general grant, which shall not exceed 10% of the Capital Budget of each Council and be the minimum grant paid to a council to operate decentralized services, (ii) Grant-in-aid in or an Equalization Grant. The Secretary of

State may after consultation with the Secretary of State responsible for finance, by order published in the Gazette amend the General Grants payable to any council. A Grant-in-Aid is conditional and consists of specific moneys given to a council to finance programs agreed between the central government and councils and be expended only for the purpose for which it is made and in accordance with the conditions agreed on.

An equalization Grant is made for purposes of equalization and is based on the degree to which a Local Government Unit is lagging behind the national average standard in the provision of basic social

services and calculated in accordance with the First Schedule.

The grants made shall be remitted directly to the General Fund of the beneficiary council. A formula for the distribution of grants to councils shall take into account factors including the population, the age structure of the population, the existing levels of services in the councils, their resources base, their potential for commerce and industry and their impact on the environment.

Most Councils, however lack adequate resources because of their weak revenue base. Perhaps the better endowed Councils are KMC and BCC. The onus is on Councils to endeavour to generate funds for such developments projects. The Local Government Act in Section 128 (3) states that the Central Government shall provide 25% of the Council's development budget. This may not be adequate and should be seen as a challenge to councils for the generation of their own revenue, It is recommended that both the Central and Local Government Councils enter into a dialogue on the question of the revenue

### **The locally generated revenues**

The provision for local financing under the Local Government Finance and Audit Act 2004 stipulates the following sources of revenue for councils: Rates, Rents and Fees, Licenses, Taxes.

The total aggregate revenue of Gambia local government in 2003 was D.118,207,492 (USD 4,546,000).

Table 3: aggregate source of revenue 2003

Resources	Percentage (%)
Rates	41
Rents & Fees	33
Licenses	14
Taxes	3
Others (including central government grants (0.1%))	9

Source, CLGF ([www.clgf.org](http://www.clgf.org))

The councils are responsible for setting and collecting taxes and rates but the Department of State supervises setting up of the local taxes. There is no policy of revenue sharing and the specific grants are very small, making only 0.1%

## **VII- Local development and poverty alleviation**

### **Evaluation:**

base of Councils as a result of the observation by these Councils that some revenues that formerly accrued to Councils have been taken over by Central Government. Examples given include sand mining and taxes on hotels/guesthouses. The international donor community has been quite active in the Gambia where UNDP, the EDF, and the World Bank have been participating as are other development partners and NGO's in a variety of programmes/projects. Councils no doubt will be looking forward to the participation of these agencies in the implementation of council plans The donor community will however be eager to see the efforts of the Councils themselves and the measures adopted to ensure effective financial management as well as transparency and accountability in all Council's activities. Given the demand expected from the village and ward communities for funding of development projects, Councils should consider innovative ways of raising revenue to meet such demands.

contribution to local government revenue overall.

The total aggregate expenditure of local governments for 2003 was D111,207,492 (USD 4,227,000.00) and distributed among various services (see table 3).

Table 3: aggregate expenditures 2003

Items	Percentage (%)
Essential services	25
Development Projects:	24
General Administration	11
Treasury	15
Markets	5
Civic Education	5
Health and Social Welfare	3
Education	3
Cleansing Services	3
Other	6

Source, CLGF ([www.clgf.org](http://www.clgf.org))

The financial powers of local government authorities are limited within the scope of existing financial instructions of central government.

*The planning skills of LGs are improving over years. LGs are vested with responsibilities in the areas of MDGs. Insufficient resources leads to very limited interventions of LGs in service delivery to the population and poverty alleviation.*

**Indicators:**

- 7.1. Local development planning capacity : ⇒
- 7.2. Level of service delivery to the population: ⇓
- 7.3. Support to the local economic actors: ⇒

**The local development planning**

The Government long term development policy, Vision 2020, deals with strategic issues for intensive political and institutional decentralization process for poverty alleviation and economic development. The strategy is based on a three tier Planning System: Village, Ward, and council levels. It recognizes the low economies of scale' and insufficient rationalization at Village and Ward levels for the establishment of Planning Unit (PU). It proposes that capacity in the form of a 3 person Planning Team: An Economic/Social Planner, Physical/Infrastructure Planner and a Socio-economic Planner/Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, be instituted in each council, as the Council Planning Unit (CPU). In none of the councils have this requirement been met yet.

In December 1997, Government of the Gambia commissioned a study, funded by UNDP to assess Divisional Planning, a mechanism based upon the "bottom up Planning Concept", which was introduced by the European Development Fund (EDF) for its suitability as the Decentralised Planning frame work for the Gambia.

This move represented a significant departure from the centralized planning system initiated in the seventies. These were driven by traditional "Top Down" approaches to planning with minimum allowances for community involvement. In 1985/86 the traditional five year planning system was abandoned for three year rolling public investment programming under the aegis of the World Bank IMF. Since then the annual budget and the Public Investment Programme have been the principal instruments for economic management. These like the previous 5 year Development Planning framework do not meaningfully involve beneficiary

communities in the articulation of needs and priorities.

The detailed recommendations advanced in this study including the processes and procedures inherent in the Decentralised Planning System, until 1<sup>st</sup> March 2003, when it was updated and validated in a well-attended consultative meeting with representatives of all relevant stakeholders. The recommendations were reviewed and particular focus was made on the structure of the Planning system, as well as the Plan Preparation vetting and approval procedures. The

recommendations on the structure centre on effective strategies for building-up a technical capacity for executing planning requirements at the divisional level, as this is critical to the overall process. The study recognizes the process which leads to the formulation of decentralized plans, as resolutely consultative. It is initiated at the Village and the Ward, to capture effectively, the essence of community development requirements. It is linked from the division to the village levels through the Ward level. Village and Ward Plans will be collated and approved at their respective levels. The Village and Ward Development Plans will be endorsed by Council and the Council Development (CDP) will be reviewed by the Technical Advisory Committee for vetting and alignment with Government Policy.

The Local Government Act 2002 prescribes wide responsibilities for Local Government Authorities, particularly in the area of planning and development in local communities.

Section 90 (1) of the Local Government Act states: Every Council shall be the Planning Authority for its area and may plan and implement any programme or project for developing the infrastructure, improving social services, developing

human and financial resources and for the upliftment of the community.

Subsection 2 of the same section states: Every council shall (i) coordinate all donor support, (ii) approve all project agreements and (iii) perform such other functions as may be assigned to it. In performing its functions every council shall adopt such processes and procedures and ensure that communities are involved in the conception and execution of development plans.

Central Government technical departments operating within the jurisdiction of every council are required to support the development process of the council through extension workers operating at ward/village levels. These two sections of the Act constitute the basis of the development mandate of Councils and also the rationale of the other complementary policies on Multidisciplinary Facilitation Teams (MDFT) and the Council Development Fund (CDF). The Local Government Act

recognizes the synergy that must exist between the centre, the divisions and the local communities, but it places the primary responsibility for the planning of local development under the jurisdiction of individual Local Government Councils.

This requires development planning to be decentralized (devolved) to the respective levels of Local Authorities, Village and Ward Plans endorsed by council and coordinated nationally through a mechanism located at the centre. Planning Units at Councils level assume responsibility for the technical content of Ward and Village Planning processes.

The aim of this policy is to provide a framework for addressing the question of local participation in the development process, with the following two objectives: (i) to implement sections 90 (1) (2) and (3) section 91 of the Local Government Act 2002 and (ii) to provide a bottom up planning framework that links local and divisional needs to national priorities.

### ***Local government supply of basic services to the population***

Under the new system the role of councils have become important, complex and diversified. The statutory functions of councils include the provision of basic services to local communities, the promotion of community development and self help.

With the local government finance and audit Act, they are now full stakeholders in the process of social and economic development and are expected to full-fill the government mission of continuity, presence and proximity in the implementation of policies and the delivery of public services in their areas of administrative control. Through

decentralization the local government authorities are now expected to consolidate the spatial and institutional environments for the performance of economic operators, guarantee equal access to social services and ensure the consistency of urban development, social action, fight against poverty and social exclusion. The integration of the local potential into the new strategies of development has become recognised and in the fight against poverty in particular, local governments need to be able to meet fully the demands relating to local development, democracy and participation.