

THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN MID-TERM EVALUATION COMPLETED



The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (Directorate of Development Planning) has completed the Mid-term Evaluation of the National Development Plan. The NDP is The Gambia's medium term development blueprint for the period 2018 to 2021 meant to succeed PAGE. It was launched in February 2018 by H.E President Adama Barrow. The NDP accommodates regional and international commitments that the government seeks to implement including the Africa Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The goal of the NDP is to Deliver good governance and accountability, social cohesion, and national reconciliation and a revitalised and transformed economy for the wellbeing of all Gambians through eight Strategic Priorities (SPs) and seven Critical Enablers (CEs). This midterm evaluation was commissioned to assess the appropriateness of the plan, its institutional arrangements, financing and technical strategies, to track and report on the level of attainment of set targets as well as identify the factors that affect progress including the impact of COVID-19 on the implementation with a view to suggesting ways and means of improving both the plan and its means of delivery for the remaining two years. During the evaluation exercise, documents and materials associated with the NDP were reviewed, key informants and other stakeholders interviewed.

With respect to relevance, the design of the plan, appropriateness and comprehensiveness of identified SPs and CEs, and integration of the SDGs and Africa Agenda 2063 were assessed. While largely relevant, the evaluation found some elements across the three areas assessed that could be improved to enhance the overall performance of the plan. One of these is the process of NDP design, which was consultative but not sufficiently interactive partly due to the silo approach to identifying the priorities. This led to limited cross sectoral work and multiplicity of outcomes (63 for a four-year plan). As a result, the coordination challenge was amplified by the need to streamline fragmented intervention strategies. The SPs/CEs are

defined broadly to accommodate almost every development challenge the nation faced and, in some instances, not guided by a comprehensive Theory of Change (TOC) analysis. This has made it difficult to prioritise the development. The NDP is found to be strongly aligned to both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 representing a strong foundation for their effective implementation. This alignment could improve if data collection quality and coverage is enhanced.

In assessing effectiveness of the NDP, the evaluation exercise looked at completeness of the definition of the identified results and appropriateness of the strategies for their realisation. At three years of implementation, the NDP has already achieved some significant milestones across several SPs and CEs, notably, the establishment of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the drafting of a new constitution; the reduction of domestic borrowing and the total debt stock; increased access to Early Childhood Development (ECD), improving quality of learning, improved access to water, sanitation and hygiene services and improved nutrition for mothers and children. The accomplishments are undermined partly by the reliance on Flagship Project (FSP) financing as opposed to regular national budgetary processes. Another factor that affected effectiveness is the incomprehensiveness or strictly guided interventions by what Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) do, instead of focusing on addressing those issues that prevented achievement of result or needed to be addressed to achieve the goals. Non implementation of prescribed NDP actions specifically, **prioritisation and sequencing of actions** and the non-implementation of the capacity building plan and many legal and regulatory reforms minimised the effective implementation of the blueprint. Other challenges have been the COVID-19 pandemic, limited cross-sectoral coordination of implementation, weak engagement of partners, largely non-functional coordination arrangement, less than optimal use of resources and limited availability of data.

The NDP could have been more visible if it were efficiently implemented despite significant progress registered in terms of achievement of some objectives. This means that the gains recorded could have been much more, if some results pursued were objectively prioritised; if the cost of some of the identified priorities were directly estimated using the outcome and the expected effort and if the national budget was trained to financing implementation; if the implementation and accountability framework was made to function as planned; if partners were sufficiently engaged to make sure their efforts complement each other; and if COVID-19 has not emerged. These issues must be addressed to improve efficiency over the remaining period of plan implementation.

The NDP implementation period is extended to end 2022. This will enable the Government to redefine the strategies of the NDP considering the new challenges the country is facing given the context of COVID-19 pandemic. This will also give the Government time to prepare and finalize a new medium term development plan informed by a new long-term vision in time for the start of the 2023 budgetary process.

From the review, it has become clear that though the government led the identification of the prioritisation and articulation of the plan, the development expenditure from the budget could have been enhanced. Further enhancing the participation of senior policy officials in

the implementation of the plan will significantly improve national ownership. Proposed institutional arrangement, capacity building and engagement of partners have not been implemented as planned. Thus, even though significant gains have already been registered from the NDP implementation, these may not be sustained in the long run unless measures are taken to correct the slippages mentioned above.

From the available data, a total of US\$1.3 billion was committed to flagship projects related to strategic priorities and of this amount, 34.6% are loans and 65.4% are grants. So far, 42.1% of this amount has been disbursed. With respect to critical enablers, a total of US\$48.7 million (grant) is committed but only 36.1% was disbursed. In total therefore, approximately US\$1.4 billion was committed and so far, 41.9% has been disbursed.

The NDP is being implemented through 8 strategic priorities and 7 critical enablers further broken down into 63 outcomes which are tracked by a total of 287 indicators including, in some cases, their disaggregation. 45 of these indicators were either not sufficiently defined or were not reported and so were considered constrained. In the assessment of progress of implementation, an outcome-by-outcome approach was taken where outcomes are rated under three categories namely: achieved, on track and constrained. After three years of implementation, 60.0% of all outcomes are already achieved or are on track and are expected to be achieved by end of the plan, December 2021. The rest are constrained and are not expected to be achieved. Of the total indicators therefore, 54.0% are on track to be achieved while 46.0% are constrained.

For detailed information on the Mid-term Evaluation, kindly view or download a copy of the full report from the Ministry of Finance's website on www.mofeagambia.gm.

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