THE GAMBIA

Report of the Peer Review of the National Statistical System

September 17-21, 2018

PAN AFRICAN STATISTICS PROGRAMME

The contents of this report constitute advice and recommendations provided by Directors general or Deputy directors general (the "Peers") of the African Statistical System (ASS) to their counterparts ("Peer") from a National statistical system (NSS) of the African Union Member States (the "Reviewed country") in response to their request for assessment.

"The reviewed countries committed themselves to publish (or allow the publication of) the Peer Review Reports and ensure their discussion among the NSS partners" (see Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems in Africa, www.austat.org).

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Abbreviations

ASYCUDA	Automated System for Customs Data
ECOWAS	Economic Commission of West African States
EUROTRACE	Trade Statistics Processing Software
CAPI	Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing
E-Views	Computer Package
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FPoS	Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics
GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographical Information System
GRA	Gambia Revenue Authority
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MoFEA	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
MoICT	Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology
MoTRADE	Ministry of Trade
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPs	Members of Parliament
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSS	National Statistical System
PR	Public Review
PS	Permanent Secretary
PURA	Public Utility Regulatory Authority
SG	Statistician General
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solutions
SQL	Structured Query Language
STATA	Statistics & Data (Statistical Analysis Software)
TV	Television
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WTO	World Tourism Organisation

Foreword

The peer review of the statistical system of The Gambia is the eighth in the current round of peer reviews carried out by the African Union Commission (AUC) as part of Pan-African Statistics Program (PAS). The PAS is a programme of assistance funded by the European Union for a period of 42 months from January 2016. Previously, peer reviews for African countries have been conducted through PARIS21. Under the PAS, it is hoped that 18 countries would have been reviewed by June 2019 (the end of the first phase PAS programme).
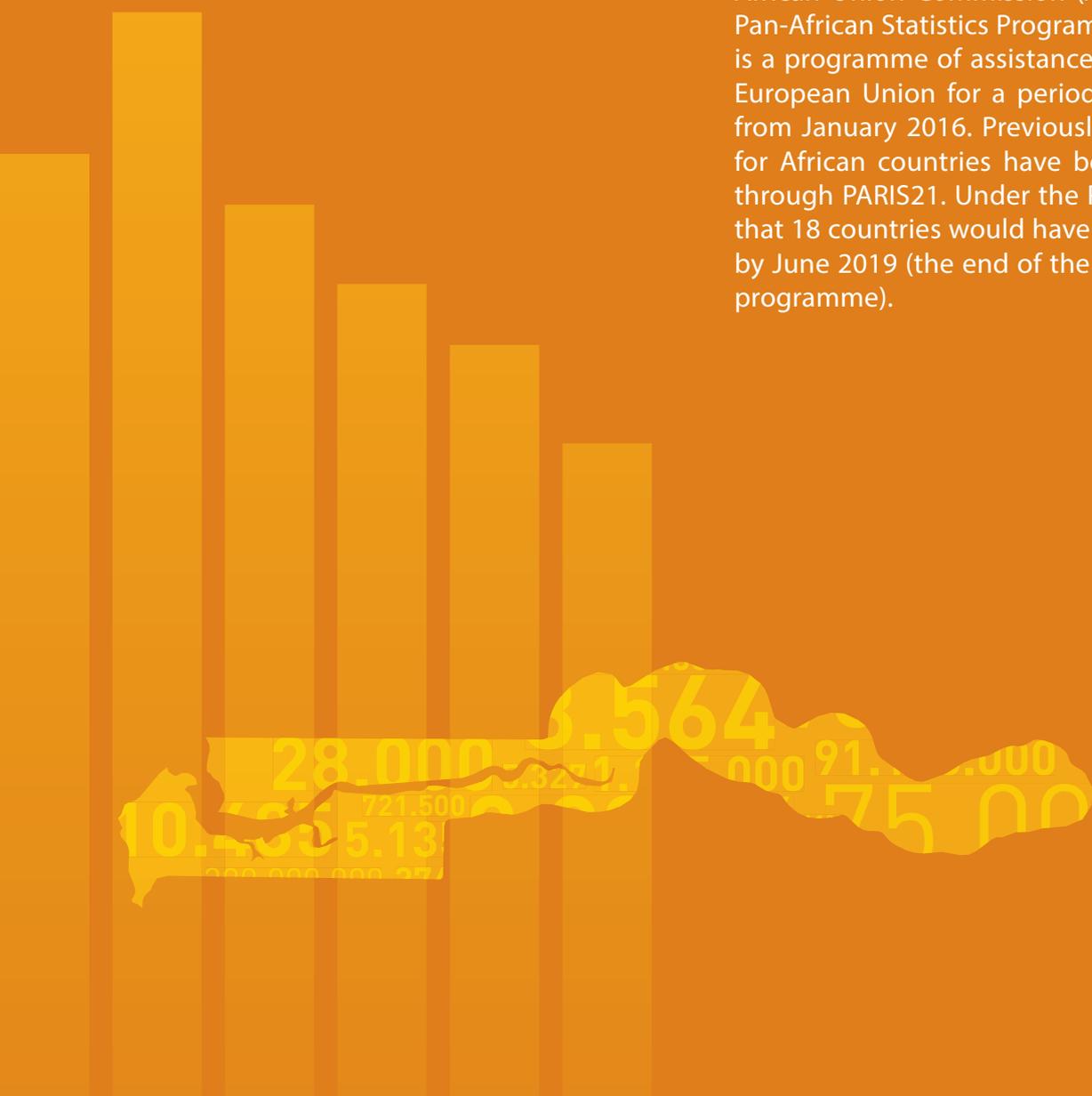
These peer reviews are being carried out according to a manual for peer reviews of National Statistics Systems in Africa that was developed under the auspices of AUC and agreed by the statistical authorities of AU member states.

The review of The Gambia statistical system took place from 17 to 21September 2018. The peer review team comprised Mr. Yusuf Murangwa, Statistician General for Rwanda as Chair, Ms Norah Madaya, Director, Statistics Coordination Services at the Uganda Bureau of Statistics as Deputy Chair. Mr. Musaemura Guest Charumbira, Key Expert 3 at Expertise France, acted as expert and assisted the reviewers with the peer review process. Also, in attendance was Mr. Christopher Uchay Ajaero on behalf of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). All logistical arrangements and meeting preparations for the review were facilitated by Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS). The bulk of the meetings took place at the GBOS headquarters. The meetings were held in a very open and transparent atmosphere.

In his opening remarks, the Chair mentioned that Gambia statistics officials have visited Rwanda many times. They have bench-marked on Rwandan and Ugandan statistical systems. He mentioned that African challenges may be similar. As such, by sharing information we may be able to copy good things from each other and avoid pitfalls that others have experienced. He further informed the meeting that the peer reviewers are not auditors. As such, discussions with all concerned are meant to be constructive and to assist in the further improvement of the Gambia Statistical System. At the end of this review, it is hoped that the process shall have zeroed in on pertinent issues that ought to be addressed in a holistic manner.

On her part, the Deputy Chair informed the meeting that the purpose of the peer review is to look for gaps, particularly in terms of collaboration and coordination. She further emphasized the need to ensure that there was need to ensure no one is left behind in the statistical development process. She mentioned that the peer review process is taking place when the NSDS process has just been concluded. In this regard, the peer review shall reinforce the ideas expressed in the NSDS documentation.

In his response, the Gambia Statistician General said they chose the Peers. They visited both countries and were impressed with their statistical performance. It is their wish as the Gambian Statistical System, to emulate the good practices in Rwanda and Uganda. He informed the meeting that they intend to amend the statistical legislation to address shortcomings that have been observed in the existing legislation. He also informed the Peer Reviewers that they have selected those that they would hold discussions with to address issues that are of immediate concern for his organisation:

• The University is seen as an important partner regarding training needs for GBOS. Currently they depend on training institutions outside the country.

• The ICT Ministry is key in analysis and dissemination. They work with the Ministry and PARSIS21 on dissemination issues. When they commemorate African Statistics Day, the Ministry, alongside ICT companies, assist with dissemination ideas.

• The Donor Community are important partners. They assist with resources for some key statistical operations in the Gambia.

• Members of Parliament are major stakeholders in that they are influential during allocation of resources when the statistical budget is considered at budget time. They are also expected to support GBoS when legislation comes up for revision.

• They need government support in terms of statistical enforcement. They do not have capacity as an institution.

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Executive summary

The Peer review of the National Statistical System of The Gambia was carried out during 17-21 September 2018. The peer review was meant for a period of 5 working days. This was however not achieved because Thursday 20 September 2018 was declared a public holiday at short notice. The review was based on discussions with selected stakeholders of the NSS and documentation submitted to the review team by the authorities. Where possible, information from relevant websites was used to fill the gaps. It should be noted however, most websites in The Gambia are not very user-friendly.

The Gambia key Statistical Legislation is somewhat outdated. The authorities are aware of this and have taken steps to rectify the situation. The legislation does not contain enough provisions for the operation of a modern statistical system.

Overall, the performance of The Gambia National Statistical System may be described nascent. It has its strengths and weaknesses. At the centre, the Gambia Bureau of Statistics performs relatively well in data collection activities but still needs substantial development in the fields of processing and analysis. The Bureau still depends heavily on external inputs for statistical analysis. There is a general shortage of skilled personnel to perform these functions. Ministries and departments are not any better. Although these entities produce some statistics, those statistical activities are not explicitly defined. Statistical activities are subsumed in planning units of the ministries and departments. According to the World Bank assessment of statistical capacity, the country scored 63.3 in 2004 and 2017 (out of a possible 100), implying there has not been notable development over a period of almost 15 years.

A National Strategy for the Development of Statistics II (NSDS II) covering the period 2018-2022 is in place and has been linked to the National Development Plan. This, coupled with a cooperation agreement (South-South cooperation) with Rwanda and Uganda, spells a bright future for The Gambia NSS in the longer-term.

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Recommendations

2.1 Organisation and coordination of the National Statistical System

RECOMMENDATION 1
GBoS and concerned stakeholders in the NSS should aim to implement the NSDS as planned.

RECOMMENDATION 2
To implement the NSDS, GBoS in consultation with key stakeholders should develop detailed annualized workplans (GBoS – Directorates; MDAs) in line with the 3-year rolling Medium Term Expenditure framework.

RECOMMENDATION 3
Engage agencies whose key programmes are not reflected in the NSDS for due consideration during implementation e.g. GRA, ICT, PURA, Agriculture etc

RECOMMENDATION 4
Revive the Development Partners coordination group meetings to streamline financing for statistics development.

RECOMMENDATION 5
GBoS should strengthen and regularize its coordination and collaboration mechanisms (structures) in the NSS e.g. Statistics Steering Committees; focal persons.

RECOMMENDATION 6
GBoS should harmonize survey undertakings in the NSS to avoid duplication and wastage of meagre resources.

2.2 Institutional Environment

RECOMMENDATION 7
Provision of the revision of the Statistics Act must be consistent with the Africa Charter of Statistics and the FPoS.

RECOMMENDATION 8
The law should make provisions for penalties to non-compliance of the Statistics Act.

RECOMMENDATION 9
Provide for rules and regulations to operationalize the Act.

RECOMMENDATION 10
The Act should give coordination mandate to GBoS consistent with best practice.

RECOMMENDATION 11
The Act should acknowledge the content of other MDA legislation that may limit access to data by the statistical authorities;

RECOMMENDATION 12
The Act should mandate GBoS to clear (issue visas) for all Statistical Activities in the NSS that feed into national policies and programmes. (The definition of feeding into national policies and programmes should be clarified).

RECOMMENDATION 13
Initiate discussions for the establishment of a stand-alone course for Applied Statistics at the University of The Gambia.

RECOMMENDATION 14

GBoS should undertake a functional review of its core programmes and deploy human resources where they can be optimally utilized.

RECOMMENDATION 15
GBoS should institute an in-house training programme for its staff and the NSS in core competencies needed (data analysis, communication, management, M &E, leadership etc).

RECOMMENDATION 16
GBoS should establish mechanisms of promoting initiative for staff including: knowledge and opinion sharing platforms, periodic staff meetings, staff perception surveys, suggestion boxes etc.

RECOMMENDATION 17
GBoS should use the NSDS as a vehicle for lobbying for resources to support statistical activities in the NSS.

RECOMMENDATION 18
The MoFEA should consider tabling the NSDS to the Development Partners meeting for financing statistics activities in The Gambia.

RECOMMENDATION 19
MDAs should include budget lines for statistics in their annual plans and budgets if statistics development is to be achieved and streamlined.

RECOMMENDATION 20
GBoS should explore partnership for non-traditional financing mechanisms with other agencies such as PURA and the Central Bank towards statistics production of common interest.

RECOMMENDATION 21
GBoS should put in place basic and reliable infrastructure that supports statistics production and interoperability namely: internet, intranet, statistical software, computers, printers etc.

RECOMMENDATION 22
Set standards for software to support data collection, capture, and analysis in the NSS.

2.3 Quality

RECOMMENDATION 23
GBoS should design the quality assessment framework in line with other best practices including ECOWAS.

RECOMMENDATION 24
GBoS should establish standard operating procedures for Censuses, surveys and administrative data; stakeholder engagements and user-needs assessment among others.

RECOMMENDATION 25
GBoS should establish tools for data quality assurance of all Statistical activities and products in the NSS.

2.4 Statistical Processes

RECOMMENDATION 26
Adopt and use up to-date statistical standards.

RECOMMENDATION 27
Develop a revision policy to facilitate compliance to changing standards and classification.

2.5 Dissemination

RECOMMENDATION 28
GBoS should develop and ensure compliance to the dissemination policy.

RECOMMENDATION 29
GBoS should establish and share the NSS release calendar with key stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 30
GBoS should formalize their engagement with media and design training for the media operators.

RECOMMENDATION 31
Ensure an operational website, look at use of modern communication mechanisms (social media- twitter, face-book, You-tube)

RECOMMENDATION 32
Strengthen publicity of statistics to the public

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Introduction

The peer review of the NSS of The Gambia was the eighth (alongside Togo that was being reviewed during the same week) in a series of African peer reviews to be conducted under the Pan African Statistics Programme (PAS), a programme of assistance for the development of African statistics financed by the European Union. Other reviews so far have been conducted for Mauritius, Equatorial Guinea, Benin, Namibia, Botswana, Niger and Angola. The peer reviews are coordinated by the Statistics Division of the African Union Commission.

The objective of peer reviews is to assist the participating countries to develop their national statistical systems through assessing their current situation benchmarked against the African Charter on Statistics, the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and recommended practices of official statistics.

The methodology for conducting peer reviews is set out in a Manual for Peer Reviews of National Statistical Systems prepared under the auspices of the PAS programme. The main modes of conducting the peer reviews are the following:

• The peer reviews are to be conducted through visits of designated peer review teams to each participating country, with discussions in meetings between the teams, the NSIs and NSS stakeholders.

• The length of the peer review visit to each country shall be five days.

• The peer reviews shall be based on documentation submitted by the country under review, mainly a short description of the NSI and the NSS, Statistics Act and related legal instruments, available statistical policy documents, and a self-assessment questionnaire based on the Eurostat Snapshot tool.

• The peer review discussions and meetings shall involve main producers of official statistics, data providers and main users such as ministries, central bank, research institutions, business organisations, international organisations, the media and any other organisations considered relevant for the country.

The manual further specifies that the peer reviews shall focus on five major themes based on the African Charter on Statistics or the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. The themes are:

• Organisation and coordination of the NSS

• Institutional environment

• Quality

• Statistical processes and

• Dissemination.

Under each theme, a list of issues shall be addressed as specified in the manual. The manual also contains a model agenda for the peer review visits and sets out instructions for the reporting of the peer reviews.

The peer review of The Gambia was conducted during the week of 17-21 September 2018 in Serrekunda and Banjul. However, Thursday 20th September was declared a public holiday at short notice. As a result, interviews were only conducted over a period of 4 days as opposed to the recommended 5. The documentation for the review was prepared by The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), which is the lead producer and coordinating authority for statistics in The Gambia. GBoS also prepared the itinerary for the week. The authorities identified 28 Ministries, Departments, organisations etc. to be met by the Review Team. Due to last minute change of schedules, it was not possible to achieve this ambitious target. The Team managed to meet 15 users and producers of statistics, out of the intended 22.

The full list of organisations and persons met by the review team is provided in the annex.

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Organisation and management of the NSS and official statistical activities in Gambia

4.1 The National Statistics System

The National Statistic System of the Gambia comprises statistical producers, respondents, users of statistics and research institutions. In terms of statistical production, the statistical system is decentralised. The Gambia Bureau of Statistics is the central authority and is responsible for major statistical activities such as the population and housing census, some household surveys, the national accounts, Merchandise trade and price statistics. The following institutions are some of the main producers of statistics: Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Central Bank of The Gambia, Ministries of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, etc.

Now, there are no strong coordination mechanisms to produce statistics in the country. Each agency is largely responsible for its statistical activities.

4.2 Statistical legislation

The Statistics Act (No. 13 of 2005), is the enabling legislation for statistical activities in The Gambia. The Gambia Bureau of Statistics, a semi-autonomous agency, was established in pursuance of this legislation.

Management of GBoS have recognised the short-comings of this legislation in the sense that it does not consider coordination of statistical activities in the NSS, amongst others. Plans are underway to make it comprehensive enough for modern day statistical operations. It is therefore considered inappropriate to discuss its shortcomings in this Peer Review Report since a pertinent recommendation has already been advanced elsewhere in this document. The recently approved NSDS has also elaborated on these issues.

4.3 Statistics Council

The current legislation has provision for a Statistics Council that oversees the operations of the GBoS. Th responsibilities of the Council will also be reviewed when the legislation comes up for review.

4.4 Code of Practice

There exists no code of practice at the GBoS. This should be addressed in the law when it comes up for revision.

4.5 Strengths and weaknesses of the Gambia Bureau of Statistics

The Gambia Bureau of Statistics is the principal body responsible for collecting, analysing and disseminating statistical data. It is the successor to the Central Statistics Department that was operating under the Statistics Act of 1972. The Bureau replaced the Central Statistics Department following the enactment of the new Statistics Act in 2005.

The GBoS is headed by the Statistician General, who is the accounting officer for the Bureau. The SG is deputised by the Deputy SG. The office of the deputy SG is in charge of assisting the Statistician General in the management of the bureau; coordinate the collection, analysis, dissemination of national accounts statistics, trade statistics and tourism and transport statistics and other mandatory official statistics. In addition to the office of the Deputy SG, there are five directorates that deal with other issues pertaining to statistical production as follows:

• Directorate of Prices and Government Finance Statistics in charge of collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Producer Price Index (PPI) and the Government Finance Statistics

• Directorate of Social Statistics, in charge of collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of demographic and other social statistics, conduct of population and housing censuses and other household surveys

• Directorate of Quality, Dissemination and Coordination, responsible for policy research and planning, development of statistical methods and standards, dissemination and coordination of the National Statistical System

• Directorate of Information Technology, in charge of information technology of the Bureau in terms of data processing, software and hardware for statistical operation purposes, as well as the maintenance of the website and data portal of the Bureau.

• Directorate of Support Staff oversees the provision of logistical support to the operations of the Bureau in terms of the management of transport, furniture needs and the maintenance and clearing of the entire office.

The GBoS currently has a staff compliment of 97 (excluding field staff), 60 of whom are reported to be support staff. Most professional staff are reported to lack strong statistical background. This, coupled with lack of readily accessible in - house statistical training or relevant training within the country, places a considerable constraint on statistical production at the GBoS. Elsewhere in this report, it is reported that the office relies heavily on inputs from cooperating partners for statistical processing. Other problems facing the agency are lack of sampling experts, lack of qualified programmers as well as funding gaps, in the event government and cooperating partners are not in agreement on funding responsibilities.

Another way to summarise a country's statistical capacity is to look at the World Bank's Statistical Capacity Indicator. It is a composite score assessing the capacity of a country's statistical system. It is based on a diagnostic framework assessing the following areas: methodology; data sources; and periodicity and timeliness. Countries are scored against 25 criteria in these areas, using publicly available information and/or country input. The overall Statistical Capacity score is then being calculated as simple average of all three area scores on a scale of 0-100. According to this measure, The Gambia's score was 63.3 in 2004 as well as in 2017. This may be compared with the average for Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high income countries) at 55.6 and 59.8 for the two reference periods.

Having said this, we may now turn to statistical production by the Agency in the last two years. The table below shows the publications recently published by GBoS. It may be noted that key publications such as the national accounts and price statistics are routinely being published and disseminated. The publication of 15 volumes pertaining to the recent population census is commendable.

Recent Publications
• *2013 Population and Housing Census (15 volumes) - 2016*
• *CPI (monthly) and PPI (quarterly) - 2016, 2017, 2018*
• *GDP (annually) - 2016, 2017 (Rebased - new base year 2013 from previous one - 2004)*
• *Statistical Abstract - 2017*
• *Integrated Household Survey 2015/2016 (Volume 1,2 and 3) - 2017*
• *Merchandise Trade 1994/2017 - 2018*
• *Tourism and Transport Statistics 2013/2017 – 2018*

The Peer Review exercise has taken place at a time when there are significant events on the time horizon for The Gambia Statistical System. The NSDS that runs from 2018 to 2022 has just been finalised. This in turn has been synchronised with the National Development Plan. The management of GBoS have recognised that the Statistical Law should be revised as soon as possible. This revision will make provision for effective coordination of the NSS by GBoS, among others. Management has also resolved to resume discussions with the local university with a view to localise statistical training. Added to this is the South-South cooperation between the GBoS, sister organisations in Uganda, Rwanda and others. This cooperation has already yielded considerable results and is expected to continue to do so for the foreseeable future. These endeavours are opening a very positive future for the statistical service of The Gambia.

The following sections will focus on the statistical situation in the MDAs. The Review Team was informed that there are no statistical units in MDAs. They are embedded in Planning Units. Documentation provided to the Review Team indicates that MDA information management systems derive most of their data from administrative records and the systems are generally weak and require substantive development and improvement. Furthermore, the key suppliers of data require a lot of motivation to provide data and records for the compilation of the needed statistics.

4.5.1 Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs is responsible for the national budget, amongst others. It is a key user of statistics for planning. It is also a key producer of statistics since it is responsible for Government Finance Statistics.

Discussions between the representative of the Ministry and the Peer Review Team centred on key issues of financing statistical production in the Republic, as well as statistical needs of the ministry for planning and budgeting. The representative mentioned that the major products they rely on are the GDP figures and price statistics. Without reliable statistics, the ministry would operate in a vacuum. The Macro-Economic Working Group that consists of the Policy Directorate, the Central Bank of Gambia and GBoS also needs consistent statistical products to enable efficient management of government debt, among others. From time to time, the ministry develops economic forecasts that rely heavily on statistics from the statistical agency.

As the Ministry responsible for finance, they also depend on other statistical products from the wider NSS.

The Team noted that the recently completed NSDS has come up with an estimate of some $29 million as the estimate for statistical operations over the life span of the statistical plan. The question to the Ministry was the possible source of funding of the prioritised statistical activities. Issues of Program Based budgeting were also touched upon during the discussions.

Regarding further development of new areas of statistics, the representative informed the Team that quarterly GDP would be a welcome addition to key macro-economic indicators for the ministry.

4.5.2 Central Bank of The Gambia

The Central Bank of The Gambia is publishing data collected in compliance with Section 64 and 65 of the Central Bank of The Gambia Act 2005. By publishing statistical data, the Central Bank of the Gambia aims to provide timely access to information that underlie decisions on monetary policy, the development and strengthening of financial system, the development and promotion of stability of financial markets and national payments system.

The Bank works closely with GBoS in key areas of economic statistics such as the national accounts and price statistics. The Bank also works closely with the statistical agency in issues related to the balance of payments statistics.

Future developments in the statistical arena include the establishment of a data release calendar that will guide its annual data compilation and publication.

4.5.3 Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

The Ministry works in close collaboration with the statistics agency. The GBoS carry out most of the household surveys for the ministry. They have jointly created an integrated health information database hosted by the University of Oslo. Some of the health statistics are routinely published by the statistical agency in the Statistical Abstract of The Gambia.

The representative of the Ministry informed the Review Team that there is still room for further collaboration with GBoS. As a ministry, they need demographers and GIS experts to fulfil some of their mandates.

4.5.4 Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education

The ministry works in close collaboration with the statistics outfit. There is a representative of the ministry in the Statistics Council and there is also a focal point that works with GBoS in several statistical areas of interest.

The ministry has noted population projections, which are a key input for their educational planning, are not provided by GBoS. Another problem that has been observed is mismatch of enrolment data produced from the school censuses with statistics from household surveys of GBoS. These are issues of quality of statistical products that must be addressed as producers of statistics develop closer working relationships.

The ministry publishes its outputs through their website and printed publications. However, just like GBoS, they do not have a statistical release calendar.

4.5.5 Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science & Technology

The ministry has a good working relationship with the GBoS. They worked together in the development of the NSDS.

They produce statistics on students and lecturers. They share these statistics with GBoS and they also receive statistics on school-going age from GBoS. However, there is still room for improving the statistical production activities, such as a M&E system.

4.5.6 Meeting with the Permanent Secretary, Finance

It was not possible to meet with the Minister, due to conflicting appointments on this day. The Peer Review Team had audience with the Permanent Secretary instead.

The Peer Review Chair narrated the imperatives for statistical development. He informed the meeting that statistics is now a security issue. In this regard, it was important that the statistics act be revised to provide GBoS with a stronger mandate to coordinate the production of statistics in the country. Amongst many examples of the need for accurate statistics, he gave an example of the need for accurate tourism statistics. In most of our countries, tourists come through "Tourist Packages". Through these packages, the bulk of the revenues remain in the countries of origin of the tourist, with little benefit to the destination countries. There is need to develop reliable tourism statistics and related tourism satellite accounts to establish benefits accruing to the host country. The Chair informed the PS that it was desirable to budget lines for statistics in MDAs.

The ECOWAS representative informed the meeting that ECOWAS proposed the establishment of a Statistics Development Fund. The purpose of the proposed fund was to promote the development of statistics needed for integration of the region. However, this has not been successful.

In response, the PS informed the meeting that Government is in total agreement with all the proposals for statistical development in The Gambia and said that is why the NSDS that has been developed is closely aligned with the National Development Plan. He is also of the opinion that the study visit to Rwanda Statistical System was of invaluable benefit to the Gambia.

4.5.7 ICT and PURA

The PR team noted a high potential of engagement between GBoS and the MoICT. ICT related statistics is generated and shared between PURA and GBoS. They are aware of the NSDS although their statistical activities were not embedded in the current NSDS. The Statistics function is located under planning, and they generate data which is shared with GBoS. There is currently no open data regulation. The Ministry is willing to build and develop the Statistics, but this will depend on strong leadership and partnership for establishing long term commitment on ICT statistics.

To support the production of ICT statistics, they recommended that;

• GBoS should develop a comprehensive plan of nurturing the ICT statistics system.

• GBoS should consider training for personnel involved in data production in PURA and MoICT and ensure its quality.

• Collaboration between the three Agencies (MoICT, Public Utilities Regulation Authority (PURA) should be strengthened.

• MoICT, Public Utilities Regulation Authority (PURA) - should be engaged in the GBoS programmes to generate ICT statistics; mobile phone related data etc

• GBoS should support advocacy and use of ICT statistics so that it is collected routinely (forms)

4.5.8 Meeting with Representatives of the National Assembly

The National Assembly was represented by four members and an official. The official welcomed the Peer Review Team and the GBoS Statistician General, on behalf of the Speaker.

The Peer Review Chair briefed the MPs present on the importance of statistics to the national economy. He informed the meeting that statistics is a national security issue. Each country should take stock of what is going on in its economy. Gone are the days when African countries continue relying on external partners for statistical development. He further informed the members present that as representatives of the people, they ought to understand what statistics stand for. If there were any mis-understandings of any statistical issues, it was incumbent

upon the Statistician General to take time to explain in detail what all sectoral statistics are used for in the country. It was also incumbent upon the MPs to understand why they were allocating resources to the statistics sector. The Chair went further to explain 3 issues that are of immediate concern and requiring support of the House: i) Statistics should be centralised under one authority ii) need for GBoS to have a strong mandate to coordinate statistical production and iii) support for additional resources for statistical activities. Considering the need for strengthening GBoS's mandate along these lines, the Statistics Act would soon be presented to parliament for revision. Support from Honourable members was necessary. The MPs were further informed that the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics covering the period 2018 – 2022 has just been launched. This is a clear indication of commitment on the part of the GBoS.

On his part, the Statistician General informed Honourable members that the Peer Review exercise is voluntary. He informed them that they had opted to be reviewed by Rwanda and Uganda since they have been working with these two countries over the past two years learning from them the best approaches to statistical development for developing countries. This is a good example of South-South cooperation.

The observer from ECOWAS added his voice to the deliberations. He requested MPs to strongly support the proposed changes to statistical legislation. He informed them that GBoS requires strong mandate to be able to effectively coordinate statistical production in the country.

In response, the MPs informed the meeting that they are aware that no country can develop without information. They believed this sensitisation should have taken place far much earlier. They impressed upon the SG to keep up sensitization about statistical development on a regular basis.

4.5.9 Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA)

GRA has an excellent working relationship with GBoS, and partner to undertake some surveys such as the Tax payer satisfaction survey. Partnership with GBoS is bound by a MoU because of the confidential nature of data shared. GRA also shares customs data and Tax related data with Ministry of Trade.

They are members of the Statistics Technical Committee and participated in the NSDS development. Statistics is in the Policy, Planning and Research. Data sharing is by a flash from GBoS – on flash disk, although GBoS was noted to be irregular in their collection of the information. This hampers the provision of up to date information to the public.

GBoS is inconsistent in picking information so demand from Users is overwhelming. Also, handling of data by GBoS sometimes presents inconsistencies but border data capture sometimes presents underreporting of data and misclassification, but they train them annually. GRA – checks for inconsistencies as part of the steering Committee [agriculture, trade, central bank, Ministry of Finance, GBoS]. Confidentiality of data from GRA is observed by GBoS. GRA conducts training for clearing agents alone. GRA statistics function is underfunded and not prioritized in their department particularly training. Hence, requested that:

• GBoS should advocate for the visibility and budget for the statistics function in GRA. Currently limited attention is given (under the Research and Planning)

• Use ASYCUDA ++ but the current version cannot enable them to readily produce reports, and use SQL to extract information from the system, but would like to migrate to ASYCUDA World.

• Need to appreciate the NSDS more and how they are represented.

• Their statistics function is weak and limited in terms of operational standards for statistics.

• GBoS should publicize the Statistics Act (2005) and explain how it impact GRA.

• GBOS needs to strengthen statistical skills in all MDAs to match the changing technology and data demands so that they can produce quality data.

• GBoS should determine and provide support towards increased access to statistical packages [Stata, E-view; SPSS] because they are compatible with Oracles for the research department; currently, SQL is limited to only one person.

• Need to recruit and train more people.

• GBoS should strengthen its dissemination channels because publicity is somewhat weak. The processes are slow, and releases often delay.

4.5.10 Gambia Radio and Television Service

A representative of the Gambia Radio and Television Service presented on behalf of the media. He said the media play a crucial role in dissemination of statistical information to the general population. Without dissemination, resource would have been wasted in collecting the information in the first place.

Throughout the discussions with the Peer Review Team, the representative claimed no knowledge of the statistical outputs from GBoS or any other statistical producers. He did not recall any news item on TV or radio from GBoS, even though besides the national television, there are 20 radio stations in the country.

For his part, the ECOWAS representative informed that there exists a National Unit for Communication in each member state. This unit plays an important role in communication on all matters of development, including statistics. In this respect GBoS should take advantage of this unit to develop communication materials in their field of operation.

4.5.11 Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA)

This organization regulates the activities of the petroleum, telecommunications, energy, water and sewage sectors. The authority collects data from them on a quarterly basis based on a guideline that has been developed for regulatory purposes. There are no statisticians at the authority. As such, these data gatherings and analysis are carried out by economists.

Asked if the organisation would be interested in establishing a statistical entity. They representative answered in the positive. This would make sense as some agenda indicators (2030 and 2063) would use data from these sectors.

Section 4.5.7 contains further elaboration of the activities of this organisation.

4.5.12 Gambia Tourism Board

Tourism is a major income earner for The Gambia. As such, statistics for the sector should play a central role in statistical activities of the country. The Gambia Tourism Board is responsible for the statistical collections for the sector. There are currently 5 staff members responsible for customer satisfaction survey, arrivals and expenditures by tourists as well as hotel survey. Regarding the hotel survey, it is reported that some refuse to collaborate in the data collection activities. It may be noted that the GBoS statistical law currently provides no penalties for refusals. In any event, since statistical activities are currently decentralised, nothing much can be done about such refusals since the Tourism Board itself has no legal provisions to cover such issues.

The Gambia has 9 official entry points (one airport and 8 land boarders). Tourist on arrival complete the entry card that is the basis for the statistics. It has 31 parameters. In terms of outputs, there are quarterly, six-monthly and annual reports that are published and posted regularly on the GBoS website. Tourism satellite accounts are also compiled with the assistance of the WTO and UNDP.

Future statistical plans for this sector include close collaboration with the GBoS in the hotel survey and statistical training.

4.5.13 Fisheries Department

The Fisheries Department falls under the auspices of the Department of State for Fisheries, Natural Resources and the Environment. The Fisheries Department, as the technical institution, administers and implements the national fisheries development and management plan within the overall natural resources sector. It is responsible for the protection and development of the resources and for monitoring, control and surveillance of all fisheries and fisheries related activities within fisheries waters and on land.

According to information available on the official website, the fisheries sub-sector contributes approximately 12% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Within the food production sector, fisheries rank third after crops and livestock, with an average annual contribution of 2.4%. The artisanal fisheries sub-sector provides direct and indirect employment to an estimated 25-30,000 people and the industrial sub-sector provides employment to between 1 500 and 2 000 people. The sector contributes about 13% annually to government revenue.

The representative that met with the Peer Review Team complained that GDP under-reports the contribution of the fisheries sector to the economy. He informed the Team that there are about 162 landing sites for fishing in the country Quizzed on the reasons for his beliefs in such allegations, he did not offer much explanation. Suffice it to say, the FAO, as the international organisation responsible for statistics on food related estimates, does provide estimates on this variable. Asked further if he is aware of the NSDS, he replied in the negative!

At the end of the interactions, it was agreed GBoS should work closely with the Research Unit of the Department to improve the statistical collections in this sector.

4.5.14 Ministry of Agriculture

The current arrangement for statistical production in The Gambia is along ministerial lines. This is the case with the Ministry of Agriculture. The statistical activities of the ministry are embedded in the Planning Division of the Ministry. For their statistical activities, they are availed the sampling frame and enumeration area maps by the GBoS.

The representative of the ministry informed the Review Team that they would like to work more closely with the statistical agency. As mentioned in another section of this report, agriculture is a major sector of the economy. As such, reliable statistics are a matter of must for the Republic.

4.5.15 UN Agencies (UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF)

The above-captioned UN Agencies appeared before the Team as a group. Other agencies originally scheduled to attend together with these three could not make it due to the short notice in timetable change. In their introduction, they described themselves as users of statistics and enablers.

The UNDP Representative described statistics as a cross-cutting area that is of concern to all UN Partners and Others. He said without statistics they would not be able to deliver their mandates. They informed the Team that as development partners they are key in maintaining GBoS and they were heavily involved in the transformation to the current organisation from Central Statistics Department. They have also participated effectively in the NSDS process.

Amongst the programmes they have assisted with funding in recent times are: Labour Force Survey, Integrated Household Survey and Tourism Establishment Survey. The representative observed that GBoS are efficient at data collection but weak on analysis. Development Partners usually provide technical assistance to help with statistical analysis. Another area they assist in is organisation and funding of a user/producer get together annually in November.

The UNICEF Representative commenced his contribution by reiterating what his UNDP colleague had presented in terms of donor driven operations of the statistical agency. Another weakness, he lamented, was that the agency is poor at communicating with the public. He noted that though the NSDS has been successfully developed, it has not been well publicised. It was supposed to have been discussed at a donor round table, but this has not happened.

The UNFPA Representative summed up the cooperating partners' presentations by emphasizing that lack of a NSDS has been an impediment to statistical advancement in The Gambia. Now that the NSDS is in place, it should be possible to make rapid progress. He however informed that some ministries are not appreciating the NSDS because it is interfering with their own donor funding from elsewhere.

He further said there is need for close monitoring of the NSDS process on an annual basis to ensure it does not get derailed.

In summing up, the Peer Review Chair proposed that 1% of donor funding for The Gambia should be ear-marked for statistical development. He also recommended that the partners' meeting for statistical development be resuscitated.

4.5.16 The University of The Gambia

The University of the Gambia is about 20 years old. As of now, the university does not offer any statistics degrees, but they offer a Bachelor of Science with some statistics courses.

The GBoS have informed the Peer Review Team that currently they train their officers at the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. . They further informed the Team that it is time they have a statistical training institute in the country.

The Team asked the university if they would consider introducing a bachelor's degree in statistics at the university, to which they responded it could be considered. What remains for GBoS and the University to enter negotiations with a view to map a way forward.

4.5.17 Meeting with Staff

This meeting was intended for middle level management and junior staff to air their views on various issues on the working atmosphere at the statistical organisation. In his welcome remarks, the Chair of the Review Team assured them the interactions would be kept confidential. He requested them to share information on both positive and negative aspects of working at GBoS. Some staff members did not feel free to share their experiences. However, following assurances from the Review Team the staff representatives shared their experiences and concerns.

In interactions of this nature, it is not unexpected that emphasis would usually be on the negative aspects of the working environment. This should also be seen considering the time available for such meetings. The following is a summary of the interactions with the staff representatives:

• An exercise of this nature (Peer Review) is long overdue

• It is a good exercise for copying good practices from beyond our borders

• Some institutions carry out surveys without collaboration with GBoS, thereby generating conflicting statistics

• There is no legal officer in the organisation. This is an anomaly

• Current statistical legislation is obsolete and needs revision

• Knowledge sharing across the organisation is lacking

• Poor coordination within the office. There has not been a single staff meeting in the last 2 years. Only senior management meet on a regular basis

o• There are problems with computer security. There is no anti-virus software in place

• There are internet problems. Staff have their own internet (private) services

5

Issues and recommendations

5.1. Organisation and coordination of the NSS

The peer review mechanism recognizes the importance of organisation and coordination in statistical development. The Review Team aimed at establishing how GBoS organises itself in statistics production, how it relates to other producers and users of statistics in the national statistics system and how it engages facilitating partners.

The Review Team observed that The Gambia has developed and is implementing a NSDS (2018-2022). The development of the NSDS was consultative and is integrated in the National Development Plan. The NSDS provides for technical working groups and committees to support its implementation. However, the Peer Review Team observed several limitations, including: lack of detailed annualised work plans, dysfunctional committees that are central for effective implementation and uncoordinated statistical undertakings. It was also noted that some MDAs participated in the design of the NSDS, but their programmes are not included in the final document. These observations warrant the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1

GBoS and concerned stakeholders in the NSS should aim to implement the NSDS as planned.

RECOMMENDATION 2

To implement the NSDS, GBoS in consultation with key stakeholders should develop detailed annualized workplans (GBoS – Directorates; MDAs) in line with the 3-year rolling Medium Term Expenditure framework.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Engage agencies whose key programmes are not reflected in the NSDS for due consideration during implementation e.g. GRA, ICT, PURA, Agriculture etc.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Revive the Development Partners coordination group meetings to streamline financing for statistics development.

RECOMMENDATION 5

GBoS should strengthen and regularize its coordination and collaboration mechanisms (structures) in the NSS e.g. Statistics Steering Committees; focal persons.

RECOMMENDATION 6

GBoS should harmonize survey undertakings in the NSS to avoid duplication and wastage of meagre resources.

5.2 Institutional Environment

GBoS management has recognized that the Statistics Act of 2005 has some short-comings and does not incorporate recent developments in international statistical operations. The Peer Review Team in full agreement with these sentiments and offers additional advice to management as they embark on the revision process.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Provision of the revision of the Statistics Act must be consistent with the Africa Charter of Statistics and the FPoS.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The law should make provisions for penalties to non-compliance of the Statistics Act.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Provide for rules and regulations to operationalize the Act.

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RECOMMENDATION 10

The Act should give coordination mandate to GBoS consistent with best practice.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The Act should acknowledge the content of other MDA legislation that may limit access to data by the statistical authorities;

RECOMMENDATION 12

The Act should mandate GBoS to clear (issue visas) for all Statistical Activities in the NSS that feed into national policies and programmes. (The definition of feeding into national policies and programmes should be clarified).

The Peer Review Team observed that there is acute shortage of qualified staff for efficient statistical operations. Cooperating partners informed the Team that GBoS is efficient at data collection but poor at processing and analysis. The statistical system trains its staff abroad, either Accra, Ghana or Tanzania. Now, there are no in-house courses to upgrade staff skills. In this regard, the following recommendations are advanced.

RECOMMENDATION 13

Initiate discussions for the establishment of a stand-alone course for Applied Statistics at the University of The Gambia.

RECOMMENDATION 14

GBoS should undertake a functional review of its core programmes and deploy human resources where they can be optimally utilized.

RECOMMENDATION 15

GBoS should institute an inhouse training programme for its staff and the NSS in core competencies needed (data analysis, communication, management, M &E, leadership etc).

The Peer Review Team had an opportunity to interact with representatives of middle level and junior staff for purposes of sharing their experiences in statistical production at GBoS. Staff members are an invaluable resource for any organisation. It is therefore beneficially to solicit their opinion about their welfare at the workplace. A summary of their observations is in a section of this report.

RECOMMENDATION 16

GBoS should establish mechanisms of promoting initiative for staff including: knowledge and opinion sharing platforms, periodic staff meetings, staff perception surveys, suggestion boxes etc.

The recently approved NSDS as an estimated budget of about $29 million over its life span. Like in many African developing countries, the government does not seem to have resources to finance the total cost. The following recommendations have been advanced by the Review Team.

RECOMMENDATION 17

GBoS should use the NSDS as a vehicle for lobbying for resources to support statistical activities in the NSS.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The MoFEA should consider tabling the NSDS to the Development Partners meeting for financing statistics activities in The Gambia.

RECOMMENDATION 19

MDAs should include budget lines for statistics in their annual plans and budgets if statistics development is to be achieved and streamlined.

RECOMMENDATION 20

GBoS should explore partnership for non-traditional financing mechanisms with other agencies such as PURA and the Central Bank towards statistics production of common interest.

Modern communication infrastructure is essential if the Gambia NSS is to become an efficient provider of statistical services. Staff representatives advanced reasonable complaints to the Peer Review Team regarding connectivity problems at GBoS. They also had issues regarding training in the use of some software in use at the institution.

RECOMMENDATION 21

GBoS should put in place basic and reliable infrastructure that supports statistics production and interoperability namely: internet, intranet, statistical software, computers, printers etc.

RECOMMENDATION 22

Set standards for software to support data collection, capture, and analysis in the NSS.

5.3 Quality

There are currently no assessment frameworks in The Gambia NSS. Some producers did indicate that there are inconsistencies in some statistical outputs with those from the GBoS. For example, enrolment data for education conflicts with statistics from censuses and surveys (outputs of GBoS).

RECOMMENDATION 23

GBoS should design the quality assessment framework in line with other best practices, including those developed by ECOWAS.

RECOMMENDATION 24

GBoS should establish standard operating procedures for Censuses, surveys and administrative data; stakeholder engagements and user-needs assessment among others.

RECOMMENDATION 25

GBoS should establish tools for data quality assurance of all Statistical activities and products in the NSS.

5.4 Statistical Processes

RECOMMENDATION 26

Adopt and use up to-date statistical standards.

RECOMMENDATION 27

Develop a revision policy to facilitate compliance to changing standards and classification.

5.5 Dissemination

Dissemination of products is one area that is still needs attention in the NSS in general. If statistical output is not availed to users, resources to produce them may be considered as having gone down the drain. Internet dissemination is not efficient. Dissemination through the television and newspapers was also reported to be weak. A representative of the media informed the Review Team that he does not recall coming across a news item on statistics in the last 2 years.

RECOMMENDATION 28

GBoS should develop and ensure compliance to the dissemination policy.

RECOMMENDATION 29

GBoS should establish and share the NSS release calendar with key stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 30

GBoS should formalize their engagement with media and design training for the media operators.

RECOMMENDATION 31

Ensure an operational website, look at use of modern communication mechanisms (social media - Twitter, Facebook, You-tube)

RECOMMENDATION 32

Strengthen publicity of statistics to the public.

Annex 1

List of attendees

NSS Peer Review Meeting

GBoS Conference Hall 17th - 21st September 2018

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DAY 1					
SESSION 1 - CHAIRED BY SG					
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Members of Parliament 21 September 2018

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2	**Hon. Manjanko Samusa**	7064481
3	**Hon. Alhagie H. Sowe**	7363659
4	H**on. Yaya Gassama**	2108084
5	**Landing Jobe**	9229340

Ministry of Finance

Permanent Secretary

Ministry of Finance

MoICI   Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure

UTG   University of The Gambia

MoBSE   Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education

MoHERST   Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology

GBoS   Gambia Bureau of Statistics

ECOWAS   Economic Community of West African States

MoFEA   Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

CBG   Central Bank of The Gambia

GT Board   Gambia Tourism Board

GRTS   Gambia Radio and Television Services

PURA   Public Utilities and Regulatory Authority

GRA   Gambia Revenue Authority

MoA   Ministry of Agriculture

MoH&SW   Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

HMIS   Health Management Information System

Annex 2

List of institutions met

List of institutions / Development partners met

17th September

1 **Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure**

2 **University of The Gambia**

3 **Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education**

4 **Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology**

18th September

1 **Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs**

2 **Central Bank of The Gambia**

3 **Fisheries Department**

4 **Gambia Tourism Board**

19th September

1 **Gambia Radio and Television Services**

2 **Public Utilities and Regulatory Authority**

3. **Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure**

4 **UNFPA**

5 **UNDP**

6 **UNICEF**

7 **Gambia Revenue Authority**

8 **Ministry of Agriculture**

9 **Ministry of Health and Social Welfare**

20th September

National Holiday

21st September

1 **National Assembly**

2 **Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs**

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