

The Gambia is amongst the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. These vulnerabilities span several sectors, livelihoods and assets within each sector. According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Index (ND -GAINS) 2021, The Gambia is the 32nd most vulnerable country and 43rd least ready country in the world. Related factors that limit adaptive capacity and exacerbate vulnerability to climate change include gender inequalities, environmental degradation, poor educational outcomes, and declining health indicators. Environmental degradation and unsuitable land use practices are reducing the generation of ecosystem services that could support agricultural productivity, livelihoods, and resilience against food and nutrition insecurity, as well as climate resilience in The Gambia. Key drivers of environmental degradation and reduced climate resilience, including over-extraction of woodland trees for firewood, uncontrolled bushfires and production of charcoal, have resulted in reduced capture of rainfall within the watershed catchment areas, loss of vegetative cover leading to widespread soil erosion and sediment transfer to the river, as well as loss of biodiversity and increase in Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

While The Gambia registered improvements in nutrition indicators, particularly from 2013 to 2018, these were reversed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from the National Surveillance Survey (NSS, Nov, 2022) revealed that for Children Under Five (CUF) stunting increased from 18% in 2019 to 18.6% in 2021, wasting increased from 12% to 16.8% and underweight increased from 5.0% to 16.8%. Young people in Gambia face a high unemployment rate with only 17% of the working-age population work in waged employment. As of 2018, only one in four young people aged 15-24 years were employed and only one in seven worked in paid employment. These limited opportunities for market employment for the young has culminated in high illegal migration to Europe dubbed “the backway”. In 2017/18, The Gambia had the second per capita immigration to Europe in the World.

The Gambia Constitution recognizes that all women are to be considered and treated as equals to men with respect to political, social, and economic opportunities. Provisions for the protection of women against all forms of discrimination is recognized in laws on issues around adoption, marriage, divorce and inheritance as related to Personal Laws (1997, rev. 2002). The Gambia National Development Plan (2018-2021) recognizes women’s empowerment as one of the seven critical enablers that crosscut their strategic priorities and proposes the realization of women’s full development potential as part of its vision. This is partly the result of the enactment of legislative acts, including the National Women’s Council and the Bureau of Integration of Women established in 1980, the National Policy for the Advancement of Women in 1999, the Gambia National Gender Policy 2010-2020 and the Women’s Act in 2010¹². Despite legal provisions safeguarding women’s access to resources in The Gambia, their effective implementation remains deficient, particularly in rural areas governed by customary land tenure systems. The prevalent male dominated decision-making structures, influenced by both customary and religious beliefs, consistently favour men, limiting women’s representation in positions of authority. This bias extends to land and resource allocation, impeding women’s ownership and decision-making¹³.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Problem 1: Lack of market access and market-led production

The expanding urban population and the hotel industry are providing an increasingly large local market for fresh produce. In addition, large-scale producers are exporting horticultural produce to the European market, and indications are that this trade can be developed substantially because of The Gambia's close proximity to Europe, availability of direct air transport, and capacity to produce during the winter months when horticultural products are in greatest demand in Europe. With high-quality produce, The Gambia could compete with other African and Middle East countries for a share of the European export market. As of today, the volume of export of fruits and vegetables is very small. According to FAO data, mangoes are the dominant export product, followed by tomatoes, chilies, and onions.

At present, and as is the case in many countries, few smallholders in The Gambia plan for the demands of the market. They generally grow what the rest of the community is growing and primarily for subsistence purposes with excess production in good years sold into the local market. With EU funding over the past decade, considerable investments have been made into developing a network of Community Vegetable Gardens throughout

¹² [The Gambia National Development Plan – The Gambia's National Development Plan \(ndp.gm\)](#)

¹³ [Socio-legal-review-Gambia.pdf \(cifer-icraf.org\)](#)