NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

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Prepared by
Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery
Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination, and Delivery

Government of The Gambia

National Policy Development Handbook

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FOREWORD

The launch of the *National Policy Development Handbook 2025* marks a defining milestone in our country's journey toward institutional coherence, policy excellence, and resilient development. As the first of its kind, this handbook is also a deliverable as per the Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (2023–2027)-YIRIWAA, which identified the urgent need to strengthen national planning systems through standardization, coordination, and greater accountability.
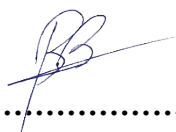
This handbook provides a unified approach to the development, implementation, and review of public policies. It standardizes the national policy framework landscape by establishing clear structures, timelines, and responsibilities for policy formulation and review. Critically, it introduces a three-year review cycle for the framework to remain relevant by incorporating emerging issues and address implementation challenges. It has also emphasized the need for mid-term reviews for all policies during their implementation period. These provisions ensure both the Handbook and policies remain relevant, responsive, and aligned with evolving national priorities.

The development of this framework has benefited from extensive consultations and feedback, led by the Policy Analysis Unit, Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery of the Ministry of Public Service. Almost all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and the academic fraternity were consulted. This inclusive and extensive process reflects our shared commitment to building a coherent policy environment that supports the delivery of our national development agenda.

This handbook is not only a technical guide—it is a statement of intent. It signals our collective resolve to strengthen governance, promote transparency, and foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement. It will serve as a foundational reference for all sectors of government, supporting more effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of public policy.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all stakeholders who contributed to this process. Your collaboration ensures that this framework is not only nationally owned but also deeply rooted in the practical realities of our institutions.

Let this first edition set the standard for excellence and accountability in policy development, implementation and review, now and years to come.

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Honorable Baboucarr Bouy
Minister
Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination and Delivery

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of this framework reflects a shared vision and the concerted efforts of individuals and institutions devoted to advancing our public policy objectives. I would like to extend sincere gratitude to the leadership of the Ministry of Public Service for spearheading this initiative. In particular, appreciation goes to the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery, and more specifically, the staff of the Policy Analysis Unit, whose tireless dedication has been instrumental in crafting a comprehensive Policy Formulation Framework. Their efforts have resulted in a standardized and structured approach to policy development, implementation, and monitoring across government.

This process was enriched by the invaluable collaboration of key sectors, in the absence of which, the foundation of this framework would not have been completed. Foremost among these, I acknowledge the staff of the Directorate of Development Planning under the Ministry of Finance, who worked closely with the Policy Analysis Unit from the initial Policy Diagnostic Study through to the formulation and validation of this document. We are equally grateful for the critical input provided by the planners of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Health, as well as the broader planning cadre who actively participated in the validation process.

Lastly, I wish to thank our development partners for their unwavering technical support throughout this process. The World Bank, African Center for Economic Transformation (ACET), and the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (TBI) each provided technical attachés and advisors whose expertise and engagement significantly shaped the quality and substance of this framework. Their contributions in reviewing, drafting, and refining the document were vital in delivering the final product we have today. Through these collective efforts, the Government of The Gambia now possesses a standard Policy Formulation Framework, one that is expected to enhance coordination, promote the use of evidence, and elevate the overall integrity of our policy development process.

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Mr. Alieu Njie

Secretary to Cabinet and Head of Civil Service

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AWP	Annual Work Plan
CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDP	Directorate of Development Planning
DSPD	Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery
GoTG	Government of The Gambia
IDF	Integrated Development Framework
LGA	Local Government Authority
MCA	Multi-Criteria Analysis
MDA	Ministry, Department, or Agency
MDAs	Ministries, Departments & Agencies
MER	Monitoring, Evaluation & Review
MoFEA	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoPS	Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination & Delivery
MTEFF	Medium-Term Economic Fiscal Framework
MTP	Medium-Term Plan
NAO	National Audit Office
NDP	National Development Plan
NPF	National Policy Framework
NPDH	National Policy Development Handbook
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAU	Policy Analysis Unit
PBB	Program-Based Budgeting
PESTLE	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RF-NDP	Recovery-Focused National Development Plan
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Government of The Gambia (GoTG), under the *Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP 2023-2027),* committed to "develop frameworks for harmonisation of policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation" as part of its broader governance reform agenda (GoTG, 2023, p. 79). This strategic commitment is intended to resolve long-standing challenges in policymaking, including fragmentation, inconsistent processes, weak coordination, and overreliance on anecdotal evidence, which have historically undermined the effectiveness of government actions (GoTG, 2023).

To support this reform agenda, the Policy Analysis Unit (PAU) within the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD) conducted a diagnostic study to assess the root causes of policymaking challenges in The Gambia. The report revealed structural and procedural gaps across the policy process, which have contributed to inconsistent policy products and implementation bottlenecks (DSPD, 2024).

On the strength of these findings, the report recommended the creation of a harmonized national policy framework that defines minimum standards for every stage of the policy cycle and clarifies institutional roles in policy development. The report also called for the development of toolkits of templates and analytical tools to guide policy development efforts across government (*see Annex A* for a summary of the report's findings).

These recommendations were endorsed by the Ministry of Public Service and validated at a national stakeholder workshop, paving the way for the development of the National Policy Development Handbook (*see Appendix A* for the development process). It marks the first comprehensive effort to standardize public policy development across all public institutions in The Gambia.

1.2 Scope & Objective

The *National Policy Development Handbook (2025)* is the official guide for public policy development and strategic planning across all public institutions in The Gambia. It functions as a complete reference manual for the entire policy cycle: agenda-setting, planning, formulation, implementation planning, validation and approval, monitoring, evaluation, and review. The Handbook introduces consistent, evidence-informed, and results-oriented practices to improve the coherence and effectiveness of government policy actions. Its specific objectives are to:

- ⮑ Institutionalize a harmonized national policy framework to reduce fragmentation and improve consistency in policymaking.

⮒ Embed the use of research, data, and analytical tools to encourage evidence-informed decisions throughout the policy process.

⮒ Enhance the legitimacy, transparency, and responsiveness of the policy process by mandating inclusive and participatory processes.

⮒ Ensure strategic alignment of all national policy and planning instruments with national development priorities and frameworks.

⮒ Improve the clarity, consistency, and coherence of policy documents by introducing uniform policy templates and tools.

⮒ Strengthen policy execution and accountability through clearly structured implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and review mechanisms.

⮒ Build national capacity in policy development among civil servants and other stakeholders through templates, tools, and practical guidance.

1.3　Outline of the Handbook

The Handbook is organized into four main parts, each mirroring a specific function of the national policy framework.

Part I: The National Policy Framework (Chapters 2-4) introduces the legal, institutional, and strategic foundations for public policies in The Gambia. It sets out the legal mandates, roles of key institutions involved in the policy process, the principal national policy instruments, and an overview of the national policy development cycle.

Part II: Policy Development Manual (Chapters 6-11) is the main technical guide designed for use by policymakers, analysts, and technical teams involved in developing or revising public policies. It provides guidance and tools for navigating the full national policy cycle: agenda-setting, planning, policy formulation, implementation planning, validation and approval, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and review.

Part III: Templates and Tools (Chapter 12) presents standardized templates and practical resources to support the development of key policy and planning outputs. These include the Needs Assessment Report, Concept Document, Sector and Procedural Policy, Strategic Plan, and Cabinet Paper templates.

The Annex provides reference materials that informed the development of this Handbook and support its application. This includes a summary of the *Policy Framework Diagnostic Report* (2024), a description of the Handbook's development process, an overview of the national Integrated Development Framework, and the National Policy Repository.

PART I: THE NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

2   FOUNDATIONS OF THE NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK

The *National Policy Framework* sets out the principles, legal mandates, institutions, and processes that govern the development, implementation, and oversight of public policy in The Gambia. The framework provides a standard reference for all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), ensuring that public policy initiatives are coherent, relevant, inclusive, and aligned with the country's long-term development aspirations.

2.1   Guiding Principles

The core principles that govern public policies in The Gambia are drawn from international best practices (NCLS, 2020; OECD, 2020; Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2012) and findings from The Gambia Policy Framework Diagnostic Report (DSPD, 2024). These include:

- **Strategic Alignment:** All public policy initiatives must advance national development priorities and support relevant sector strategies to promote coherence across government.

- **Equity and Inclusion**: The policy process must reflect the views of all Gambians, and adequate arrangements must be made to engage women, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalized groups.

- **Evidence-Informed Approach:** Policymaking must be grounded in reliable data, rigorous analysis, and contextual knowledge to improve policy relevance and effectiveness.

- **Results-Driven Orientation**: Every policy must have clearly defined objectives, indicators, baseline data, and time-bound targets to enable systematic assessment of its performance and contribution to national goals.

- **Transparency and Accountability:** The policy process and decisions shall be documented and publicly accessible to promote public trust and institutional accountability.

- **Adaptability and Responsiveness:** The policy process should remain flexible to accommodate changes in context in order to enhance policy relevance and long-term sustainability.

- **Continuous Learning & Improvement:** Periodic evaluation and review should be embedded in the policy cycle to generate evidence, capture lessons from implementation, and support adaptive improvements.

2.2   Legal and Policy Framework

The *National Policy Framework* is underpinned by laws, regulations, and national strategies of the Republic of The Gambia.

2.2.1   The 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia

The 1997 Constitution provides the principal legal authority for governance and the moral imperative for all government institutions to engage in transparent, participatory, and development-oriented policy formulation.

- ⮑ Section 71(1) empowers the President to establish ministerial portfolios as may be considered necessary for national governance. The Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination, and Delivery (MoPS), under which the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD) currently operates, was established under this provision.[1]

- ⮑ Section 215(3b) (*Directive Principles of State Policy*) emphasizes the responsibility of all persons and institutions to contribute to national development—a constitutional call to inclusive policymaking that involves public participation and shared ownership of policy outcomes.[2]

- ⮑ Section 214(5) (*Directive Principles of State Policy*) mandates the government to foster accountability and transparency at all levels.[3] A core principle underpinning the National Policy Formulation Framework.

2.2.2   Legislative Mandates

Several legislative instruments confer on public institutions specific mandates to develop, influence, implement, and regulate processes related to public policies.

- ⮑ Public Service Act, 1991: Provides the legal framework for the management and administration of the public service, including the formulation of human resource policies and procedures for the civil service.

- ⮑ Local Government Act, 2002: Empowers local authorities to design and implement policies that address their unique needs in alignment with national development policies; and to coordinate, monitor, and evaluate central government policies in their respective areas.

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[1] "There shall be such number of Ministers, including the Attorney-General, as the President may consider necessary" Section 71 (1).

[2] "That persons bear their fair share of social and national responsibilities including their responsibility to contribute to the development of the country" Section 215 (3b).

[3] "Government, with due regard to the principles of an open and democratic society, shall foster accountability and transparency at all levels of government" Section 214 (5).

- **Public Finance Act, 2014:** Establishes the framework for sound public financial management, including those related to the financial obligations of public policies. It sets out the responsibilities of MDAs in budget preparation, execution, accounting, and reporting.

- **The Gambia Public Procurement Authority (GPPA) Act, 2022:** Regulates the procurement of goods, works, and services by public bodies, including those directly related to policy implementation.

- **National Audit Office Act, 2015:** Mandates the National Audit Office (NAO) to audit public accounts and assess the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations. The Act strengthens external oversight and enforces adherence to financial and operational standards in policy implementation.

- **National Environment Management Act, 1994:** Requires MDAs to integrate environmental considerations into policies, plans, and programs for sustainable development and compliance with environmental standards.

2.2.3   The National Development Plan (2023–2027)

The *Recovery-Focused National Development Plan* (RF-NDP 2023-2027) is the flagship national development strategy of the Government of The Gambia and provides a directive for improving the quality and consistency of public policy. *Strategic Priority 2.8.1* Pillar II: Governance Reforms calls for the development of institutional frameworks to harmonize policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to address gaps in coherence, efficiency, and accountability across government.

The RF-NDP specifically tasks the Ministry of Public Service (MoPS) with developing and institutionalizing a national policy framework, supported by stakeholder consultations, capacity building, and creating monitoring mechanisms to track compliance.

2.3   Institutional Architecture

The institutional architecture for public policy development in The Gambia comprises public sector institutions responsible for specific policy functions (initiating, formulating, coordinating, implementing, and overseeing) in accordance with their legal and institutional mandates, and other non-state actors who complement these functions through advocacy, technical assistance, and resource support.

2.3.1   Principal National Institutions

- **Office of the President & Cabinet:** Sets the overarching national agenda; issues high-level directives and strategic direction; and grants final approval for all national and sector policies.

- ➲ National Assembly: Enacts, amends, and repeals legislation to support policy implementation; influences the policy agenda through motions and debates; and may review major national strategies.

- ➲ Judiciary: Interprets laws that underpin public policies; ensures compliance with constitutional principles through judicial review; and adjudicates disputes that may arise during policy implementation.

2.3.2 Line Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs)

- ➲ Line Ministries: Responsible for initiating, formulating, monitoring, and reviewing sector policies and programs.

- ➲ Departments and Agencies: Operationalizes sector-specific policies, programs, and strategic plans; develops institutional policies to improve operations and service delivery; and monitors and reports on implementation progress.

2.3.3 Specialized Entities

- ➲ Ministry of Justice (MoJ): Provides legal guidance during policy formulation; reviews drafts for legal compliance; and supports legislative drafting.

- ➲ Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA): Reviews policies and advises Cabinet on financial implications; supports sector program alignment with the Medium-Term Economic Fiscal Framework (MTEFF) and the Program-Based Budget (PBB).

- ➲ Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD): Provides policy advisory support to the Office of the President and Cabinet; serves as the central policy coordination, oversight, and quality assurance unit; and manages the National Policy Repository.

- ➲ Directorate of Development Planning (DDP): Coordinates the formulation, implementation, and review of medium-term development plans.

2.3.4 Other Actors

- ➲ Local Government Authorities (LGAs): Design and implement policies consistent with national development priorities; coordinate, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of central government policies.

- ➲ Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations: Advocate for policies and grassroots concerns; provide technical inputs.

- ➲ Development Partners & Donors: Policy advocacy; capacity and funding support; and co-design and -implementation of policies and programs.

- ➲ Private Sector & Academia: Offer research support; provide sector-specific expertise.

3 HIERARCHY OF PUBLIC POLICY INSTRUMENTS

Public policy can be broadly understood as deliberate decisions and actions taken by government to address public problems and pursue national development goals. As Thomas Dye famously puts it, "whatever governments choose to do or not to do" (Dye, 1972).

In The Gambia, public policies are the primary instrument through which the government expresses national priorities, addresses development challenges, and guides public service delivery. They are formalized in official documents ("policy documents") that set out priorities, strategies, and implementation pathways to achieve specific objectives. They derive their authority from mandates of public institutions, executive directives, or legislation passed by the National Assembly.

Although the term "public policy" is often used broadly to refer to all government actions, in practice, policies vary in scope, intent, and function. This chapter provides an overview of the public policy ecosystem in The Gambia, focusing on the levels and types, and how they function as a coherent system to advance national priorities.

3.1 Levels of Public Policy

Public policies are developed across three operational levels: national, sector, and institutional. Each of these levels is distinct in terms of strategic orientation, purpose, and ownership, but works together in advancing national priorities.

3.1.1 National-level Policy Instruments

National-level Policy Instruments define the medium- to long-term direction and development priorities of the country. They focus on driving socioeconomic transformation and address cross-cutting national issues such as poverty reduction, socioeconomic development, human capital, national security, and social protection. They also serve as the main vehicle for localizing international and regional commitments, such as the African Union Agenda 2063, ECOWAS Vision 2050, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), into actionable national strategies.

National policies are directed by the Office of the President or Cabinet, which may designate an MDA to coordinate the development and implementation process. Policy development at this level is highly consultative and inclusive, involving a wide range of stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organizations, the private sector, development partners, and the public. This enables them to remain relevant and flexible across political cycles while unifying national efforts around a shared development agenda. Examples of common policy instruments in this category are:

➲ National Vision: Defines the long-term aspirations for growth and development, typically over a 25- to 30-year horizon. It sets out a forward-looking policy agenda designed to benefit current and future generations of Gambians. Example: Vision 2020 (1996–2020) aimed to transform The Gambia into a middle-income country.

➲ National Development Plans: These medium-term (5–7 years) plans operationalize the national vision, adapting it to fiscal realities, political cycles, and emerging challenges. They may also function as the highest-level policy instrument in the absence of a long-term national vision.

3.1.2   Sector Policies

Sector Policies establish the strategic direction for specific sectors or thematic areas of government responsibility. They translate national priorities into tailored sector-specific strategies and guide decision-making, resource allocation, and performance monitoring within the sector. Sector policies are developed by MDAs through participatory processes that involve key stakeholders. They are typically accompanied by high-level action plans that define institutional roles and responsibilities, timelines, performance indicators, resource requirements, and coordination mechanisms for effective implementation.

3.1.3   Institutional Policies

Institutional policies are internal documents that govern the operations of public institutions. They define standard processes, protocols, and practices to promote consistency and efficiency in administrative functions and public service delivery. Examples include the *Personnel Management Office Recruitment Policy (2020)*, which establishes fair and transparent recruitment standards for the public sector, and the *Customs Risk Management Policy (2016)*, designed to improve operational efficiency and manage risks within customs operations.

3.2   Categories of Public Policies

Public policies can be categorized by the nature of government intervention and the outcomes they seek to achieve. Drawing on Lowi (1972), public policies can be classified as distributive, redistributive, regulatory, and constituent. These policy types can apply across all policy levels—national, sectoral, and institutional. The boundaries between these policy types are not always absolute; some policies may exhibit characteristics of more than one category.

➲ Distributive Policies: Provide tangible benefits to people without directly redistributing resources from one group to another. They focus on expanding access to public goods or services, boosting productivity, or enhancing infrastructure.

- ⮱ Redistributive Policies: Aim to remedy socioeconomic inequality by deliberately reallocating resources and opportunities from one group to another. They may involve instruments such as cash transfers, social safety nets, and tax reforms.

- ⮱ Regulatory Policies: Establish rules and standards to govern behavior and activities, protect public interests, and promote fair and sustainable economic practices.

- ⮱ Constituent Policies: Create or restructure institutions or agencies to improve coordination, efficiency, and performance.

- ⮱ Procedural Policies: Define the processes and methods by which other policy types are formulated, implemented, monitored, or evaluated. These policies promote transparency, consistency, and fairness in government operations.

3.3   Integrated Development Framework (IDF)

The *Integrated Development Framework (IDF)* provides a unified strategic framework for aligning and coordinating government actions at all levels to advance the country's long-term development aspirations. It establishes a clear hierarchy among all national policy and planning instruments, from the National Vision to annual work plans (*see* Figure 1).

At the apex of the IDF is the *National Vision*, which sets the country's long-term development aspirations. This vision is operationalized through a series of *National Development Plans*. These, in turn, are translated into targeted *Sector Policies* and *Action Plans*, developed by line ministries to address sector-specific goals.

At the institutional level, *Strategic Plans* consolidate the obligations of MDAs, drawing from sector and national strategies. These plans guide the formulation of *Annual Work Plans (AWPs)*, which organize day-to-day activities, assign responsibilities, and facilitate performance monitoring at the most operational level of government.

The IDF incorporates periodic reviews and assessments at every level to inform refinements to higher-level instruments. This enables continuous learning and adaptive management, making the system responsive to emerging challenges and evolving national priorities. Additional details and cascade diagrams are provided in Annex C.
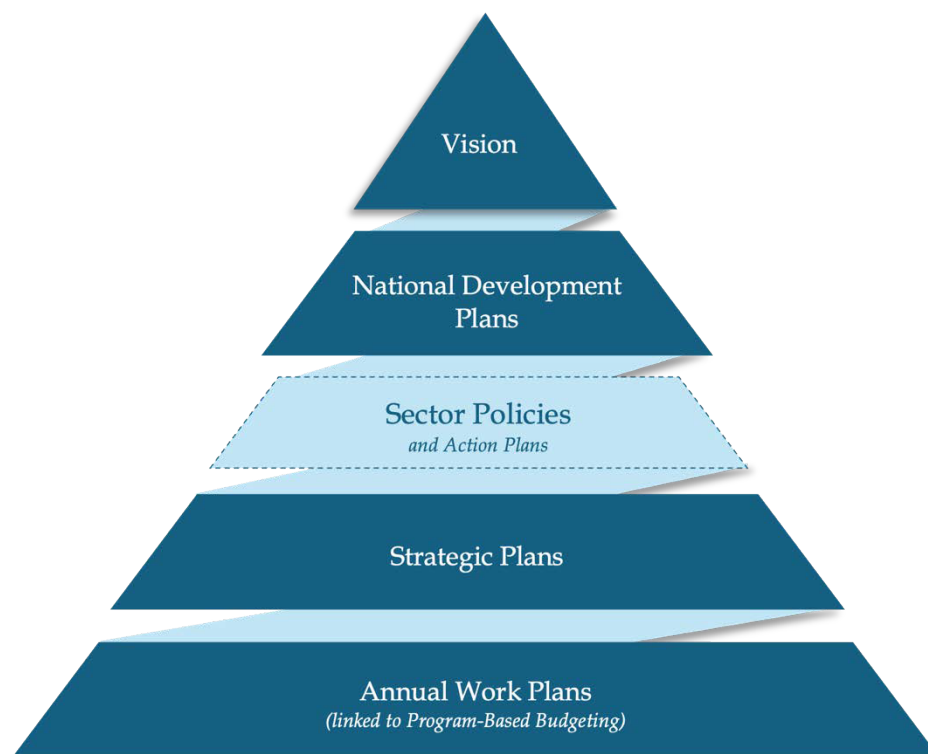
Figure 1: Hierarchy of National Policy and Planning Instruments

Table 1: National Policy and Planning Instruments

Instrument	Time Frame	Purpose	Lead Agency
National Vision	20–30 years	Articulates long-term national development aspirations	Office of the President and Cabinet
National Development Plan (NDP)	5-7 years	Operationalizes national vision and sets medium-term development priorities	Directorate of Development Planning/MoFEA
Sector Policies & Action/ Implementation Plans	5+ years	Translates higher-level goals into sector specific actions	Line Ministries (coordination by DSPD)
Strategic Plans	5 years	Institutional planning document that consolidates all planned activities and resource needs	MDAs
Annual Work Plans (AWPs)	1 year	Operationalize strategic plans through day-to-day activities and tasks	Departments, Agencies, and Authorities

4 OVERVIEW OF THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The national policy development process provides a common approach for developing public policies in The Gambia. This section summarizes the process in key phases: agenda setting, planning, policy formulation, implementation planning, validation and approval, monitoring, evaluation, and review. Each stage is further explored in detail, along with technical guidance, in Part II of this handbook.

Figure 2: The National Policy Development Cycle

4.1 Agenda Setting

Agenda setting marks the beginning of the policy development process, where policy issues are identified and prioritized for government intervention. This phase is generally shaped by multiple interests and influences and rarely follows a strictly linear or predictable path. In The Gambia, policy issues are typically shaped by national development priorities, political commitments, stakeholder advocacy, and public demand. The Cabinet, MDAs, and the National Assembly play central roles in surfacing and elevating these issues to the policy agenda. Factors such as political salience, public interest, and resource availability influence which issues gain traction and are selected for formal policy consideration. A *Needs Assessment Report* (*see* Section 11.1) must be prepared for policy issues that emerge outside documented national strategies to clearly define the problem and rationale for government intervention.

4.2   Planning

The *Planning* phase lays the foundation for subsequent stages of the policy development process. It involves preparatory analyses that enable evidence-informed, inclusive, and targeted policy response. These analyses are consolidated into a *Concept Document* (*see* Section *11.2*) and shared with stakeholders to gather early feedback. The main activities involved in this stage include:

- ➲ Establishing Institutional Structures: Formation of a Policy Committee to oversee the process, supported by a Technical Drafting Team responsible for research and drafting. Additional technical bodies may be formed depending on the nature of the policy.

- ➲ Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis: Identifying all actors and their level of interest or influence over the policy to inform engagement strategies.

- ➲ Problem Analysis: Understanding the nature and root causes of the problem, allowing for a more targeted policy response.

- ➲ Setting Vision and Preliminary Goals: Formulating an aspirational statement of a desired future state, along with preliminary goals.

4.3   Policy Formulation

The *Policy Formulation* stage develops specific solutions to the identified policy problem. The principal output is a draft policy framework, which forms the basis for implementation planning. The main activities involved in this stage are:

- ➲ Setting Policy Objectives: Translating broad *policy goals* into specific, relevant, and achievable objectives.

- ➲ Policy Analysis: Developing and analyzing options to achieve *policy objectives* using analytical tools such as cost-benefit analysis (CBA), multi-criteria analysis (MCA), or Delphi methods, and validating with stakeholders.

- ➲ Policy Statements: Converting preferred option(s) into authoritative statements that spell out the government's official commitment to specific actions.

4.4   Implementation Planning

The *Implementation Planning* phase translates the policy's strategic intent into concrete actions and establishes the institutional and operational arrangements required for execution. All sector and procedural policies must be developed together with an accompanying implementation plan document in which the action plan is placed. However, within the policy document, the following components are to be included under the implementation framework section:

- ➲ Implementation Arrangements: The operational roadmap indicating specific actions, responsible parties, timelines, milestones, and resource requirements.

➲ Financing and Sustainability: Estimates resource requirements and identifies funding sources and sustainability measures.

➲ Risk Management: Identifies, prioritizes, and outlines mitigation and contingency measures for all risks that could impede policy implementation.

➲ Institutional & Governance Framework: Establishes the institutional arrangements, decision-making processes, conflict resolution, and accountability mechanisms for implementing the policy.

➲ Stakeholder Engagement and Communication: Details how stakeholders will be informed and engaged throughout the implementation period.

4.5   Validation, Approval & Implementation

Once the draft policy document and its accompanying implementation framework are finalized, they undergo a series of technical, legal, and stakeholder reviews before Cabinet submission, approval, and full implementation. The steps here include:

➲ Internal Review: Draft policy document reviewed internally to assess the policy's coherence, feasibility, and alignment with sector priorities.

➲ Compliance Review: Conducted by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD) to check consistency with national laws and development strategies.

➲ Stakeholder Validation Workshop: Organized by the lead MDA to engage stakeholders in reviewing and validating the draft policy document. (NB: The policy may be taken for stakeholder validation prior to the development of an implementation plan however, the policy and implementation plan are to be submitted together for Cabinet approval).

➲ Cabinet Approval: The final draft policy document, together with an implementation plan and Cabinet Paper, is submitted to Cabinet for approval.

➲ Implementation: The policy and implementation plan are adopted, rolled out and disseminated in line with the communication strategy.

4.6   Monitoring, Evaluation, & Review

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review (MER) activities are integrated throughout the policy lifecycle to track progress, assess performance, and guide policy adjustments.

➲ Monitoring: Begins at policy rollout and continues throughout the implementation period to track progress against predefined indicators.

➲ Evaluation: Mid-term and summative evaluations are conducted halfway through implementation and at the end of implementation respectively.

➲ Policy Review: Conducted after evaluations to determine if the policy remains relevant, needs revision, or should be phased out.

National Assembly

Cabinet

Coordination Mechanism

MDA

Ministry of Justice

Mandatory
Optional

Directive ①

Concept Paper ② Advice

Final Draft Policy ④

Approval ⑥

Research & Briefs

Concept Paper
Technical Feedback ②

Draft Policy
Technical Feedback ③

Concept Paper
Legal Feedback ②

Draft Policy
Legal Feedback ③

⑤

Note:

This diagram depicts the institutional workflow for policy development in The Gambia. Part II of the National Policy Handbook contains details of the activities involved at each step.

MDA: Ministry Department or Agency

⑤ Sector Minister submits bill for legislative amendment (if applicable).

Figure 3: Institutional Workflow for Public Policy Development in The Gambia

PART II: POLICY DEVELOPMENT MANUAL

Part II of this Handbook offers practical guidance and a suite of analytical tools to support the national policy development process. As the official reference manual for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), it is designed to equip policy practitioners to design, formulate, implement, monitor, and review public policies with consistency and technical rigor.

Each chapter corresponds to one of the interconnected phases of the national policy development cycle. Within these chapters, users will find clear guidance on tasks to be completed, expected outputs, recommended analytical tools, and institutional responsibilities. While the chapters are sequenced to reflect the chronological flow of the policy process—from agenda setting through to monitoring and review—they are designed to be flexible reference points, allowing users to consult relevant sections according to their specific roles or needs at any point in the process.

Users are encouraged to use this manual alongside Part I (Framework) and Part III (Templates and Tools). Cross-references throughout Part II point to essential tools and templates—such as the Concept Note Template, Stakeholder Analysis Matrix, and Results Framework—found in Part III, to facilitate seamless navigation and enhance policy quality across government.

5   AGENDA SETTING

The *agenda-setting* phase identifies and prioritizes policy issues that require government attention. When carried out effectively, this phase helps direct public resources to areas of greatest need and steers government actions toward pressing national issues. This phase may result in the preparation of a *Needs Assessment Report*, which provides a preliminary diagnosis of the policy problem and an evidence-based justification for government intervention.

This section presents the primary actors involved in agenda setting and the sources from which policy issues typically emerge.

5.1   Institutional Actors in Agenda-Setting

The agenda-setting process is primarily driven by the Cabinet and Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), with additional influence from the National Assembly and other non-state actors.

- ⮌ Cabinet: As the highest executive authority, the Cabinet sets the overarching priorities for the government. It also plays a central role in initiating the policy

process by directing policy responses to address national issues, deliver on political commitments, and advance strategic national interests.

➲ National Assembly**:** As the legislative arm of the government, the National Assembly shapes policy direction by bringing attention to grassroots issues and voicing constituent concerns. They influence the executive to address specific topics through debates, motions, and legislation.

➲ MDAs: MDAs oversee specific sectors and are responsible for identifying issues within their mandates and formulating policy responses accordingly. They also translate higher-level national strategies such as the National Development Plans (NDPs) into sector policies.

➲ Non-State Actors: Civil society organizations (CSOs), traditional and religious leaders, private sector representatives, academic and research institutions, donor agencies, and development partners often influence the policy agenda in a way that reflects their mandates, interests, and values. They amplify issues not reflected in formal government priorities, advocate for policies that align with their objectives, and may even challenge or contest those perceived to be in conflict.

5.2   Sources of Policy Issues

Issues that make it onto the policy agenda may come from several sources, including internal (e.g., national development strategies, government sources, political commitments) and external sources (e.g., public sources, donor sources, and research-based sources). Familiarity with these sources is important to identify and prioritize policy concerns more effectively.

➲ National Development Strategies: Long- and medium-term development plans, such as *National Vision* or *National Development Plans*, provide strategic direction for the country's development agenda. Although technically considered public policy instruments, they also guide the development of policies and strategies to translate broad goals and objectives into specific, actionable strategies at sector or institutional levels.

➲ Government Sources: Reports from the constitutionally mandated annual *Meet the People Tour* by the President provide insights into the needs and priorities expressed by communities across The Gambia. These reports document the current situation of citizens and their direct requests to the government. Additionally, policy briefs produced by MDAs often highlight current challenges and opportunities within their respective sectors, serving as valuable sources for identifying issues requiring government action.

➲ Political Commitments: Political promises, such as those in election manifestos**,** presidential commitments**,** and other priority areas identified by political

leadership, often drive the agenda-setting process. These commitments reflect the leadership's vision and form a key source of prioritization.

➲ Public Sources: Issues gain traction through public advocacy, media attention, and civil society engagement. Interest and advocacy groups, the media, and public opinion are powerful forces in bringing social issues to the attention of policymakers, even when such issues are not initially on the formal government agenda.

➲ Donor Sources: Donor agencies and development partners can elevate certain issues to prominence through funding and technical assistance. This can influence policy priorities, especially when aligned with national development goals.

➲ Research-Based Sources: Academic studies, technical reports, and conferences often highlight emerging national challenges or opportunities. These sources provide evidence-based insights into complex issues, making them invaluable for informing policy decisions.

5.3   Needs Assessment Report

Policy issues that emerge from national strategies or documented government sources typically have a clearly defined and structured scope and context and may not require needs assessment. However, for policy issues that emerge from other sources (e.g., public advocacy, policy briefs, or external reports), a *Needs Assessment Report* is mandatory (*see* Section 11.1 for the template).

The report provides an evidence-based evaluation of the issue and substantiates the need for a policy response. The report includes a clear problem statement, root cause analysis, justification for government intervention, and preliminary ideas on possible policy directions or solutions.

6   PLANNING

The *planning* phase produces an organized plan to guide the rest of the process. It ensures that the policy issue is well understood, key stakeholders are identified and engaged, and the necessary coordination mechanisms are in place to support a credible and inclusive policy formulation process.

This phase also provides the first opportunity to define a unifying vision and preliminary goals that will guide all subsequent stages. It consolidates early-stage analysis into a formal *Concept Document*, which communicates the policy intent to stakeholders.

The main *planning* activities covered under this section are: (1) institutional structures for policy development, (2) stakeholder mapping and engagement strategy, (3) problem analysis, and (4) setting vision and policy goals.

6.1   Institutional Structures for Policy Development

One of the foremost activities during the *Planning* phase is establishing structures to oversee and manage the policy process. These are the *Policy Committee* to provide strategic oversight and leadership, and the *Technical Drafting Team,* which prepares the *Concept Document* and the final draft policy. Additional technical structures may be formed, depending on the complexity and nature of the policy.

6.1.1   Policy Committee

A *Policy Committee* is formed whenever a new policy is being developed or an existing one is being reviewed. The committee reports to the lead MDA and, in cases of policy review, may report to the existing policy *Steering Committee*. The committee is dissolved once the policy is approved or the review is completed, at which point implementation oversight is transferred to the *Steering Committee*.

The lead MDA designates the chairperson or coordinator to head the committee, which may include representatives from key MDAs, civil society organizations, the private sector, and development partners, depending on the scope of the policy.

The *Policy Committee* is expected to act with professionalism and a commitment to excellence. The committee's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- ➲ Strategic Direction: Sets the scope and focus of the policy in alignment with national development plans and sector strategies.
- ➲ Oversight: Supervise the entire policy process, including the activities of the technical drafting team and ensure adherence to timelines, budgets, and deliverables.

➲ Coordination: Managing engagements with other MDAs, stakeholders, and external partners to harmonize inputs, resolve cross-sectoral conflicts and interests, and facilitate validation exercises.

6.1.2   Technical Drafting Team

A technical drafting team is constituted under the guidance of the *Policy Committee*. The team comprises staff with expertise in the policy area and, where necessary, external consultants. The team reports to the *Policy Committee* and is dissolved after completion of the policy document and approval by the Cabinet. The team is responsible for drafting the *Concept Document* and the draft *Policy Document* under the guidance of the *Policy Committee*. In fulfilling this responsibility, the team is expected to:

➲ Research and Data Analysis: Collect data from multiple sources and conduct rigorous analysis to inform policy decisions.

➲ Drafting: Translate the strategic direction into a structured policy document for internal review and final approval by the Cabinet.

➲ Revisions: Refine policy drafts based on feedback from stakeholders and emerging evidence.

6.1.3   External Experts and Consultants

External experts and consultants may be engaged when specialized expertise beyond the MDA's capacity is required to support the policy drafting process. When engaging external experts, priority should be given to individuals with a strong understanding of the local socio-economic, political, and institutional context.

External consultants should complement and not replace the work of the *Technical Drafting Team*. Engagements should be structured to encourage knowledge sharing and internal capacity building. The *Policy Committee* remains responsible for validating all input from external consultants to ensure alignment with national priorities and frameworks. A *Terms of Reference* (ToR) must be prepared when engaging external consultants, which should clearly define their responsibilities, expected deliverables, timelines, and reporting lines.

6.2   Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Analysis involves identifying and understanding the interests, influence, and expectations of individuals and groups who may be affected by (or have the capacity to influence) the policy process. This analysis enables policymakers to anticipate risks, make informed decisions, and design effective engagement strategies that enhance policy ownership, legitimacy, and inclusivity by allowing communities to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Below are the steps for a structured stakeholder analysis:

6.2.1   Identifying Stakeholders

The first step is to compile a comprehensive list of all relevant state and non-state actors, including individuals, institutions, and groups, using two primary criteria:

- ➲ Interest: Individuals and groups with a vested interest because they stand to gain or lose from the policy. This group offers valuable insights that help to understand the policy issue and design relevant responses.

- ➲ Influence: Individuals and groups with the power to shape public opinion or influence policy approval and outcomes. This group is critical to navigating political dynamics and securing broader support for the policy.

As stakeholders are identified, their core expectations, interests, and potential sources of resistance should also be documented to guide the design of appropriate engagement strategies. Consider the following questions in assessing needs:

- ➲ What are their expectations and desired outcomes?

- ➲ What concerns, resistance, or conflict may arise with policy objectives?

- ➲ What is their preferred medium or mode of communication or participation?

6.2.2   Mapping Stakeholders

All identified stakeholders are first assessed and categorized based on their level of interest and influence. The matrix below shows four stakeholder categories. Each group plays a distinct role in shaping or responding to the policy and may require different methods and levels of engagement.

	High Influence	Low Influence
High Interest	***Key Stakeholders*** (High Interest, High Influence) This group has a stake in the success or failure of the policy and possesses significant power to shape it Examples: Cabinet, key MDAs, and development partners	***Advocates or Affected Groups*** (High Interest, Low Influence) This group is deeply affected by the policy but has limited power Examples: local communities, CSOs, and academic institutions
Low Interest	***Potential Allies or Opponents*** (Low Interest, High Influence) This group can either facilitate or obstruct the policy, depending on how they are engaged. Examples: Opinion leaders, Political opposition, traditional or religious leaders.	***Observers*** (Low Interest, Low Influence) This group has limited interest and minimal influence. Examples: Unaffected individuals, communities, and groups. General public, peripheral organizations.

Figure 4: Interest-Influence Matrix

6.2.3   Decide on an Engagement Strategy

Engagement strategies should be tailored to the level of influence, interest, as well as their needs. Four primary strategies are particularly suitable for policy processes—namely, inform, consult, involve, and collaborate. At a minimum, every citizen should be informed to promote transparency, accountability, and trust-building in the policy process. See *Figure* 5 for an overview of engagement levels and methods.

Inform: A one-way communication strategy to provide stakeholders with relevant policy information. It is the basic form of engagement to keep stakeholders aware of developments without active participation. E.g. tools: press releases, briefs, public announcements, and social media updates.

Consult: This strategy invovles actively collecting information from stakeholders to inform policy decisions. Stakeholder inputs is higly valued but may not binding. This is an effective strategy for engaging affected groups and advocates. E.g. tools: surveys, focus groups, public consultations, interviews, and online polls.

Involve: Stakeholders play a meaningful role, actively participating in discussions and decision-making processes. It is an effective strategy for building ownership and stronger partnerhsips. E.g. tools: workshops, advisory committees, roundtables, co-design sessions.

Collaborate: Stakeholders at this level are treated as equal partners in the policy development process. They have significant input and influence, often participating in the co-design and co-development of policies. E.g. tools: joint committees and partnerships.

Figure 5: Levels of Stakeholder Engagement in the Policy Development Process

6.2.4   Stakeholder Engagement Plan

A *Stakeholder Engagement Plan* outlines when and how different stakeholder groups will be engaged throughout the policy development process. It defines the purpose of each engagement activity, identifies appropriate methods, assigns responsibilities, and ensures that the right stakeholders are involved at the right time. The engagement plan should be reviewed and updated regularly to remain relevant and responsive.

Deliberate efforts must also be made to include marginalized groups—such as persons with disabilities, women, youth, ethnic minorities, and rural populations—in all engagement activities. This includes selecting accessible venues, using inclusive communication formats, and working with representative organizations.

A sample engagement plan, aligned with the main stages of the policy development process, is presented below. It can be adapted based on the scope of the policy and the nature of the stakeholders involved.

Table 2: Sample Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Stage	Stakeholder Group	Purpose of Engagement	Engagement Method	Responsible Entity
Planning	Affected communities, CSOs	Understand lived experiences and policy issues	Focus groups, public consultations (Consult)	Policy Committee
	Technical Experts	Validate problem diagnostic and initial vision and goals	Roundtables, technical meetings (Involve)	Policy committee; Technical drafting team
	All stakeholders	Share Concept Document to gather early feedback	Public dissemination (Inform)	Lead MDA
Policy Formulation	Affected communities, groups, CSOs	Gather input to shape draft objectives, options, and content	Interviews, public consultations (Consult)	Technical Drafting team
	Implementing partners (MDAs, LGAs, donors)	Operational feasibility and alignment with mandates	Joint technical session (Involve)	Policy Committee
	Technical Experts	Review technical analysis and feasibility of options	Review panels (Collaborate)	Technical Drafting team
Implementation Planning	Implementing partners	Co-develop implementation strategies	Joint technical session (Collaborate)	Technical Drafting team
	Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA)	Aligning financial obligations with national fiscal frameworks	Bilateral meeting (Involve)	Policy Committee
Review	Ministry of Justice	Reviews legal consistency and regulatory soundness	Legal co-design (Involve)	Policy Committee
	Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD)	Review policy coherence and alignment with national strategies	Technical review (Involve)	Policy Committee
	All stakeholders	Disseminate draft policy for feedback	Online publication (Consult)	Lead MDA
Validation	MDAs, implementing partners	Final validation of the draft policy before Cabinet submission	Validation workshop (Involve)	Lead MDA
Approval	Cabinet	Secure official approval for the policy	Cabinet submission (Consult)	Lead MDA
Implementation	All Stakeholders	Communicate policy rollout, roles, and responsibilities	Online publication on policy repository, websites (Inform)	Lead MDA

Note: This table is a sample tool. Every stakeholder engagement plan should be tailored to the specific policy or program context.

6.3   Problem Analysis

Problem analysis is a systematic process for breaking down a complex policy issue into its constituent parts—namely, the *core problem*, its *causes*, and its *effects*—to understand the problem's full scope and identify the most appropriate policy response. This step of the policy process helps minimize the risk of misdiagnosis by distinguishing root causes from symptoms, thereby enabling a more targeted policy response that addresses the underlying drivers of the problem.

6.3.1   Information and Evidence Gathering

This involves collecting and analyzing all relevant information from multiple sources to gain a full picture of the policy issue. This may include:

- ➲ Review existing reports and documents: Source documents such as needs assessment reports, official government reports, and official data repositories provide foundation insights and help situate the issue within the broader national context.
- ➲ Engage affected groups: Employ quantitative tools (e.g., surveys, online polls) and qualitative approaches (e.g., stakeholder interviews, focus groups) to capture local-level insights, lived experiences, and perceptions.
- ➲ Triangulate data for accuracy: Cross-reference findings with national statistics from institutions such as the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) and sector-specific information systems within relevant MDAs.

6.3.2   Breaking Down the Problem

A *Problem Tree Analysis* or an equivalent diagnostic tool should be employed to break down policy issues into *core problems*, *causes*, and *effects*. A separate analysis should be conducted when a policy issue involves multiple *core problems* to ensure clarity and precision.

A. Define the Core Problem

A *core problem* is the central issue or condition that a public policy seeks to address. It is the most immediate and observable manifestation of a broader challenge. The problem should be stated in neutral, outcome-oriented terms, avoiding value judgments or implied solutions. For example, use "high youth unemployment" instead of "lack of youth jobs."

B. Identify the Underlying Causes

Explore the full range of factors contributing to the problem. Causes should be categorized into three levels:

➲ Direct Causes: Immediate, visible triggers or mechanisms contributing to the problem. (e.g., limited job opportunities, insufficient job-relevant skills among youth)

➲ Intermediate Causes: Underlying mechanisms or processes that enable the direct causes. (e.g., skills mismatch between technical training and labor market demands, lack of skills training programs for youth)

➲ Root Causes: Deep-seated structural or systemic factors that drive the problem (e.g., regulatory or infrastructure constraints limiting private sector development, underfunded TVET institutions, lack of youth development policies)

Use iterative questioning (e.g., repeatedly asking "Why does this problem exist?") starting from the core problem to trace each cause to its systemic roots.

C. Map Effects

Identify the consequences and broader impacts of the core problem. This involves asking "What happens because of this problem?" repeatedly to identify immediate and long-term effects. Understanding the effects is important for framing the urgency and significance of the problem.

➲ Direct Effects: Immediate or observable outcomes that result directly from the problem. (e.g., income insecurity, underemployment, increased dependency on family or informal work, social frustration among youth)

➲ Indirect Effects: Long-term consequences that affect society or the economy more widely. (e.g., increased poverty and inequality, reduced national productivity, youth migration or brain drain, and heightened risk of social unrest or instability)

D. Visualize Connections

A *Problem Tree Diagram* (Figure 6) is a visual tool for organizing the analysis, where *roots* represent causes, *trunk* the core problem, and *branches* the effects. This visual aid supports clarity and communication during internal reviews and stakeholder engagement.

6.3.3   Validate Findings with Stakeholders

Engaging stakeholders to validate the *problem analysis* strengthens the relevance and legitimacy of the process. Consultations should include affected groups to reflect their lived experiences; technical experts to assess analytical accuracy; and other MDAs and CSOs to validate assumptions and integrate sector-specific insights.

Stakeholder input may lead to refinement of the problem framing or adjustments of identified causes and effects.
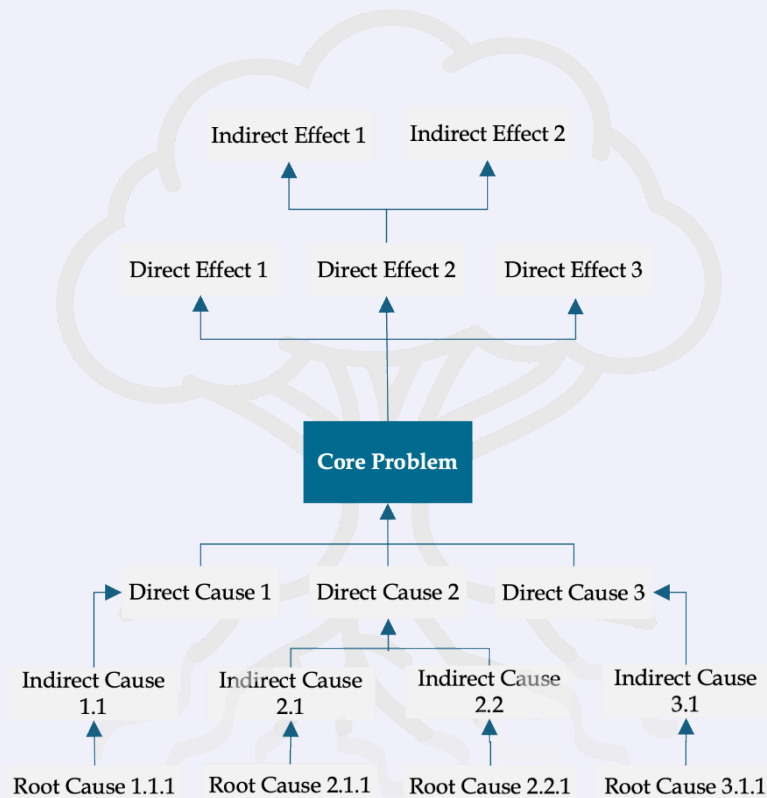
Figure 6: Problem Tree Visualization

6.4   Setting Vision and Preliminary Goals

The *vision* and preliminary *goals* set the strategic intent of the policy. These initial *goals* may be refined during the formulation stage for consistency with the proposed solutions and implementation realities.

6.4.1   Vision Statement

The policy *vision* is a high-level, aspirational expression of the desired future state without the problem. It provides a unifying purpose for policymakers and stakeholders by articulating the long-term transformation the government aims to bring about. A strong *vision* statement should be:

- ⮑ Aspirational: Inspire commitment by describing a desirable and transformative future state.

- ⮑ Align with National Priorities: Consistent with broader national development strategies (e.g., National Vision, National Development Plan), and international commitments (e.g., SDGs, AU Agenda 2063).

⊃ Clear and Simple: Expressed in simple direct language that resonates with a broad audience.

> Example:
>
> For a *core problem* such as high youth unemployment, an appropriate vision statement could be: "*A future where every young Gambian has access to meaningful, dignified, and sustainable employment opportunities.*"

6.4.2 Goals

Policy *goals* are broad high-level statements that describe what the policy aims to achieve over the medium to long term. They guide the formulation of specific policy objectives and interventions. Well-developed policy *goals* should:

Vision

⊃ Support the Vision: Directly contribute to achieving the aspirational direction set by the *vision*.

Goals

⊃ Address Core Problems: Target one or more of the *core problems* to maintain relevance to the main policy issue.

⊃ Ambitious yet Realistic: Inspire progress while remaining achievable given resource constraints and institutional capacities.

⊃ Broad but Actionable: Provide direction to guide the development of objectives and interventions.
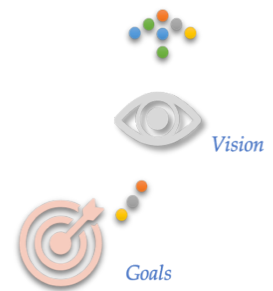
> Example:
>
> In response to a *core problem* of youth unemployment, potential *policy goals* may include:
>   i) *Goal 1: Enhance youth employability through access to skills training,*" and
>   ii) *Goal 2: Expand decent job opportunities for young people in emerging sectors.*"

6.5 Concept Document

The primary output of the *planning* stage is the *Concept Document,* which synthesizes the preparatory analyses and serves as the foundation for subsequent stages. It communicates the policy intent to stakeholders and solicits early feedback before drafting begins.

The *Concept Document* should briefly present the policy issue, its rationale, vision, preliminary goals, possible interventions, and a high-level plan for stakeholder engagement. It also includes an indicative budget and proposed timelines. A standard template is provided in *Section 11.2*.

7   POLICY FORMULATION

Policy Formulation involves developing, evaluating, and refining possible policy options to arrive at the most effective and feasible course of action. It translates the *policy vision* and *goals* from the *planning* stage into specific objectives and actionable strategies to guide *Implementation Planning*.

The policy formulation process is inherently iterative, which requires revisiting previous activities and decisions as new evidence and stakeholder input emerge. It also demands a careful balance between technical rigor, political considerations, and practical feasibility. The main output of this stage is a coherent and comprehensive policy framework that states the government's preferred course of action, including the policy goals, objectives, instruments, and statements.

The main elements of *policy formulation* covered in this section are: (1) formulating policy objectives, (2) policy options development and selection, and (3) policy instruments and statements.

7.1   Formulating Policy Objectives

Policy Objectives are specific statements that define what the policy intends to achieve to realize its *vision* and *goals*. They connect the policy's strategic intent with the concrete interventions to be delivered during implementation.

Objectives must be developed in consultation with key stakeholders, particularly affected groups, implementing partners, and technical experts, to ensure that they are feasible and contextually relevant.
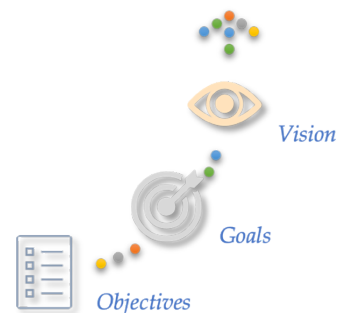
Before defining *objectives*, the *vision* and preliminary *goals* should be revisited to confirm that they have not been influenced by any events since the *planning* stage. A well-structured policy requires internal coherence between its vision, goals, objectives, and strategic actions. A useful tool to support this process is the *Objective Tree*, which mirrors the *Problem Tree* developed during the *planning* phase. It reframes the core problem and its causes into solution-oriented statements that inform the policy's hierarchy of objectives.

For instance, depending on the problem analysis, the *vision* can be framed as the absence of the *core problem*; the *goal* can be formulated as the solution to the direct causes; and the *objectives* address the intermediate causes and define specific results necessary to achieve the *goals*. The *root causes* inform the design of specific policy interventions and *strategic action*. Each *objective* should be linked to its corresponding *goal* using a sequential numbering format for easy cross-referencing throughout the policy document and *implementation planning*.

Example:

Core problem: High youth unemployment → *Vision*: A future where every young Gambian has access to meaningful, dignified, and sustainable employment opportunities.

Direct Cause 1: Inadequate skills among youth → *Goal 1*: Reduce youth unemployment through access to market-relevant skills

Indirect Cause 1.1: Skills mismatch between technical education and labor market needs → *Objective 1.1:* Improve alignment of technical education curricula with labor market demands.

Indirect Cause 1.2: Lack of practical skills training opportunities for youth → *Objective 1.2*: Expand access to practical skills training opportunities for young people.

7.2   Develop and Select Policy Options

Once clear goals and objectives are established, the next step is to conduct an in-depth policy analysis to generate, compare, and evaluate multiple options. Comparing different pathways and assessing potential trade-offs allows analysts to make informed decisions on the most promising solution. Employing a structured, criteria-based approach enhances objectivity and transparency throughout the decision-making process.

7.2.1   Generating Policy Solutions

Brainstorm a broad range of potential solutions or alternative courses of action. The goal is to explore multiple options without prematurely ruling them out so that no viable option is overlooked. The current situation or a "do nothing" option should always be included to enable the comparisons of benefits and trade-offs of potential solutions against maintaining the existing conditions. This process should be informed by evidence, case studies from similar contexts, previous policies, and expert views.

7.2.2   Evaluating and Ranking Policy Options

The list of options should be systematically compared to identify the best approach to solving the problem. Analysts must adopt an objective, consistent, and transparent process, using data and evidence wherever possible. Stakeholder insights must be integrated into the evaluation to ensure accuracy and minimize possible bias. Below are some evaluation approaches that policymakers can consider in assessing and ranking alternatives.

1) Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA)

MCA is an approach for evaluating policy options when multiple criteria are involved. This method combines quantitative assessments with expert judgment to rank

alternatives. Using this approach, analysts in consultation with stakeholders and subject matter experts identify criteria, such as effectiveness, efficiency, feasibility, political, and social acceptability, for assessing the alternatives and assigning relative weights to reflect their importance. Each policy option is scored against the criteria, and these scores are weighted and summed to generate the total score for ranking. The rankings can be shared with stakeholders to validate the findings and gather feedback. Below is an example of an MCA matrix for ranking three policy options:

Table 3: Example Ranking Options Using MCA

Options	Effectiveness (35%)	Efficiency (25%)	Equity (20%)	Sustainability (20%)	Weighted Score	Rank
Option 1	5 (0.35)	5 (0.25)	5 (0.2)	4 (0.2)	4.80	1st
Option 2	4 (0.35)	3 (0.25)	4 (0.2)	3 (0.2)	3.55	3rd
Option 3	3 (0.35)	3 (0.25)	4 (0.2)	5 (0.2)	3.60	2nd
Status quo	2(0.35)	3(0.25)	2(0.2)	3(0.2)	2.45	4th

Note: Weights in parentheses. Scores multiplied by weights are summed to calculate the weighted scores. The status quo option (or "do nothing" scenario) is included as a baseline for comparison. Its inclusion helps assess the added value of proposed interventions and clarifies the opportunity cost of inaction.

2) Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA)

CBA is a method for comparing policy options based on the potential monetary costs and benefits to society. It is best used when monetary valuation of costs and benefits is possible, and economic efficiency is a primary concern. This approach requires all potential costs and benefits associated with each option to be identified, quantified, and adjusted to current values to account for the time value of money.

Using this method, the policy option with the highest net present value (present value of benefits minus the present value of costs) or the Benefit-Cost Ratio (present value of benefits divided by the present value of costs) is considered the most viable. An example of a *CBA* approach to selecting policy options is provided below:

Table 4: Example of a Cost-Benefit Analysis Approach to Selecting Policy Options

Options	Present Value of Benefits (B)	Present Value of Costs (C)	Net Present Value (B-C)	Benefit-Cost Ratio (B/C)	Rank
Option 1	70,000,000	20,000,000	50,000,000	3.5	1st
Option 2	80,000,000	40,000,000	40,000,000	2	2nd
Option 3	120,000,000	90,000,000	30,000,000	1.33	4th
Status quo	8,000,000	5,000,000	3,000,000	1.6	3rd

Note: The status quo (or "do nothing" scenario) is included as a baseline for comparison. It helps assess the added value of proposed interventions and clarifies the opportunity cost of inaction.

3) Delphi Method

The *Delphi Method* is an expert-based consultation technique to build consensus among experts on complex policy issues where data may be limited, uncertainties are high, or decisions require expert judgment. Delphi is based on the principle that decisions from a group of experts are more accurate than those from an individual expert or non-experts. The Delphi process typically unfolds in multiple iterative rounds:

- ⮑ Panel Selection: A group of qualified experts is identified based on their subject matter knowledge and relevance to the policy issue under consideration. The panel should be diverse, independent, and multidisciplinary, where appropriate.

- ⮑ First Round of Input: Experts are presented with the policy issue and a list of possible options, criteria, or scenarios. They provide individual assessments, such as rankings, ratings, or qualitative feedback.

- ⮑ Synthesis and Feedback: A facilitator compiles, anonymizes, and summarizes the responses. The summary identifies trends, areas of agreement, and points of divergence. This aggregated feedback is then shared with the panel for further reflection.

- ⮑ Subsequent Rounds: Experts are requested to revise or reaffirm their initial responses based on the group's feedback. The process is repeated over two or more rounds until a stable consensus or option emerges.

- ⮑ Final Output: The result may be a ranked list of policy options, a convergence score, or a set of expert-endorsed recommendations to inform final decision-making.

1. Experts Selection	**2. First Round Input**	**3. Synthesize Responses**
Identify a diverse panel of subject matter experts relevant to the policy issue.	Experts individually assess the policy options or criteria and submit their responses anonymously.	Facilitators aggregate, anonymize, and summarize expert input (e.g., trends, key themes).

4. Second Round	**5. Repeat Until Convergence**	**6. Final Output**
Experts review the summary and revise or confirm their earlier responses in light of the group's input.	Continue iterations (usually 2–3 rounds) until consensus or stable opinion emerges.	Generate a final report with ranked policy options, consensus points, or recommendations.

Figure 7: Delphi Method

7.2.3   Selecting the Preferred Policy Option

The *Policy Committee,* in consultation with the lead MDA (or the Cabinet for national policies), makes the final decision regarding the most preferred policy option. Before finalizing the decision, it is advisable to consult relevant stakeholders (if not already involved) to validate the choice and flag concerns that might not have been fully captured in the policy analysis.

A summary report with a list of each option, key evaluation results, and a brief narrative of its pros and cons should be presented to the approving authority to help their decision. The selected policy option should be based on the evidence from the analysis, practical considerations for implementation, and alignment with national development objectives. Sometimes, the decision might be to combine elements of multiple options. For example, implementing a primary option while also adopting parts of another to mitigate its weaknesses.

1. Generate Options	2. Define Criteria	3. Score & Rank	4. Select & Document
• Brainstorm a wide range of interventions • Include the status quo (or "do nothing" scenario) as baseline	• Select appropriate evaluation method (e.g., MCA, CBA, or Delphi) • Define decision criteria (e.g., effectiveness, cost, feasibility, equity, risk, sustainability)	• MCA: Assign weights, score each option, and calculate weighted scores • CBA: Estimate NPV or benefit-cost-ratio • Delphi: Present options to panel of experts	• Identify the highest-performing option(s) based on scoring or consensus outcomes • Document the selection rationale, assumptions, uncertainties, and any trade-offs considered

Figure 8: Steps in Generating and Selecting Policy Options

7.3   Policy Instruments and Statements

Once a suitable option has been identified, the next step is to determine *how* the solution will be implemented. This requires selecting the right *policy instruments* and formalizing these decisions through *policy statements (or strategies)* that specify the government's course of action.

Policy Instruments are tools or mechanisms to achieve *policy objectives*. As defined by Vedung (1998), they are a "set of techniques by which governmental authorities wield their power in attempting to ensure support and effect or prevent social change" (p. 21). *Policy instruments* are generally categorized into carrots (economic instruments), sticks (regulatory instruments), and sermons (informational instruments) (Vedung, 1998). Most public policies use one or more of the following instrument categories:

substantive, regulatory, economic, and informative instruments. Instrument selection must be guided by the *problem* and *policy analysis* and tailored to the implementation context.

Policy instruments are formalized through *policy statements*—authoritative declarations of the government's chosen course of action. A well-articulated *policy statement* should specify the intended government action and the instrument(s) to be used.

> Example:
>
> *Policy Statement*:
> "The government will provide subsidies to accredited higher education institutions to improve the alignment of training programs with labor market needs."

Substantive Instruments: These are tools that result in the direct provision, production, and delivery of goods and services by the government. Examples include public healthcare services, infrastructure development projects, and social welfare programs.

Regulatory Instruments: These are rules, standards, and requirements that mandate or prohibit certain behaviours and activities. Examples include safety standards for consumer products, environmental protection regulations, and quality standards for seeds.

Economic Instruments: Financial incentives or disincentives to influence behaviour or modify market mechanisms. Examples include taxes, subsidies, grants, and tax credits to encourage or discourage specific activities.

Informative Instruments: Tools that influence behavior through information dissemination to educate, persuade, or promote transparency. Examples include public awareness campaigns, educational programs, and transparency initiatives.

Figure 9: Categories of Policy Instruments

7.4   Draft Policy Framework

The main output of the *policy formulation* stage is the draft policy framework, which represents the core design of the proposed policy. It presents the policy goals, objectives, instruments, and statements, providing technical drafters and other stakeholders a clear understanding of the policy direction before implementation details are finalized. The *policy framework summary* is eventually integrated into the full *Draft Policy Document*, which is finalized at the end of the *implementation planning* stage.

8   IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

The *Implementation Planning* phase sets out the operational roadmap, performance indicators, and institutional arrangements required to implement and manage the policy. It translates strategic intent into practical execution. The main output of this stage is the *Implementation Framework*.

This section is primarily designed for national and sector policies but may be adapted for institutional-level planning where appropriate. The main implementation planning activities covered are: (1) action planning, (2) results framework, (3) risk management, (4) governance and institutional arrangements, and (5) communications strategy.

8.1   Action and Implementation Planning

The *Action Plan* is the operational backbone of the *Implementation Framework*. It provides specific steps required to achieve policy objectives. It defines what needs to be done, who is responsible, when it should be done, and what resources are required.

The primary output is the *Action Plan Matrix*, which presents a sequence of actions to achieve policy objectives, linked to responsible institutions, timeframes, and indicative resources (*see* Table 7). The *Action Plan* is to be placed within the implementation plan of the policy (see section 11.5). The implementation plan document should be developed alongside the policy before or after stakeholder validation, and submitted together for approval by Cabinet. Where an Institutional Strategic Plan precedes the development of a policy implementation plan, the policy implementation plan will be an addendum to the existing Institutional Strategic Plan and is to be further translated into annual work plans.

8.1.1   Strategic Actions

Strategic Actions are the specific interventions the government will undertake to achieve the policy objectives. The *actions* should be clearly described using active language to guide implementers on what to do (e.g., develop, conduct, build) and logically sequenced, accounting for dependencies to minimize disruptions.

Strategic Actions must follow the same numbering format as *goals* and *objectives* to maintain logical consistency, easy cross-referencing, and clear communication.

> Example:
>
> Goal 1 → Objective 1.1 → Strategic Action 1.1.1; 1.1.2; or *Objective* 1 → *Strategic Action* 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, when the policy has one or very few *goals*.

Table 5: Example of Strategic Actions linked with Objectives

Objectives/ Strategic Actions	Description
Policy Objective 1.1	Improve the alignment of higher education curricula with labor market needs.
Strategic Action 1.1.1	Conduct a national skills gap assessment to identify high-demand occupations and skills.
Strategic Action 1.1.2	Upgrade higher education curricula based on assessment findings, in consultation with industry.
Strategic Action 1.1.3	Provide in-service training for instructors on updated curriculum and competency-based delivery.

8.1.2   Roles and Responsibilities

Each *strategic action* must be assigned to one or more lead institutions responsible for its execution. Assigning roles and responsibilities is essential for accountability, coordination, and efficiency in policy implementation. At this level, responsibilities should primarily be assigned to institutions (e.g., ministries, departments, agencies, or strategic partners), while more granular level assignments can be delegated through institutional-level plans.

Roles and responsibilities must be documented and communicated to all relevant stakeholders for clarity and transparency. A helpful tool for defining roles is the RACI matrix, which categorizes responsibilities into four key areas:

R   Responsible: The institution or lead entity responsible for carrying out the specific action.

A   Accountable: The institution that is ultimately answerable for the action or decision. They ensure the task is completed and approve the work.

C   Consulted: Stakeholders who provide input and whose expertise or cooperation is needed.

I   Informed: Stakeholders who must be kept informed about progress but do not directly influence implementation.

Table 6: Sample RACI Matrix for Strategic Actions on Youth Unemployment

#	Strategic Action	Responsible (R)	Accountable (A)	Consulted (C)	Informed (I)
1.1.1	Conduct a national skills gap assessment	Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS)	MoYS	Ministry of Trade, Industry & Employment (MoTIE);	DSPD

#	Strategic Action	Responsible (R)	Accountable (A)	Consulted (C)	Informed (I)
				National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA); Private Sector	
1.1.2	Upgrade higher education curricula in priority sectors	NAQAA	MoHERST	TVET Institutions	National Assembly Education Committee
1.1.3	Provide in-service training for higher education instructors	TVET Directorate (MoHERST)	MoHERST	Gambia College of Education; Development Partners	School Boards, Unions

8.1.3 Timelines and Milestones

Timelines indicate the expected duration (start and end days) of actions and help structure the implementation process in a clear and manageable way. They should be realistic, accounting for budget and national planning cycles. Timelines are typically expressed in quarters following a calendar year format or years (e.g., Q1 2025; Q2 2024 – Q4 2026).

Milestones are important checkpoints that act as targets and decision points. They help signal whether the implementation is on course or mid-course corrections are needed. Examples may include completion of guidelines, adoption of new regulations, or establishment of national platforms.

8.1.4 Resource Requirements

Resource requirements describe the estimated financial, human, material, and technological resources required for each *strategic action*. It is intended to inform budgeting discussions, guide resource mobilization efforts, and flag any critical capacity gaps early. While detailed costing occurs at the operational level, this section provides indicative financial envelopes, human resources (expertise, quantity, or profiles), and material and technological needs (equipment, vehicles, infrastructure, software, IT systems, etc.) required for each *strategic action*.

8.1.5 Action Plan Matrix

The *Action Plan Matrix* presents an overview of all strategic actions required to achieve the policy objectives, along with key implementation details. Each row shows a specific action, the main responsible institution, the timeline for delivery (including milestones), and indicative resource requirements.

Table 7: Sample Action Plan Matrix

#	Strategic Action	Responsible Institution	Timeline (Milestone)	Resource Requirement
1.1.1	Conduct a national skills gap assessment to identify high-demand occupations and skills.	MoYS	Q1–Q2 2025 Report finalized by May 2025	National consultant, survey tools, GMD 300,000
1.1.2	Revise TVET curricula in priority sectors based on assessment findings, in consultation with industry.	NAQAA	Q3–Q4 2025 Revised curricula adopted by Dec 2025	Curriculum experts, industry workshops, GMD 200,000
1.1.3	Provide in-service training for TVET instructors on updated curricula and competency-based delivery.	MoHERST	Q1–Q2 2026 150 instructors trained by April 2026	Training logistics, facilitators, GMD 250,000

Note: This is an illustrative *Action Plan Matrix* for only a singly policy objective. An *Action Plan Matrix* must cover all *strategic actions* and may include additional columns for goals and objectives.

8.2   Results Framework

The *Results Framework* is central to results-based policy and program design. It serves as the policy's overall results architecture and a point of transition from the conceptually driven *Theory of Change* to a practical, measurable plan for implementation, management, and oversight.

The framework organizes the policy's hierarchy of objectives along the *Results Chain* and links them to clear indicators, baselines, targets, and means of verification. It also clarifies assumptions and dependencies that underpin the causal pathway, helping to reveal gaps in logic that may require design adjustments. The indicators and metrics developed here form the basis for *Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review* in *Section 10*.

8.2.1   Results Chain

The Results Chain presents a linear sequence through which inputs (resources) are transformed into the long-term changes the policy aims to achieve. Each level builds on the preceding one, reflecting a cause-and-effect relationship that underpins the internal logic of the policy. Two linked but distinct levels of the *Results Chain* can be identified:

➲ Implementation-Level Chain (Inputs → Activities → Outputs): These are operational-level interventions that focus on mobilizing resources (inputs) to deliver specific strategic actions (outputs). It is typically the responsibility of

implementing institutions and is elaborated through sector strategies, program budgets, and annual work plans.

➲ Policy-Level Chain (Outputs → Outcomes → Impacts): This level captures the deliverables under the policy's direct control (outputs), the change it seeks to influence (outcomes) and the broader societal or sectoral changes that it contributes to (impacts). It is the focus of most national policy and planning.

Both chains must be internally coherent and logically connected. Weak linkages, such as outputs that do not plausibly lead to outcomes, or outcomes that are insufficient to produce intended impacts, must be addressed during the design phase to ensure a valid causal pathway.

Table 8: Mapping Policy Framework to Results Levels

Policy Component	Description	Results Level	Example Indicators
Resources	The financial, human, and material inputs required to implement the policy.	Input	% of approved budget disbursed; % of staff posts filled; # equipment units delivered
Interventions	Operational tasks/work packages undertaken by implementing institutions under the policy to deliver strategic actions; defined in institutional strategies/work plans.	Activity	# of activities completed vs. planned; % completed on time; staff-days used; average procurement time; # of trainings conducted
Deliverables *(from *Strategic Actions)*	Tangible products or services that result from policy actions. These may include systems, programs, regulations, services, or campaigns.	Output	Program launched; regulation gazetted; standards or procedures operational; infrastructure built; reports validated and published
Objectives	Short- to medium-term improvements in behavior, service quality, access, efficiency, or institutional capacity that result from outputs.	Outcome	% of target population adopting new behavior; service uptake or coverage; client satisfaction; time/cost efficiency; quality ratings
Goals	Long-term societal or sector-level changes the policy aims to influence. These outcomes are important but typically not fully under the policy's control.	Impact	Poverty or unemployment rate; maternal mortality; CO_2 emissions per capita; national learning outcomes; sector GDP contribution

Note: *Strategic Actions are high-level policy initiatives delivered through *Interventions* by implementing institutions. Their *Deliverables* (Outputs) evidence action completion and bridge the implementation to the policy results chain.
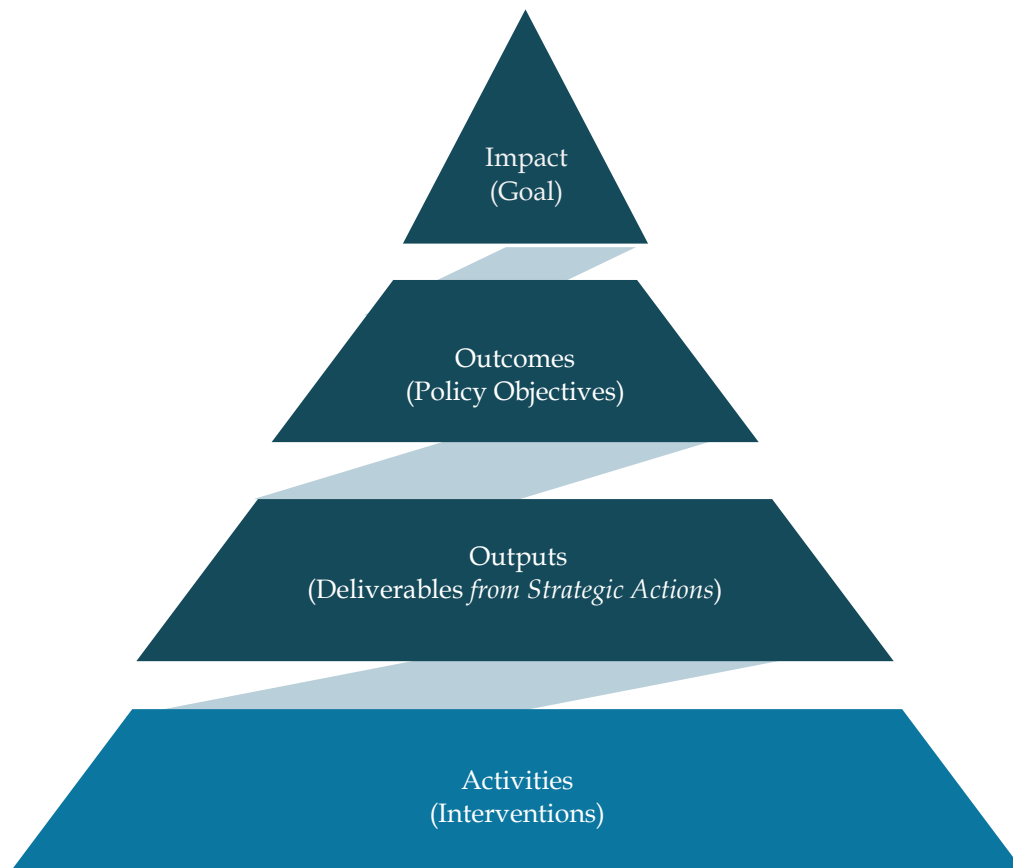
Figure 10: Results Pyramid

8.2.2   Logical Framework (Logframe)

The *Logical Framework* (Logframe) extends the *Results Chain* into a more comprehensive planning and appraisal tool. It is an accountability layer that runs across each level of the causal logic, specifying how results will be measured and validated and the critical assumptions that underpin the Results Chain. The Logframe typically consists of an indicator (with baseline and target), means of verification, and assumptions/risks.

➲ Indicator: The quantitative or qualitative variable for measuring results. Indicators must be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART), with a *baseline* (the starting value and a reference point for measuring change) and a *target* (the desired value or status to be achieved within a specified timeframe).

➲ Means of Verification: The data source and collection method to accurately track the indicator.

➲ Assumption: are conditions and dependencies that must hold for the causal pathway to succeed. They carry inherent risks, some are within the control of implementing institutions others, especially at higher levels are external. All types of risks must be proactively identified and managed (see Section 8.3 on *Risk Management)*.

Table 9: Illustrative Results Matrix/Logframe Excerpt

Result Statement	Indicator	Baseline (2025)	Target (2029)	Means of Verification	Key Assumptions/risks
Goal 1 (Impact) Reduce youth unemployment through access to job-relevant skills	Youth unemployment rate	38%	15%	Labor Force Survey (GBoS)	The national economy grows at a rate that supports job creation.
Objective 1.1 (Outcome) Align higher education curricula with labor market needs	% of revised curricula meeting accreditation benchmarks	0%	80%	Tracer studies, accreditation reports	Higher education institutions adopt the revised curricula and implement them with fidelity.
Strategic Action 1.1.1 (Deliverable) Conduct a national skills gap assessment	Skills gap assessment completed and published	None	Q2 2025	Published report, MoYS policy records	Key government and private sector stakeholders cooperate with the assessment.
Strategic Action 1.1.2 (Output) Upgrade higher education curricula in priority areas	Number of revised curricula adopted	0	> 3 by Q4 2025	Curriculum review memos	NAQAA has the capacity to review and approve the curricula in a timely manner.
Strategic Action 1.1.3 (Output) Provide in-service training for instructors	Number of instructors trained in updated curriculum	0	150 trained by Q2 2026	Training attendance sheets, reports	The training materials and facilitators are of sufficient quality to effect change.

Note: This is an illustrative logframe to demonstrate the format and logic for one policy objective. A complete framework would include similar details for all its objectives and goals.

8.3   Risk Management

Risk Management involves identifying, assessing, and taking steps to mitigate potential challenges that may disrupt the successful implementation of a policy. A *risk management* strategy ensures that both internal and external threats are proactively addressed, supporting the achievement of policy objectives in a dynamic and often unpredictable environment. This section presents an approach to managing risk throughout the policy lifecycle. This includes: (1) risk identification, (2) risk analysis, prioritization, and treatment, and (3) risk monitoring and review.

8.3.1   Risk Identification

Risks are potential events or conditions that could adversely affect policy implementation. They may arise from internal weaknesses within institutions (internal risks) or external environmental shocks beyond the control of implementers (external risks). *Risk Identification* involves systematically recognizing all *risks* that could derail implementation progress. Common approaches to *risk* identification include tools such as PESTLE and SWOT, or structured risk surveys.

- ➲ PESTLE Analysis: Useful for scanning and identifying potential external risks across six dimensions:

  P Political Risks: Political instability, changes in government, bureaucratic resistance, geopolitical tensions, or lack of political will.

  E Economic Risks: Budget constraints, inflation, withdrawal of external funding, commodity price volatility, or exchange rate fluctuations.

  S Social Risks: Resistance from stakeholders, lack of public awareness, religious risks, ethnic tensions, or cultural barriers to adoption.

  T Technological Risks: Insufficient infrastructure, cybersecurity threats, power outages, outdated technology, insufficient technical skills, or technology failures.

  L Legal Risks: Regulatory barriers, weak enforcement, litigation, or conflict with international agreements.

  E Environmental Risks: Natural disasters, climate change impacts, environmental degradation, pollution, or health epidemics.

- ➲ SWOT Analysis: Captures both internal and external *risk* factors related to the implementing institutions' readiness:

S Strengths: Internal advantages such as strong leadership and prior experience that can be leveraged during implementation.

W Weaknesses: Internal vulnerabilities that may impede implementation, such as weak institutional capacity or poor coordination mechanisms.

O Opportunities: Favorable external conditions that can be capitalized on to support implementation.

T Threats: External risks such as natural disasters, political resistance, or shifts in donor priorities.

8.3.2 Risk Analysis, Prioritization, and Treatment

Risk Analysis evaluates the likelihood and potential impact of identified risks (low, medium, or high) to determine which risks are prioritized for *treatment.*

- Likelihood: The probability that the risk will occur during implementation.

- Impact: The extent of disruption or harm if the risk materializes.

- Risk level: The combined likelihood and impact rating which determines whether a risk is i*nsignificant*, *low*, *moderate*, *significant*, or *critical*.

Impact

	Low	Medium	High
High	Moderate Risk	Significant Risk	**Critical Risk**
Medium	Low Risk	Moderate Risk	Significant Risk
Low	Insignificant Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk

Likelihood

Figure 11: Likelihood-Impact Risk Assessment Matrix

Risks rated *moderate* or higher are prioritized for active management and recorded in the policy's *risk register (see* Table 8 below*)* and assigned to a *risk owner* (institution responsible for monitoring, reporting, and responding to that risk).

An *insignificant* risk requires no immediate action but should be reviewed periodically to detect any changes. A *low* risk should be monitored occasionally. *Moderate* and *significant* risks require regular monitoring and mitigation measures to reduce potential disruption. *Critical risk* requires constant monitoring and a contingency plan to manage consequences should the risk materialize.

The *risk register* must include a trigger event, the specific condition or threshold to signal when the contingency plan should be activated.

8.3.3 Risk Monitoring and Review

Risk Monitoring and Review is the process of tracking identified risks, evaluating the effectiveness of mitigation and contingency measures, and scanning for new or evolving risks that may emerge during implementation. As part of their reporting obligations, risk owners provide periodic updates on the status of risks which is recorded in the risk register maintained by the *Lead MDA*.

Table 10: Sample Risk Register Extract

#	Risk Event	Like.	Imp.	Risk Level	Mitigation Strategy	Trigger Condition	Contingency Plan	Owner
1	Budget shortfalls	H	H	Critical	Diversify funding; institute 3-month reserve	Funding gap >30% in one quarter	Suspend non-essential tasks; bridge-financing	Lead MDA
2	Natural disaster in target area	M	H	Significant	Climate-resilient design; early alerts	Flooding in >50% of the target area	Relocate activities; activate disaster protocols	Lead MDA & Local Units
3	Withdrawal by implementing partner	H	M	Significant	Robust MoUs; joint review meetings	Formal withdrawal; refusal to participate in activities	Conflict resolution; engage alternate partners; reassign responsibilities	Steering Committee
4	ICT system failure (core platform)	M	H	Significant	Redundant servers; staff IT drills	Platform offline for >48 hours	Switch to manual system; expedite system repair	ICT Unit
5	Delays in field-level data collection	M	M	Moderate	Stagger surveys; use mobile data tools	-	-	M&E Unit & Regional Offices
6	Procurement delays	L	M	Moderate	Framework contracts; advance procurement plans	-	-	Lead MDA (Procurement Unit)

Note: "Like." = Likelihood; "Imp." = Impact (L = Low, M = Medium, H = High). This is a summary extract from the risk register. A complete risk register typically includes additional fields such as status (e.g., open, resolved), date of last review, and notes/comments.

8.4 Governance & Institutional Framework

The governance and institutional framework establish the structures, processes, and mechanisms necessary for transparent, accountable, and coordinated policy implementation. It defines how decisions are made, collaboration is achieved, and disputes are resolved among the institutions and stakeholders involved. This framework consists of four key components: (1) institutional arrangements, (2) conflict resolution, (3) oversight and accountability, and (4) coordination mechanisms. In addition to the guiding principles established in *Section 2.1*, this framework should adhere to the following operational principles:

- ⮑ Proportionality: Governance structures should reflect the scale and complexity of the policy. A leaner structure may suffice for sector policies, while national or cross-sector policies require more elaborate governance mechanisms.

- ⮑ Separation of Oversight and Execution: Oversight bodies such as *Steering Committees* or *Governing Boards* should be distinct from implementing entities to avoid conflicts of interest and strengthen accountability. Where overlap is unavoidable, external mechanisms for oversight should be introduced.

- ⮑ Functional Specialization: Institutional roles should be assigned based on technical expertise and legal mandates to maximize efficiency and minimize conflict.

- ⮑ Transparency and Documentation: All decisions, roles, and processes must be formally documented and accessible to ensure accountability.

8.4.1 Institutional Arrangements

Institutional arrangements define the main bodies and decision hierarchies necessary for effective coordination of policy implementation. It clearly delineates the governance structure, lead and supporting agencies, and other technical groups responsible for delivering the policy. All institutional arrangements, especially with external parties, must be formalized through binding instruments such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), service-level agreements, or inter-agency protocols that clearly specify deliverables, timelines, and reporting obligations.

A. Steering Committee or Governing Board

The *Steering Committee* (or *Governing Board*) is the apex body responsible for providing strategic direction, high-level oversight, and making strategic decisions. It is chaired by a senior government official, typically the Minister or a Permanent Secretary from the *Lead MDA and* comprises representatives from all relevant MDAs and implementing partners. For policies led by a single ministry, the functions of the *Steering Committee* may be delegated to an internal senior management committee or

equivalent governance structure within that ministry. The Committee's core responsibilities include:

- ➲ Maintains alignment with national priorities.
- ➲ Reviews implementation milestones and key performance indicators.
- ➲ Addresses cross-institutional bottlenecks and coordination challenges.
- ➲ Approves major adjustments to timelines and budgets.
- ➲ Reports periodically to the Cabinet or a designated national oversight body

B. Lead Ministry, Department, or Agency (Lead MDA)

The *Lead MDA* is the main institution responsible for operational decisions and overall coordination. This role is assigned to the institution with the closest mandate to the policy issue. Its core implementation responsibilities include:

- ➲ Coordinates implementation across all MDAs and partners, using appropriate coordination mechanisms.
- ➲ Consolidates progress reports for submission to the *Steering Committee*.
- ➲ Monitors adherence to policy timelines and budget allocations.
- ➲ Mobilizes resources and technical inputs required for implementation.

C. Implementing Partners

Implementing Partners are other institutions that support the *lead MDA* by executing specific components of the policy. These partners may include other MDAs and external entities such as NGOs, development partners, or private sector institutions.

D. Technical Working Groups (TWGs) or Task Forces

Technical Working Groups (TWGs) or *Task Forces* are composed of experts tasked with supporting technical aspects of the policy. Their focus is mainly on complex or cross-cutting issues that require dedicated attention, such as regulatory reform, systems integration, or developing sector-specific guidelines. They are typically coordinated by the *Lead MDA* but may report directly to the *Steering Committee*, which integrates their input into broader strategic and operational decisions.

E. Regional and Local Implementation Units

Regional and Local Implementation Units are required for policies with a decentralized or community-level focus. These units are often embedded within subnational government structures (e.g., regional government offices, city and town councils, etc.). Their core responsibilities include:

- ➲ Facilitating local-level implementation of policy activities.

- ⮕ Mobilizing community resources and fostering local ownership.
- ⮕ Monitoring activities and collecting data on implementation progress.
- ⮕ Providing upward feedback to the *Lead MDA* and *Steering Committee*.

Table 11: Summary of Institutional Roles and Decision-Making Responsibilities

Institution/ Entity	Core Responsibilities	Reporting Line
Steering Committee/ Governing Board	Provide strategic direction; Oversee implementation progress; Strategic decisions (e.g., budget reallocations, policy revisions, cross-sector bottlenecks)	Cabinet or National Oversight Body
Lead Ministry, Department, or Agency (Lead MDA)	Coordinate day-to-day implementation; Manage operational planning and reporting; Make operational decisions (e.g., activity sequencing, stakeholder coordination, resource mobilization)	Steering Committee or Governing Board
Implementing Partners	Delivery of agreed actions; Provide technical inputs	Lead MDA
Technical Working Groups (TWGs)	Provide expert advice; Review policy instruments; Solve technical issues	Lead MDA; Steering Committee
Regional & Local Implementation Units	Execute local activities; Engage communities; Monitor local progress	Lead MDA; Regional Coordination Offices

8.4.2 Conflict Resolution

Disputes among implementing partners may arise due to overlapping mandates, competing priorities, resource constraints, or coordination challenges. The *governance framework* must outline formal mechanisms for resolving such conflicts to avoid delays in policy implementation. A conflict resolution clause should be included in all implementation-related agreements such as MOUs and service-level agreements.

A tiered conflict resolution mechanism is recommended, escalating from negotiation to more formal mechanisms such as mediation, arbitration, and, when necessary, adjudication. Escalation protocols should be clearly defined, including timelines for resolution at each level and automatic referral to the next level if no resolution is reached within the prescribed period. All stages must be systematically documented, including meeting records, agreed-upon actions, follow-up measures, and timelines.

A. Negotiation

Negotiation is the first step in resolving implementation-related conflicts. It involves direct dialogue between parties in a dispute to reach a mutually acceptable resolution without third-party intervention. *Negotiation* is best suited for minor misunderstandings, coordination lapses, or initial disagreements about scope.

B. Joint Mediation Sessions

If negotiation stalls or risks escalate, the matter should proceed to mediation. *Mediation* is a voluntary, confidential process in which a neutral third party facilitates dialogue between disputing parties to help them reach a mutually acceptable solution. The mediator does not impose a solution but rather assists the parties to clarify positions, explore solutions, and may offer recommendations. *Joint Mediation Sessions* should be convened by a neutral body, such as the *Lead MDA*, especially if it has no stake in the dispute. Otherwise, the *Steering Committee* or an external facilitator may be engaged. Mediation is particularly suitable for coordination failures, misunderstandings over roles, timelines, or resource use, and technical disagreements in interpretation or implementation.

C. Arbitration Committees

For more complex or persistent disputes, an *Arbitration Committee* may be convened. Arbitration involves presenting the dispute before an impartial committee that delivers a binding decision. The *Arbitration Committee* should comprise 3 or 5 senior officials or independent experts with no vested interest in the dispute. Members may be appointed jointly by the disputing parties or the *Steering Committee* if no agreement is reached on membership.

D. Adjudication

In rare or extreme cases where internal mechanisms fail, the dispute may be referred for legal adjudication through the courts. Judicial resolution is governed by the laws and constitution of The Gambia and provides a legally binding outcome. Adjudication should only be pursued when all administrative remedies have failed.

1. Negotiation
Direct discussions between the parties involved. It requires no third-party intervention and works best for simple, early-stage issues.

2. Mediation
A neutral third party facilitates dialogue between the disputing actors. Best suited for more complex coordination or technical issues.

3. Arbitration
An independent committee reviews the dispute and issues a binding decision. Used for unresolved, prolonged, or high-impact conflicts.

4. Adjudication
In rare cases, the matter is escalated to the national courts when internal mechanisms fail. The judiciary provides a formal, legally binding resolution based on national laws.

Figure 12: Conflict Resolution and Escalation Pathway

8.4.3 Oversight and Accountability

Oversight and Accountability mechanisms guarantee that resources are used responsibly, and institutions remain answerable for their roles and obligations under the policy. They also support timely course correction when challenges arise and help build public confidence in the policy process.

All *Oversight and Accountability* mechanisms must be aligned with existing national frameworks, such as financial management regulations of the Public Finance Act, open government standards, and relevant public service accountability frameworks, to maintain consistency.

A. Financial Oversight

All policies must incorporate financial oversight provisions to ensure that public funds are used for their intended purposes and in compliance with applicable regulations. This should include both internal and external audits. Audit findings and financial summaries should be submitted to the *Steering Committee* and made accessible to stakeholders.

- Internal Audits: Conducted by audit units within the *Lead MDA* or implementing agencies to verify adherence to budget lines, procurement procedures, and spending guidelines.

- External Audits: Undertaken by the National Audit Office or independent auditors to validate institutional financial reports and adherence to financial management regulations.

B. Grievance Redress Mechanisms

A *Grievance Redress Mechanism* (GRM) provides a formal channel for external parties (e.g., citizens, service users, staff, or affected groups) to raise concerns or feedback related to policy implementation and seek resolution. The *Lead MDA* is responsible for establishing, resourcing, and managing the GRM. The mechanism should be accessible, responsive, and integrated into the policy's broader oversight and learning systems. A good GRM must have the following features:

- Multiple Access Points: Online portals, phone lines, physical drop-boxes, and community meetings.

- Clear Timelines: Defined timeframes for acknowledgement, investigation, and resolution of complaints.

- Documentation and Follow-Up: All feedback and grievances should be recorded, categorized, and followed up on.

- Reporting: Regular summaries of complaints received, and actions taken should be included in policy monitoring reports.

C. Reporting Requirements

Regular reporting is a central element of implementation oversight and performance monitoring. All institutions with implementation responsibilities as defined under *Section 8.4.1* must submit periodic progress reports to the *Lead MDA* at regular intervals (e.g., quarterly, biannually). The *Lead MDA* consolidates these inputs and submits them as a consolidated progress report for review by the *Steering Committee*.

Reports must cover the institution's progress on agreed performance indicators (outputs, outcomes), completion of key milestones and strategic actions, resource use, emerging issues and risks, and implementation challenges.

8.4.4   Coordination Mechanism

Coordination Mechanisms enable coherent, efficient, and collaborative policy implementation. The *Lead MDA,* as the primary coordinating body, is responsible for convening all institutions involved in implementation and aligning efforts across entities. Both national (horizontal) and sub-national (vertical) coordination are necessary in policy implementation, supported by tools that enable efficient collaboration and communication.

A. Horizontal Coordination

Horizontal Coordination enables collaboration across national-level institutions involved. This mechanism convenes stakeholders to assess progress and align efforts across institutions. Participating members are responsible for integrating coordination decisions into internal processes, including strategic plans, annual budgets, and work plans with group decisions on policy implementation.

B. Vertical Coordination

Vertical coordination links national and sub-national institutions. It is particularly relevant for decentralized implementation, local delivery, community mobilization, or localized oversight. This mechanism functions as a two-way communication channel, allowing for the flow of information, resources, and technical guidance from the national level, while feeding back local experiences to inform adaptive decision-making.

C. Coordination Tools

Coordination efforts must be supported by appropriate tools to facilitate timely information sharing and consistent communication. A coordination toolkit should have the following components:

- ⟳ Centralized Dashboard: Provide real-time visualization of key indicators such as activity implementation status, budget execution, and timelines (e.g., Power BI, Tableau, or customized government-hosted dashboards).

➲ Digital Reporting Tools: Online forms and submission platforms to standardize reporting (e.g., KoboToolbox, Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, etc.).

➲ Collaborative Document Repositories: Cloud-based platforms for stakeholders to store and share documents—such as terms of reference, meeting minutes, action plans, and progress reports—in a centralized location. These repositories support continuity and reduce data fragmentation (e.g., SharePoint, Google Drive, internal government file-sharing systems).

➲ Communication Channels: Communication tools for ongoing coordination, such as mailing lists, virtual meeting platforms, and messaging tools for real-time coordination (e.g., MS Teams, WhatsApp, or SMS-based updates where the internet is limited).

➲ Offline Tools and Low-Connectivity Options: In areas with limited digital access, the *Lead MDA* must ensure availability of alternative tools such as: Excel-based trackers, paper-based reporting templates, SMS- or USSD-based systems for low-bandwidth updates.

8.5   Communication Strategy

Communication Strategy defines how policy-related information will be conveyed to stakeholders and the public to raise awareness and galvanize public support. A communication strategy should identify the target audiences, define tailored messages for each group, and determine the most appropriate channels for delivery. Messaging should reflect the concerns, needs, and interests of each audience segment and be informed by the stakeholder analysis conducted during the planning stage.

8.5.1   Target Audience & Information Needs

Different stakeholders engage with the policy in different ways, and their information needs vary accordingly. Communication must be tailored for effective engagement.

➲ Implementing Partners require detailed information about their roles, timelines, and deliverables, as defined in MoUs, service-level agreements, etc.

➲ Direct beneficiaries need simple messages on how the policy address their needs, what benefits they can expect, and any actions required on their part to access services or comply with provisions.

➲ Development partners and civil society organizations benefit from information that aligns with their interests and encourage collaboration or technical support.

➲ The general public requires non-technical explanations to garner support and ensure adherence.

8.5.2   Communication Channels

The choice of communication channel should be guided by audience preference, demographic factors, accessibility considerations (e.g., disability, language, internet access) and cultural sensitivity to maximize reach, engagement, and impact. Common communication channels include:

- ➲ Traditional Media: Newspapers, radio, and television are effective for reaching broad audiences, especially in rural areas or among older demographics.

- ➲ Digital Platforms: Social media, websites, and email are suitable for reaching tech-savvy audiences and fostering two-way engagement through comments, polls, or live Q&A sessions.

- ➲ Community-Based Communication: Town hall meetings, workshops, and focus group discussions allow for direct engagement with stakeholders, particularly in communities with limited access to digital or traditional media.

- ➲ Printed Materials: Flyers, brochures, and posters can disseminate information in easily digestible formats, especially in areas with limited internet connectivity.

- ➲ Special Channels: Stakeholders with specific roles, such as implementing partners, may require dedicated channels like secure online portals, technical manuals, or project dashboards.

8.5.3   Implementation and Monitoring

The communication strategy should include timelines for implementation, designated responsible entities, and metrics to monitor and evaluate performance. Monitoring should assess both *reach* (e.g., number of people or communities engaged) and *impact* (e.g., changes in awareness, attitudes, or behavior).

Table 12: Sample Communication Plan Matrix

Audience	Objective	Key Message	Primary Channels	Timeline	Responsible Entity	Monitoring Metric
Direct Beneficiaries	Inform and encourage participation	"This policy improves your circumstances by…"	Community outreach, radio, town halls	Monthly updates	Lead Ministry	Attendance, feedback, survey responses
Implementing Partners	Define roles and responsibilities	"… here are your responsibilities, timelines, and deliverables."	Workshops, official briefings, emails	Quarterly updates	Lead Coordinating Agency	Adherence to timelines, completion of deliverables
Other Stakeholders	Leverage expertise and encourage collaboration.	"This policy aligns with your interests and	Stakeholder forums, partnership meetings	Bi-annual engagement	Policy Coordination Secretariat	Agreements signed, Advocacy activities

Audience	Objective	Key Message	Primary Channels	Timeline	Responsible Entity	Monitoring Metric
		offers opportunities for collaboration"				
General Public	Raise awareness, dispel misconceptions, and build public support	"This policy addresses [core issue] and creates [societal impact] …"	Social media, TV/radio, websites, public awareness campaigns	Weekly updates during launch, periodic after	Ministry of Information	Social media engagement (likes, shares, comments), public opinion surveys
Donors & Development Partners	Maintain funding and collaboration, build confidence in policy progress	"This policy shows progress in addressing [key issue]. Here are the results achieved to date."	Policy briefs, progress reports, donor meetings, official updates	Bi-annual reporting, during funding cycles	Monitoring and Evaluation Unit	Donor satisfaction surveys, funding renewal rates

8.6   Output: Implementation Framework

The output of the implementation planning stage is an *Implementation Framework*, comprising the action plan, governance and institutional framework, risk management strategy, and results framework. Together with the *policy framework* developed during the *policy formulation* stage, these components form a comprehensive *Draft Policy Document*. The draft policy document must follow the national policy template (*see* Section 11.3 & 11.4) and editorial guidelines for official government documents. Once completed, the final draft document is prepared for the next phase, which includes internal technical review, stakeholder validation, and cabinet submission.

9   COMPLIANCE REVIEW, VALIDATION & APPROVAL

Compliance Review, Validation, and Approval is the final phase in the national policy development process before implementation. At this stage, the draft policy document undergoes a series of reviews to assess its alignment with institutional mandates, national legal frameworks, and national development priorities. This is followed by a formal stakeholder validation workshop and Cabinet approval, which grants formal authorization for implementation. The process consists of four key activities: (1) internal review, (2) compliance review, (3) stakeholder validation, and (4) Cabinet approval.

9.1   Internal Review

The *Internal Review* is the first comprehensive review following finalization of the draft policy. It is led by the *Lead MDA* to evaluate the policy's internal coherence, strategic alignment, and implementation feasibility.

The internal review serves as a quality assurance step before the draft proceeds to the compliance and external validation phases. Clearance to move forward is granted by the leadership of the Lead MDA once they are satisfied that the draft meets the required standards. During this review, particular attention should be given to the following:

➲ **Strategic Alignment:** The policy's goals, objectives, and strategic actions must be clearly articulated and aligned with the core mandate of the Lead MDA and its key implementing partners.

➲ **Feasibility:** Proposed interventions should be realistic and achievable within the existing institutional capacities, available resources, and the proposed implementation timeline.

➲ **Institutional Arrangements:** The coordination mechanisms and roles assigned across government and non-government actors must be well-defined, executable, and conducive to effective policy delivery.

9.2   Compliance Review

Compliance Review involves concurrent reviews by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD) to assess consistency with national legal frameworks, national development priorities, and other sector policies.

9.2.1   Legal Compliance Review

As the government's principal legal advisor, the *Ministry of Justice (MoJ)* reviews the draft policy for consistency with national laws, as well as compliance with regional

and international legal obligations. The review assesses potential legal implications and identifies areas that may require legal reform or clarification.

If legal adjustments are deemed necessary, the MoJ provides formal recommendations. The *Lead MDA* is responsible for initiating any required legislative process, with the MoJ offering technical guidance throughout drafting and submission of proposed legislation to the National Assembly.

The outcome of the legal review is captured in a formal *Legal Review Report* issued by the MoJ. This report is included in the *Cabinet Paper* as part of the submission package for Cabinet consideration.

9.2.2   Strategic and Technical Review

The DSPD, through its Policy Analysis Unit (PAU), provides technical guidance throughout the policy development process. It also reviews final draft policies for consistency and strategic alignment.

This review focuses on an alignment with national development priorities (such as National Development Plan and National Vision); consistency with existing national and sectoral policies to avoid overlap or conflict; and adherence to the *National Policy Development Handbook* and the National Policy Template.

The DSPD issues a written report to the Lead MDA, identifying any gaps, inconsistencies, or areas for improvement. Recommended revisions should be addressed before the draft proceeds to validation.

9.3   Stakeholder Validation Workshop

The *Stakeholder Validation Workshop* provides a platform for broad-based consultation and consensus-building. It enables individuals and institutions who have not been directly involved in the policy process so far to review, critique, and contribute to the final version of the draft policy.

The workshop is convened by the *Lead MDA*, who are also responsible for inviting a representative cross-section of stakeholders, including implementing partners, beneficiary groups, civil society organizations (CSOs), the media, and representatives from the public. It workshop should be facilitated in a way that promotes open dialogue, allowing participants to meaningfully engage with the draft policy and provide constructive feedback for its improvement. *Figure 13* presents some considerations for organizing an effective stakeholder validation workshop.
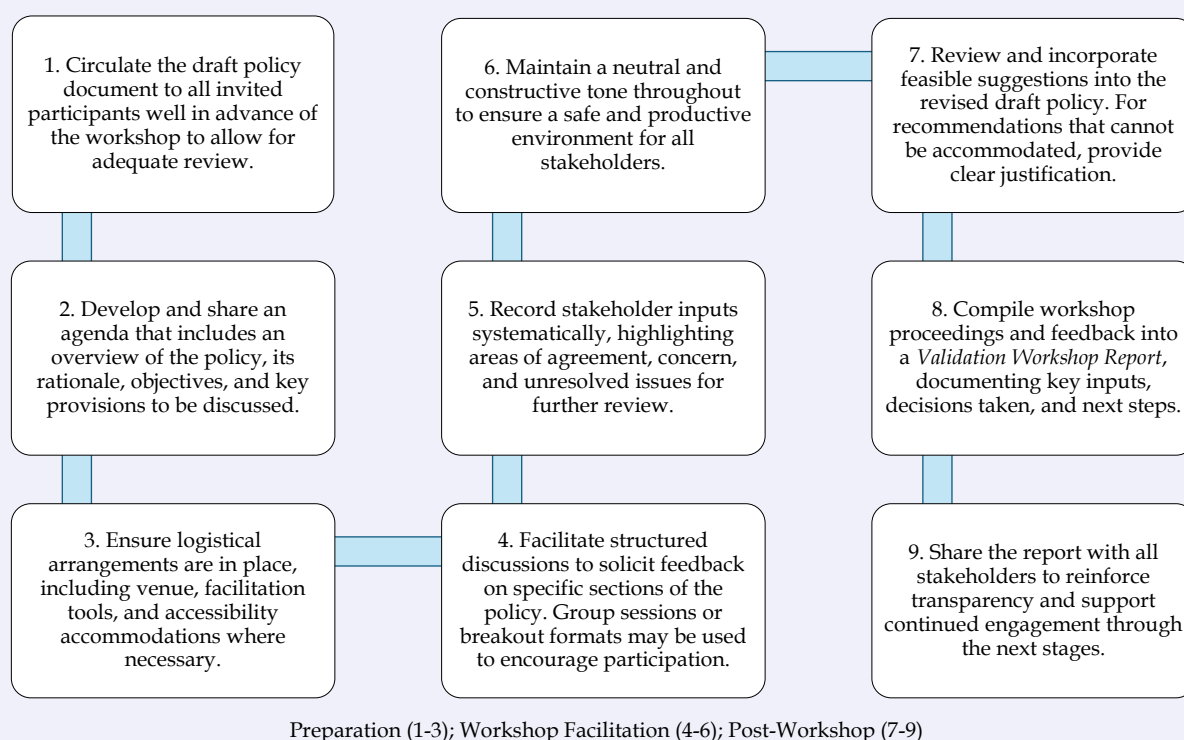
Figure 13: Considerations for an Effective Stakeholder Validation Workshop

Following the workshop, all feedback should be reviewed, and relevant suggestions incorporated into the final draft policy. The proceedings and outcomes of the validation workshop should be compiled into a *Validation Workshop Report* to be shared with stakeholders. A summary of this report, highlighting key institutions in attendance and workshop conclusions, is included in the *Cabinet Paper* during final submission to the Cabinet Office.

9.4   Cabinet Approval

The final phase of the review process is obtaining formal endorsement from the Cabinet. The Lead MDA prepares a cabinet submission package, including the validated policy document and a *Cabinet Paper* (*see* Section 11 for a template) for submission to the Cabinet Office.

The Cabinet grants official approval if they are satisfied with the policy and any requested revision. The approval represents the final endorsement required for the implementation. The Cabinet Office formally communicates the approval to the *lead MDA*, signaling the commencement of implementation.

9.5   Post Approval

Following *Cabinet Approval*, the *Lead MDA* must formally announce the policy and take necessary actions to make the policy document widely accessible to all stakeholders. These may include:

- ➲ Issuing a formal announcement through press releases, social media, and traditional media channels (radio, television, newspapers).

- ➲ Publishing the approved policy document on the *National Policy Repository* (*see* Appendix C) and the *Lead MDA's* official website.

Implementation begins immediately following Cabinet approval. The *Lead MDA* coordinates this phase by activating the necessary institutional, financial, and operational mechanisms to support full policy rollout. Communication and stakeholder engagement efforts should also commence, guided by the policy's communication strategy, to ensure that all relevant actors are informed of their roles and that the public is aware of the policy's objectives and expected outcomes.

10 MONITORING, EVALUATION & REVIEW

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review (MER) are integral components of the policy lifecycle. Together, they provide a systematic approach for tracking implementation, measuring policy performance, and ensuring that policies remain relevant and responsive to changing needs and priorities. While distinct in their primary functions, they are intrinsically linked, forming a continuous feedback loop that strengthens institutional learning, accountability, and public trust.

This section is informed and guided by the *Results Framework* (*see* Section 8.2) and describes how strategic actions and interventions will be monitored, how performance will be evaluated, and how these findings guide decisions to continue, adjust, or phase out the policy. The section is organized into three sub-sections: (1) Monitoring, (2) Evaluation, and (3) Policy Review, each focusing on a sub-component of the MER process.

10.1 Monitoring

Monitoring is the systematic collection and consolidation of information to track progress on the implementation of a policy against it planned activities and deliverables. It begins immediately at policy rollout and continuous throughout implementation, providing timely and actionable evidence on whether the policy is being executed as planned and progressing toward its objectives. Monitoring data also helps identify implementation bottlenecks early, allowing for corrective actions before problems escalate.

A comprehensive monitoring system must be fully established before implementation begins. This includes a *monitoring framework*, monitoring tools (data collection and management), and clear reporting and dissemination protocols. This system allows monitoring information to be readily available and accessible to decision-makers and all implementing partners.

10.1.1 Monitoring Framework

The *Monitoring Framework* is an operational tracking tool that defines *how* and *when* performance indicators will be measured and by whom. Building on the indicators, baselines, and targets developed in the *Results Framework* (*see* Section 8.2), the *Monitoring Framework* includes the following elements:

- ⮎ Data Source: The source of information for each indicator, which may include administrative records (e.g., budgets, official statistics), national surveys, monitoring reports (field visit report, activity logs), or external databases.

- ⮎ Collection Frequency: The time interval at which data will be collected and reported (e.g., monthly, quarterly, annually).

➲ Responsible Institution: The MDA, unit, or partner institution responsible for collecting and reporting the data.

Table 13: Example Monitoring Framework

Result Level	Result Statement	Indicator	Baseline (2025)	Target (2029)	Data Source	Collection Frequency	Responsible Institution
Goal 1 (Impact)	Reduce youth unemployment through access to job-relevant skills	Youth unemploymen t rate (ages 15-35)	38%	15%	Labour Force Survey (GBoS)	Annual	MoYS, GBoS
Objective 1.1 (Outcome)	Align higher education curricula with labor market needs	% of revised curricula meeting labor market standards or accreditation benchmarks	0%	80%	Tracer studies, accreditation reports	Biannual	MoHERST, NAQAA
Strategic Action 1.1.1 (Output)	Conduct a national skills gap assessment	Skills gap assessment completed and published	None	Q2 2025	Published report, MoYS policy records	Quarterly	MoYS
Strategic Action 1.1.2 (Output)	Upgrade higher education curricula in priority areas	Number of revised curricula adopted	0	>3 by Q4 2025	Curriculum review memos	Quarterly	NAQAA
Strategic Action 1.1.3 (Output)	Provide in-service training for instructors	Number of instructors trained in updated curriculum	0	150 instructors trained by Q2 2026	Training attendance sheets, reports	Quarterly	MoHERST

Note: This monitoring framework is illustrative and based on a single policy objective

10.1.2   Monitoring Tools

Monitoring tools are instruments and platforms used primarily to collect and manage data on the progress of policy implementation. These tools enable implementing partners to track performance in real-time, identify bottlenecks early, and take corrective action.

A complete monitoring toolkit should combine data collection tools (digital or paper-based) with centralized data management platforms and reporting instruments to maintain a steady flow of information throughout the policy implementation cycle. The selection of tools should be guided by the specific data requirements of policies and programs, while also considering contextual realities such as institutional capacity, infrastructure availability, digital literacy, and internet connectivity. Additionally, selected tools should be cost-effective, sustainable, and interoperable

with national data systems and must comply with national data protection and cybersecurity regulations.

A. Data Collection Tools

Data collection tools are used by implementing partners and field officers to capture field or project-level information on implementation activities. These tools may be digital (online or offline) or paper-based, depending on the context.

Digital data collection tools, such as online forms and mobile applications, offer considerable advantages in terms of speed, accuracy, and real-time validation. Most modern digital tools operate both online and offline, with data automatically syncing to central systems once connectivity is restored. These systems also include advanced features such as skip logic, data validation checks, GPS tagging, and multimedia inputs, making them ideal for capturing detailed data.

Paper-based tools, such as forms and logbooks, remain common in remote or resource-constrained environments. These tools are particularly useful in contexts with low digital literacy, unreliable power supply, or poor internet access. However, to maintain data quality and accessibility, information captured on paper must be digitized regularly and integrated into the central monitoring system.

Digital Forms and Mobile Applications: Tools such as KoboToolbox, SurveyCTO, Open Data Kit (ODK), Google Forms, and Microsoft Forms enable real-time, structured data collection. Features like skip logic, validation, and direct syncing with dashboards and centralized data systems reduce errors and enhance data quality.

Offline Mobile Data Collection Apps: In areas with limited internet connectivity, tools such as ODK Collect, KoboCollect, and SurveyCTO's offline mode allow field officers to complete structured forms, including GPS coordinates, images, and custom workflows. Data is stored locally and uploaded once connectivity is restored.

SMS and USSD-Based Platforms: Platforms like RapidPro, FrontlineSMS, and SurveyCTO's SMS modules support basic mobile-based data submission. These tools are effective for engaging frontline staff or beneficiaries in areas with basic phone coverage but no smartphones or internet.

Paper-Based Forms and Logbooks: In low-resource or remote areas, paper templates remain the most accessible option for collecting data on activities, service delivery, and field observations. These forms should follow standardized formats and be digitized at regular intervals.

Figure 14: Data Collection Tools

B. Data Management Tools

Data management tools support the aggregation, storage, processing, and visualization of collected information. They consolidate inputs from various data collection tools and reporting channels, providing a central platform for accessing information on

implementation progress. These tools may be standalone systems or integrated platforms, such as Management Information Systems (MIS) and dashboards.

Where sector-specific or national data systems already exist, they should be used as primary platforms for managing monitoring data. These systems are interoperable, enabling a more coordinated and comprehensive policy monitoring among MDAs.

Dashboards, even in the absence of MIS platforms, can be used to consolidate, monitor, and display implementation progress. They can integrate with various data collection and aggregation platforms to provide real-time interactive visuals that support decision-making and oversight.

Spreadsheet software is a practical alternative for data collation and analysis in environments with limited digital infrastructure. These tools, however, require manual updates, version control, and regular backups. Spreadsheets should feed into centralized databases at regular intervals to prevent the risk of data loss and ensure consistency.

Centralized Databases and National Systems: Large-scale data repositories maintained by government institutions. E.g., Education Management Information System (EMIS), Health Management Information System (HMIS).

Interactive Dashboards or Web-Based Platforms: Interactive platforms that visualize data in real time, enabling stakeholders to track performance indicators, identify trends, and make timely decisions. E.g., Power BI dashboards, Tableau dashboards, Google Looker Studio, custom-built government platforms.

Spreadsheets and Local Files: Locally stored data files used for data collation, analysis, or reporting in environments with limited connectivity. E.g., Microsoft Excel files, LibreOffice Calc spreadsheets, CSV-formatted logbooks.

Mobile Device Storage: Temporary data stored on mobile devices during fieldwork using offline-capable apps. Data is later synced to central databases when internet connectivity becomes available.

Figure 15: Data Management and Storage Tools

10.1.3 Monitoring Reports

Monitoring reports are the official products generated from collected data. They provide a synthesis of implementation performance and are used by oversight bodies and other stakeholders for decision-making and accountability.

In decentralized and multi-sector implementation environments, sub-national and implementing partners are responsible for submitting periodic reports on their assigned strategic actions in line with their reporting responsibilities. These reports provide updates on performance indicators, challenges, and resource use, offering deeper insight into implementation dynamics.

The lead MDA's M&E Unit or assigned unit, is responsible for synthesizing inputs from all partners into consolidated reports. These reports provide a holistic overview of policy implementation and typically include overall progress towards targets and key milestones, implementation challenges, identified risks, and recommended actions.

Monitoring reports should be produced at least biannually, or according to the agreed reporting cycle defined in the policy's implementation plan. They must be shared with the *Steering Committee*, implementing partners, relevant coordination bodies, and archived for reference during evaluation and review.

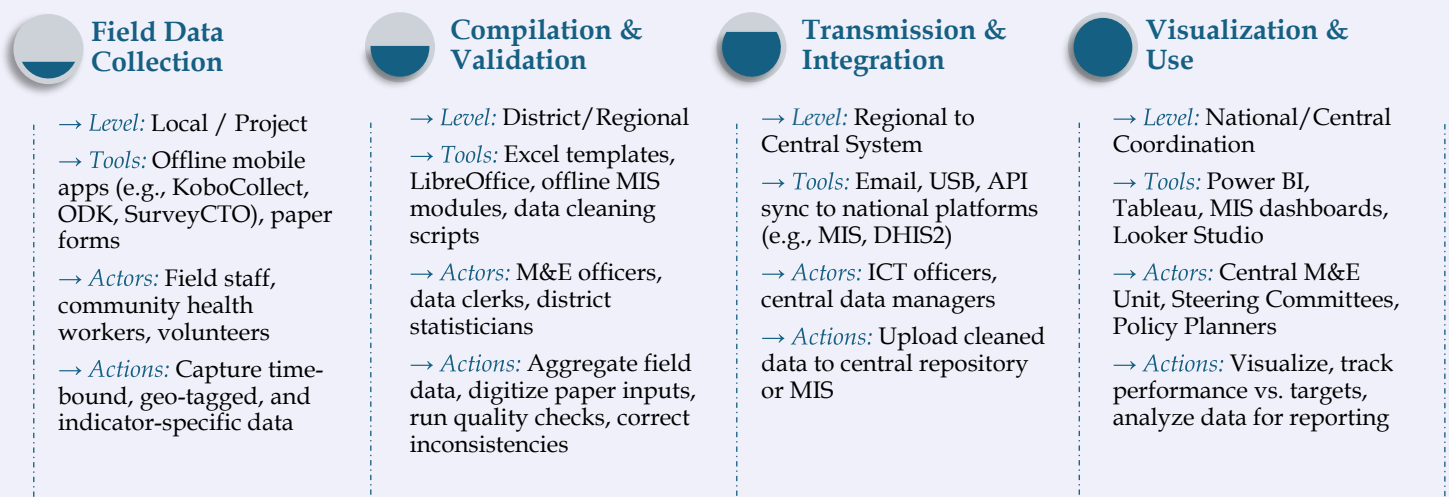| **Field Data Collection**	**Compilation & Validation**	**Transmission & Integration**	**Visualization & Use**
→ *Level:* Local / Project	→ *Level:* District/Regional	→ *Level:* Regional to Central System	→ *Level:* National/Central Coordination
→ *Tools:* Offline mobile apps (e.g., KoboCollect, ODK, SurveyCTO), paper forms	→ *Tools:* Excel templates, LibreOffice, offline MIS modules, data cleaning scripts	→ *Tools:* Email, USB, API sync to national platforms (e.g., MIS, DHIS2)	→ *Tools:* Power BI, Tableau, MIS dashboards, Looker Studio
→ *Actors:* Field staff, community health workers, volunteers	→ *Actors:* M&E officers, data clerks, district statisticians	→ *Actors:* ICT officers, central data managers	→ *Actors:* Central M&E Unit, Steering Committees, Policy Planners
→ *Actions:* Capture time-bound, geo-tagged, and indicator-specific data	→ *Actions:* Aggregate field data, digitize paper inputs, run quality checks, correct inconsistencies	→ *Actions:* Upload cleaned data to central repository or MIS	→ *Actions:* Visualize, track performance vs. targets, analyze data for reporting

Figure 16: Data Flow in Policy Monitoring

10.2   Evaluation

Evaluation is "the process of determining the merit, worth, and value of things" (Scriven, 1991, p. 1). In the policy context, evaluation examines how well a policy has been implemented and whether it has achieved its intended objectives. It contributes to accountable governance, continuous improvement, and institutional learning.

The evaluation process draws primarily on data generated through monitoring systems, complemented by stakeholder consultations, surveys, and administrative data. For quality and consistency, policy evaluations must be guided by internationally recognized standards. The OECD evaluation criteria provide a common framework for judging the merit of public policies, strategies, and programs (OECD, 2021). These include: *Relevance* (does the policy address current needs?), *Coherence* (is the policy consistent with other sector and national policies and strategies?), *Effectiveness* (does it achieve its stated objectives?), *Efficiency* (are resources used optimally in achieving results?), *Impact* (what longer-term effects has the policy produced?), and *Sustainability* (will positive results endure over time?). Other important considerations may include *equity*, *gender responsiveness*, and *inclusion*.

Evaluations must adhere to the principles of independence, credibility, and transparency (UNEG, 2016). This requires a structural separation of evaluation function from implementation. Where feasible, evaluations should be conducted by an independent or external entity to minimize conflicts of interest and ensure confidence in the findings.

This section outlines three forms of evaluation conducted over the lifecycle of a public policy: (1) formative evaluation, (2) mid-term evaluation, and (3) summative evaluation. *Table 14* presents sample questions commonly addressed in each type of evaluation. *Figure 17* depicts a generalized workflow for conducting policy evaluations.

10.2.1   Formative Evaluation

Formative evaluations are conducted during the design or early implementation phase of a policy. Their primary purpose may include assessing root causes of problems, evaluating the readiness of systems and institutions, and testing underlying assumptions before full-scale implementation or refining policy strategies during implementation. Formative evaluation types include needs assessment, pilot testing, and process evaluation.

A. Needs Assessment

Needs assessment is used to identify and prioritize problems, gaps in public service delivery, or unmet needs within a population. It

provides the evidence necessary to justify the policy's existence and shape its objectives. It often includes problem, stakeholder, and situational analyses. A needs assessment report is required for polices that emerge outside national development strategies *(see* Section 11.1 for a template).

B. Pilot Testing

Pilot testing involves implementing proposed policy interventions or selected components in a controlled or limited setting to test feasibility, acceptability, and potential effectiveness. This helps to identify design flaws, potential resistance, possible operational or logistical challenges, and unintended consequences. Findings from pilots help refine strategies and improve program design, reducing risks and increasing the likelihood of success.

C. Process Evaluation

Process evaluation determines how well a policy is executed relative to its original plan. It investigates whether key inputs, activities, and outputs are being delivered as intended (implementation fidelity) and whether the policy is reaching its intended population segments (reach). This type of evaluation is conducted during early implementation to identify bottlenecks, allowing corrective measures to be taken in time.

10.2.2 Mid-term Evaluation

Mid-term evaluation is conducted halfway through the policy's implementation timeline. It combines elements of process and outcome evaluation to determine whether the policy is being implemented as planned and targets are being met. This evaluation is mandatory for policies with an implementation period of four years or longer. The scope of a mid-term evaluation encompasses assessing the progress of policy activities, identifying specific challenges faced during implementation, and evaluating the performance of involved stakeholders. It provides valuable information that informs mid-term *policy review* and decision to adjust or continue the policy.

10.2.3 Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluations are conducted at the end of the implementation period to assess overall performance in achieving its stated objectives and goals. They provide a comprehensive picture of effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, and offer insights into good practices, areas for improvement, and opportunities for scale-up or replication in other contexts. Examples are outcome and impact evaluations.

A. Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation is conducted shortly after implementation to determine the extent to which the policy has achieved its short-term and intermediate outcomes. It examines the extent to which outcomes were realized, factors that supported or

hindered success, and the degree to which beneficiary and stakeholder expectations were met. Outcome evaluations provide evidence that feeds directly into summative review.

B. Impact Evaluation

Impact evaluation assesses the medium to long-term effects of the policy and whether observed changes can be credibly attributed to the policy intervention. These evaluations require rigorous designs to distinguish policy effects from external influences. They generate high-quality evidence that establishes the true effect of the policy. Impact evaluations commonly use the following methodological designs:

➲ Experimental Designs: These are considered the gold standard for impact evaluation. They involve randomly assigning individuals or groups to treatment (receiving the policy intervention) and control (not receiving it) groups. An example is the Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs), which enable strong causal attribution by controlling for external factors.

➲ Quasi-Experimental Designs: Used when random assignment is not feasible. They employ statistical techniques (e.g., propensity score matching, regression discontinuity, difference-in-differences) to eliminate bias due to external factors.

➲ Non-Experimental Designs: These approaches compare results only among the group receiving the intervention. While they are less robust in attributing causality, they are practical in settings where experimental or quasi-experimental methods are not feasible due to ethical, logistical, or resource constraints.
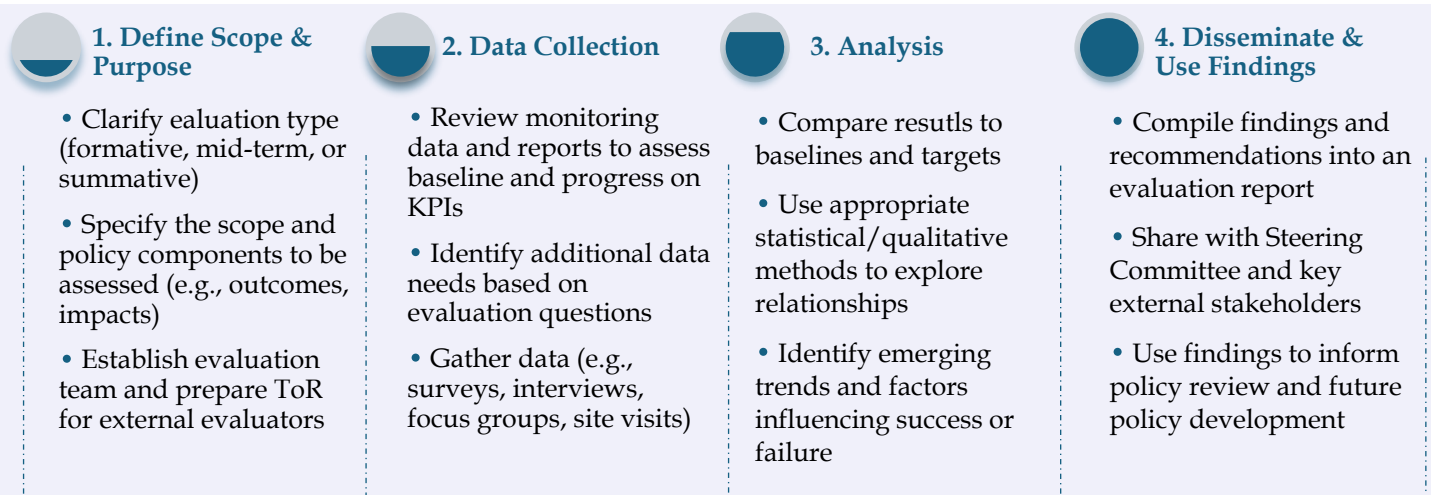
1. Define Scope & Purpose	2. Data Collection	3. Analysis	4. Disseminate & Use Findings
• Clarify evaluation type (formative, mid-term, or summative) • Specify the scope and policy components to be assessed (e.g., outcomes, impacts) • Establish evaluation team and prepare ToR for external evaluators	• Review monitoring data and reports to assess baseline and progress on KPIs • Identify additional data needs based on evaluation questions • Gather data (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, site visits)	• Compare resutls to baselines and targets • Use appropriate statistical/qualitative methods to explore relationships • Identify emerging trends and factors influencing success or failure	• Compile findings and recommendations into an evaluation report • Share with Steering Committee and key external stakeholders • Use findings to inform policy review and future policy development

Figure 17: The Evaluation Process

Table 14: Sample Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Type	Purpose	Sample Evaluation Questions
Needs Assessment	Identify service gaps and justify the policy	• What evidence supports the need for this policy? • Who are the key stakeholders and what are their priorities? • What are the root causes of the identified problem? • What existing services, if any, are failing to meet the need?
Pilot Testing	Test and refine policy approaches before scale-up	• Are the proposed interventions feasible in the pilot setting? • How do target beneficiaries respond to the pilot? • Were there any logistical, technical, or operational issues? • What adjustments are needed before national rollout?
Process Evaluation	Examine implementation fidelity and reach	• Are activities being delivered as planned? • What proportion of the target population is being reached? • Are resources (inputs) being used efficiently? • What barriers are affecting implementation quality?
Mid-term Evaluation	Assess progress and inform mid-course corrections	• Is the policy on track to meet its targets? • What challenges have emerged during implementation? • What changes can improve effectiveness going forward? • Are stakeholders engaged and satisfied with progress?
Outcome Evaluation	Measure short-term results and effectiveness	• Have desired changes occurred in the target population? • To what extent are the policy's objectives being achieved? • Are outcomes consistent across different groups or regions? • What unintended outcomes have been observed?
Impact Evaluation	Assess medium- to long-term effects and attribution	• What are the long-term changes attributable to the policy? • What other factors may have influenced observed changes? • What is the cost-effectiveness of the intervention? • How sustainable are the observed impacts?

10.3   Policy Review

Policy Review is the process of determining the policy's continued relevance based on evaluation findings and available evidence. The primary purpose is to establish whether the policy should be continued, adjusted, or phased out. This process is a key learning and accountability mechanism, allowing the government to remain responsive to changing contexts, emerging trends, and evolving implementation challenges.

The review process is closely linked to policy evaluation; evaluations provide the critical evidence base that informs review decisions. Mandatory policy reviews are triggered following major evaluations, as well as in response to significant internal or external developments. This section covers the following: (1) types of policy review, (2) the review process, and (3) review decision.

10.3.1   Review Types

Policy reviews can be categorized by the conditions that trigger them. Most notably, mid-term and summative reviews are predefined during policy development and are designed to complement the evaluation process. In addition, policy reviews may be initiated in response to significant changes in the policy environment.

A. Mid-term Review

A *mid-term review* is conducted at the midpoint of the policy implementation period and directly follows the mid-term evaluation. It is intended to inform course correction for the remaining duration of the policy, drawing on the evaluation findings and other sources of information such as monitoring data and stakeholder interviews.

B. Summative Review

Summative review, also final or end-term review, is conducted at the conclusion of the policy cycle, following summative evaluation. This review informs high-level decisions regarding the future of the policy, including whether to renew it (with or without modifications), replace it with a new policy, or discontinue that line of action altogether.

C. Contextual Review

Contextual reviews are initiated in response to internal or external developments that significantly alter the policy environment. These may include political transitions, economic shocks, global crises, or the adoption of new national strategies or international commitments. The purpose is to assess whether the policy remains fit-for-purpose and to realign its focus, scope, or priorities accordingly. Contextual reviews ensure policies remain dynamic and responsive to real-world conditions.

10.3.2   Review Process

The *policy review* processes synthesize evidence and information from multiple sources, including monitoring reports, evaluation findings, stakeholder consultations, audits, in determining the policy's future. The process is coordinated by the Lead Ministry, Department, or Agency (MDA), with active involvement from stakeholders and technical experts to ensure comprehensive analysis and broad ownership of outcomes. The results and recommendations are consolidated into a formal review report, which is then submitted to the Steering Committee for endorsement and final decision. *Figure 18* illustrates some of the major steps in the policy review process.
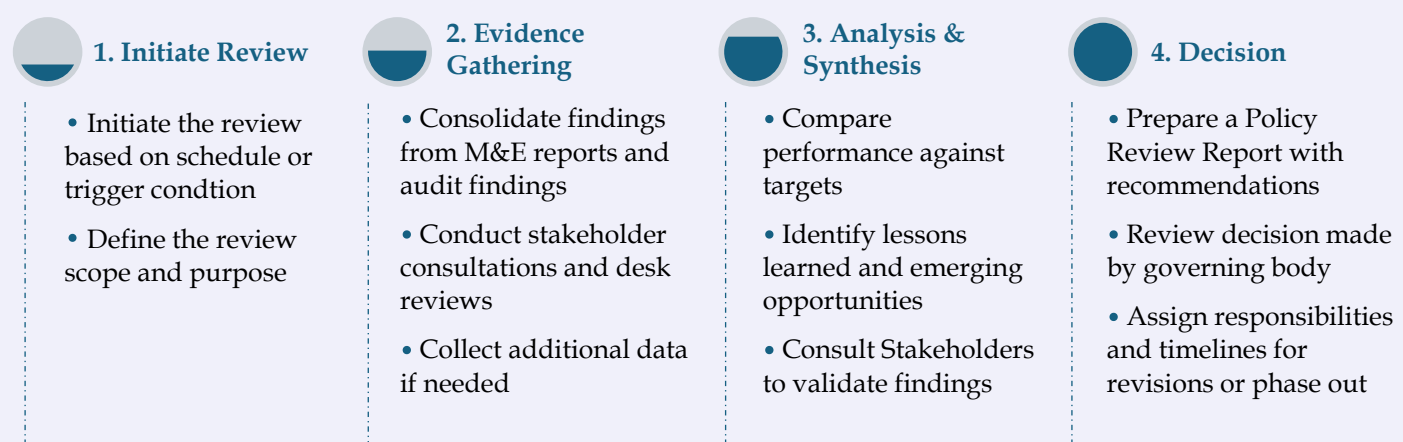

1. Initiate Review	2. Evidence Gathering	3. Analysis & Synthesis	4. Decision
• Initiate the review based on schedule or trigger condtion • Define the review scope and purpose	• Consolidate findings from M&E reports and audit findings • Conduct stakeholder consultations and desk reviews • Collect additional data if needed	• Compare performance against targets • Identify lessons learned and emerging opportunities • Consult Stakeholders to validate findings	• Prepare a Policy Review Report with recommendations • Review decision made by governing body • Assign responsibilities and timelines for revisions or phase out

Figure 18: Policy Review Process

10.3.3   Review Decision

Following the completion of a policy review, the *Steering Committee*, *Governing Board,* or other designated oversight body must decide on the appropriate course of action for future of the policy. This decision must be firmly grounded in the evidence and recommendations presented in the *Policy Review Report*. A review decision typically results in one of the following pathways:

A. Continuation

Continuation is recommended when the policy remains relevant to the original problem it was designed to address, demonstrates satisfactory progress toward achieving its objectives, and continues to align with national priorities. In such cases, the policy may proceed with its implementation, potentially accompanied by minor adjustments to enhance performance, responsiveness, or efficiency.

B. Adjustment

Adjustment is appropriate when the policy still addresses a valid issue but requires modifications to improve its effectiveness, efficiency, or alignment with evolving national strategies. Adjustments may include refining policy goals or indicators,

reallocating resources, shifting institutional responsibilities, or updating implementation mechanisms.

C. Merger or Consolidation

When two or more policies share similar objectives or have overlapping mandates, it may be more efficient to merge or consolidate them into a single, streamlined policy. This approach helps reduce duplication, clarify institutional roles, and enhance coordination across government agencies. Mergers should be carefully planned to incorporate best practices from each policy and must involve consultation with all relevant stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition.

D. Replacement

In some instances, the existing policy may no longer be fit for purpose due to changing needs, persistent underperformance, or emerging challenges. In such cases, it may be replaced by a new or revised policy that better addresses the current context. The replacement process should be evidence-based, participatory, and designed to ensure continuity in addressing the original policy goals, while also responding to new priorities.

E. Phase-Out (Termination)

Termination is considered when the policy has fully achieved its objectives, and the original problem has been resolved; when the policy has persistently failed across multiple review cycles; or when evidence indicates unintended negative impacts. Termination should be supported by documented justification and, where necessary, alternative interventions should be identified to prevent policy gaps. A transition period should be defined to allow for orderly closure, communication with affected stakeholders, and institutional handover. Stakeholders must be informed and provided with recourse through formal appeals mechanisms or institutional channels.

Table 15: Summary of Key Activities, Actors, and Outputs Over the National Policy Cycle

Phase	Main Activities	Main Actors Involved	Primary Output
Agenda Setting	• Identify national issues requiring government intervention • Prioritize based on severity, urgency, etc. • Analyze social, economic, and political implications	Office of the President & Cabinet; Line Ministries; CSOs; Development Partners	Needs Assessment Report
Planning	• Establish Policy Committee and Technical Team • Identify stakeholders and engagement strategies • Conduct problem/root cause analysis • Set initial vision and goals	Lead MDA, Policy Committee; Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD); Ministry of Justice (MoJ)	Policy Concept Note
Policy Formulation	• Define policy objectives • Develop and assess policy options • Select appropriate interventions and draft policy statements	Policy Committee; Technical Drafting Team; Experts; CSOs	Draft Policy Framework
Implementation Planning	• Develop Action Plan, Results Framework • Establish performance indicators and targets • Establish institutional and governance arrangements • Develop risk management strategy and communication plan	Lead MDA; DSPD; Implementing Partners; Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA)	Implementation Framework
Validation & Approval	• Review of draft policy by lead MDA, MoJ, MoFEA, and DSPD • Organize stakeholder validation workshop • Secure Cabinet approval • Disseminate approved policy document	Lead MDA; MoJ; DSPD; Cabinet Office	Approved Policy Document
Implementation	• Mobilize resources • Activate institutional and governance mechanisms • Execute action/implementation plan	Lead MDA; Implementing Partners; MoFEA	Operationalized Annual Work Plans and Budgets
Monitoring, Evaluation & Review	• Monitor policy implementation progress • Conduct mid-term and summative evaluations and reviews • Disseminate findings and implement review decisions	Planning/M&E Units, DSPD, External Evaluators, Directorate of Development Planning (DDP)	• Monitoring Report • Evaluation & Review Report

PART III: POLICY DEVELOPMENT TEMPLATES

11 POLICY & PLANNING TEMPLATES

This section provides standardized templates to guide the preparation of policy and planning documents across the Government of The Gambia. The templates complement the guidelines, principles, and tools presented in Parts I and II of this Handbook and include cross-references to relevant sections to support usability and consistency.

The templates define the *minimum required* structure and content for key policy documents. Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) may expand or adapt them as needed to reflect the complexity of the issue or the sector context. The following templates are provided in this Part.

1. Needs Assessment Report: The primary output of the *problem identification & agenda setting* phase. It provides a thorough assessment of the policy issue, including root causes, affected populations, and an evidence-based justification for government intervention.

2. Concept Note/Document: The main output of the *planning* phase. It synthesizes all preliminary assessments, initial policy ideas, and proposed directions for policy development.

3. Sector Policy: A core output of the *policy formulation* and *implementation planning* phases. Sector policies define strategic direction, implementation mechanisms, and institutional and governance arrangements for addressing sector-specific or cross-cutting issues. They are typically high-level documents endorsed at the national level.

4. Procedural Policy: A policy output that focuses on internal government operations. It aims to improve institutional processes and compliance to enhance the efficiency and quality of public service delivery.

5. Strategic Plan: A medium-term operational planning document that consolidates all institutional policy commitments and mandates into sequenced actions. It outlines activities, budgets, timelines, and performance indicators.

6. Cabinet Paper: A mandatory document required for all submissions to Cabinet. It provides a high-level overview of the policy, including legal, financial, human rights, and publicity implications for securing formal endorsement for implementation.

11.1   Needs Assessment Report

Cover Page

o   Report Title
   o   Ministry, Department, or Agency
   o   Date of Publication (*Month, Year*)

Executive Summary

1. Introduction
   •   Purpose of the needs assessment
   •   Contextual Background *(sector, national, and global context relevant to the issue)*
   •   Methodology used *(e.g., desk review, data sources, stakeholder consultations, fieldwork)*

2. Problem Description
   •   Clearly describe the policy problem
   •   Specify the sector, geographic, or demographic dimension of the problem
   •   Identify preliminary root causes and contributing factors

3. Impact Analysis
   •   Identify the population or groups most impacted
   •   Describe the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the problem
   •   Highlight potential long-term implications if unaddressed

4. Current Government & Partner Response
   •   Existing government approach to the problem (policies, programs, laws, etc)
   •   Identify gaps, overlaps, or failures that exist

5. Alignment with National and Global Commitments
   •   Relevance to the National Development Plan or Vision
   •   Highlight linkages with regional or global frameworks *(e.g., AU Agenda 2063, ECOWAS Vision 2050, SDGs)*

6. Recommendations
   •   Summary of the justification for government action
   •   Suggested next steps

References/Bibliography   •   Full list of reference materials used in the report
Annexes   •   Data tables, charts, summary of consultations/interviews

11.2   Concept Document Template

Cover Page o   Proposed Policy Title o   Ministry, Department, or Agency o   Date of Publication (*Month, Year*)
Executive Summary
1. Introduction • Purpose of the Concept Note/Document • Overview of the policy's scope and intended coverage
2. Background • Summary of prior or ongoing policies, programs, or interventions in this area • Justification for government intervention • Alignment with relevant national development strategies *(e.g., Vision 2050, NDP)* and international frameworks *(e.g., SDGs, AU Agenda 2063)*
3. Policy Problem Analysis *[see NPDH 6.3]* • Description of the core policy problem(s) • Analysis of root causes and contributing factors • Consequences or risks if not addressed
4. Policy Vision, Goals, and Objectives *[see NPDH 6.4 & 7.1]* • Vision statement • Policy goal(s) • Preliminary Objectives
5. Potential Solutions or Approach *[see NPDH 7.2]* • Possible policy directions or alternatives • Preferred option (if any) and anticipated outcomes/impact
6. Implementation Considerations • Proposed implementing partners and expected roles • Institutional capacity assessments and resource needs
7. Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement Plan *[see NPDH 6.2]* • Key Stakeholder groups and their interests • Proposed engagement strategy across the policy cycle
8. Indicative Resource Requirements *[see NPDH 8.1.4]* • Human, financial, and technical resource estimates • Potential source of Funds (*e.g., national budget, donor funding, PPPs*)
9. Proposed Roadmap and Next Steps • Timeline for major policy activities and expected deliverables • Any additional studies, assessments, or pilot testing required
References/Bibliography • Full list of reference materials used
Appendix/Annex • Stakeholder analysis matrix, additional tables, graphs, and extracts from relevant reports

Note: see NPDH are section references in the National Policy Development Handbook

11.3   Sector Policy Template

• Policy Title *(start – end years)*	Ministry, Department, or Agency	Date *(Month, Year)*

Front Matter
• Foreword	Acknowledgments	Executive Summary
• Table of Contents	List of Tables & Figures	Acronyms & Abbreviations	Glossary

1. Introduction
1.1 Policy Title *[Introduce the policy, give rationale, purpose, coverage]*
1.2 Strategic Alignment *[previous policies, national development strategies, international frameworks]*
1.3 Guiding Principles
1.4 Policy Formulation Process *[summary, details annexed]*

2. Background *[see NPDH 6.2 & 6.3]*
2.1 Sector Context *[trends, opportunities, challenges]*
2.2 Problem Analysis
2.3 Stakeholder & Institutional Analysis *[stakeholder groups, interest, needs]*

3. Legal and Regulatory Framework
3.1 Legal, Regulatory, & Policy Mandate
3.2 Legal Gaps & Required Amendments *[amendments should be reflected in policy statements]*

4. Policy Direction *[see NPDH 6.4 & 7.1]*
4.1 Vision
4.2 Policy Goal(s)
4.3 Policy Objectives
4.4 Policy Scope [Summary of policy target groups and focus/priority areas]

5. Policy Framework *[see NPDH 7 &8.1]*
5.1 Focus Area/Priority Area 1 *[preamble to introduce the priority or focus area]*
a.   Policy Statement(s)   b. Strategic Actions [optional]
[Repeat structure as necessary]

6. Implementation Framework *[see NPDH 8]*
6.1 Implementation Arrangements *[Commitments, timelines and responsibilities for the development of a policy implementation plan – See Policy Implementation Template 11.5]*
6.2 Financing & Sustainability *[resource estimates, funding sources, sustainability strategy]*
6.3 Risk Management *[key risks, mitigation & contingency plan, risk register]*
6.4 Stakeholder Engagement & Communication

7. Governance & Institutional Arrangements *[see NPDH 0]*
7.1 Institutional Roles *[Lead MDA, partners, sub-national bodies]*
7.2 Decision-Making & Coordination
7.3 Oversight, Grievance, & Redress

8. Monitoring, Evaluation, & Review *[see NPDH 10]*
8.1 Monitoring Arrangements *[data flows, tools, reporting]*
8.2 [Optional] Key Policy Targets *[indicators, baseline, target, data source, responsible unit]*
8.3 Evaluation Arrangements*[scheduled mid-and end-term evaluations, methods, responsible body]*
8.4 Policy Review & Update *[triggers, responsible body, reporting structures]*

Bibliography

Annexes
Detailed policy formulation process; Detailed Tables; Consultation, validation, review reports

Note: see NPDH are section references in the National Policy Development Handbook

11.4   Procedural Policy Template

Cover Page • Policy Title *(start – end years)*	Ministry, Department, or Agency	Date *(Month, Year)*
Front Matter • Foreword	Acknowledgments	Executive Summary • Table of Contents	List of Tables & Figures	Acronyms & Abbreviations	Glossary
1. Introduction 1.1 Background & Rationale 1.2 Strategic Alignment *[previous policies, national development strategies, international frameworks]* 1.3 Guiding Principles
2. Situational Analysis *[see NPDH 6.2 & 6.3]* 2.1 Problem Diagnostic/Analysis 2.2 Stakeholder & Institutional Analysis *[stakeholder groups, interest, needs]*
3. Legal and Regulatory Framework 3.1 Legal & Policy Mandate
4. Policy Direction *[see NPDH 6.4 & 7.1]* 4.1 Policy Vision [optional] 4.2 Policy Goal(s) 4.3 Policy Objectives 4.4 Policy Scope
5. Procedures & Workflows *5.1* Component 1 *[preamble to introduce the policy component]* • Policy Statement 1: [e.g. Rules, Workflow/SOPs *[step-by step, decision point & criteria, forms, tools),* Coverage & Exemptions, Responsible Unit/Process Owner] *[repeat structure for additional components]*
6. Compliance & Enforcement *[see NPDH 0]* 6.1 Inspection & Audit Mechanism 6.2 Sanctions & Remedial Actions 6.3 Appeals & Escalation Paths
7. Governance *[see NPDH 0]* 7.1 Coordination 7.2 Oversight & Audit
8. Resource & Capacity *[see NPDH 0]* 8.1 Resource Needs *[Financial, material, and human]* 8.2 Training & Capacity Building 8.3 Funding & Sustainability
9. Communication & Change Management *[see section NPDH 8.5]* 9.1 Dissemination Strategy *[internal circulation, briefs, websites, emails, etc.]* 9.2 Stakeholder Engagement & Feedback
10. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review *[see NPDH 8.2 & 10]* 10.1 Monitoring Arrangements [data flows, tools, reporting] 10.2 [Optional] Key Policy Targets [indicators, baseline, target, data source, responsible unit] 10.3 Evaluation Arrangments [scheduled mid- and end-term evaluations, methods, responsible body] 10.4 Policy Review & Update [triggers, responsible body, reporting structures]

Bibliography
Annexes *[Templates, forms, process diagrams, consultation reports, review reports]*

Note: see NPDH are section references in the National Policy Development Handbook

11.5   Policy Implementation Plan Template

Cover Page Title *(start – end years)*	Ministry, Department, or Agency	Date *(Month, Year)*
Front Matter • Table of Contents	List of Tables & Figures	Acronyms & Abbreviations
1. Introduction 1.1 Purpose 1.2 Scope
2. Policy Direction 2.1 Vision 2.2 Policy Goal(s) 2.3 Policy Objectives 2.4 Scope of the Implementation Plan
3. Overview of the Implementation Plan 3.1 Policy Impact [preamble on the expected impact of achieving policy goal] 3.2 Policy Outcome [preamble on the expected outcomes of achieving each policy objective] 3.3 Policy Priority/ Focus Areas a. Priority Area 1 [preamble on the expected outputs by implementing the activities under the policy priority or focus areas] *[Repeat structure for priority 2,3 etc.]*
4. Action Plan 4.1 Action Plan Matrix Table structure <u>Goal statement</u> <u>Objective statement</u> <u>Policy Priority Area</u> Strategic Actions/Activity	Responsibility	Timeline (Year and Quarter| Resource Requirement [continue *structure as necessary*]
5. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan 5.1 Results Matrix/ Log frame Table structure <u>Goal statement</u> <u>Objective statement</u> <u>Policy Priority Area</u> Strategic Action/ Activity 1.1| Indicator	Baseline| Means of Verification	Key Assumptions and Risks [continue *structure as necessary*] 5.2 Methodology Data collection and Analysis - Data sources - Collection Methods and Tools - Frequency

- Data Analysis
- Evaluation Plan [scheduled mid- and end-term evaluations, methods, responsible body]

5.3 Reporting Schedule
Table structure
Report | Frequency | Content | Responsibility | Recipient | Due Date

11.6   Strategic Plan Template

Cover Page
Title *(start − end years)*	Ministry, Department, or Agency	Date *(Month, Year)*

Front Matter
- Foreword | Acknowledgments | Executive Summary
- Table of Contents | List of Tables & Figures | Acronyms & Abbreviations | Glossary

1. Introduction

1.3 Purpose & Scope
1.4 Strategic Plan Development Process

2. Institutional Profile

2.5 Legal Mandate
2.6 Strategic Commitments *[Sector-specific policies & programs; NDP commitments]*
2.7 Organization Structure & Key Units

3. Sector Overview

3.4 Macro Trends & Global Context
3.5 Institutional & Stakeholder Analysis *[SWOT; stakeholder interest, influence, need]*

4. Strategic Direction

4.2 Vision, Mission, & Values
4.3 Strategic Goals & Objectives
4.4 Program Areas/Pillars

5. Strategic Priorities & Interventions

5.1 Program/Pillar 1 → Objective → Interventions → Expected Outcomes *[repeat for all pillars/areas]*

6. Implementation Plan *[see NPDH sections 8.1 & 0]*

6.1 Action Plan Matrix *[activities, timelines, milestones, responsibilities, resource requirements]*
6.2 Governance Arrangements

7. Costing & Resource Mobilization Plan

7.1 Budget & Cost Estimates *[by program area and year]*
7.2 Human Resource &Training Needs
7.3 Capital and Infrastructure Needs
7.4 Funding Sources & Mobilization Strategy *[budget allocation, donor/grant, funding gap]*

8. Risk Management *[see NPDH section 0]*

8.1 Risk Identification & Assessment
8.2 Mitigation & Contingency Measures
8.3 Risk Register

9. Communication Plan *[see NPDH section 8.5]*

9.1 Internal & External Communication
9.2 Feedback & Grievance Mechanisms

10. Results Framework *[see NPDH section8.2]*

10.1 Theory of Change/ Logical Model
10.2 Results Matrix *[indicators, baseline, target, data source, responsible unit, frequency]*

11. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review *[see NPDH section 10]*
11.1 Monitoring System *[data flows, tools, reports]* 11.2 Reporting Schedule 11.3 Evaluation, Review, & Update
Bibliography
Annexes *[Detailed Budget Tables (by Program Areas and Economic Classification), stakeholder consultation logs, etc.]*

Note: see NPDH are section references in the National Policy Development Handbook

Table 16: Sample Budget Table by Program Areas & Economic Classification

Budget Table by Program Areas

	2024	2025 (current)	2026	2027	2028
	Previous budget	Approved Budget	Budget Estimate	Forecast	Forecast
Program Area 1					
Objective 1.1					
…..					
(repeat for other program areas)					
Grand Total					

Budget Table by Economic Classification

	2024	2025 (current)	2026	2027	2028
	Previous budget	Approved Budget	Budget Estimate	Forecast	Forecast
Current Expenditures					
Personnel Emoluments Goods and Services Subvention (Transfers)					
Capital Expenditures					
Grand Total					

Cabinet Paper Template

THE STATE HOUSE
BANJUL

CABINET PAPER

[Date]
[Security classification]

Office of the [Minister for xxx]
Chair, [Cabinet Committee on xxx]

[Title of the Cabinet Paper Here]

Proposal

1   State the proposal at the beginning of the paper in one or two sentences. Succinctly state what Ministers are being asked to consider or decide at Cabinet. Do not list the recommendations here.

Executive Summary *[if applicable]*

2   An executive summary must be provided if the paper, including appendices that must be read to understand the issues, is more than four pages long, or if the paper is particularly complex. An executive summary should be brief and succinctly explain the main issues.

Background

3   Background information should cover such things as:

   3.1 a brief explanation of the reasons for the paper (for example, government policy, need to respond to external factors);

   3.2 reference to previous Cabinet or Cabinet Committee decisions (it may not be necessary to restate in full all of the previous decisions, as an accurate summary will often suffice – always quote the most relevant Cabinet or Cabinet Committee minute reference);

   3.3 a summary of developments.

Comment

4   This is the main body of the paper. It should provide the detail required for Ministers to understand the proposal.

5   Confine comment to essential information and argument that supports the recommendations and facilitates good decision making. Lengthy, complex and detailed arguments may not be read or understood during a Cabinet meeting.

6   Comment should, however, state the need for the proposed changes and, as appropriate, set out alternatives and arguments for and against.

7   Make sure the key issues stand out. Break this section up with headings if required.

Consultation

8   This section should list the Ministries that were consulted. If a ministry does not concur, include a clear statement of their views.

9   If the nature of the paper means that specific consultation is required under an Act, outline the statutory requirements, describe the consultation process, and comment on any controversial aspects.

10   The paper should also name any outside interest groups that were consulted, such as the National Assembly.

11   If outside interest groups have been consulted, provide details. If such consultation is intended after decisions are made, comment on that.

Optional Sections *[to be included if applicable]*

Financial Implications *[if applicable]*

12 All papers that contain recommendations on expenditure or revenue, or that have financial, fiscal or economic implications, must include this section and must have been referred to MOFEA for comment. The Cabinet Office will not put papers on an agenda that do not have the necessary agreement of MOFEA, until the issue is resolved.

13 This section should discuss the financial implications of the proposal. If appropriate, outline the costs and how they will be met.

Human Rights *[if applicable]*

14 Be papers that pertain to potential human rights issues must include this section. State the nature of any potential human rights issues identified and indicate the steps taken to address them.

Legislative Implications *[if applicable]*

15 All papers that have legislative implications must include this section (i.e. the potential introduction of new legislation (bills or regulations), or changes to/the repeal of existing legislation). State the legislative implications of the proposal (indicating whether a bill or regulation is required to implement the proposal).

16 The Solicitor General must be consulted if there are legislative implications.

Publicity *[if applicable]*

17 State whether any publicity is planned and whether or not the Minister proposes to release the paper. If proposals are likely to create controversy, the paper should draw Cabinet's attention to the implications.

Others *[if applicable]*

18 An additional section may be added to provide the opportunity for Ministers to include any other item not suitable for inclusion under the above headings but which remain substantially important to the cabinet paper.

Recommendations

19 Discussions at Cabinet or Cabinet Committee meeting will usually focus on the recommendations. It is, therefore, important to set out the recommendations in a logical order and to set out clearly and unambiguously all of the decisions needed. All recommendations, including options, must be drawn together at the end of the paper, not scattered throughout the text. Do not omit important issues on which decisions are required.

20 Recommendations must be written so that they can be converted into a minute recording Cabinet's or the Cabinet Committee's decision. Their meaning should be clear to those who may not have read the paper. They must provide a clear guide to Ministers, and to Ministries that have to implement the decision. To test this, imagine the reader has reference only to the recommendations, not the paper itself, and see if the recommendations would make sense to someone who knows nothing about the paper or its content.

21 Each recommendation must be supported by a statement(s) in the body of the cabinet paper. Do not introduce new material or points into the recommendations. If there is a large set of recommendations, it can be helpful to use subheadings in line with the ones in the main body of the paper.

22 If follow up is proposed, recommend a realistic, achievable date. Recommendations should also state who is doing the follow up and to whom they are reporting.

23 While every effort should be made through consultation to produce agreed recommendations, if there are genuine differences that cannot be resolved, the paper should give clear *options* so that Ministers can make the final decision.

24 In summary, good recommendations:

   24.1 Identify all of the decisions needed;

   24.2 Should be accurate in every detail;

   24.3 Do not leave any room for doubt about what is being decided;

   24.4 Should make sense independently of the paper;

   24.5 Set out clear options for Ministers to decide between, if necessary;

   24.6 Give clear instructions on the next steps or work required, identifying who is to do the work and by when;

   24.7 Rescind earlier decisions, where necessary.

[Initials of the Minister]
[Date]

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Development of the Handbook

A.1 The Policy Diagnostic Study Report (2023–2024)

1. Project Start and Data Collection (Nov 2023 – Jan 2024)

The development of the *Handbook* began with an evidence-driven diagnostic exercise to understand the systemic challenges that have long hampered policy development in the Gambia as highlighted by the *Recovery-Focused National Development Plan* (RF-NDP 2023–2027). Between November 2023 and January 2024, the Policy Analysis Unit collected a wide range of policy materials from the *National Policy Repository* (www.policies.gov.gm), government websites, and internal DSPD (Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery) records. This was complemented by unstructured interviews to fill some data gaps conducted mainly with public officials with experience in the policy process in the Gambia.

2. Preliminary Analysis & Zero Draft (Jan 2024 – Mar 2024)

Between January and March 2024, the *Policy Analysis Unit (PAU)* subjected the collected data to structural and content analysis, mapping each policy's lifecycle against good-practice criteria and flagging gaps in coordination, stakeholder engagement and results management. A zero-draft diagnostic report summarizing the emerging findings was circulated within the *Ministry of Public Service* and a small group of senior planners for methodological validation.

3. Stakeholder Consultations (April 2024 – August 2024)

Extensive bilateral consultations were held with selected Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and development partners. These meetings yielded qualitative evidence on implementation bottlenecks and capacity constraints and confirmed the need for a standardized policy templates and harmonized national policy framework.

4. Template Development and Piloting (Aug 2024)

The *PAU* developed and tested draft templates for concept notes, sector policies, and strategic plans, which were piloted from August 2024 by six MDAs, among them the Ministry of Lands, Office of the Vice President, National Disaster Management Agency, and Personnel Management Office. Feedback from the pilots proved instrumental in refining both the templates and the diagnostic analysis itself.

5. Diagnostic Report and Validation Workshop (Oct 2024 – Dec 2024)

A consolidated draft Diagnostic Study Report was completed in October 2024 and subjected to an inter-ministerial peer review. Final validation took place in November 2024 at a national workshop held at the Banjul City Council. Technical officers from various MDAS, including the Ministries of Education, Health, Finance and Public Service, scrutinized the report's conclusions and endorsed its principal

recommendation: the development of a National Policy Formulation Framework. The Diagnostic Report was also endorsed by the leadership of *Ministry of Public Service* thereby providing the authoritative mandate and evidence base for Phase II.

A.2   The Handbook (Dec 2024 – April 2025)

6.   Comparative Benchmarking (Dec 2024 – Feb 2025)

Building on the diagnostic findings, preparations begun for the National Policy Formulation Framework, later the National Policy Development Handbook. The project begun with an international benchmarking study. Comparative reviews were undertaken of national policy development frameworks of countries such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, Namibia, Jamaica, South Africa, and Georgia, and selected OECD and World Bank guidance. Insights from these jurisdictions helped to shape the first draft of the National Policy Formulation Framework.

7.   Technical Consultations (Jan 2025 – Mar 2025)

Throughout January and February 2025, the PAU convened a series of technical consultations with focal points from every MDA. Particular attention was paid to clarifying institutional mandates at each stage of the policy cycle, the sequencing of policy activities, and the interface with other national planning instruments. These discussions confirmed strong demand for a single reference document capable of streamlining currently fragmented practices. Additionally, feedback received from the piloted templates informed the need for a detailed guide on policy development, and hence the working title was changed from the National Policy Formulation *'Framework'* to *'Handbook'* to emphasize its practical orientation.

8.   Drafting of the Handbook (Feb 2025 – Mar 2025)

Drafting proceeded in two iterations between February and early March 2025. The first full draft translated the diagnostic recommendations and international lessons into principles, procedures, and templates. This draft was shared with all MDAs and selected academics, development partners, and CSOs, for feedback and comments. A lighter second draft incorporated comments received from MDAs.

9.   Validation Workshop for the Handbook (March – June 2025)

The *Ministry of Public Service* convened a national validation workshop on March 12, 2025, bringing together technical staff, planners, and directors from across government. Participants reviewed the draft Handbook's content, structure, and usability, and provided suggestions and written comments for improvement. The feedback received, which included clarifying institutional roles for policy development, additional templates for procedural policies, inclusion of digital tools, and equity considerations, was carefully reviewed, and where necessary, integrated into the final version of the Handbook. The Handbook was finalized and, together with a *Cabinet Paper,* submitted for formal approval by the Cabinet in June 2025.

Appendix B. Integrated Development Framework (IDF)

The *Integrated Development Framework* (IDF) is the national model for aligning and coordinating public policies, plans, budgets, and implementation efforts to advance The Gambia's long-term development aspirations. It establishes a clear planning and policy hierarchy (from national vision to annual work plans) and sets out how these instruments interact to deliver national development outcomes.
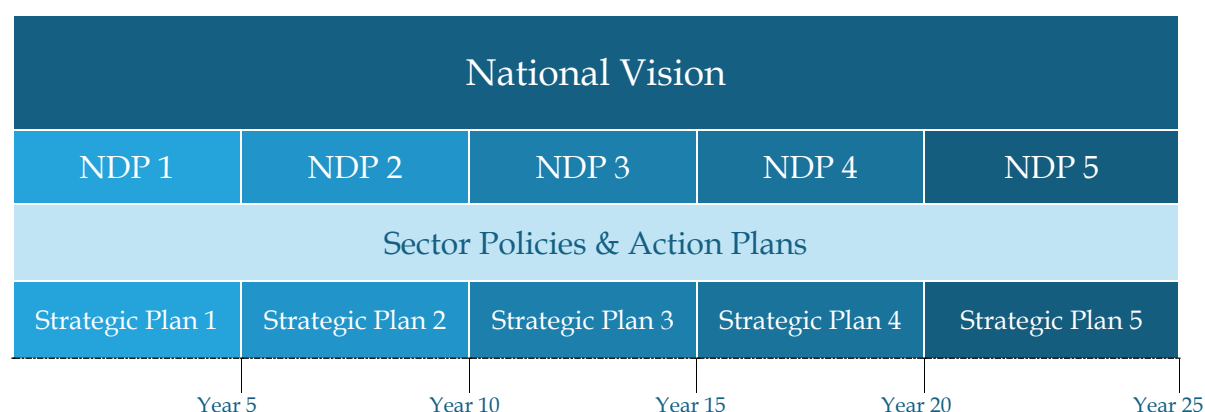
The national-level policies (vision and MTSs), set the overall direction for national development, which is translated into sector-specific actions by sector policies, and operationalized through institutional strategic plans and annual work plans (see Figure 1). The IDF is structurally integrated with the Medium-Term Economic Fiscal Framework (MTEFF) and Program-Based Budgeting (PBB), which ensure that sectoral commitments and operational activities are financially aligned with national fiscal frameworks and budget cycles.

Periodic reviews and assessments at the operational level inform refinements to sector policies and national strategies, making the IDF continuously responsive to the country's evolving needs.

B.1 National Vision and Development Plans

The *National Vision* sits at the apex of the IDF and defines the long-term national development goals spanning multiple political cycles. It articulates high-level national priorities setting the tone for long-term socio-economic transformation.

 Medium-Term Plans (MTPs), primarily the *National Development Plans* (NDPs), translate the long-term vision into time-bound strategic priorities. Each NDP serves

National Vision				
NDP 1	NDP 2	NDP 3	NDP 4	NDP 5
Sector Policies & Action Plans				
Strategic Plan 1	Strategic Plan 2	Strategic Plan 3	Strategic Plan 4	Strategic Plan 5
Year 5	Year 10	Year 15	Year 20	Year 25

as a national roadmap, with successive plans building on previous achievements to maintain momentum toward achieving the aspirational goals of the *National Vision.*

Figure 19: Schematic Illustration of the IDF over a National Vision Cycle

B.2 Sector Policies and Action Plans

Sector policies serve as an essential link between broad national goals and operational plans at the MDA level.   They translate national development priorities into objectives and actionable strategies tailored to sector needs and operational realities. *Action Plans* operationalize sector policies, specifying the activities, timelines, resource needs, and performance indicators required for implementation. *Sector policies* and *Action Plans* are critical coordinating tools in the IDF. They help align overlapping mandates, reducing fragmentation, and promoting collaboration in cross-cutting areas.

B.3 Strategic Plans

Strategic plans are the primary operational planning instruments for all public institutions in The Gambia, typically covering five years. They consolidate all institutional obligations and actions drawn from national policies and strategies, sector policies, and legal mandates into a cohesive institutional roadmap for implementation.

Strategic plans outline and sequence all planned institutional activities, define expected outputs and outcomes, and forecast resource needs, making them an important tool in the national budgeting process.

Strategic plans are developed internally by MDAs and inform the preparation of annual work plans. *All strategic plans* undergo a mandatory mid-term review to assess implementation progress and challenges. Additional reviews may be initiated in response to new national or sector policies, or significant changes in the operational environment. *Section 11.5* presents a standardized template for developing institutional strategic plans.
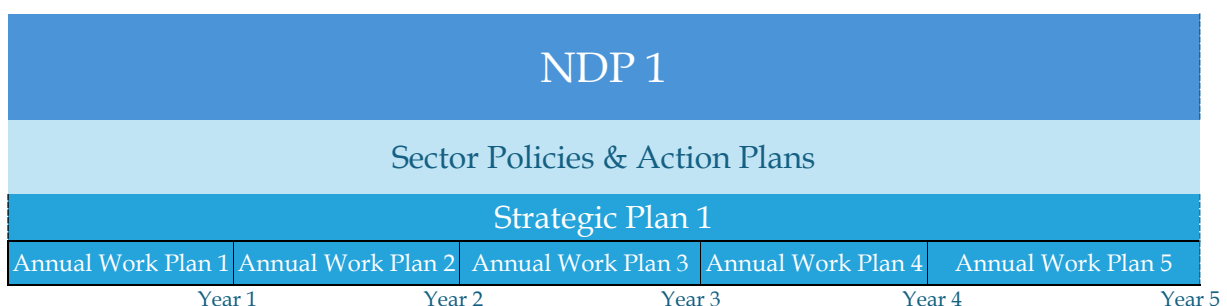
NDP 1				
Sector Policies & Action Plans				
Strategic Plan 1				
Annual Work Plan 1	Annual Work Plan 2	Annual Work Plan 3	Annual Work Plan 4	Annual Work Plan 5
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5

Figure 20: Schematic Illustration of the IDF over a National Development Plan Cycle

B.4   Annual Work Plans

Annual Work Plans (AWPs) are the most granular level of planning. They are yearly operational planning documents developed by government departments, agencies, and authorities, guided by the parent institution's strategic plan.

AWPs translate the annual activities outlined in strategic plans into specific, time-bound tasks—daily, weekly, or monthly—that are assigned to individuals or operational units. They are the primary tools for activity tracking and performance monitoring across government institutions.

The preparation of an AWP may involve consultations with key stakeholders, especially when cross-sector collaboration or support from development partners is required. AWPs are typically reviewed on a quarterly or biannual basis to assess implementation progress and address emerging operational challenges. At the end of the planning cycle, institutions compile an *Annual Performance Report*, which feeds into future planning processes and supports the mid-term and end-term reviews of strategic plans.

Appendix C.   National Policy Repository

The *National Policy Repository*, accessible at www.policies.gov.gm, is the Government of The Gambia's centralized digital platform for hosting official public policy documents and international agreements. It is part of the government's efforts to promote evidence-based policymaking, policy coherence, open governance, and transparency.

The repository is managed by the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery (DSPD), which maintains editorial oversight and reserves the right to return non-compliant submissions for revision.

C.1   Access and Functionality

The Repository operates under an open-access policy, allowing users to access its contents without any financial or technical barriers. Users can read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts without restrictions, in accordance with the *Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0)* license.

Future planned upgrades include audio functionality to support visually impaired users through text-to-speech tools, and interactive tools such as discussion forums, and feedback channels to support stakeholder engagement and participatory review.

C.2 Integration with The Policy Development Process

The *National Policy Repository* is fully integrated into the national policy process and supports policy development at each of the following stages:

- ➲ Planning: MDAs may upload *Concept Documents* to share and gather feedback from a broader audience.

- ➲ Policy Formulation and Consultation: Draft policy documents can be uploaded for stakeholder review and public consultation.

- ➲ Policy Implementation: All approved policy documents are submitted to the repository, which serves as the official portal for accessing all government policies and tracking their implementation status.

- ➲ Monitoring and Evaluation: The repository issues automated notifications to MDAs for scheduled evaluations (mid-term and summative) and policy review dates.

C.3 Institutional Responsibility

All MDAs are expected to collaborate with the DSPD to maintain the relevance, accuracy, and completeness of the contents of the repository. The Repository must be integrated into institutional policy workflows and serve as the official source for national policy documents and international agreements. To support this, MDAs should:

i)   Designate policy focal person to liaise with the DSPD to maintain an up-to-date records of policies, strategic plans, and international agreements entered on behalf of the Government of the Gambia.

ii)   Use standard templates and formatting guidelines provided by DSPD for document preparation and submission.

iii)   Participate in annual audits conducted by the DSPD to verify the completeness and accuracy of documents stored in the repository.

ANNEX

Annex A. Policy Framework Diagnostic Report (Summary)

A.1   Purpose & Scope

This summary presents the findings of the *Policy Framework Diagnostic Study (2024),* which examined three interrelated dimensions of The Gambia's policy environment: (1) historical trends in national policy activity, (2) the existing institutional framework for policy development, and (3) the structure and quality of published policy documents. The study revealed both progresses made in recent years and persistent challenges that undermine the coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness of public policies.

A.2   Trends in Public Policy Activity

An analysis of 44 publicly available policy documents over the past 15 years revealed three distinct phases (*see* Figure 2). From 2007 to 2014, policy output was low, reflecting underinvestment in institutional capacity and limited political prioritization. Between 2015 and 2018, policy development accelerated, coinciding with The Gambia's political transition and the launch of the *National Development Plan* (2018–2021). New policies emerged both in response to the growing demand for reforms and to operationalize the NDP. During that period, fourteen policies were finalized in 2018 alone, spanning civil service reform, trade, investment, and digital governance, demonstrating the country's ability to respond to emerging priorities.

Figure 21: Trends in Public Policy in The Gambia 2007-2023

Beginning in 2019, however, the pace slowed as focus shifted to implementation of existing policies. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted policy work between 2020 and 2022, due to the 'partial' government shutdown and reprioritizing resources toward emergency response. The effects persisted in the years that followed, given the multi-year nature of policy development. With the advent of the *Recovery-Focused*

National Development Plan (RF-NDP 2023–2027), momentum has returned: several sector policies in tourism, land, and agriculture are under development. Yet many legacy policies remain outdated or poorly coordinated, highlighting the need for a sustained, institutionally anchored policy formulation framework.

A.3   Fragmented Policy Development Framework

The study found that, in the absence of a standardized, government-wide procedure for policy development, Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) have adopted ad hoc approaches. A handful of MDAs have built internal processes and engaged stakeholders meaningfully; others have depended on external consultants or copied frameworks from other countries. The result is a patchwork of uncoordinated policies, duplication of effort, and incoherent implementation. While structures such as the Policy Analysis Unit (PAU) and sector working groups exist, they are either under-utilized or inconsistently engaged. Comparative review of Ghana and South Africa shows how a national policy formulation framework, with clearly defined stages, roles, and quality-assurance gates, can improve coherence and institutional ownership.

A.4   Inconsistent Structure of Policy Documents

An assessment of available policy documents uncovered wide variations in structure, depth, and clarity. In many cases, critical components such as a clear problem statement, a concise rationale, implementation arrangements, and results and monitoring frameworks, are missing or not detailed. Equally, explicit references to national development priorities are rarely integrated, undermining the coherence of individual policies within the wider national development agenda. These inconsistencies hamper effective implementation, complicates cross-sector coordination, and makes it challenging to track performance and overall effectiveness.

A.5   Summary of Recommendations

To address these gaps, the study recommends

- ➲ Establish a Legislative Mandate for Policy Coordination: Create a formal authority to oversee and coordinate policy development across all MDAs. This body would enforce standards for coherence, quality, and alignment with national development goals.

- ➲ Adopt a Structured, Evidence-Based Policy Framework: Implement a clear, step-by-step policy development process that spans issue identification, formulation, implementation, monitoring, and review. Embed quality checks and decision gates at key milestones to safeguard rigor and consistency.

- ➲ Standardize Templates and Editorial Guidelines: Adopt uniform templates and for all policy documents. Mandate consistent structure and inclusion of

essential sections such as problem analysis, stakeholder engagement, implementation arrangements, and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review plans.

- ⮞ Formalize Stakeholder Engagement Protocols: Institutionalize procedures for meaningful consultation with stakeholders, accompanied by training for public officials in participatory methods and data-driven decision making.

- ⮞ Institutionalize Policy Review Mechanisms: Mandate regular mid-term and summative reviews with clear triggers, roles, and reporting lines. Ensure that review findings directly inform decisions on policy continuation, adjustment, consolidation, replacement, or termination.

A.6   Conclusions

Collectively, these recommendations and other practical considerations gathered during stakeholder consultations inform the design of the *National Policy Development Handbook*. This handbook establishes a unified, standardized, and institutionally anchored framework for policy development in The Gambia. Its main purpose is to guide government institutions in designing and implementing public policies that are coherent, inclusive, and firmly grounded in evidence, to advance the country's national development aspirations.