



FUTURE IN OUR HANDS THE GAMBIA

NEWSLETTER

April 2019

NEWS IN SHORT

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Education For All Through Community Development

RESILIENT ECO – VILLAGE ACTION PROGRAM (REAP) - GCF



The long-awaited Green Climate Fund (GCF) concept note has now been finalized by the fundraising unit in cooperation with staff of FIOHTG and consultants.

Our program “Resilient Eco – Village Action Program (REAP)” has the objective to restore degrading environment, forest and agricultural lands and enhance adaptive climate resilience capacities for improved living standards of rural communities.

The implementation approach is partnership through a consortium of five organizations, namely; Future In Our Hands – The Gambia (FIOHTG) (Lead Applicant) BeeCause, Freedom From Hunger Campaign (FFHC), Tumana Agency for Development (TAD), Sandele Foundation, as executing entities. Whilst the Ministry of Environment agrees to provide technical backstopping, the United Nations – Gambia Office serves as an Accredited Entity. FIOHTG as the lead applicant will manage measures of environmental and social risk.

The Gambia’s patterns and impacts of climate vulnerabilities are becoming increasingly adverse with the frequent natural disasters where communities, especially the rural settings are experiencing floods and bush fires that are leading to the destruction of houses and field crops in the agricultural sector. During the last two decades the Gambia have witnessed major climate related changes where rural communities have experienced severe erosion on farm lands, salination in rice fields, mangrove die-back, decline in fish stocks, rise in sea levels, difficulty in accessing fuel wood due to erosion and deforestation which has also resulted in the rapid disappearance of valuable biodiversity, difficulty in accessing deep water tables and the frequent occurrence of erratic rainfall, followed by abrupt and untimely seizure of rains, leading to crop failure.

To manage these climatic vulnerabilities rural communities’ resort to using short term solutions such as, chemical fertilizer, walking long distances to access forest resources which spreads the depredating behavior resulting in devastating long-term effects on the environment which consequently affects the community and its future generation.

These climatic vulnerabilities on the lives and livelihoods of people have been further degraded by poverty and the increasing population growth which makes people compete over resources, long term nutrition insufficiency, health issues and ignorance that can result in inadequate knowledge-based decision making and/or selfish behavior that leads to degradation, misuse overuse of natural resources. As a result of these factors, rural communities are faced with inadequate farm inputs/ implements, as well as lacking climate smart agriculture and resilience capacity to effectively avert such vulnerabilities.

Rendering these communities with limited agricultural production and productivity, affected by post – harvest losses, leading to food insecurity, hunger, malnutrition and low-income earning capacity, thus increasing poverty levels. Half of the Gambia’s population is currently living below the UN’s poverty line, whereof (according to the World Bank) 43% of them are living in rural areas and faces even more difficulties with economic, technical and nutritional access and opportunity.

The Gambia National Development Plan 2018-2020 (NDP) renders in the promotion of environmental sustainability, climate resilient communities, appropriate use of land, invest in the country’s infrastructure and restoring energy services as well as developing the agricultural sector in order to ensure the country’s economic growth and the yields nutritional output. According to the NDP “The agricultural sector is one of the leading contributors to GDP, accounting for 20-30 percent. It is a major employer and key contributor to poverty reduction.” It is against this background that this programme is conceived to address the following mitigation and adaptation needs in order to restore our degrading environment, forest and agricultural lands and enhance adaptive climate resilience capacities for improved living standards of rural communities.

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RESILIENT ECO – VILLAGE ACTION PROGRAM (REAP) - GCF

The programme is envisaged to address the effects of climate changes in rural communities of the Gambia through a focus on the following issues;

- 1) Green House Gas emission, by promoting access to clean energy to rural communities and their corresponding schools, access to improved energy saving cooking stoves, bio-char and bio-gas energy production.
- 2) Degrading environment, forest and agricultural lands, by promoting soil, water and forest conservation through various techniques.
- 3) Low yields and incomes, by promoting climate smart agricultural practices including apiculture and aquaculture, access to improved agricultural inputs/implements, access to cereal banking schemes, access to solar powered water reticulation horticultural production practices.
- 4) Low capacities, by enhancing entrepreneurship and value addition skills development, climate smart agricultural and climate resilience techniques.
- 5) Poor infrastructure, by promoting Compressed Stabilized Earth Blocks (CSEB), flood resistant and eco-friendly model houses, construction of erosion control systems, causeways and dykes.
- 6) Poor Health, by promoting Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in communities and Lower Basic Schools, protein rich crops, waste management and environmental education.

In respect to the above-mentioned issues and their corresponding solutions, it goes without saying that the trend of environmental, forest and agricultural land degradation and pollution will significantly be revised, and adaptive climate resilience capacities enhanced, hence improve the living standards of people in the rural communities. By tackling these climate mitigation and adaptations needs, this programme works in the interest of the NDP to alleviate poverty and the environmental stress of these rural communities which will boost the growth and transformation of the country's economy and food and nutritional security.

This programme is further backed up by SDGs, 7, 13 and 15 which stress the need to: ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts and to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Thus, this proposed action plan is clearly relevant not only to the country's development priorities, but also to the internationally acclaimed Sustainable Development Goals.

FIOHTG will continue with the project planning in cooperation with our partners to ensure that this programme is implemented for the benefit of rural Gambia but we have a long way to go before this grand programme can be made a reality.

Trip to Sweden- Jainaba T. Sarr



This February, I add the privilege of being nominated by the office to embark on a month-long trip to Sweden at the invitation of SIDA to take part in their annual Networking and Partnership meeting on international cooperation specifically ,the internship programs -or which we are a beneficiary. I was also invited by the Gambia Groups/FIOHS to stay long and visit with their members as well as attend some of their group meetings.

The first leg of my trip began with my week-long learning experience at the SIDA training center at Hännösand in the North of Sweden. My travel there involved a pick-up from the Arlanda International by GG member Ingrid who graciously hosted me at her home for the night, followed by a drive to the Stockholm Central Station where I received an amazingly warm welcome from longtime GG member Sonya, and newer GG and former interns and my great friends Anthonia and Catarina. Together with Ingrid, they treated by a nice lunch, armed me with the right arsenal of winter clothes and accessories I needed during my stay and set me off on my three-hour train ride to Hännösand.



Arriving in Sweden



Experiencing the cold weather



Me and my friend Anthonia

In Hännösand, I settled among other participants from developing countries all around the world whose NGOs benefit from Swedish International Cooperation through the internship program. During the five- day stay there, we took part in a series of lectures on how the program works, exchanged accounts of how the internship programs are being implemented in our respective organizations, the known benefits to the interns, the host organization and their Swedish partner organizations, the lessons learnt, best practices, challenges, heard the testimonies from a few former interns among other things. It also afforded us the opportunity to network and learn about the dynamic works being done by these NGOs all over the world.



To the left I am holding a presentation on the work of GG and FIOHTG in Gambia .
To the right I am networking and making new friends with other NGO workers in Hännösand



Trip to Sweden- Jainaba T. Sarr



Leisure activities were also organized by the center which included a fascinating historical tour led by a veteran journalist, nightly walks in freezing temperatures to have dinner at a charming old hall, where we had the opportunity to learn square dancing. Most fascinating for me of all was the experience of having to be a vegetarian for the whole time as SIDA had taken up the stance of vegetarian-only meals as a response to Climate Change – a trend I later observe has been growing throughout Sweden. The Härnösand experience was a great learning and sharing moment for me as well as a chance to build lasting friendships with like-minded people from around the world some of whom I have stayed in touch with.

Following this experience I returned to Stockholm where I was hosted for a week by the wonderful couple Sonja and Bjorn who have been GG member from the very beginning. There a was taken to sight-seeing visits in Stockholm including to the National museum, the Modern museum and a historical museum as well as to the movie theatre, parks and /Sonja's allotment in Tanto which makes for a beautiful gardening space and summertime get-away.



I visited with other members including my friends Catarina and Antonia who invited to their homes as well as took me to various sites around time. I was treated to a meeting with the Stockholm group of the GG at Sonja's home where I was warmly welcomed by members and lengthy discussion held on a series of mutual topics. Among the members I met were dynamic Gambian civil engineer Saul Jatta who also latter kindly took me on a tour of Stockholm and also and Uppsala University PHD student Amat Jeng who has now joined as a member of GG. Madeleine De Geer who spent a stint recently in Gambia to support work on the GCF concept note writing was also in attendance. She and her husband later hosted me for lunch together with member and Dentist Lars-Göran to lunch at their beautiful home in Bromma.

With the global Climate Change Phenom - Greta Thunberg at one of her protests - and Sonja.

Sonja and me outside of the Nobel Prize Museum



Here I am visiting the cathedral in Härnösand



Trip to Sweden– Jainaba T. Sarr

Following a weekend stay with my life-long friend Ida who just happened to move back to Sweden recently, I embarked on a train ride to Vasteras for a four-day stay with my good friend and GG member Mats Nydahl and his warm and dynamic wife Kristina. It was quite an exhilarating stay filled with visits to fascinating places like the museums of arts the great treat of seeing an exhibition of Gorilla Girls – a feminist movement from the US as well as visiting the inspiring children’s historical museum. The three of us also attended a concert to witness the beautiful fusion of modern dance and classical music.



Another highlight was a dinner meeting with the dynamic ladies who form the majority of the Vasteras Group of GG hosted by Mats and Kristina. They include pioneers of our signature SEGRA approach. It was quite a powerful and inspiring evening for me among these dynamic members. I was also privileged to be taken on a tour of the Västerås Hospital where Kristina works as the Arts Director. I really got an appreciation on the importance of art and artistic design of the well-being of patients.



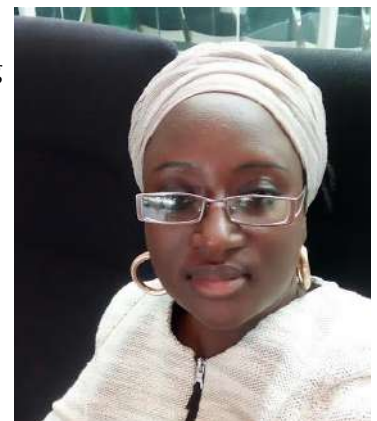
Dinner with the Västerås group

Following my Vasteras trip and a short stint back in Stockholm, I travelled to Karlskoga to be hosted by GG chairman Kristina Lundahl. There, we spent some time with my college Augustine Manneh was in Sweden on holidays, visited with Kristina son and his beautiful family in Linköping (where I got to experience my first moose meal), we visited with the dynamic Mama Inger and her husband Pele who was recovering from illness. Kristina and her friends also warmly treated me to dinner, a tour of a skill center for immigrants where Anita works as a board member and lots of shopping and sight-seeing.

I rounded up my trip back to Stockholm where I was hosted by my friends, my cousin and his family as well as treated to great lunch by Lars Goran and his daughter Amelia. Lars graciously drove me to the airport on my return to Gambia together with Faotu Badjie’s brother Modou.

In conclusion, this was certainly a worthwhile trip which afforded me the opportunity to learn more about our Swedish internship program, better understand the genesis of our organization through the impactful interactions with the Gambia Group members from whom I gained a new appreciation for their passion and sacrifice towards the Gambian cause. I cannot thank my various hosts for their amazingly warm welcome, kindness and generosity shown to me throughout my stay. I really got to receive “teranga” Swedish style. I also got to experience first-hand how a successfully operated democratic-socialistic society works albeit its own challenges, how global issues such as climate change are being tackled head-on. I reconnected with some of my favorite people and I got some much-needed rest in the most organized and one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

I take this opportunity to thank FIOHTG management and Gambia groups for making this trip possible and I encourage more of its kind to enable this growth process of other staff long into the future as it contributes to deep understanding and fostering of stronger bonds between our two partner organizations.



Thank you,
Jainaba T. Sarr
Human Resources Officer,
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Do you have a story or an event for the next newsletter?

If so, we would like to hear from YOU!

Thank you for your support!