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CORPORATE VISION

To make The Gambia, a World
Class Tourist Destination and
Business Centre.

MISSION STATEMENT

The GTBoard is dedicated to giving
tourists a uniquely rewarding
experience through an integrated
high quality product/service offering
that would promote responsible
and valued partnerships in tourism
for the socio-economic benefit of
the Gambian people.

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Gambia Tourism Board
The Smiling Coast of Africa



FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S DESK



This second edition of "The Tourist", which is specifically designed to showcase and amplify the responsible tourism credentials of Destination Gambia, has indeed added a new meaning to our efforts to inform and educate the general public including the diverse stakeholders of Gambia Tourism, about the myriad of initiatives and interventions of the GTBoard and tourism stakeholders in our quest to promote and mainstream responsible tourism. In the main, this edition projects and catalogues the various efforts and interventions both past and present geared towards mainstreaming Responsible Tourism with a view to making tourism more people centred, pro-poor and quality in product development.

What qualifies as responsible tourism credentials may be numerous and varied, but in essence, they all contribute to ensuring that the social, economic and environmental issues affecting tourism are judiciously harmonized for the benefit of both the guests and their hosts, in a destination such as The Gambia, where tourism is given pride of place and seeks to foster the values of healthy, ethical behavior, buttressed by a web of international partnerships and cooperation.

Our policy encourages tourists and locals to become more responsive to one another's needs, thereby making them more responsible in their actions in relation to the socio- economic and environmental implications of tourism.

In a nutshell, Gambia Tourism in its current shape and form seeks to minimize the negative and promoting the positive impacts of tourism. In this vein, diversification of tourism products, injecting innovation in product development, ensuring high standards of quality and encouraging the geographic spread of tourism to increase its impact become imperative.

Happy and fruitful reading!!

Abdoulie Hydara
Director General

IN FOCUS:

THE GAMBIA'S RESPONSIBLE TOURISM (RT) CREDENTIALS



awarded. The award wants to celebrate the shining stars of responsible tourism - the individuals, organisations and destinations working innovatively with local cultures, communities and biodiversity. The Gambia won 6 accolades from the WTM Responsible Tourism Awards:

Adama Bah (the author of this article)- 2004 Winner: Best for Personal contribution to RT
Makasutu- 2004 Winner: Highly commended and Best for poverty reduction
ASSET – 2005 Winner: Best for Poverty reduction
Gambia is Good- 2008-Winner: Best for poverty reduction
Footsteps-2014-Silver Award: Best for engaging people and culture
Sandele Lodge 2015 – Best for resource management (Africa Responsible Tourism Award)

Introduction

Tourism's potential as a tool for development is acknowledged in the development agenda of both developing and developed parts of the world. This multifaceted industry heavily makes use of nature, culture, society, heritage and environment for its growth and development. With high linkage effects, tourism cuts across the economy, society and environment creating both positive and negative impacts. How to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the positive, is the major question being addressed by policy makers, planners and administrators all over the world.

Responsible Tourism is about "making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit." Responsible Tourism requires that operators, hoteliers, governments, local people and tourists take responsibility, take action to make tourism more sustainable.

According to Dr. Harold Goodwin 'Responsible Tourism is not the same thing as sustainable tourism. Sustainability is the goal, a goal which can only be achieved by people taking responsibility, together with others, to achieve it. Responsible Tourism is about taking responsibility for making tourism sustainable, it is about what people do to address the many specific challenges we face.'

World Travel Market –World Responsible Tourism Day (WTMWRTD)

The World Travel Market has adopted the Cape Town Declaration's definition of Responsible Tourism for its World Responsible Tourism Day which encourages the industry to take responsibility for making tourism more sustainable and demonstrate their responsibility. The highlight of the event is the Responsible Tourism Award Ceremony, where countries, companies and individuals are

Catalyst to RT in the Gambia

Prior to the Cape Town Conference, an innovative approach was taken to addressing the situation of the informal sector through a DfID Tourism Challenge Fund (TCF) funded project. The project was about improving the situation of Small (Micro) enterprises along the Tourism Development Areas of Kotu and Senegambia. They were mainly the Fruit Vendors, the Juice Pressers, the Craft Market vendors and the Tourists Taxi Drivers. The difficult and complex issue of "bumpsters" was also to be looked at. A number of objectives and activities were established to make tourism more 'pro-poor' and specifically to increase access of the informal sector to market opportunities in tourism. This



has a desperate need to re-launch its image of being a cheap winter sun destination that is dominated by the mass tourist market. At the same time elements such as sex tourism, hassle and environmental degradation need to be tackled. This policy is addressed to the whole of the tourism industry, government and the Gambia Tourism Authority. It identifies objectives to achieve responsible marketing of the destination and to deal with issues of economic, social and environmental responsibility.

MBOKA

In November 2006, ASSET (of The Gambia) and ONITS (of Senegal), supported by tourism stakeholders and the governments of The Gambia and Senegal, signed an MOU to promote Responsible Tourism Development in Senegal and The Gambia. The two associations pledged to realise this by addressing the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental responsibility and by engaging in product development and marketing. Almost one year after signing the MOU in Dakar, Mboka 2007 helped make this pledge a reality by promoting and showcasing the Senegambian tourism industry at a fair first held in Dakar on the 31st October, 2007. Unfortunately, the fair stopped temporarily in 2011. There are plans to start the Event in Senegal in November 2016 and in The Gambia in January 2017.

ROOTS Excursion Project

The Roots excursion in the Gambia has always been one of the most popular excursions taken up by the UK tourism market. In 2008, however, its popularity was dwindling and there was serious concern by tour operators that the constant hassle tourists were experiencing from locals, was putting the excursion at risk. Negative feedback from the tourists grew to such an extent that the tour operators were considering removing the excursion from their portfolio. One of the principle catalysts for the hassle was that local communities were receiving only marginal financial benefits from the excursion, mostly through donations and the sale of souvenirs.

Between 2008 -2011 the project got funding from the Travel Foundation for community empowerment of the villages of Jufureh and Albreda, for the creation of a community development fund and to improving the visitor experience.

RT CAPACITY BUILDING

Through links with Dr. Harold Goodwin, and the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT) first established at the University of Greenwich then the Leeds Metropolitan University (now Leeds Beckett), 11 Gambians have acquired MSc degrees in RT, 1 post graduate degree, and 4 are yet to complete their studies from the two universities. All benefitted from scholarships. It is also through this link that the ICRT-Gambia net-

project became the catalyst that linked the Responsible Tourism Network to The Gambia.

RT Partnership

The Responsible Tourism Partnership (RTP) replaced the 2000-2003 project steering group that was managing the DfID funded project described earlier. It was established by the then Gambia Tourism Authority for stakeholders representing the three main Associations of Juice Pressers, Taxi Drivers and Craft Markets, and the Federation of Tour Operators representing UK based Tour Operators. Other tour operators from other countries were also invited to these meetings. The RTP was chaired by the Minister of Tourism and Culture represented mostly by his Permanent Secretary.

In 2004 the policy was launched. The policy document served as a guideline for implementing Responsible Tourism in the Gambia. In the executive summary of the policy it is stated: This policy is a call to action in order to combat some of the inequalities and negative impacts of tourism. It comes at a time when The Gambia

work and now the ICRT-West Africa was formed. The ICRT-West Africa is an integral part of an international network of responsible tourism proponents, running a wide range of programmes, courses, workshops and conferences to help stakeholders keep abreast of responsible tourism issues.

From 2012 ICRT-West Africa linked up with the University of The Gambia and ICRT based at Leeds Beckett to apply for scholarships in MSc Responsible Tourism Management from the Commonwealth for West African students. The scholarships were acquired and 23 West Africans took part in this course. In October 2017 ICRT-West Africa will be organizing the first West African Responsible Tourism Seminar in Abuja.

Switch Off, Save Big -Hotel Project

A hotel environmental project was initiated from 2011 to 2013 with funding from the Travel Foundation supported by Thomas Cook. The project covered 7 hotels: Dunes Resort, Kairaba Beach Hotel, Kombo Beach Hotel, Laico Atlantic Hotel, Ocean Bay, Senegambia Hotel and Sunset Beach Hotel. The Programme was focused on helping hotels and other accommodations minimise their environmental impact 'resource efficiency' in other words reducing their use of water and energy and also minimising the waste they produce.

In conclusion

The Gambia could be a lead Responsible Tourism destination in the world competing with South Africa (specifically Cape Town) and Kerala in India who are effectively using RT in the marketing of their destinations. However, the main issue is we need the right Responsible Tourism marketing strategies to achieve such a goal. We have all the ingredients to prepare us for such a challenge but what is left is for the GTB to take the lead by bringing together the relevant stakeholders and start to build the right steps to take. It is like cooking your "benachin", you can have all the ingredients you need and a recipe at hand but if you don't start the cooking process those in-



gredients will remain separate. With the Gambia what we now have is the ingredients and a recipe, we have to start cooking in order to plate and taste that 'Benechin'. I hope this article will be an inspiration towards such a direction, after all I am yet to meet a Gambian or indeed a tourist who wouldn't offer a smile after digesting a mouth full of 'Benechin'. Responsible Tourism has the potential to have a similar impact with our Smiling Coast.

By Adama Bah,
Chairman Board of Directors,
Institute of Travel and Tourism of The Gambia.



REVISITING THE TOURIST GUIDE SCHEME (TGS)

and when you resist, they even get aggressive. This is of course discouraging for most visitors, although some more naïve ones may even like the attention they seem to get'. Invariably, the Tourism Development Master Plan study paid great attention to this menace, and following a very authoritative review and study of this phenomenon, concluded that "the bumster problem is an enigma. If it should assume a human face, it will be one with many faces, contradictory at one point, complex at every point and difficult to fathom or comprehend. Bumsters take their role seriously. The assiduity, steadfastness and commitment which they display in staking out the beaches from sunrise to sunset on a daily basis indicate an inner resourcefulness which can be tapped for the benefit of all in a more positive way". They evidently possess some amusing twisted information that makes the "naïve" tourist stick to them like a glue.

The word bumster is perhaps the most widely used word among visitors and tourists to the Smiling Coast. It is also an accepted fact that bumsters pose a direct threat to the good image of Destination Gambia, more so in this era of globalization and the internet age. There exist a variety of platforms, than ever before, that visitors can use and share their negative experiences with potential travelers such as social networking sites (face book), tourism blogs and online newspapers with global reach and scope. According to one travel writer and a frequent visitor to the Smiling Coast "there is this constantly annoying matter called bumsters. Everywhere you go without a Gambian accompanying you; you immediately are approached by young men, who appear to be friendly, but in the end are looking for personal gain and ask for money. If you politely say you wish to walk in peace along the beach, some of them persist

boys to become productive. The scheme got off on a high note in 1997, with the identification, screening, training, induction and deployment of the first batch of official tourist guides. It is worth pointing out that this was preceded by open consultation and discussions with various stakeholders in the tourism industry including ground tour operators, equipment hirers, hoteliers, restaurateurs as well as other small scale businesses operating in the tourism industry.

Objectives of the scheme

The Original concept in 1997 was to form a body of freelance tourist guides to reduce the amount of hassling in the TDA and other areas frequented by tourists and to create a viable means of income generation for a section of the unemployed youth. Their task was to:

- Guide tourists around the local community.
- To provide tourists with accurate information concerning our social/ cultural heritage.
- To promote the image of the country.
- To encourage more professionalism amongst local youth in terms of guiding and building useful network with tourists.
- Finally to reduce the hassling of tourists visiting The Smiling Coast and increase the security of tourists.



It was envisaged that the Official Tourist Guides would complement, not conflict with the services of the existing formal sector and provide a valuable tool for some of the tourist revenue to trickle down in to the local economy. The Official Tourist Guides are licensed by the Gambia Tourism Board and other tour operators as well as ground tour operators are at liberty to engage their services in the spirit of responsible tourism. The existence of the tourist guides has been further recognized in the Gambia Tourism Board Act 2011 where a tourist guide is defined as 'a person who has acquired sufficient information and insight about the geography, history, culture and life of different communities within the locality and is able to share this confidently with tourists. This implies that "tourist guide should act as a cultural broker displaying the appropriate skills, competencies, values and aptitude to present a balanced and holistic view of The Gambia to tourists". Furthermore the GTBoard Tourism Regulations classified the Tourist Guides in to the following categories: Local Tourist Guides, Regional Tourist Guides, National Tourist Guides as well as Specialist Tourist Guides.

Humble beginnings

The Tourist Guide Scheme has come a long way since its humble beginnings in 1997. To further consolidate their operations, a code of conduct has been articulated for the guides to regularize their operations and is operational. A follow up training programme was undertaken by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture in 2001 to consolidate the scheme. Over the years, the scheme has received considerable support from other stakeholders such as ASSET and series of refresher training programmes have been organized under the aegis of ASSET through the Travel Foundation, with a view to enhancing the capacity of the guides and sharpen their skills in guiding and related areas such as customer care and deepen their knowledge of the Gambia tourism products.

Tourist Guides - Cultural Brokers

The overall result is a crop of seasoned and dedicated tourist guides who are willing and able to serve as cultural brokers and ply their trade as freelance tourist guides in the Tourism Development Area and other areas frequented by tourists. It must however, be pointed out that the fact that most tourists to the Gambia are repeat visitors(48% -GTBoard Tourism Statistics Annual Report 2016) and come through pre-packaged tours (87% of holiday makers – Tourism Development Master Plan Study)) does not augur well for the Official Tourist Guides. However, the feedback from both tourists and tourism stakeholders about the overall operations and services offered by the guides continue to be mixed. This is partly due to the fact that some of the guides were absorbed from the beach and as such the stigma of "bumster tag" continues to hang on some of them.

According to a leading tourism stakeholder,"this has posed serious challenges in the beginning as some of the guides were wrongly perceived in certain quarters as "bumsters in uniform". But according to Demba Joof – The President of the National Tourist Guide Scheme (NTGS) "over time the tourism fraternity has come to realize our essence and that is to offer our services as professional guides and cultural brokers", he emphasized. He further pointed out that the Official Tourist Guides have proven their mettle in various ways, including serving as catalyst in attracting donor and philanthropic support to the needy communities of the Smiling Coast. In this regard, Mr Joof revealed that various nursery school projects have been initiated by the tourist guides and today these early childhood learning centers have mushroomed all across the rural areas, thanks to the hard work of the tourist guides. Besides, "we have put in place a queue system in all our operational stations in the Tourism Development Area (TDA) to ensure smooth service delivery, and at the same time ensure strict compliance to our code of conduct", he concluded.

Today, the National Tourists Guide Scheme has come of age and continuous to consolidate its presence in the tourism industry. A significant segment of the guides have lived up to expectations

by embracing new ideas and adopting better approaches to guiding so as to better serve tourists and at the same time meet the ever changing dynamics of the tourism industry. A casual glance at the "Guide Comment Book" in their Senegambia base will offer tangible gleanings in to the success stories that their operations have proved to be, at least if the views of satisfied customers (tourists) are anything to go by. Besides, some of the Guides have metamorphosed in to small scale ground tour operators such as "Bush Walker Tours", "Jannehya Tours", "Black and White Safari", "Happy Safari" and "Simon Tours". These niche small scale tour operating agencies have come to provide specialist and tailor made tours in areas such as birding, ecotourism and other niche areas of tourism.

Achievements of the Scheme

In additions to the positive comments from satisfied tourists, the official tourist guides have registered positive gains as follows;

- Formation of a functional association to serve the interest and welfare of the scheme.
- Effective participation in national development endeavors such as beach cleansing exercise, and complimenting government efforts in education, youth and sports, and supporting the President's agricultural efforts in Kanilai as well as the Jammeh Foundation for Peace.
- Affiliation with World Federation of Tourist Guides.
- Affiliation with the National Youth Council.
- Membership of Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET).
- Creation of a trust fund to cater to the welfare of their late colleagues.
- Effective collaboration with the GTBoard.

Constraints

These successes, notwithstanding, the National Tourist Guide Scheme is also encountering certain constraints ranging from stigmatization, lack of proper operational base, proliferation of 'guides' in the industry (piracy) to lack of recognition in certain hospitality outfits.

Conclusion

The Gambia Tourist Guide Scheme is a bright example of responsible tourism, where the needs of the host communities are given pride of place and this enables them to benefit as much as possible from tourism. This approach has the potential to enrich the destination and unlock opportunities for the hosts to interact positively with the guests (tourists). The need for the guides to consolidate their presence in the industry cannot be overemphasized. This can be achieved through capacity building to enable the guides to acquire critical skills set in customer care and hone their guiding skills to meet the needs of the "new tourist" who is not only discerning, but very knowledgeable and prepared to pay a premium for high quality products and services.

*By Lamin Saho
Former Coordinator - Tourist Guide Scheme Project.*



TOWARDS A MORE INNOVATIVE CRAFT INDUSTRY

Tourism is a major contributor to the Gambian economy. And those in the craft sector contribute substantially to the tourism industry through the production and sale of arts and crafts objects for tourists who buy them as souvenirs.

However, over time the craft products have become boring, lacking in appeal and also not presentable. Series of studies undertaken by various tourism stakeholders have pointed out the need to build the capacity of the craft producers to make them more innovative in production and product packaging.

In a bid to build the capacity and encourage innovation among craft producers in the tourism industry, Gambia Tourism Board (GTBoard) in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture rolled out a training project tagged 'Enhancing the capacities of craft producers in OIC member countries, funded by the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC), with the endorsement of the organization of Islamic cooperation (OIC) based in Ankara, Turkey. The project's overall objective is to increase the scope and productive capacity of crafts people to enable them to earn more income.

Following the identification, screening and

induction of the trainees from the Gambia, Senegal and Mali, the training started on the 23rd May and ended on 18th June 2016.

The trainees were exposed to various techniques of art and crafts work through group and theoretical work, practical sessions and demonstrations. They were able to acquire vital skills in product development and packaging. The modules of the training were all delivered by the master trainers, who exposed the participants to new techniques, skills, and operational methods in tie and dye, wood carving, visual arts, thrash to treasure as well as product packaging. The modules also focused on the development of the productive capacity of the trainees and enhancement of their operational efficiency in line with the key components of the project. The modules also incorporated best practices in terms of safety and high standards of operational efficiency.

• SYNOPSIS OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

All training activities were carried out simultaneously in line with the project implementation matrix and the synopsis of the programme delivery of the various components as follows:

• TRAINING OF TRAINERS IN WOOD CARVING

This component attracted five (5) participants from Mali, Gambia and Senegal and kicked off on the 26th June – 17th May 2016. The training was conducted by the master trainer Mr. Erasmus Philip Aborlu, from Ghana. The training combined theoretical learning and practical demonstrations to give the participants the knowledge and skills of applying innovative techniques to be able to produce wood crafts from creative design concepts. At the end of the training, the 5 trainees were equipped with the requisite skills and techniques to be able to prepare wood carving resources, identify and select a range of wood crafts in different styles, as well as produce innovative wood crafts. The participants were also exposed to workplace safety procedures, and setting up safe work space.

• TRAINING OF TRAINERS IN TYE AND DYE/ BATIK

This component also involved five participants and the objective was to expose the participants with the knowledge and skills to make innovative tie and dye and batik. Consequently, the training methodologies placed emphasis on practical demonstrations and at the end of the training, the participants were able to make innovative tie and dye from fabric design, pattern making, cutting, and

quality control. The training was led by Mr F. Owusu, the Master Trainer.

• TRAINING OF TRAINERS IN VISUAL ARTS – PAINTING

This component was one of the key intervention areas and attracted five participants and featured trainees from The Gambia, Senegal and Mali. The Master Trainer was the award winning Gambian artist, Mr Njogu Touray. The objective revolved around the need to expose participants to various painting techniques and ideas so as to become more innovative in design and product presentation. The course methodology focused on practical sessions and demonstrations and at the end of the training the 5 participants were able to develop proficiency with a range of painting techniques, create finished painting using a mix of techniques.

• TRAINING OF TRAINERS IN THRASH ARTS

This training attracted five participants from the Gambia, Senegal and Mali. Given the approach of the training, emphasis was placed on practical work and group demonstrations. The overall objective was to expose participants to a range of tried and tested methods of creating craft items out of thrash materials. At the end of the training, all the 5 participants were able to utilize various skills and techniques to produce artifacts from recycled materials.

• TRAINING OF TRAINERS IN PRODUCT PACKAGING

This training package was attended by all the 20 participants and the objective was to expose all the participants to the skills required to add extra creativity to the packaging of their handicraft products. The training mythology was centered on group demonstrations, lectures and case studies. At the end of the training the 20 trainees were exposed to various methods and techniques in innovative product packaging.



Recommendations

It can be concluded that this is a laudable project that can and has through this instance increased the capacity of craft producers from various markets. The training of the trainers will expand the knowledge to many others, which is needed in the industries. To further consolidate the gains of this intervention, the following recommendations are proffered;

- that a larger number of OIC member countries in Africa participate and that the duration is increased as the three weeks training was very intense and short. It can also be observed from the last training module that these three countries are still lagging behind in labeling and branding component of product craftwork.
- that product packaging, labeling and branding becomes a fully added component of such trainings. This training can go a long way in educating and protecting the craft ideas (copyright) and products of local

craft men who often sell their items abroad. The project gained sub regional recognition and was highly appreciated by craft market associations across the three countries and their governments.

- It is also recommended for a yearly 3-day workshop and exhibition to be organized with a view to bringing participants together to discuss pertinent matters in craft producing business and allow further networking to take place.

- In addition, it would also make a big difference if trainees could be availed the opportunity to undertake study tours to other countries in the sub region to further expose them to new techniques and also to network with like-minded professional colleagues in the context of follow up projects.

By Lamin Saho-
COMCEC PROJECT COORDINATOR



FATOU BEYAI RAJI ON RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

The Gambia has made significant inroads in Responsible Tourism. According to the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations, 2002, "Responsible Tourism minimizes negative economic, environmental and social impacts, generates better economic benefits for the local people and makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage: to the maintenance of the world's diversity". In this exclusive interview, DPDIC delves in to the genesis of Responsible Tourism and the Gambia experience. The questions are designed such that the general readership will understand the basics of Responsible Tourism and how it is applied in the Gambia.

THE TOURIST. First of all for the benefit of our esteemed readers could you kindly tell us who is Fatou Beyai Raji?

FB. Raji. I am the Director for Product Development Investment and Culture at the Gambia Tourism Board, and have been working for the Gambia Tourism Board since its inception in 2001 but came in a year later 2002. I have been working through the ranks started as an officer till I reached the position of a director. I have also acted as Director General twice one for a short while and the other for over two years.

THE TOURIST. What does the concept of Responsible Tourism entail and how has it fared in the Gambia?

FB. Raji. Ah... Responsible Tourism is a policy that has been prepared by the Responsible Tourism Partnership (RTP) in the Gambia. It is a multi-Stakeholder process, in which all the Stakeholders came together and decided that they will do tourism in a responsible manner, and have agreed to formulate the Responsible Tourism Policy. And this policy is a policy that is used in the Gambia, is the basis for all tourism activities destination Gambia.

THE TOURIST. How do you think we can mainstream Responsible Tourism Development in the Gambia?

FB. Raji. Well! I think it is already mainstreamed, mainstreamed in the sense that it has been included in the Tourism Master Plan Development that is one, two as a policy document it means that all our activities in the Tourism sector are based on the three principles of Responsible Tourism which is; the economic, the environment and the social aspects of every action that within the context of tourism. Whether we are developing a product, whether we are



marketing it, whether we are looking at quality control everything that we do we have to give consideration to the economic, the social and the environment dimensions within the framework of tourism development. And basically this is what we are doing in every aspect of tourism in the Gambia.

THE TOURIST. Are there any projects and or programmes that have been rolled out or in the pipeline to advance the cause of Responsible Tourism in Destination Gambia?

FB. Raji. Since 2002 when the Responsible Tourism was put in place the Gambia Tourism Authority and now the Gambia Tourism Board has always been working in that direction. All the projects that we have done at the GT Board up to date are all based on the principles of Responsible Tourism. In terms of Community based tourism, we have done the Ndembu Home Stay Project, Kartong and Juffureh (the information center/revamp project) they are all based on Responsible Tourism Development. Every development that we do we look at it in that context, in the sense that we want it to be tourism but we also think that it should be tourism that does not affect the people negatively. Where we have positive effects we try to improve on those positive effects and basically that is what it is all about. It is to reduce the negative effects of Tourism and increase the benefits of Tourism to everybody.

THE TOURIST. What is your final word to our esteemed readers?

FB. Raji. I want to say that in order to achieve those objectives, the basis of having Responsible Tourism is just to increase the benefits of Tourism to everybody, equity in the benefits whether you are from the big companies or the small businesses, or the individuals, the formal sector, the informal sector, whether you are in the urban or rural areas. It is our intention to make sure that those benefits are shared equally but in order for us to achieve that we have to work together with the industry and all the

Stakeholders to agree on best practices, to agree on all the things that we believe will bring benefits to everybody not to individuals but also a Tourism that will look at the environment, consider the environment as an important source of resources and to make sure that the environment is not destroyed because Tourism depends on the environment.

We also need to work together with the general public and the tourists as well so that because of Tourism we don't break down our social norms. This is a society that has its social values and we don't expect tourists to come here and flout those values. Because we have moral values and we believe that if we work together with the guest and the host we would be able to achieve that mutual respect for each other's culture.

We also believe that by working together we should be able to achieve economic benefits. In as much as the tourist wants to enjoy and experience our country, we also as Gambians want to enjoy those experiences as well. Whether is the tourist or Gambian we think that responsible tourism should be able to provide good living for us the Gambians and also for the tourist that come, they should be able to enjoy coming to Gambia. But at the same time, we should also be able to enjoy living in the Gambia and is only through responsible tourism that this can be achieved.

So I think that working together with the communities with the people, with the institutions, whether they are formal or informal and agreeing to have specific standards and regulations as well as codes of conduct will help a great deal in maintaining sustainable and responsible tourism in the Gambia.

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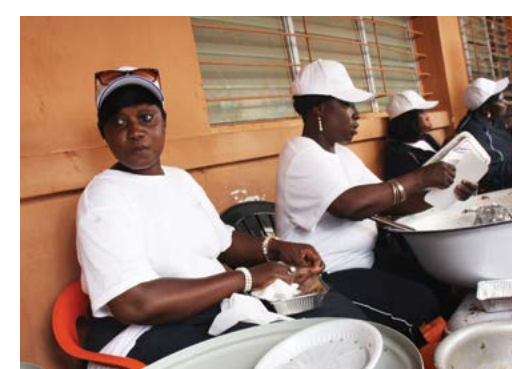
GT BOARD CELEBRATES MAY DAY IN STYLE

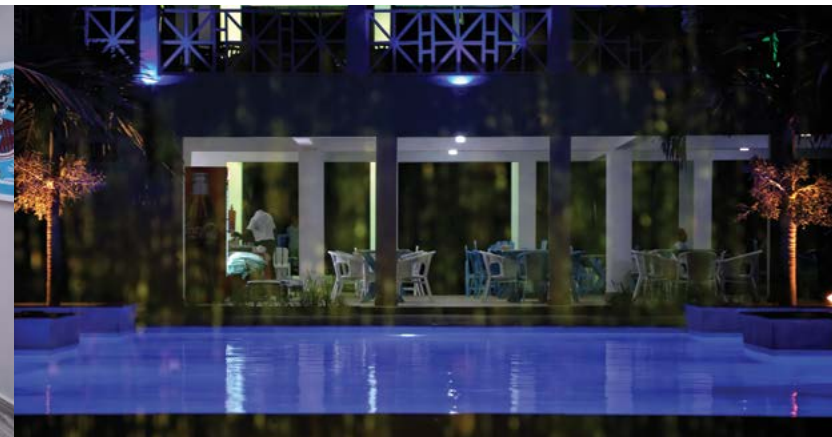
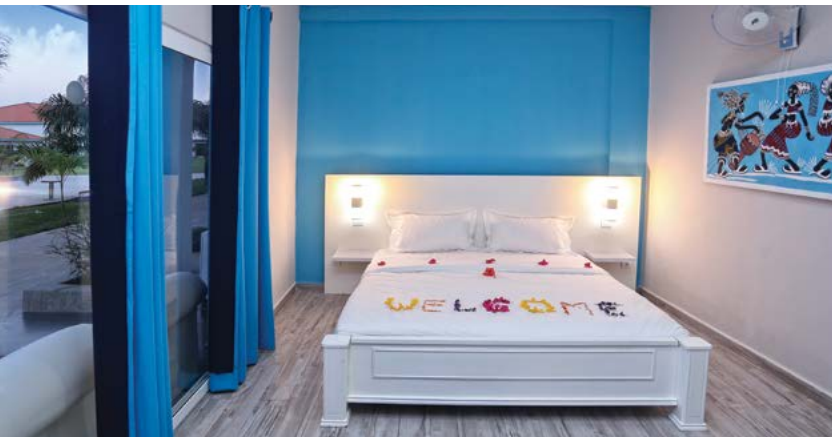
Every May 1, Labour Day, the world remembers the plight of workers across the universe. In The Gambia 'THE SMILING COAST OF AFRICA', Labour Day is marked by activities such as a march pass, and a workers' sports event called May Day Sports, which takes place at the Independence Stadium in Bakau. Last May 1, The Gambia Tourism Board under

the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MoTC), joined other institutions in the country to celebrate this very important day. This year's celebration, started with a parade of workers led by the army band, and the usual speeches by labour representatives and government officials. The 2016 May Day Sport was successfully staged at the Independence Stadium in Bakau

and the GT Board staff were well kitted out for the event as these pictures show. Please enjoy! Please see the eye catching pictures of GT Board Staff together with its parent Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

By Mamou Suwaneh
GTBoard Asst. Marketing Officer





GTBOARD MAKES STRONG CASE FOR QUALITY PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

The DG GTBoard recently attended the UNWTO convergence meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The theme of the meeting was 'Effective policy and Governance instruments – Success stories and institutional frameworks and partnership for product development'. The session focused on targets and objectives of quality product development, competitiveness of quality products in African tourism destinations and satisfactory investment to ensure quality tourism.

Given that The Gambia is considered a mature tourism destination with excellent credentials in terms of institutional framework, public-private sector partnership, and responsible tourism in ensuring quality product development the Director General, GTBoard crafted his presentation on the Gambian experience with a view to throwing insight on these issues and highlight our success stories. Below are excerpts of his presentation:

1. "Tourism as a dynamic industry is undergoing tremendous transformation in various fronts, most notably in the domain of product development and how this impinges on quality service delivery. As we are all aware, changes in lifestyle, technology, values are key driving forces impacting on tourism. Increasingly tourists are more knowledgeable, experienced, environmentally aware, discerning, independent and more quality and value for money conscious. Consequently there has been increasing demand for quality and good value holidays and new holiday ideas.

2. In recognition of this trend various policies have been articulated by the Gambia Government and existing frameworks reengineered in tandem with tourism stakeholders with a view to developing new products and mainstreaming quality in tourism. Invariably, various institutional arrangements and partnerships have been forged between public and private sectors in the area of product development with the sole objective of creating tourist destinations that are not only interesting, exciting, but offering quality products to meet the changing dynamics of tourism.

3. Therefore, the objective of this presentation is to point out the success stories in institutional frameworks and partnerships in the context of quality product development.

4. The Gambia is a small country located in West Africa, with a population of 1.8 million. Tourism has been the mainstay of the economy since Inde-

pendence in 1965. The core product include sea, sun and sand, but there has been increasing emphasis on eco-tourism, cultural tourism, community based tourism ventures as well as the development of high end resort facilities. The strategy is two pronged and the central plank include the consolidation and development of the core beach product to offer high end products in the four and five star categories for the discerning leisure tourist and attracting high end tourists, while at the same time expanding the scope and geographic spread of tourism to offer niche products for Eco minded tourists, cultural and adventure tourists thereby spreading the impact of tourism on the livelihood of all Gambians. This will be underpinned by high service standards to meet guests expectations.

5. Given the cross cutting nature of tourism, and in line with best practice in tourism destination management, stakeholders of the tourism industry comprising the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Gambia Tourism Board, National Centre for Tourism and Culture, Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute as well as the Gambia Hotel Association and the Gambia Tourism and Travel Association and related agencies such as the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency formulated the Tourism, Hospitality and Culture Strategy 2020. This strategy document has been designed to guide the tourism industry over a five year period from 2015 – 2020. 6. The central plank of this strategy is to ensure a more robust tourism development anchored on quality products and providing investment opportunities for the development of Tourism in the context of partnership with all stakeholders, while at the same time boosting tourist arrivals to 500,000 by 2020.

7. It was in this context that a Memorandum of Association between the Gambia Tourism Board and Gambia Investment Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) came in to effect. This partnership agreement was designed to foster cooperation and collaboration between these key institutions notably in the area of investment in tourism product development. One of the major fruits of this partnership was the first ever Investment Forum which was conceived and rolled out by the Gambia Tourism Board in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency. The investment forum showcased the investment opportunities in Tourism with the overriding objective of enhancing the product portfolio. The opportunities showcased ranged from water sporting activities, marinas, eco-tourism, 4 and 5 star hotels and resorts, and



economic opportunities to leverage the backward linkages with agriculture and horticulture to increase the multiplier effects of tourism.

8. Investment in the tourism sector is being facilitated by GIEPA in tandem with the GTBoard. Investment laws and regulations are conducive to the product development of the tourism sector. The following are some of the very attractive incentive packages for investment in the tourism sector.

- Exemption on customs duties on capital equipment, spare parts, raw or semi-finished materials.
- Exemption from withholding tax and tax on dividends for a period of five years.
- Airport incentive on landing and handling fees.
- Joint marketing activities with tour operators, hotels and airlines.
- Those investing in 4 and 5 star hotels and high end complimentary facilities are eligible for complimentary free land if investing in the declared Tourism Development Area.

9. At the level of the GTBoard there exists a functional department for Product Development, Investment and Culture, the core mandate of which is to develop the product portfolio and suites of destination Gambia in collaboration with tourism partners and stakeholder institutions. This includes liaising with all relevant stakeholders at the destination level and at the level of the Tourism Think Tank under the aegis of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture to articulate and execute projects and programmes geared towards the development of quality products in Destination Gambia.

10. In line with this framework, the Juffreh Revamp Project has been rolled out in partnership with the National Centre for Arts and Culture. The purpose of this project is to augment the products for quality service delivery at the level of the heritage sites of Juffreh and Albreda – the Land of Kunta Kinteh of Roots Fame.

11. A Craft Development Project to inject innovation in craft products jointly funded by COMCEC and the GTBoard has been rolled out. The objectives includes the boosting of craft products and at the same time to augment the quality and presentation of art work, and enhance visitor experience.

12. Revisiting the classification scheme [of hotels] to include the service element and the streamlining of Gambia Tourism Regulations to enhance the operational efficiency and quality of service of various operators in tourism such as fruit juice sellers, tourist guides, tourist taxi drivers, equipment hirers, ground tour operators etc. The overall objective is to boost the operational efficiency of these operators and service providers and ensure quality services and products.

14. Product development in terms of upgrading the bed stock of the industry is ongoing. This is being rolled out to upgrade select 3 star hotels in to four star hotels. Currently, there exist the lion share of hotels classified under three star, with just over 9 properties classified in the 4-5 star categories. This means that the available bed stock is deficient in terms of high quality products and services. Thus the need to upgrade some 3 star hotels to 4 star category. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture in close collaboration with the GTBoard and the Tourism Stakeholders are drawing up plans to realize this project.

14. CONCLUSION

It is worth pointing out that The Gambia has become a prime target for investors' thanks mainly to its peaceful disposition and liberal economic environment. This has been reinforced by the Government's effort to create a favorable environment for tourism to thrive and flourish. The Gambia tourism and hospitality industry has witnessed a transformation as more upscale properties and infrastructure have emerged to add the rich stock of tourism products in the Tourism Development Area and other areas frequented by tourists. These products have added value to the tourism industry while enhancing the profile of the Smiling Coast.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

Story compiled by Lamin Saho



THE GAMBIA LAUNCHES COUNTRY BRAND

In today's age, the need for a unified country brand cannot be overemphasized, given the myriad of challenges confronting nations in their quest to be differentiated from others and attract the right foreign direct investment, boost tourism and promote inclusive development through bilateral and multilateral networks. It is against this background that the government of The Gambia set up a committee to spearhead the development of a strong country master brand that will promote investment, commerce and tourism. This committee's work culminated in the formation of a Brand Council which comprised experts from both government and the private sector, whose task was to craft a new country master brand that will serve to project the Unique Selling Point (USP) for The Gambia. Furthermore, Africa Practice, an international consulting firm in partnership with Generation Alliance, a well acclaimed branding firm was contracted through funding from Gambia Growth and Competitiveness Project (GGCP) to develop a country Master brand for The Gambia. After many months of extensive work with the Brand Council and many other stakeholders, a new brand was crafted which has been successfully launched to the delight of all stakeholders in both the business community and the government.



Our Vision

The Gambia is the preferred destination in West Africa for new investment and diverse tourism opportunities.

Our Mission

To stimulate sustainable growth in The Gambia towards middle income economic status.

Our Positioning Statement

The Gambia is the preferred destination for investors looking for high-growth opportunities in West Africa and for tourists interested in accessible, friendly African experience. We are look-

ing to share our untapped potential.

THE BRAND OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the new brand is to avail The Gambia the opportunity to attract high level investments into the country, boost tourism as well as enhance trade and commerce. In order to achieve the above, the brand seeks to help Gambia:

- Become a 'middle-income economy';
- Attract sustainable investment into targeted opportunities;
- Increase the volume and value of tourism, year on year;

- Unite all stakeholders around a single compelling proposition;
- Build international awareness and recognition of The Gambia as a regional; hub and global leader in inclusive development;
- Create pride in the community and energize Gambia's people to work together for a better future.

THE TARGET AUDIENCE

In order to realize the objectives of the country brand, we need more targeted investment from the following:

- Local investors;
- Tourism investors, operators, and visitors;
- Like-minded international private sector investors;
- The Gambian Diaspora;
- Infrastructure developers / investors;
- International donors and aid agencies;
- Public-private partnerships;
- Social entrepreneurs.

Source: <http://www.thegambia.gm/>



KEEPING UP WITH THE KAIRABA BEACH HOTEL

In the first edition of "The Tourist", we pointed out that 'Gambian Tourism has witnessed exponential growth in terms of trendy and exquisite facilities, and that GTBoard encourages the hospitality industry to embrace new and refreshing holiday ideas.

Well, the Kairaba Beach Hotel – one of the leading five star hotels of destination Gambia - has been a pace setter in this front. According to its Director of Sales and Marketing 'a holiday with sun, sand and sea has now become synonymous with wellness and pampering. With that in mind, The Kairaba Beach Hotel has decided to consolidate on the latter to build on its excellent track record'. The Kairaba Spa was inaugurated in November 2015 to simply pamper the discerning guests. Renovated and refurbished in style for good taste, it has brought a breath of fresh air to the resort. From the eye-catching landscaping, to the decor and set up of the treatment rooms and facilities, everything looks tasteful and inviting!

The gym inspiringlly faces the lush gardens with its wide bay windows offering exhilarating garden views to motivate the guests doing a strenuous workout while on vacation.Two large flat screen TV sets are on the wall to help the guests catch up with the news, or set the pace of their workout with a music video.



A water cooler is aptly located in the corridor to quench the thirst and keep one hydrated. In the lobby of the Spa, one has a view of a gushing fountain; a TV set and some comfortable couches are in the lobby where tea is served with cookies at 16.00 hrs. daily. The Spa has 9 treatment rooms, a Couple's Massage Room, 4 massage rooms, 3 facial and facial steaming rooms, a stunning space for pedicures and manicures facing the beautiful gardens, a hair dressing salon for Him and Her, changing rooms, showers and dressing rooms. A men's and women's Jacuzzi will be added in the near future.

'It is always refreshing to get recognition and commendation from our guests. Their feedback is critical. This is the fifth year running that we have received the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence and three concurrent years winning the Zoover Award', added the Director with a wide smile. The Director concluded on an even more optimistic note: 'These accolades and commendations from our esteemed guests mean a lot to us; it motivates and inspires our staff and signals to management that our efforts and strategies have not gone unnoticed'.



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BRITISH JOURNALIST WRITES WHY THE GAMBIA LIVES UP TO ITS ‘SMILING COAST’ TAG

Published on Tuesday, 29 November -0001 22:53 | Written by Aliou Khan, culled from What's ON Gambia website.

In her week's stay in Gambia, British journalist explores and tells the other positive side of the Gambian story that British media consumers hardly come by. From the 'infectious smiles' that she was greeted with everywhere to the traditional culinary, there was 'an infinite amount of things that inspired' Denise Evans who promised to return with 'plenty more crayons in hand'. All I can look at is the open wound on his shin. All he wants to do is try on my sunglasses. I am spending time at the Prospect School Project in Mariama Kunda Village in The Gambia and this one little boy, no older than seven, is following me around. Wide smiles greet me and little hands slip into mine for a game of ring-a ring-a roses with the nursery school out in the yard who pause their spelling lessons to say hello. The boys, in their cute brown knee-length shorts and white and brown checked shirts pass my shades around posing like mini Justin Biebers. The girls giggle and clap, their smiles so infectious I cannot help but join them. They have limited resources here with the teachers writing on chalkboards and the school relying on sponsorship and equipment donations from tourists.

I handed over colouring books, pencils and pens but I wished I had brought more, such as old clothes and sweets for the hundreds of children we saw on the streets. Still, the pupils are engaged, happy and friendly. But there is also something moving about it, especially when my little friend hands back my sunglasses and waves me off on the truck. The school visit was part of a Gambia Tours army truck day-trip.

The excursion was a perfect way to experience the 'real' Gambia, from the sandy off-the-beaten-track, the stop at a bustling fruit market or to meet 'Uncle John' at Yuna Village and taste his traditional palm tree wine – it's not called 'fire water' for nothing. Lunch was at Paradise Beach in Sanyang, with a snake charmer and African drummers as a nice little side order. It really is a stunning beach, with clean sand, palm trees and clear, blue water. The afternoon takes in the Tanje Village Museum which is set up exactly like a traditional tribal village.

Interesting little anecdotes were revealed as we walked around, such as drums are used as a peace sound between tribes, there are over 50 types of snake in the country and fruit from Boabab trees are good to treat diarrhoea. The final stop is the Tanje fishing port. This is an extraordinary place. The smell hits you first, then you are greeted with rows and rows of fish guts as you weave through dark, hazy shacks where fish is being smoked on open fires before stepping out onto a huge chaotic beach.

We arrived at trading time so hundreds of locals were haggling and selling their daily catch. Kids as young as five struggle past you with huge buckets full to the brim with fish. Beautiful rainbow-coloured Viking-style fishing boats are lined up on the beach. And then out of nowhere a young man in a Manchester United shirt circa 1998 stops in his tracks and asks you what football team you support. Then a cow walks past. It is one of those places that has to be seen to be believed. Our second excursion was The Roots tour, which was a two-hour boat trip from Banjul to Juffureh Village which houses the Museum of Slavery – a sobering experience. I visited Gambia with my friend Matthew and we were both first-timers to the continent.

Following a painless six-hour Thomas Cook flight and smooth transfer from Banjul airport, we arrived at the Kairaba Beach Hotel on Kololi Beach. The hotel is set in beautiful gardens, with tropical plants and trees the perfect home for birds. The hotel is a tourist attraction in itself, with groups of bird watchers flocking there to see the tropical and rare species. Our room was spacious, air-conditioned, had plenty of storage and had a lovely little seating area outside with a picture-postcard view of the gardens.

If you fancy a holiday sunbathing by the pool, soaking up the (fierce) sun, a spa treatment or two, eating at one of the hotel's four restaurants and sipping cocktails then the Kairaba is a perfect choice. The staff were some of the friendliest (and happiest) people I have ever met, embodying the West African country's 'smiling coast' tag with



gusto. The hotel's non-human guests were a treat too. Monkeys were a common sight, especially around mealtimes, and don't be shocked if a peacock comes and sits next to your sun lounger. Matthew and I especially enjoyed the breakfast

buffet, with practically every taste catered for, from continental to full cooked English breakfast. I'll let you into a secret too. At 4pm, English afternoon tea is served but get there early as the cakes and treats are very popular. But if you don't leave the hotel you are missing out.

I loved that the Kairaba was right on the beach, which was clean and quiet and had some stunning views out to sea. Also, part of the fun was running the gauntlet of the fruit juice traders asking if you would like an apple or grapefruit juice. I had been warned about this and was wary but there was no need to be. We found that just a firm 'no thanks' and a smile would suffice and you were left alone.

The Kairaba is at the end of the Serrekunda resort strip, which houses a mouth-watering amount of bars, restaurants and clubs. A week isn't long enough to try them all but you must eat at the traditional Gambian places as a priority. We tried all of the Gambian dishes on offer,

from the satay-tasting Domada, ginger prawns cooked in tin foil, beef Benachin, chicken Yassa and jollof rice. The food is tasty, cheap and packed with flavour. African Queen was our pick of the restaurants with Club One and Ali Baba the places to be for atmosphere. There are Chinese, Italian and Indian restaurants for the less adventurous. The resort comes alive from around 9pm, with vibrant live bands at practically every bar playing African music long into the night. Gambia is ideal for anyone on a budget, too, as an evening meal with drinks can cost as little as £20 for two. Serrekunda has a lovely little market selling wood carvings, African dresses and headscarves and handmade jewellery. At 11.30am in the Senegambia Beach Hotel next door it is vulture feeding time. Well worth a look. I also squeezed in a visit to a crocodile pool with two new friends, Ash and Lisa – I hadn't been within 10-feet of a crocodile let alone touched one before.

We ate at Solomon's fish bar for lunch, washed down with a bottle of local beer Julbrew, which costs as little as 70p per bottle. This trip was an eye-opener for me as in an hour I went from handing out sweets to hungry children with no shoes, to sipping a cocktail during happy hour at the hotel. A real juxtaposition. There was an infinite amount of things that inspired me about The Gambia but there is one phrase spray-painted onto an abandoned advertising board that stands out – 'take what you have, and make it better.' So, having mottos as positive as this, in a country where some would be excused for giving up, makes it the kind of place I will return to, with plenty more crayons in hand. Denise Evans is a prominent journalist on the Manchester News Evening. She was recently in The Gambia to experience Gambian tourism.



IMAGE COMPETITION

Where is this?

Know where this is? If you do, please send your answer to info@GTBoard.gm and you could be in with a chance to win a copy of the next edition of the "Tourist".



DID YOU KNOW?

The International Union of official Travel Organizations evolved in to the World Tourism Organization, and further evolved in to the UN Specialized Agency – United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)



GAMBIA INTERNATIONAL BIRD WATCHING FESTIVAL; A PREVIEW

In quest to promote bird watching as a major niche in Gambia tourism portfolio, the GTBoard in conjunction with the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management, Bird Watchers Association and world renowned Birding organisations welcome you to the first ever birding festival slated to be held from the 21st -25th October in the river-side village of Tendaba in the Lower River Region.

This festival is indeed very historic as it is the first time in the history of Gambian tourism that a festival of this nature is being rolled out under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture in conjunction with all the satellite institutions under its purview, most notably the GTBoard. This is therefore very significant in many fronts, but most notably in the collective endeavor to develop and promote tourism in all its manifestations.

Thanks to various concerted efforts in product development by the GTBoard in conjunction with all tourism stakeholders such as the Bird Watchers' Association, the Smiling Coast is frequented by a diverse range of seasoned and experienced discerning tourists to indulge in their favorite passion – be it bird watching, water sports on the tranquil waters of The Majestic River Gambia, or dining and lodging in the trendy resorts and award winning eco- resorts and related tourist havens.

It is in this vein that the maiden International Bird Watching festival has been given a prominent spot in the tourism calendar of destination Gambia. It dovetails neatly with the lofty goals of the Tourism, Hospitality and Culture Strategy to improve the scope and geographic spread of tourism with a view to capturing high value tourists and generally increase demand and at the same time increases the socio- economic benefits of tourism as encapsulated in the newly unveiled economic development blueprint of The Gambia Government.

This diversification is a gradual, but a significant shift in focus from our traditional package based tourism and a necessary foray in to other rewarding niche tourism products. It is in this regard that

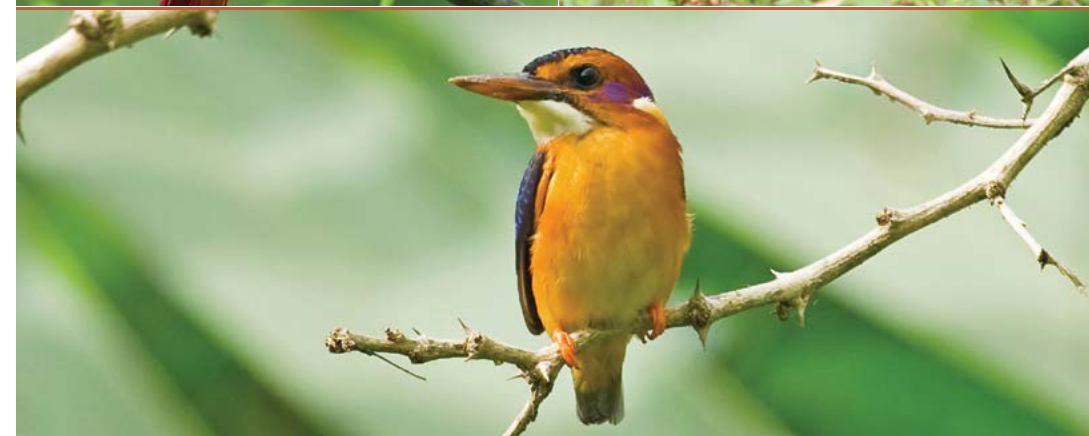
this maiden edition of the International Birding Festival should be vigorously promoted, given the huge potential of Bird watching niche in our efforts to diversify our product range. In addition to the huge international exposure and marketing benefits of this initiative, it will offer many a tourist the opportunity to descend on the Gambia and experience the genuine warmth of the Smiling Coast.

According to the DG, GTBoard "this festival is the culmination of efforts undertaken both at the level of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the GT-Board to reposition destination Gambia, not just as a sea, sun and sand destination, but also as a haven for birding and related niche activities such as water sports, sports fishing, culinary, cultural tourism as well as eco- tourism".

The Director General further pointed out that "this festival is indeed a unique one, and for the first time all roads will lead to Tendaba – a small and typical Gambian riverine village- lying on the south bank of the majestic River Gambia, and in attendance will be high value tourists, attracted not by our sandy beaches and glorious sunshine, but our diverse stock of birds, inhabiting the myriad of protected forest reserves in our various localities such as Tendaba and its environs", he underscored.

For his part the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture Benjamin Roberts underscored that "this festival could not have happened at a more appropriate time, given that the 2016/2017 tourist season is just around the corner and besides, he revealed that "some years ago destination Gambia under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture launched a new logo and brand image. This initiative seeks to underscore the need for destination Gambia to broaden its tourism appeal and diversify its products in the competitive world of tourism. It is therefore very gratifying to point out that this maiden international birding festival is a small step for the GTBoard, but a giant leap for destination Gambia. The Bird Festival will feature a range of birding activities including field trips, exhibitions and a farewell gala dinner.

Story compiled by Lamin Saho
Former Director of Planning, Ministry of Tourism and Culture



THE LAST WORD: DG GTBOARD SPEAKS

Quotes and Unquotes

A lot of efforts are ongoing to put Gambia Tourism on a higher pedestal. From marketing the destination to regulating the industry, to increasing the scope and reach of tourism and winning the partnership of stakeholders while ensuring that requisite standards are met, in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility, the GTBoard has its hands full. Director General, GTBoard delves in to the issues to portray an organization with a strong sense of direction in ensuring the success of the industry.

He revealed that the Gambia Tourism (GT-Board) was set up by the Government to serve as a successor to the defunct Gambia Tourism Authority in 2011 following a World Bank supported institutional review. The GT-Board has five functional departments and the Director General outlined these as the Office of the Director General; Department of Marketing; Finance and Administration Department; Department of Product Development, Investment and Culture; as well as the Quality Control and Inspectorate Unit. The Departments are arranged functionally to respond to the core objectives of the GT-Board: the marketing of Destination Gambia as an exciting and interesting tourism attraction, and in support of this core mandate the GTBoard is also entrusted 'with the role of product development and the regulation of the tourism industry to ensure quality in tourism development'.

The Director General further underscored the fact the Office of the Director General "is responsible for the strategic direction of the GTBoard, corporate issues and ensuring that there is both strategic fit and departmental alignment of the Boards goals and objectives".

The Director General lamented the scourge of Ebola, which has slowed down the confident march of Gambian tourism, but hastened to add that expectations are that the 2016/ 2017 winter season will kick off on a high note and the early commencement of the winter season with the arrival of the maiden Corendon flight justifies this optimism. He therefore seized the opportunity to thank the government 'for creating the conducive environment for tourism to re-bounce and regain its vitality, and for according this vital industry full support at all times. The entire



tourism industry also deserves commendation, including the local media for projecting "the good image of destination Gambia'. He added: 'Our sincere gratitude also goes to our overseas partners and myriad of marketing representations, spread across the broad spectrum of the various source markets'. The GTBoard's strategy focuses on rebuilding confidence in tour operators and travel agents and working hand in glove with them to create maximum awareness of Destination Gambia in key markets and working towards reaching the consumer. In this vein the Director General disclosed that a range of marketing activities are to be rolled out as prelude to the commencement of the 2016/2017 season including FAM Trips involving travel agents of reputable and dependable international tour operators such as the TUI Group based in the Netherlands as well as the TMI – a marketing firm based in the Russian Federation, in the quest to penetrate the lucrative Russian market.

On the various products of Destination Gambia, DG Hydara said: 'we started tourism in the Gambia as a leisure destination promoting sea, sun and sand, but there is a gradual emphasis on other more lucrative forms of tourism such as cultural tourism, eco-tourism and at the same time placing emphasis on niche tourism such as bird watching, adventure and nature based tourism as well as community based tourism as evidenced by the forth coming International Bird Watching Festival slated to take place in Tendaba in a bid to boost community and nature based tourism'. This dovetails with 'our strategy of

tourism product diversification in line with the Tourism, Culture, and Hospitality Strategy, which has placed lot of emphasis on the need for tourism to be people centered and increasing the impacts.

There are obvious indicators pointing to the fact that Gambia Tourism is expanding in depth, scope and range of trendy and exquisite tourism facilities, both in the Tourism Development Area and other areas frequented by tourists. The response of the GTBoard to this positive trend is to formulate robust regulatory mechanisms to ensure quality in tourism service delivery in a bid to meet the expectations of discerning and experienced "new tourists" cognizant of the fact that the industry is dynamic and evolves very rapidly to keep pace with changes in life style and the impact of robust technological trends'. The GT Board boss added: 'Another vital response is to lure investment in to 4 and 5 star categories and related complimentary products. "This is necessary so as to meet the growing and varying demand of customers, as well as increase the impact of tourism by attracting high value tourist'. He concluded the interview saying: 'I want to thank all key partners in the quest to make Destination Gambia interesting, exciting and rewarding tourism haven in Africa, with ideal investment climate thanks to the peace and tranquility and the legendary hospitality and the genuine warmth of the Gambian people – the jewel in the crown.'

STORY COMPILED BY LAMIN SAHO

List of Handicraft and Pre-Packed Food

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 6. Best Look | - European and African , Accessories |
| 7. Baba Mbow | - Handicraft, Leather and Silver Jewellery |
| 8.Haddy Njie | - Handicraft, Leather and Silver Jewellery |
| 9.Mrs. Dabba Taal – Wax Shak | - Fashion Bags and Silver Jewellery |
| 10. Sainabou Jagne | - Handicraft, Leather and Silver Jewellery |
| 11. Fab- Africa – Yassin Jallow | - Designer's Clothes |
| 12. Saptieu Savage— Wax | (Slippers, necklaces, neck & Bow tie, Shoes) |
| 13. Mariama Dukureh | - Vegetable Seller |
| 14. Terinfili Agro-Forestry | - Cashew Fruit Cake |
| 15. Haddy Jow | - Hot Beverages (Attaya, Mbor Mbor, Kinkiliba) |

Local African Food Vendors

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 17. Ya Mai Sey | - Grill Fish, Rice Vermiselle, Chinese noodle |
| 18.Fatoumatta Jatta | - Nyambeh Ak Nyebbeh & Fry Fish |
| 19. GTHI | - Ebbeh |
| 20. Yama Secka | - Snacks (meat pie, spring rolls etc) |
| 21. Yassin Jallow | - Fufu & Okra sauce, Fish Ball and Oleleh |

Local Juice Seller

- | |
|--|
| 22. ESSA - Local Juice Seller (Chakry, Ginger, NanburuWonjo, Baobab) |
|--|

International Cuisine and Ice Cream

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 24. Caramel | - Ice cream and Cakes |
| 25. GTBoard/GTHI | - Assorted Snacks (Corporate) |
| 26. GTBoard / GTHI | - Assorted Snacks (Corporate) |
| 27. La Terrasse | - Local Ice-Cream and waffle |
| 28. Sariba Restaurant | - Slush, snacks and other varieties of Food |
| 29. Icy Wonderland | - Pizza, Ice cream, slush, pop corn, meat pie, mini pizza, chicken and chips, croissant, Pudding |
| 30. Tropicana Gardens | - Chawarma, Meat pies, and Cow Foot |

Kidz Corner

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 31. Bouncy Castle | - face painting, wrist band etc. |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|

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4 Days of Fishing Competition

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The River Gambia is one of the most attractive and richest fishing spots in the African sub region. It obtains its source from the Futa Jallon highlands in Guinea and opens up to the vast Atlantic Ocean thus providing a unique combination of flora and fauna.

The fishing spots are accurately selected with a valuable knowledge of the fish and fishing grounds offering the angler the rare opportunity to catch the "Big One". Fishing methods would take the form of live baiting, dead baiting, drifting, trolling, etc. The anglers would be provided with live or dead baits or artificial ones depending on their choice of fish predator.

The prized fish would include both fast moving fish and dormant fish. They include the famous Baracuda, the golden Snapper, the flamboyant Cassava Fish, Captain, Tarpon (also referred to as Silver Queens), Sting Ray just to name a few.



Participation

Entry Fee:

- £150 per day (Covers transportation, bait, water, boat and Awards Gala Dinner).
- up to £6000 worth of prizes to be awarded on various prize categories.

Competition is on full insurance cover with support from Gambia Maritime Administration, The Gambia Fire and Rescue Services, Gambia Navy and Department of Fisheries.

Closing date for entry into the competition is 31st October 2016.

Fish The Gambia are pleased to support The Gambia Tourism Board and their Partners with the event of The Gambia International Boat Fishing Competition.

Fishing Methods:

- Bottom Fishing (different Bait)
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- Trolling

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www.fishthegambia.com
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