

### **Case study The Gambia - A youthful & dependent population**



The Gambia is the smallest African country and 95% of Gambia's population are Muslim. There has been a taboo on contraceptives and the birth rate is high, on average each woman in her life time will have 5.67 children. The birth rate is 29.4 per 1000 population and for every 1000 children born 11 mothers will die in child birth. People do not live much be 60, the life expectancy for women is 63.3 and for men 60.6. It is thought that the population will double every 28 years.

The Gambia is an LIC with a GDP per capita of \$470.00 and there is not enough money to build infrastructure and develop urban areas sustainably. Healthcare is very limited and the infant mortality rate is 60.2 per 1000.

#### **Problems having a young population**

High dependency ratio.

Financial problems – not having enough money to feed and support the growing family. Malnutrition is common.

Homes often don't have electricity and are overcrowded.

Sanitation is very poor.

Desertification of the forests, people use the wood for fires housing and selling. The land left ends up as desert therefore making the temperature rise.

Not enough education, there is a shortage of toilet facilities and educational material, often schools adopted a 2 shift system some children educated in the morning and some later in the day. Teachers are poorly paid and can work up to 12 hours a day.

1 in 3 14 year olds have to work to help support the family.

#### **Responses to the problems**

### **Contraception**

There are now awareness campaigns and radio adverts explaining about contraceptives. An NGO called Futures is helping to address the problem by delivering very cheap contraception which is subsidised by the World Health Organisation. Due to this programme the population growth rate has dropped from 4.2% to 3%.

### **Health**

To reduce the infant mortality rate funding from Canada is used to provide free vaccination for children. Improved maternity care helps the mothers to survive. Parents are encouraged to space out the births so that mother has enough time to recover.

### **Managing Resources**

The German government are funding a forest management scheme. The plan is to plant new forests and educate the population on how to look after and use the forests.

### **Education**

More and more children are attending school.

### **The role of NGO'S**

#### **Concern Universal**

Development in isolated communities to help them have a sustainable livelihood

Developing the social and material capacity to avoid and respond disasters

Reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS

Peace building and cross border exchanges sharing experiences and ideas.

This give the Gambians a new understanding, they now see themselves as peace actors rather than passive victims of conflict

#### **United Nations Population fund**

To improve reproductive health

Promote gender equality

Supporting teenagers

Making motherhood safer

Preventing the spread of HIV

All women to have access to contraception

Skilled care when pregnant, all pregnancy complications to receive quality emergency obstetric care to reduce mortality

Support safe motherhood initiatives by training midwives

#### **GambiaHELP**

Work with communities to identify and solve health problems

Improve primary education

Empowering rural communities

Support initiatives such as health, environment protection and sanitation

Construct wells which include a hand pump and an animal trough, provide funds for repairs. Separate water wells constructed for washing and cooking facilities