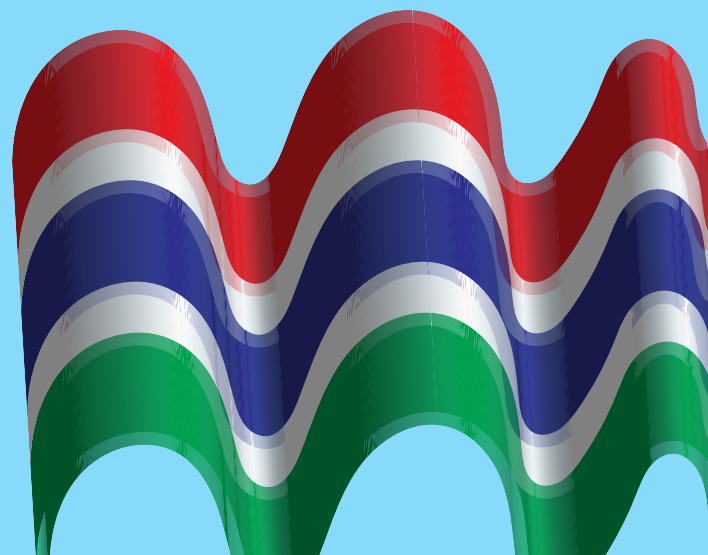


# BASSE AREA COUNCIL

REGIONAL STRATEGIC  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2024 - 2028)

**JANUARY  
2024**



# BACKGROUND

Introduction: This plan outlines the key themes and commitments that Basse Area Council, along with its associated services and affiliated organizations and partners, will prioritize over the next five years. It represents a significant step forward in our efforts to:

- ▶ Promote good governance, enhance accountable management through effective citizen inclusion and participation in decision making processes.
- ▶ Foster economic growth and diversification by harnessing the potentials of the untapped local resources through innovation, training and value addition.
- ▶ Improve social protection and the delivery of essential services for enhanced social welfare and community wellbeing.
- ▶ Promote the creation of green jobs, bolster the green economy, and advance eco-friendly and climate resilience agricultural practices for sustainable growth.

These core outcomes serve as the foundation for all the actions and initiatives detailed in this plan. We fully acknowledge our accountability for the successful execution of these objectives. To ensure transparency and progress, we commit to providing annual reports on our achievements. Additionally, we will conduct a mid-term review to remain agile in addressing emerging issues, such as potential impacts resulting from various factors, including climate related impacts.

This strategic plan has been crafted through extensive consultation with the people of Upper River Region. We believe that the valuable input from our community members reflects the true priorities and concerns of our region's residents. Furthermore, we recognize that our ability to address inequalities effectively hinges on collaborative efforts with our partners from various sectors, including the non-profit, public, academic, and business sectors.

This plan holds a central role in guiding the strategic direction and implementation of Basse Area Council. It provides the framework for future budget allocations, informs governance practices, influences operational plans for service delivery, facilitates performance management and reporting, and supports the work of affiliated organizations. Moreover, our plan aligns with and supports the broader goals of the National Development plan and its successor plan complementary to the global Sustainable Development Goals. Our commitment extends to:

- ▶ The pursuit of inclusive growth, improving the life chances and choices available to all our citizens to live in dignity and prosperity.
- ▶ Embedding principles of social justice and equity in our policy-making processes in ensuring a fairer allocation and distribution of resources to bridging the gap of inequality.
- ▶ Empowering our citizens by providing them with a voice and a stake in shaping the direction of their local communities and areas of particular interest.

Our Region: The Upper River Region, situated in the eastern part of The Gambia, is a region of rich historical and cultural significance. It is home to a population with a deep sense of pride in their heritage, traditions, and diverse backgrounds. As we embark on a journey to plan for the future of this unique region, it is important to understand its distinct characteristics and challenges.

The Upper River Region is known for its unique blend of ethnic groups, each contributing to the cultural tapestry of the region. The diverse traditions and practices of these communities enrich the social fabric of URR. Stretched over an area of 2069.50km-square sparsely inhabited by 367 communities with a population of 239916 GBOS – 2013 census 65% youth and 51.7% female.

Agriculture is the backbone of the Upper River Region's economy. The region is characterized by vast stretches of farmland where crops like millet, groundnuts, rice, maize and sorghum are cultivated. The fertile lands along the Gambia River support both agriculture and fishing, playing a vital role in the livelihoods of local communities.

URR boasts a stunning natural landscape, comprising savannah grasslands, woodlands, dazzling sunlight and riverine areas. The Gambia River, a lifeline for the region, not only sustains local communities but also facilitates agriculture, trade and commerce. The youthful population of the region represents a valuable resource for the region's future development. With the coming of a new dynamic youth leadership, the council is positioned in a better footing to tackling corruption and transitioning into transparency and accountability hence sustaining good governance in the region.

As a local government area, the region leverages on the presence of decentralized government institutions, international organizations, financial institutions, health facilities, educational institutions, telecom companies, bustling subregional markets, hotels, electricity, road network, transportation service among others to accelerate inclusion, sustainable growth and wellbeing.

While we celebrate the uniqueness, strengths and opportunities of the Upper River Region, we acknowledge the weaknesses and threats we face include:

- ▶ Persistent Poverty and Inequality including child poverty and exploitation leads to mass rural – urban and irregular migration especially among youths in the region.
- ▶ Long-term health challenges, such as access to affordable healthcare services and disease prevention, hinder our citizens from reaching their full potential.
- ▶ Skills Gap: Despite having a potentially skilled workforce, many residents lack the necessary skills to access meaningful employment.
- ▶ Infrastructure Gaps: poor feeder roads, dilapidated transportation services, inadequate electricity supply among others hinder robust socioeconomic development of the region.
- ▶ Climate change and waste management as a major threat to not only community development but sustaining it.
- ▶ Low revenue base which is as a result of the relatively micro economic activities in the region hinders the realization of development priorities of the council.





**Mission:** To strengthen decentralized structures in every aspect of sustainable development to positively impact the well-being of 367 communities of the Upper River Region.

**Vision:** To attain an equitable, decentralized, responsive and participatory local governance system within a just and an empowered society by 2028.

**Values:** The Basse Area Council values, rooted in the aspirations and needs of our residents, serve as the foundation of our mission. Developed through extensive consultations with our citizens and dedicated staff, these values guide our actions and decisions:

- ▶ **Transparency and Accessibility:** We are committed to being an open, transparent, and easily accessible organization. Our aim is to engage in free and open communication with our residents, involving them in the decision-making processes that impact their lives directly.
- ▶ **Fairness and Equality:** Our fundamental goal is to foster a fairer and more equal Upper River Region. We believe in providing every individual in our region with the opportunity to flourish and improve their life chances and choices. We are unwavering in our commitment to upholding and protecting the basic human rights of all our residents, treating each person with dignity, fairness, equality, and respect, regardless of their background.
- ▶ **Promoting Pride:** We take pride in celebrating our region's achievements, our people, our rich heritage, our exceptional facilities, and the overall appearance of the Upper River Region. We strive to instil a sense of pride in our residents, encouraging them to take pride in living and working in our region.
- ▶ **Partnership and Inclusivity:** Collaboration is at the core of our approach. We actively seek partnerships that allow our residents to contribute their ideas and concerns. We believe in the power of inclusivity, where ideas from any source are not only heard but also thoughtfully considered.

**Together, we will shape a brighter future for the Upper River Region of The Gambia.**



## 1. Strategic Pillar: Inclusive Governance for Accountable Management

Strategic Milestone 2023 – 2028: improved operations and service delivery anchored on the principles of good governance, rule of law, citizen participation, transparency and accountability.

Strategic Opportunity 1.1: Enhance Transparency and Accountability

Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- Establish and implement mechanisms to stimulate public participation and engagement to enhance transparency in decision making processes.
- Strengthen and operationalize accountability frameworks and procedures such as financial, operational and general management manuals and tools.
- Establish key performance indicators, regular reporting and feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of service delivery and to inform future decision-making processes.

Strategic Opportunity 1.3: Human Resource and Workforce Development

Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- Identify operational competencies and capacity gaps, design tailored made trainings to strengthen capacities of both staff and council members and foster the culture of skills transfer and continuous learning.
- Explore opportunities and leverage on technology and continuously evaluate emerging trends and innovations for potential adoption to improve service delivery.
- Introduce a comprehensive policy framework and a mechanism for a regular review to adopt to changing needs and circumstances to enhance ethical behavior, performance and practice.

## Strategic Opportunity 1.4: Devolution, Partnerships and Sub Treasuries

### Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- ▶ Engage higher level of government and the local government authority to jointly review and evaluate relevant legal and regulatory framework for a much greater devolution.
- ▶ Establish constituency halls to host sub-treasuries and bring local representatives closer to the people by exploring digital platforms for citizen engagement.
- ▶ Engage sister councils on shared initiatives. Build and strengthen partnerships for continuous shared learning and skills transfer on mutual grounds.
- ▶ Foster partnerships and collaboration with local stakeholders, government institutions, non-governmental organisations, the diaspora, private sector investors, children's organizations, media and civil society organizations in the implementation of this strategic plan.

## Strategic Opportunity 1.5: Communication, Engagement and Outreach

### Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- ▶ Institute effective community engagement and practice models to promote organic communication, enhance inclusivity and mock public participation in decision making processes, activities and other affairs of the council.
- ▶ Enhance regional coordination, strengthen local and outside partnerships and maintain trust worthy relationships between the council and its publics through effective public relations leveraging on the opportunities of social media and other digital innovations.
- ▶ Invest in capacity and a user-friendly infrastructure to enhance a reliable, credible and swift customer service and feedback mechanism in order to stimulate greater citizen participation.



## 2 Strategic Pillar: Growth and Economic Diversification

Strategic Milestone 2023 – 2028: sustained socioeconomic welfare and community wellbeing through inclusive economic growth that generates decent employment opportunities, alleviates poverty and enhances overall standard of living.

### Strategic Opportunity 2.1: Proliferate Vocational Education and TVET – Plus Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- ▶ Partner with local industries and educational institutions to identify skill needs of the local markets, tailor relevant training schemes, programs and apprenticeship opportunities for youths and women.
- ▶ Refurbish and establish vocational training centers equipped with modern facilities. Provide scholarships, incentives and other opportunities to make the field attractive.

### Strategic Opportunity 2.2: Establishment and Access to Local Markets Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- ▶ Identify suitable locations for the establishment of local markets providing adequate space for trading, transport services, storage facilities, sanitation and security needs.
- ▶ Promote small businesses and local entrepreneurship by harnessing the potentials of the untapped business opportunities in the local economy.
- ▶ Enact and enforce legal frameworks to ensure the protection of small and medium enterprises, promote economic inclusion, enhance compliance and effective management of business infrastructure for sustainable growth.



## Strategic Opportunity 2.3: Diversify Council's Revenue Base

### Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- Establishment of a cooperation as a dedicated business arm of the council tasked to identify potential investment opportunities and to generate revenue to address the development needs.
- Explore the concept of Destination URR to introduce and promote community - ecotourism initiatives as an economic venture.
- Seek potential public-private partnerships with private sector investors particularly natives and residents on the basis of shared business interests.

## Strategic Opportunity 2.4: Biannual Regional Economic Forum

### Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- Mobilize and consolidate higher political will to supporting greater devolution of power to local government for a more robust socioeconomic development and wellbeing.
- Stimulate the participation of the private sector especially from native people living in the diaspora to invest in various strategic business sectors.
- Provide a platform for local businesses and entrepreneurs to network and secure potential expansion and growth opportunities through partnerships.
- Strengthen partnerships and collaboration with non-governmental organizations and other development partners especially in the areas of resource mobilization, technical support, skills and technology acquisition and transfer.



### **3 Strategic Pillar: Protection and Local Services**

Strategic Milestone 2023 – 2028: improved access and usage of relevant social protection services for community wellbeing. Provision of affordable local services to ease life and livelihood translated into prosperous, safe, dignified and happy neighborhoods.

#### **Strategic Opportunity 3.1: Town Planning and Development** **Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:**

- Develop a comprehensive and an environmentally friendly town planning framework that accounts for future growth by leveraging on technology to map and number streets and houses to enhance digital governance.
- Enhance public safety and security by investing in crime prevention initiatives, provide leadership to effectively address social protection gaps – such as coverage and financing.
- Improve feeder road infrastructure, establish and expand an eco-friendly local transportation service, ensure road safety and traffic management in order to facilitate movement and trade.

#### **Strategic Opportunity 3.2: Public Health Service Delivery** **Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:**

- Invest in preventive health care through social mobilization particularly on public health issues including sexual and reproductive health rights and gender-based violence.
- Improve primary health care delivery by upgrading community health facilities to cater for the increasing population growth and public demand.
- Enhance capacity levels of community members as the first contact to health emergencies by strengthening capacity levels on first aid and equip communities to facilitate swift referrals.

### Strategic Opportunity 3.3: Vulnerable Populations, Addiction and Rehabilitation

#### Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- ▶ Formulate policies and programs to support and empower vulnerable population cohorts to thrive, grow and live a prosperous, decent and dignified life.
- ▶ Establish recreational facilities and centers for both children, youths and persons living with disability as a means of keeping and growing human capital of the region.
- ▶ Introduce a by-law to curb drug and substance abuse and invest in recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration for addicts and victims by establishing shelter and rehabilitation centers for victims and addicts respectively.

### Strategic Opportunity 3.4: Legal and Formalization Services

#### Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- ▶ Engage relevant higher authority to devolve greater legal and formalization services to facilitate swiftly the process of acquiring certain licenses, registrations and permits.
- ▶ Provide training, coaching and legal services to entrepreneurs and establish formalization programs for informal sector.



## 4 Strategic Pillar: Environment and Climate Change

Strategic Milestone 2023 – 2028: reduced environmental hazards through climate mitigation, adoption and resilience initiatives for improved overall living standards, health and wellbeing leveraging on green and the circular economy using modern technology.

Strategic Opportunity 4.1: Agricultural Production and Productivity

Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- Explore and tap renewable energy potentials and utilize it for improved eco-friendly agricultural production and productivity for increased and sustainable growth.
- Provide access to finance, technology and relevant infrastructure in climate resilient farming, processing, value addition and market access to ensure economic inclusion and growth, environmental protection and food security for all.

Strategic Opportunity 4.2: Green and Circular Economy

Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities:

- Ensure access to pipe borne, treated and safe drinking water for communities by upgrading and maintaining water treatment and distribution systems.
- Design and implement legal and regulatory framework to promote the exploration of the green and circular economy as a means of preserving the environment and general mitigation of climate change impact for community resilience.
- Device mechanisms using eco-friendly modern technology and infrastructure to transform the current waste management system to an economic venture.

### Strategic Opportunity 4.3:

#### Sub Strategic Deliverables and Priorities: Emergency Response and Disaster Risk Reduction

- ▶ Develop and deploy a regional policy and an action plan as an emergency related and climate resilience, mitigation, response and relief strategy.
- ▶ Ensure institutional capacities are enhanced to effectively manage climate related emergencies and natural disasters.

