



NAMEL e.V./ HfWU Center for Sustainable Development  
at Nürtingen-Geislingen University

Project Proposal

## Solar Village in The Gambia

December 2018

### **A project proposal directed to displaced Gambians who consider to return home**

A considerable number of Gambians are currently displaced in Europe without a legal perspective to stay. Many of them have learnt that their formerly high hopes of a bright future in Europe will not come true. But a return to The Gambia does not seem easy either, since they had left their homes in search of economic and social opportunities. This proposal aims to help path the way for voluntary and successful returns to The Gambia.

We want to initiate a village project in a rural area of The Gambia and supply necessary and attractive conditions for a good re-start of former refugees in The Gambia: education, jobs, self-esteem, hope for a better future as well as a positive impact to the local society. The “Solar Village” will offer economic opportunities, such as vocational training, employment and ways of self-sustenance. It will offer social opportunities and social networks for a successful re-integration into the Gambian society. It shall have sustainable energy generation, clean water supply from wells, and a waste managing system. It shall be developed, built and driven by and with locals and Gambians that have returned from Germany in cooperation with NAMEL ([www.namel.de](http://www.namel.de)), a German-based non-governmental African cultural association that has experience with projects in The Gambia as well as Nürtingen-Geislingen University (NGU - [www.hfwu.de](http://www.hfwu.de)).

The Solar Village may be located in the shrub savanna or in the immediate surroundings of an existing village, which will allow the integration of the village into existing networks. The final choice of location will depend on further factors, such as the quality of the soil, property rights, governmental help, as well as ecological and economic considerations.

A team consisting of members from NAMEL and NGU will visit The Gambia during two weeks from the end of December 2018 to mid January 2019. The team has financed the travel privately and wishes to talk to different important stakeholders, such as representatives of the government, local projects and initiatives, as well as international organizations. Both NAMEL and NGU are located in the town of Nürtingen, in the south of the metropolitan region of Stuttgart in the southwest of Germany.

The Solar Village will feature basic agriculture and horticulture, workshops in which important skilled manual jobs can be trained (such as electricians, mechanics, plumbers, joiners, carpenters, builders), touristic infrastructure (such as a restaurant, accommodation for teachers, trainers and visitors), as well as an area for private dwellings of the villagers. So far, a total land area of 15 hectares seems appropriate, but plans can be adjusted in a flexible way. A total of 40 to 50 people shall train, work and generate income from the three main areas of activity (workshops, agri- and horticulture, and



tourism). In an area of approximately 8,000 square feet, returnees as well as local Gambians, e.g. those who do not succeed in urban areas, may set up a house with a small individual garden and garden beds.

Experienced senior experts from both The Gambia and Germany from different professional areas will be in charge of the job training. The Solar Village shall cooperate closely with local skill centers. The project shall be sustainable in the way, that participants will not only train and invest into human capital, but also work in a profitable way, produce for the local market, satisfy local needs, serve the Gambian society, and keep the Solar Village running.

The village shall have its own water supply, renewable energy generation, as well as an independent sewage system. Waste shall be omitted or recycled. The largest part of the necessary food for the villagers shall be produced within the village. Depending on the location and the main crops, rice shall be bought from local producers. Independency from electric power grids and water will lower costs of establishment and add latitude to the choice of location. Further amenities may comprise a kindergarden and a sports field. It will be important, to establish village infrastructure that is shared amongst the villagers first (ground water well, solar energy generation, repair and agriculture shops, and communal housing). Thereafter, participants may start to help each other to build private houses and gardens.

We expect that it will take 5 years from breaking ground and starting construction to the full development of the village. Before construction can start, a suitable area needs to be found, a stable core group needs to be established, and financing must be secured to the extent of 50% of total costs. Funding will come from German private donors and as well as from official German development agencies. We estimate a need of funding of 1.5 million Euros for the Solar Village of around 15 hectares. Financing needs will depend on the scale of the project, which in turn will be adjusted to specific local requirements and local geographic, legal and economic background.

During the building phase and before attaining full economic activity, villagers will receive a wage from the initial funds. We suggest a secured wage in the first year of around 5,000 Dalasi per month which will decrease to 4,000 Dalasi per month in the second year and so on until phasing out in the fifth year when the village will reach its full level of development. This wage will be topped up by individual economic activities.

As legal organizational form we suggest a cooperative which is a corporate entity with private ownership and a broad dispersion of voting rights for both villagers and members. Influence of German private supporters may be organized through the German association NAMEL, whose current president is a permanent resident of Germany with Gambian roots. All legal details need and will be adjusted to Gambian law.

Natural conditions are favorable in The Gambia: the Gambia River gives access to ground water at certain depths almost anywhere. Sunshine duration is favorable for solar energy generation and the climate allows around-the-year-farming. Since heat is an issue, cooling is needed, and there is a general need for adequate and environmentally friendly buildings.

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