



People's Reformist Organization for Growth, Renewal, Equity, Security and Social-justice

# MANIFESTO PEOPLE OVER POLITICS



*"It is the combination of Government and people working together in unison and harmony, That still lead us to achieve the progress that we all desire. We must stand together as one people with one goal and move forward as one nation. "*

*The National Pledge*

# **PEOPLE'S REFORMIST ORGANIZATION FOR GROWTH, RENEWAL, EQUITY, SECURITY AND SOCIAL-JUSTICE. (P.R.O.G.R.E.S.S.)**

## **MANIFESTO**

### **OUR VISION FOR A BETTER GAMBIA**

For too long, The Gambia's potential has been hindered by corruption, inefficiency, and a reliance on external aid. Over half a century after independence, many citizens still await the promise of true development and equitable prosperity. Now, at a critical juncture in our nation's history, Gambians are yearning for bold and transformative leadership to turn the tide. Project PROGRESS has emerged to answer that call.

Project PROGRESS is more than a political movement. It is a vision for a new Gambia that is united, just, and prosperous. Our vision is to build a nation anchored on transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and innovation, where every citizen, irrespective of background, enjoys equal opportunity to thrive.

### **OUR MISSION**

To realize this vision, our mission is to deliver people-centered governance that truly serves the public. We will do so through transparent leadership and accountable institutions, fair distribution of resources and effective management of development, empowerment of youth, women, and marginalized communities, strategic global partnerships that advance our national interests, and sustainable economic growth rooted in innovation, agriculture, and tourism. This manifesto outlines how we will achieve these goals. It details our plans to overhaul governance, revitalize the economy, and uplift the social well-being of all Gambians. It is both a call to action and a promise: to bring about real PROGRESS that touches every Gambian life and secures our nation's future.

# PRIORITY AGENDA

## **1. Cost of Living**

Reducing the cost of living begins with promoting national self-reliance and food security. PROGRESS envisions a Gambia that produces what it consumes and consumes what it produces. We will support local farmers through targeted subsidies, investment in smart farming techniques, and access to modern equipment to increase productivity and yields. Our approach will also include a national campaign to diversify eating habits towards nutritious, home-grown alternatives over imported food, fostering both health and economic sustainability.

## **2. Elimination of Corruption**

Corruption has crippled development and eroded public trust. PROGRESS will declare corruption a national emergency from day one. We will establish an Independent Anti-Corruption Commission vested with powers of investigation, arrest, and prosecution, operating under the administrative oversight of the National Assembly. Audit and Commission of Inquiry reports will be fully enforced, and costly commissions will be replaced by time- bound criminal investigations. Penalties for corrupt practices will be significantly increased to deter abuse and restore accountability in public service.

## **3. Ending Wastefulness and Cost Cutting**

To free up national resources for development, PROGRESS will end wasteful government expenditure. We will rationalise ministries, reduce from 20 – 8 ministries, foreign travel and perks, and streamline the civil and foreign services to improve efficiency and unnecessary cost. Savings from these reforms will be redirected to critical sectors such as education, healthcare,

agriculture and infrastructure, ensuring that every dalasi of public funds serves the people's interest.

#### **4. Overhaul of the Health System**

PROGRESS will embark on a complete overhaul of the healthcare system using a bottom-up approach that prioritises primary and preventive healthcare. We will implement a One Village, One Doctor policy to ensure universal access to medical professionals, declare maternal mortality a national emergency, and eliminate import duties on female sanitary products. Public hospitals will be removed from under the direct control of the Ministry of Health and placed under an autonomous, professionally run authority focused on quality service delivery and accountability.

#### **5. Overhaul of the Education Curriculum**

Education reform will be at the heart of national transformation. PROGRESS will undertake a comprehensive overhaul of the education curriculum to align with the needs of the 21st century and national development goals. Emphasis will be placed on civic education, innovation, entrepreneurship, and national pride. The teaching profession will be restructured to attract and retain the best minds through better remuneration, professional development, and social recognition, ensuring that teachers become true nation-builders.

#### **6. Radical Reform of Local Governance**

The present local government system has been weakened by politicisation, corruption and inter-party feuds, such that councils spend more time on constant partisan squabbles than on development. PROGRESS will dismantle this model and replace it with a people-centred system that puts decision-making and accountability at the community level. At the foundation will be Village Development Committees (VDCs), chosen in democratic village

elections and structured to include youth, women, elders and persons with disabilities so that every group has a voice. From this base, representation will move upward to the district, regional and national levels through universal suffrage, with candidates selected on the strength of their ideas, competence and service to their communities rather than party label. To stop leakages in local governance, revenue collection will be centralised at the national level and shared back to the regions through automatic, transparent allocations. To further reduce costs and political tensions, parliamentary and presidential elections will be held on the same day. In this new dispensation, local governance will be driven by community priorities, fairness and service and not partisanship or personality clashes.

## **7. Security and Public Safety**

The Gambia's development depends on peace, stability, and public trust. PROGRESS will implement the long-awaited security-sector reform to ensure professionalism, discipline, and merit-based recruitment. Training and remuneration will be improved to attract capable and patriotic officers. A reformative, rather than punitive, criminal justice system will be implemented to promote rehabilitation and reintegration. Community policing will be strengthened to build trust between law enforcement and citizens, ensuring that every community feels protected, secure, and free to thrive.

# GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP

PROGRESS will usher in a new era of clean, efficient governance. We recognize that government exists to serve the people, not itself. One of our first steps will be to streamline the structures of government for maximum efficiency and minimum waste. The current bloated cabinet of 20 ministries will be consolidated into 8 lean, functional ministries. Overlapping portfolios will be merged to eliminate duplication of roles and cut down on bureaucratic red tape. Certain ministries that are not essential for cabinet-level oversight will be downgraded to directorates run by competent technocrats, reporting to the relevant ministries. Additionally, the Vice-President's role will be merged with other ministerial portfolios. By reducing the size of government, we will not only save public funds but also improve coordination and service delivery. A leaner government is a smarter, more responsive government, one that spends money on public needs instead of maintaining unnecessary offices.

## ELIMINATING EXCESS AND PRIVILEGE AMONG POLITICAL ELITE

As we rationalize government structures, we will also end the culture of excess and privilege among public officials. PROGRESS will review and rein in the extravagant emoluments and perks enjoyed by the political elite. Ministers and Directors of State Owned Enterprises will no longer have multiple luxury vehicles and a cascade of allowances at taxpayer expense. Each Minister will be limited to a single official vehicle used strictly for official duties, and unnecessary perks like fuel allowances and first-class travel will be eliminated. Our expenditure must match our reality as a country. All ministerial salaries and benefits will be transparently recorded and subject to regular review so that public servants are fairly compensated but not excessively pampered. We will enforce

strict accountability for the use of any government resources: if an official misuses public funds or property, they will face disciplinary action and be made to repay the misused funds. By curbing waste and luxury at the top, we free up resources for the people and set a tone of integrity and humility in public service.

## **DECLARING CORRUPTION AS A NATIONAL EMERGENCY**

Fighting corruption is at the heart of our agenda for good governance. For decades, corruption has crippled development and eroded public trust in The Gambia. PROGRESS will declare corruption as a national emergency from day one. We will establish an Independent Anti-Corruption Commission with full powers to investigate, arrest, and prosecute corrupt officials, operating under the oversight of the National Assembly to ensure it is free from executive interference. Past audit reports and commissions of inquiry that have exposed corruption will no longer gather dust. We will enforce their findings and recommendations to the letter. Instead of allowing endless, costly commissions to delay justice, our government will pursue swift, time-bound criminal investigations to bring offenders to court. Penalties for corrupt practices will be dramatically increased to deter would-be offenders and demonstrate that graft has no place in our public institutions. We will also empower the Auditor General and other oversight bodies to act decisively when wrongdoing is found.

## **A NEW CULTURE OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

However, ending corruption is not only about punishing the guilty; it is about preventing misconduct from taking root. PROGRESS will promote a culture of transparency and ethical service through proactive measures. This includes mandatory ethics training for civil servants and strong protections for whistleblowers who expose wrongdoing. Every civil servant will be required to declare their assets when they assume office, providing a baseline for their wealth. At the end of their term or periodically during service, those assets will

be reviewed. If someone's wealth vastly exceeds what they could lawfully earn, they will be compelled to account for the discrepancy. In this way, we ensure that public office is not abused for private gain, and honest officials are protected while dishonest ones are exposed. Public service will be a privilege and an honor once more, a domain for those who want to contribute, not those who want to enrich themselves.

## **THE CONSTITUTION WE WANT**

Our commitment to good governance also means strengthening the foundations of our democracy and the rule of law. Gambians have made clear their desire for a new constitution that reflects their aspirations, especially after a widely consulted draft constitution was produced at great expense only to be shelved. PROGRESS will not let this effort go in vain: within our first year in office, we will revive and enact the new constitution that the people have asked for. This supreme law will entrench term limits, checks and balances, and fundamental rights that guard against the abuse of power.

## **FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMISSION WHITE PAPERS AND AUDIT REPORTS**

At the same time, we will implement all recommendations of the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC) and other investigative bodies to reckon with past abuses and prevent their recurrence. A dedicated task force will recover stolen assets identified in inquiries like the Janneh Commission, ensuring that those who looted our nation's wealth are held accountable. Recovered funds and properties will be transparently managed and redirected to public use. For example, the former regime's lavish residence at Kanilai will be converted into a public museum and community center, transforming a symbol of oppression into a space for education, remembrance,

and tourism. By learning from our past and enshrining justice in law, we build a governance system that is fair, accountable, and trusted by citizens.

## **DEPOLITICIZATION OF PUBLIC OFFICERS AND INSTITUTIONS**

Another pillar of accountable leadership is the depoliticization of public officers and institutions. PROGRESS will remove party politics from the day-to-day operations of governance. The civil service, security forces, and local administrations will be professionalized so that hiring and promotion are based on merit rather than political loyalty. We will abolish practices that give unfair advantage to any party in power. For instance, the tradition of the **President's “Meet the People” tour**, currently a taxpayer-funded roadshow for the ruling party will either be scrapped or reformed so it cannot be abused for partisan campaigning. All Alkalos and Chiefs will be depoliticized, and Governorship will be completely and totally removed from our system of decentralization by law. The President and all public officials must serve all Gambians, regardless of party, and resources meant for development will never be used as political gifts. After elections, a PROGRESS-led government will govern in the interest of national unity, not vengeance or favoritism. The presidency is not a partisan prize; it is a responsibility to the entire nation.

## **TRUE DECENTRALISATION AND REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT**

Local government will be overhauled so that it serves communities, not political camps. The current arrangement, inherited from a colonial-era mindset, has too often turned councils into arenas for destructive political infighting instead of local development. Our approach is to depoliticise local governance and rebuild it from the ground up, starting where the people are. At the foundation of this new system will be Village Development Committees (VDCs). Every village, ward or neighbourhood will elect its own VDC through an open, democratic process.

These committees will be deliberately inclusive, with seats for women, young people, elders and persons with disabilities, so that local priorities are not decided by a few loud voices but reflect the full community. From this strong base, representation will move upward in a way that keeps leaders close to the people. Higher-level local bodies will be formed from, and answerable to, these grassroots structures, so that those who speak for a community are people who have actually served it. In this way, leadership will be judged by ideas, competence and service records, not by party colours.

To end the abuse of local revenues for partisan purposes, revenue collection will be centralised and then shared back to regions and localities through a transparent, automatic formula. This guarantees fairness, makes planning easier, and ensures that no community is punished or neglected because of politics. To further cut costs and minimise political tension, national elections will be held on the same day. Altogether, this reform will produce a local government system that is people-centred, development-focused and firmly rooted in VDCs as the democratic foundation of governance.

# **ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE AND PROSPERITY**

Our economic vision centers on making The Gambia self-reliant and prosperous through the intelligent use of our unique resources. The Gambia may not boast oil fields or diamond mines, but we refuse to accept that as a fate of poverty. We will define and harness our own “natural resources” — those assets that, if

managed wisely, can drive our progress. These include our **arable land, our river and ocean coastline, our strategic location, and above all, our people.**

The Gambia’s fertile soil, spanning the banks of a great river and an 80-kilometer Atlantic coastline, holds untapped potential for agriculture, aquaculture, trade, and renewable energy. Even more importantly, our youthful population is a vast reservoir of talent, creativity, and energy. Under a PROGRESS government, we will invest heavily in this human capital so that Gambians have the education and skills to innovate and excel. By leveraging technology and forming strategic partnerships, we will modernize agriculture and fisheries, turning these sectors into engines of growth. In short, what we lack in traditional resources we will make up with ingenuity and dedication, transforming The Gambia’s economy from the ground up.

## **FOOD SECURITY**

Food security is a top economic priority. We believe that no country can be truly sovereign while it depends on imports to feed its people. To reduce the cost of living and achieve food self-sufficiency, PROGRESS will revolutionize our agriculture sector. We will implement large-scale irrigation projects along the River Gambia, using modern pumping and piping systems to enable year-round farming instead of being at the mercy of seasonal rains. Gambian farmers will be

supported to increase production and diversify crops — through targeted subsidies, access to affordable farm machinery, and training in climate-smart techniques. Our goal is to ensure The Gambia produces what it consumes and consumes what it produces. As we boost local production of staples and high- value crops, we will launch a nationwide campaign encouraging citizens to buy Gambian and eat Gambian. Nutritious home-grown rice, fruits, vegetables, and poultry should become more common on our plates than expensive imported foods. Not only will this improve public health and food security, but it will also keep wealth within our communities and stabilize prices. When Gambia can feed itself reliably, every family's cost of living will drop and our nation will stand more proudly on its own feet.

## **RAPID INDUSTRIALISATION**

Beyond agriculture, we will drive industrialization and infrastructure development to create jobs and broaden our economic base. The Gambia's location gives us a natural advantage: we are a gateway between Africa and Europe, just a few hours by air from major markets and easily accessible by sea. PROGRESS will capitalize on this by positioning The Gambia as a regional processing, manufacturing, and logistics hub. First, we must solve our energy crisis. We will undertake a comprehensive reform of the National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC) to vastly improve electricity generation and distribution. Our plan embraces renewable energy — we will invest in solar farms and wind turbines to harness our abundant sunshine and coastal winds, reducing reliance on expensive fuel imports. At the same time, we will upgrade the national grid to cut waste and efficiently meet demand. Reliable, affordable power will jump-start industrial activities and attract investors who currently shy away due to constant outages.

## **SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

With power stabilized, we will focus on developing infrastructure that supports commerce and industry. We will dredge and revitalize the River Gambia as a viable transportation corridor, establishing mini-ports and docks along its length so that farmers and businesses upcountry can cheaply transport goods. Improving river transport will spur trade internally and with our neighbors. We will also invest in better road networks and explore rail or ferry connections to streamline the movement of people and goods across the country. Simultaneously, we will create special economic zones and industrial parks to encourage manufacturing and agro-processing industries to set up operations in The Gambia. Our policies will provide tax incentives and infrastructure support to businesses that add value to our raw materials, whether it's processing groundnuts into finished products, packaging fish for export, or assembling goods using imported components. By moving up the value chain, we will create thousands of new jobs and increase our export earnings.

## **TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Technology and innovation are another pillar of our economic transformation. PROGRESS will promote a digital economy and make The Gambia a hub for technology and finance in our region. We will invest in high-speed internet infrastructure and digital skills training so that our youth can participate in the global tech industry from right here at home. By encouraging start-ups in software development, digital services, and creative industries, we will open new avenues for employment beyond traditional sectors. Furthermore, we will embrace emerging financial technologies such as mobile money platforms, fintech services, and even blockchain and cryptocurrency innovations under proper regulation. The Gambia can become a leader in fintech adoption, attracting investment and providing modern financial services to our people. Our vision is to see Gambian innovations and products making their mark in Africa and around

the world, transforming us from a consumer of foreign technology into a producer and exporter of ideas and solutions.

## **REJUVENATION OF TOURISM**

Tourism, one of our mainstay industries, will be rejuvenated and expanded under PROGRESS. We will move beyond the current model of seasonal, coastal tourism and develop year-round attractions throughout the country. Our approach will emphasize eco-tourism and cultural heritage tourism, aligning with sustainable practices. For example, in the hinterland we will transform the former president's private zoo at Kanilai into a community-run eco-park. This park will restore natural habitats and allow visitors to experience our wildlife and environment responsibly, avoiding the mistakes of past attractions that mistreated animals. We will introduce guided safari tours and birdwatching trails that create jobs for local youth as guides and conservationists. Along the coast and the river, we will support projects like river cruises, historical tours of sites such as James Island (Kunta Kinteh Island), and cultural festivals that celebrate Gambian music, art, and traditions. Additionally, we will vigorously market The Gambia in new international markets, tapping into tourist segments in Asia, the Middle East, and the Americas beyond our traditional European base. By diversifying what we offer and extending the tourism calendar, we will increase tourist arrivals, lengthen their stays, and spread the benefits of tourism to communities across the country.

## **FISCAL REFORM**

A self-reliant economy also means standing on our own feet financially. We will undertake sweeping fiscal reforms to boost revenue and control expenditure. It is unacceptable that nearly half of our national revenue is lost to inefficiency, corruption, or debt service. PROGRESS will maximize domestic revenue collection without raising tax rates, by making tax administration more effective

and honest. We will digitize all tax and customs operations to seal loopholes every business and taxpayer will be registered in a central database, and payments will be tracked electronically to prevent underreporting and theft. Tax evasion and skimming by revenue officers have long plagued our economy; our administration will impose strict penalties for these offenses and use technology to make such diversion nearly impossible. When everyone pays what is due and those funds are safeguarded, The Gambia can easily double its current revenue. Those additional funds will be channeled into development projects that benefit citizens directly.

## **ELIMINATING WASTEFUL SPENDING**

In tandem with raising revenue, we will rein in wasteful spending. A significant portion of the budget today is eaten up by non-productive expenses for example, excessive travel budgets, untargeted subsidies, and the ever-growing government wage bill. PROGRESS will re-prioritize government spending to align with our development goals. We will cut down unnecessary foreign trips and per diems for officials, and invest that money in schools, hospitals, and roads instead. We will also implement project and performance-based budgeting, where each department must justify its expenditures in terms of results delivered to the public. Our philosophy is simple: the people's money must be spent on the people's needs. Every dalasi should go toward something that yields progress or relief for Gambians, not to pad the privileges of those in power. By instilling discipline in fiscal management, we will reduce deficits and free up resources to improve public services.

## **SELF RELIANCE**

Moreover, PROGRESS will explore innovative sources of financing that do not saddle us with unsustainable debt or dependency. We plan to expand public-private partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure, allowing the government to team

up with reputable companies to build roads, bridges, and power plants that can pay for themselves over time. We will broaden the domestic bond market so that Gambian citizens and businesses, as well as African partners, can invest in our nation's development and earn returns, rather than depending on costly loans from abroad. The Gambia once had profitable state-owned enterprises, and we will support the revival or creation of such enterprises where they make sense. Whether it's revitalizing agri-business ventures or launching new initiatives in sectors like renewable energy always with sound business plans and professional management. We reject the notion that our government must rely indefinitely on foreign aid or on policy dictates from international lenders. Instead, we will chart an independent course, funding growth by mobilizing our own resources and forging equitable investment partnerships.

## **RESPONSIBLE DEBT POLICY**

Of course, in today's interconnected world, loans and debts are a reality but they must be managed wisely. Our government will pursue a responsible debt policy. Under PROGRESS, we will favor borrowing in our local currency and from domestic lenders where possible, to avoid the currency risks that come with external debt. When we do take loans, it will only be for projects that directly spur economic growth and can generate revenue to repay the debt. No more borrowing millions for vanity projects or ill-considered ventures that burden the nation without yielding benefits. We will also aggressively seek better terms on existing debt and push for debt relief internationally. In fact, The Gambia will join hands with other African nations to demand a form of reparative justice: forgiveness of debts that have accumulated in part due to unfair global systems and the legacy of slavery and colonialism. The transatlantic slave trade and colonial exploitation set back Africa's development, and while those wounds can never be fully healed, relieving the crushing debt on our economies would be a meaningful step forward. By reducing the debt burden, The Gambia could

redirect billions of dalasis from interest payments into building schools, clinics, and industries. PROGRESS will champion this cause on the world stage while simultaneously ensuring that any future borrowing is prudent and purposeful.

## **YOUTH AS THE DRIVERS OF OUR PROSPERITY**

Our plan for prosperity places a special focus on youth and working Gambians. With young people making up the majority of our population, their success will determine our nation's success. PROGRESS will unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of Gambian youth by supporting small businesses and start-ups. In our first 100 days, we will introduce tax exemptions for new youth-led enterprises, giving young entrepreneurs a crucial break as they launch their ventures. We will also establish a start-up fund to provide seed capital and mentorship for promising business ideas in fields like agriculture, technology, and the creative industries. By empowering youth to create their own opportunities, we will simultaneously tackle unemployment and spur innovation in our economy. Over the first three years, we expect this initiative to generate new jobs, strengthen food security through youth-driven agribusiness, and position our young people as drivers of sustainable development.

## **LIVING WAGE AND NATIONAL WELFARE**

Ultimately, the true measure of economic progress is the improved welfare of our citizens. Thus, poverty alleviation is the bottom line of all our economic policies. We believe that anyone who works hard should earn enough to live in dignity. To make this a reality, PROGRESS will implement a national minimum income policy. After broad consultations with labor, businesses, and experts, we will set a fair minimum wage across different sectors. For example, estimates indicate that workers in the informal sector should earn at least D10,000–15,000 per month, and those in formal employment (private or public) should earn a minimum of about D20,000–25,000 per month, to meet basic living costs. We

will phase in these minimum income levels and support employers in raising wages, so that as the economy grows, its fruits are shared by all. In addition to wage policies, we will strengthen social safety nets and community development programs to uplift the poorest households. Our goal is not just to reduce poverty but to fundamentally break its cycle. We envision a Gambia where every family can afford decent shelter, food, healthcare, and education; a nation with a growing middle class and opportunities for all. Through hard work, wise management, and a people-first approach, PROGRESS will deliver an economy that works for every Gambian.

## **SOCIAL PROGRESS AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Investing in our people is the cornerstone of national development. PROGRESS's social agenda will build human capital, promote equality, and strengthen the fabric of our society. Central to this is a radical transformation of our education system. Education is the great equalizer and the engine of social progress, yet in its current state it is not equipping our youth to thrive. We will institute a comprehensive reform from basic schooling to higher education and vocational training. First and foremost, we affirm that every Gambian child has the right to quality education.

### **FREE AND COMPULSORY QUALITY EDUCATION**

To realize that, we will make education free and compulsory from Grade 1 through Grade 12, ensuring no child is left behind due to inability to pay or lack of access. But access is only the beginning; we must also revolutionize what and how we teach. Under PROGRESS, the curriculum will be redesigned to meet the needs of the 21st century and to reflect our national values. We will embed a sense of national identity and civic duty in students from an early age by teaching Gambian history, African heritage, and citizenship education alongside math and science. Critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills will be emphasized at all levels. Beyond academia, students will learn vocational skills, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship to prepare them for the modern world and job market, aligning education with the country's development priorities in agriculture, technology, healthcare, infrastructure, and the creative industries.

### **TEACHERS AS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR NATION**

Our teachers are the heroes who will make this transformation possible, and we will elevate the teaching profession to attract and retain the best minds. Teachers

should see their career as a respected calling, not a last resort. PROGRESS will improve teacher training, offer incentives for excellent performance, and raise teacher salaries so they reflect the importance of the job. An inspired, well-supported teacher in every classroom is our goal, because motivated teachers create motivated students. To complement academic learning, after high school we will introduce a compulsory two-year national service and skills program for young adults (detailed further in the security section). This program will have dual benefits: it will instill discipline and a spirit of service, and it will provide advanced vocational training and apprenticeships. Whether a student aims to be a high-tech coder, a nurse, a farmer, or an electrician, there will be pathways for them to gain hands-on experience and certification in those two years. By the time Gambian youth complete their education, they will not only have degrees or diplomas, but also practical experience, a strong work ethic, and patriotic dedication to the nation.

## **ONE VILLAGE ONE DOCTOR**

Just as important as education is the health of our people. A nation cannot prosper if its citizens are ill or dying from preventable causes. Therefore, PROGRESS will overhaul the healthcare system to deliver accessible, quality care for all. We will significantly increase funding for health, focusing on primary and preventive care which yield the greatest benefits. Our vision is to have at least one doctor or qualified health practitioner in every village or community — the “One Village, One Doctor” initiative. This means training and deploying more healthcare workers to rural areas, building and upgrading clinics, and ensuring essential medicines are always in stock. With healthcare providers embedded in communities, illnesses can be caught early and healthy habits encouraged, reducing the burden of disease. We will place particular emphasis on maternal and child health: it is unacceptable that women lose their lives in childbirth in modern Gambia. We will declare maternal mortality a national emergency and

marshal resources to protect mothers, from prenatal care and nutrition programs to emergency obstetric units. Furthermore, to support women's health and dignity, we will eliminate import duties and taxes on female sanitary products, making them affordable to all.

## **A HEALTHY NATION IS A PRODUCTIVE NATION**

Our plan also calls for smart management in the health sector. To eliminate bureaucratic inefficiencies, public hospitals and major healthcare facilities will be given more autonomy and run by professional boards rather than being micromanaged by the central ministry. This autonomous health authority will enforce high standards of care, ensure accountability for staff and resources, and respond better to the needs of each hospital's locality. The Ministry of Health will focus on policy, funding, and oversight, while empowered local administrations handle day-to-day operations. This structure has proven effective in other countries by reducing red tape and allowing health professionals to do what they do best save lives. By ensuring strong oversight, adequate funding, and a presence of healthcare services in every community, PROGRESS will build a healthier Gambia where no one has to travel far or pay exorbitantly to get treatment.

## **REVIEW OF ALL LAND ALLOCATIONS**

A just society must guarantee that its resources , including land , are shared fairly among its people. For too long, land allocation in The Gambia has been marred by favoritism, speculation, and injustice. We have seen well-connected individuals receive public lands for free or at nominal cost, only to sell them for private profit without any development, while ordinary citizens struggle to find a plot to build a home or farm. PROGRESS will bring an end to these corrupt practices and ensure equitable access to land. Our government will launch a comprehensive review of all recent land deals, especially those involving state or reserved lands, to identify cases of abuse or illegal acquisition. Any land that was

acquired through misrepresentation or abuse of power will be repossessed by the state and, where appropriate, returned or redistributed to rightful beneficiaries.

## **TRANSPARENT AND EQUITABLE LAND ALLOCATION**

Moving forward, we will implement a transparent and merit-based system for public land allocation. Clear criteria will be established for who qualifies for land grants or leases, for instance, genuine investors with viable development plans, or community organizations needing land for public benefit projects. All allocations will be made public within 7 days of their allocation to allow scrutiny. We will enact anti-speculation rules to ensure that land given for development is actually developed: no recipient of government land will be allowed to sell or transfer it before fulfilling the development purpose. If they attempt to do so, the land will automatically revert to the state. In strategic areas such as the Tourism Development Area (TDA), any plot that remains unused beyond the legally stipulated period will likewise be taken back and offered to someone ready to develop it. Our land policy will also prioritize those who have historically been disadvantaged. Special provisions will make it easier for women, youth, and low- income families to acquire land for homes or farms, because land ownership should not be limited to the rich. We will protect community lands by legally recognizing traditional communal land rights, ensuring that local communities cannot be displaced without consent and fair compensation. Additionally, to curb fraud and conflicts over titles, we will modernize the land registry by digitizing records, mapping all public lands, and requiring that all land transactions involve a licensed legal professional. Under PROGRESS, land will become a source of opportunity for the many, not a tool of enrichment for the few.

## **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY**

True progress must include everyone. Our vision of an inclusive society means bringing all marginalized groups into the fold and giving them a voice in national affairs. Women and youth make up the majority of our population, yet they remain underrepresented in leadership and often underserved by policy. PROGRESS will correct this imbalance by actively promoting women and young people into positions of responsibility. We will ensure that our Cabinet, Parliament, and Judiciary include a fair share of women and youthful leaders, not as a token gesture but as a reflection of the talent and perspectives they offer. We will introduce measures (including, if necessary, constitutional or legislative quotas) to guarantee that women and youth have seats at the decision-making table in local and national governance. Beyond just representation, our policies will focus on the specific needs of these groups: for women, that includes stronger laws and support systems against gender-based violence and discrimination; for youth, it includes mentorship programs, education aligned with job markets, and access to capital for entrepreneurial ventures. We also recognize the contributions and rights of people with disabilities, and will make sure public facilities, schools, and workplaces become more accessible so that a disability is not a barrier to participation in any aspect of public life. In a PROGRESS-led Gambia, diversity will be seen as a strength; we want every citizen to know they have an equal stake in the nation's future and an equal opportunity to contribute.

## **NATIONAL IDENTITY AND CULTURAL VALUES**

Our cultural values and national identity are the soul of our nation. PROGRESS believes that development is not purely an economic or infrastructural matter; it must also be cultural and moral. We will nurture a strong sense of Gambian identity that binds us together despite our diverse ethnic and religious makeup. This means promoting our cultural heritage, languages, and arts as part of our development strategy. In schools, children will learn not just math and science,

but also the history of The Gambia and the stories of our heroes and heroines, fostering pride in our identity. We will support cultural initiatives at the community level from traditional music and dance troupes to art exhibitions and literary festivals — through grants and partnerships. By reviving and modernizing cultural institutions like museums and community centers, we will make Gambian culture more visible and accessible to the younger generation.

## **RELIGION AND VALUES**

Hand in hand with culture is the role of religion and values in our society. The Gambia is a predominantly Muslim nation with significant Christian and other religious communities, and a longstanding tradition of mutual respect and coexistence. We will maintain and strengthen this tolerance. At the same time, we recognize that our colonial history privileged Western education and the English language to the exclusion of other forms of knowledge. Many Gambians educated in Arabic or in Islamic seminaries have found their skills and knowledge underutilized. PROGRESS will integrate Islamic scholars and Arabic-educated citizens into our national development efforts. We will ensure that being educated in Arabic or having religious expertise is not a barrier to public sector employment or advancement. Their knowledge can be valuable in areas like education, diplomacy, community development, and more. By embracing all educational backgrounds, we tap into a wider pool of talent and uphold the principle of fairness. Diversity is strength not weakness.

## **CULTURAL REVIVAL**

Cultural promotion also has an economic angle through tourism and the arts (as discussed in the economic section). A vibrant cultural scene with music, film, visual arts, and crafts not only enriches the lives of citizens but can also create jobs and spur tourism. PROGRESS will provide support for artists and creative entrepreneurs, including establishing arts centers and recording studios that are

accessible to young talent. We will celebrate and export Gambian culture: our musicians, artists, and athletes will be championed as ambassadors of our nation. Consider our international sporting champions, like sprinter Gina Bass — their achievements bring pride to all of us. Under a PROGRESS government, exceptional athletes and artists will receive the recognition and support they deserve (such as national awards or ambassadorial roles) to both honor them and inspire our youth. We will invest in sports infrastructure and grassroots sports programs, ensuring that talent in every region is spotted and nurtured. Sports unite people and engage youth in positive pursuits, so we will organize more school competitions, community leagues, and training camps for various sports.

## **THE DIASPORA AS THE ANCHOR OF DEVELOPMENT**

Finally, an inclusive society also reaches out to Gambians beyond our borders. The Gambian diaspora is an integral part of our nation. Their remittances, knowledge, and love for their country are invaluable resources. We will strengthen ties with Gambians abroad by making it easier for them to contribute to national development. This includes legislative reforms to guarantee diaspora voting rights in our elections and the development of secure online voting systems so that Gambians can vote from wherever they live. We will also create a dedicated Diaspora Affairs office to engage our overseas nationals, provide them with streamlined services (such as faster processing of documents and a special Diaspora ID card for easy access to national services), and channel their investments into productive ventures back home.

## **EMBRACING THE DIASPORA**

A crucial aspect of our global engagement strategy involves the Gambian diaspora, as discussed in the economic and social sections. Our citizens abroad are unofficial ambassadors and a source of strength for the nation. PROGRESS will integrate the diaspora into our foreign policy like never before. We envision

the Gambian diaspora not just sending remittances, but also sharing skills, advocating for The Gambia's interests internationally. We will tap into their patriotism and know-how to accelerate development, truly making them partners in our progress.

## **PAN-AFRICAN UNITY**

In addition, PROGRESS embraces the pan-African vision of unity. We will encourage people of African descent around the world to reconnect with the continent, specifically inviting them to visit, invest, or even settle in The Gambia if they wish. Our “Coming Back to the Roots” initiative will offer incentives such as eased residency or citizenship processes for those who can contribute to our society. We recognize that Africans in the diaspora, including descendants of those taken from these shores during the slave trade, have a longing to rebuild connections with their ancestral land. The Gambia, as a gateway to West Africa, will stand as a beacon for this reconnection. By welcoming our wider African diaspora and friends of The Gambia, we not only address historical injustices in our own small way but also gain partners in our development journey. In sum, PROGRESS's social vision is one of a united, empowered people, educated, healthy, culturally grounded, and inclusive of all, working together to build a nation we can all be proud of. Diversity is strength not weakness.

# **NATIONAL SECURITY AND GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT**

Peace and security are essential prerequisites for everything else in this manifesto. Without stability, our plans for prosperity and social progress cannot take root. PROGRESS is committed to ensuring that Gambians live in a safe and secure environment under the protection of disciplined, professional security forces. We will reform our security sector, including the military, police, and intelligence services to uphold professionalism, patriotism, and respect for human rights. Recruitment into the armed forces and police will be strictly merit-based and reflective of the nation's diversity, eliminating favoritism or political influence in the ranks. We will improve training at all levels, from basic instruction to advanced tactical and leadership courses, so that our soldiers and officers are well-prepared to handle modern security challenges. Better pay and living conditions for service members will also be a priority, because those who risk their lives for the nation deserve decent living standards and should not be driven to corruption or side jobs to make ends meet.

## **A NEW ETHOS FOR OUR SECURITY FORCES**

We will instill a new ethos in our security forces one that defines their role as servants and protectors of the people. Instances of misconduct or abuse of power by security personnel will not be tolerated; instead, accountability mechanisms (such as independent police complaints commissions and military ombudsmen) will be strengthened to investigate and address any violations of public trust. Our approach to public safety will emphasize community policing and grassroots intelligence. Police officers will be trained to work with local communities as partners, building trust so that citizens feel comfortable cooperating with law enforcement. When the police are seen as allies rather than adversaries, crime prevention becomes a shared responsibility and our neighborhoods become safer

for all. Meanwhile, our justice system will be reoriented towards rehabilitation and the reintegration of offenders into society. We will modernize prisons and expand community service and vocational training for minor offenders, to reduce recidivism and give people a second chance to be productive citizens.

## **COMPULSORY NATIONAL SERVICE**

A central pillar of our strategy for national unity and security is the introduction of a structured national service for young Gambians. PROGRESS will establish a compulsory national service program built around disciplined training and community service. Every Gambian enrolled in university will be required to complete one year of national service after the third year and before graduation. This year will begin with a period of physical conditioning, placements, basic drills, survival skills, constitution, citizenship and leadership. After this training phase, participants will be deployed for six months to serve in different parts of the country in roles that support communities and public institutions. In doing so, they will discover that a nation is not only lines on a map but a shared home whose people deserve loyalty and service. Through well-designed activities, these young men and women will develop confidence, teamwork and a spirit that says, “ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”

## **NATIONAL SERVICE AS A PATHWAY TO PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

For young Gambians who do not proceed to higher education, national service will also be compulsory, to be completed over two years between the ages of 18 and 20. After the initial training phase, the program will open multiple pathways for personal and professional growth. Participants will be able to pursue advanced instruction in areas such as engineering, health services, public administration, agriculture or technology. Others will be deployed to national development projects—building and maintaining infrastructure, supporting schools, or

assisting agricultural programs so that they contribute real labour to national progress while learning marketable skills. On completion, these youths will receive credentials that improve their employability. Even more important, they will emerge physically fit, skilled, patriotic and community-minded, a generation prepared to safeguard our sovereignty and drive The Gambia's development.

## **A CLEAR FOREIGN POLICY**

The Gambia's security also depends on wise engagement in international relations. PROGRESS will pursue a foreign policy that safeguards our sovereignty and promotes our development interests. We will maintain friendly relations with all nations but will always put The Gambia's interests first in any international agreement or partnership. Our diplomatic missions abroad will be overhauled to reflect professionalism and purpose. We will appoint qualified diplomats and trade representatives who can actively seek opportunities for investment, trade, and technical cooperation that benefit our country. Each embassy will have clear targets for example, securing scholarships for Gambian students, attracting a certain amount of investment, or opening new markets for Gambian products and ambassadors will be held accountable for results. By making our foreign service more results-oriented, we ensure that our presence on the global stage directly translates into gains for our people at home.

## **RETAKING OUR PLACE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE**

Under PROGRESS, The Gambia will stand proudly in the international community as a voice for democracy, human rights, and African unity. We will strengthen ties with our ECOWAS neighbors and the African Union to work on common challenges like regional security, trade integration, and climate change. The Gambia will also support initiatives to reform international institutions to be fairer to small nations. We will lend our voice to global calls for climate justice, knowing that environmental threats like rising sea levels directly imperil our

country. And, as mentioned earlier, we will champion the cause of debt relief and economic fairness for developing nations. Our foreign policy will leverage the goodwill The Gambia has earned (for example, as host of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international bodies) to gain support for our development priorities.

## **DIGNITY, SAFETY AND PROSPERITY**

Our national security and international engagement will be guided by the same core values as our domestic policies: responsibility, transparency, and service to the people. Whether it is a soldier standing guard at our borders, a police officer patrolling our streets, or a diplomat negotiating abroad, the mandate is clear to safeguard the dignity, safety, and prosperity of every Gambian. In building a secure, respected nation at peace with itself and engaged with the world, PROGRESS will ensure that the groundwork is laid for all other aspects of our vision to flourish.

## A RALLYING CALL

The PROGRESS Movement calls on every Gambian to join hands in this national renewal. Whether you are a farmer in Kuntaur, a teacher in Banjul, a vendor in Serrekunda Market, or a Gambian living abroad, your hopes, talents, and hard work are what will build the new Gambia. We ask for your support, your ideas, and your determination. Hold us accountable and stay engaged, because the success of this agenda depends on collective effort and vigilance. We are all stakeholders in the future of this nation.

Imagine a Gambia where our children receive world-class education and grow up to be confident innovators; where hospitals are well-equipped and every family can access care without hardship; where corruption is a distant memory and public offices truly serve the public; where young entrepreneurs drive a thriving economy and create jobs for others; where food is plentiful, energy is clean and reliable, and our environment is cherished; where women and men, young and old, from every community stand as equals in shaping our destiny. That is the Gambia we can achieve together.

The journey to this promised future begins now. With courage, unity, and commitment, we will turn this manifesto into reality. Let us all rise to the occasion and be the change that we desire. A united, just, and prosperous Gambia is within our reach. Together, under the banner of PROGRESS, we will make it happen.



People's Reformist Organization for Growth, Renewal, Equity, Security and Social-justice