

CHAPTER 1

1.1. Introduction

“Africa is a paradox which illustrates and highlights neo-colonialism. Her earth is rich, yet the products that come from above and below the soil continue to enrich, not Africans predominantly, but groups and individuals who operate to Africa’s impoverishment”.
Kwame Nkrumah– Neo-Colonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism, 1965.

West Africa¹, including the Maghreb (Western Sahara, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia), occupies an area of over 6.400.000km². The Atlantic Ocean forms the western and southern borders of the region, while the northern border is the Sahara Desert and the eastern boundary extends from Mount Cameroon to Lake Chad (United Nations, 2014).

The history of the countries of West Africa is marked by European contact, the slavery time that began in the 15th century with the Portuguese and later colonialism, where the British and French divided the region. All this weakened the region in its economy and human resources. Likewise, there are problems of climate change affecting the area due to geography, as much of this land is plains lying less than 300 meters above sea level, though isolated high points exist in some states along the southern coast of West Africa (Speth, 2010). Owing to past history aforementioned civil wars during the twenty-first century and climate change this region of Africa suffers from serious economic problems, which unfortunately hunger and poverty are established as standard.

¹ West Africa has 18 countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, the island of Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, the island of Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and Principe and Togo.

It is in West Africa where the smallest country of the region called The Gambia² is situated. It is entirely surrounded by Senegal, except at the mouth of the Gambia River on the Atlantic Ocean. The country is situated on the banks of the Gambia's river, which gives its name, and runs through the middle of it with mouth in the Atlantic Ocean. The country has 10 500 km² and an estimated 1.9 million population, with a very young population (50% are between 0 and 14) mainly Muslim and ethnically diverse (The Gambian Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2015). It is a country with fertile agricultural land that has become one of the key elements of the economy, along with fishing and tourism. Approximately one third of the population lives below the international poverty line (of \$ 1.25 per day). Gambia has one of the lowest Index of Human Development; with 0,441 the country is located in position 172 of 187 countries (World Bank, 2015). In relation to the agriculture sector, both the Gambian government and the European Union, through its development programs, are trying to refurbish this sector for the benefit of the general population, since Gambia's economy is based on agriculture, fishing and tourism. The development of various programs to promote and support farmers' organizations in the country could be the key to fighting against poverty and famine. In this particular topic, sustainability agriculture³ is very important for the country and of course the region in general.

More than 20 years ago a project was born in Benin called *Songhai Centre*⁴ and has managed self-reliance, and also developed a new concept among Africans youth who have participated on it. This project gives a new vision on farming where young people become entrepreneurs and also have been able to generate jobs in their communities (Songhai

² Officially the name of the country is Islamic Republic of The Gambia. This thesis will be mentioned the country as The Gambia or Gambia.

³ Sustainable agriculture is the efficient production of safe, high quality agricultural products, in a way that protects and improves the natural environment, the social and economic conditions of farmers, their employees and local communities, and safeguards the health and welfare of all farmed species.

⁴ Songhai Project integrated system of production based on a synergetic interaction between agriculture, animal husbandry, and fish farming. Plant products feed our animals and animal by-products nourish our plants, incorporating energy from materials that would otherwise be waste. This synergy enables farmers to achieve almost total self-sufficiency and to preserve the health of environment for future generations, and last but not least, this project has developed a new concept of agriculture where farmers become innovative entrepreneurs.

Project, 2016). Today 15 activities are spread onto Africa, and The Gambia is the youngest repetition on *Songhai Centre*, and therefore a good point to analysed how is working in a country with more than 70% of the population living in rural areas and approximately one third of the population lives below the international poverty line. But what is surprising is that despite the European Union (EU) through the European Development Fund⁵ (EDF) gives money to Gambia for development programs, the *Songhai Project* lacks support.

For many years the European Union tries to help the different countries of Africa in order to improve the quality of life of people. Especially in West Africa, a part of the continent hard hit by climate change with drought or heavy rains; In addition to internal wars, corruption and other components that facilitates extreme poverty and famine.

The way in which the EU provides financial assistance to Africa is through European Development Fund (EDF).

“EDF was created in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome and launched in 1959; this is EU's main instrument for providing development aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and to overseas countries and territories. It is financed by direct contributions from EU Member States according to a contribution key and is covered by its own financial rules and the total financial resources of the 11th EDF amount to €30.5 billion for the period 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2016).

The EU, through its delegations throughout Africa, is responsible for distributing the money agreed to finance development programs, coordinated by African governments in collaboration with NGOs. But these programs are not enough to achieve self-sufficiency of the countries and their people, as these projects are dispersed according to the needs of the countries and plans each government has in collaboration with NGOs.

⁵ Created in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome and launched in 1959, the European Development Fund (EDF) is the EU's main instrument for providing development aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and to overseas countries and territories (OCTs).

What is surprising is that *Songhai Project* is recognized by UNESCO⁶ and have the financial support of United Nations Development Programs (UNDP), but does not have the economic or technical support from the European Union. Therefore, in this thesis it may try to develop a bond to understand if it is possible that this project could be one of the keys to EU seek to fight against poverty and famine in Western Africa, and perhaps dispel this idea to other parts the continent.

1.2 Problem formulation

“Katsina: Using Songhai initiative to address unemployment, food security and self-sufficiency”

(Daily Trust, 2016)

In the recent years the importance of sustainability agriculture in The Gambia took main relevance for the government, and thought the Ministry of Youth is supporting the *Songhai Project* in Upper River Region, where the first class of Gambian students has graduated last July 2015. *“Gambia: 29 Graduates from Songhai Centre Deployed to Chamen”* (The Daily Observer, 2015). However, the European Union is not supporting this particular program, otherwise in September 2015 11th EDF⁷ approved 33 euro million to The Gambia, of this budget line, 28 million will go directly dedicated to the agriculture sector in the country.

⁶ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN). Its purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter.

⁷ 11th EDF would cover the period 2014-2020 and coincide with the expiration of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement in 2020, and the EU budget period.

Hence this document will try to stress the EU's engagement in the agriculture sector in Gambia and the participation of EU's member states. After all, EU is showing concern by providing financial support but not real participation, it look to be focus only in the monetary level than technical support; although it is important for them to develop programs to protect food security in Gambia. Therefore, the paper will look closer on the following question:

Why does the European Union not support 'Songhai Project' in The Gambia?

In order to answer the main question critically and precisely, the paper will include four sub-questions:

- What is Songhai Centre and how it works?
- What is the real involvement of the EU in development programs carried out in Gambia?
- Is the political dialogue influence the decisions of the member states to support specific programs developed in Gambia?
- Are the procedures for applying to the European Development Fund too bureaucratic and requirements are difficult to reach for NGOs in Gambia?

The sub questions have been developed based on the theoretic choices and the information obtained during the interviews that have been conducted to complement this research. It rests upon the notion that the importance of development programs in Gambia to address food security through sustainable agriculture. Thus, the current status of EU's engagement, and obstacles standing in the way of it, must be analysed in order to find conclusion to the problem formulation.

CHAPTER 2

2.1. Methodology

This chapter described the methodological illustration of the project, analyses, type of used data and methods included. The main purpose of this paper was to build knowledge about the importance of sustainability agriculture to fight against poverty and famine in West Africa, while explaining European Union's engagement in sustainability agriculture in Gambia using the case study of Songhai Project. After an analysis of actions, events and factors connected to the topic, a part was dedicated to test the findings through theories that can support the results or deny them. This leads to a conclusion that summarizes the data, analysis and therefore the project sought an answer to the problem formulation that was raised in the beginning.

2.1.1 Synopsis / design

The aim of this project was to cast some light on the European Union's engagement in sustainability agriculture in the Gambia, and specific *why does the EU not support Songhai Project?* This document has the objective of identifying the processes and programs which has already been developed in trying to deal with the issue; if there a political implication on it, how well EU's commitment on development projects work, and which one are the agreements and funds to help development of agriculture in the country? To try to obtain it all, this project has been divided into five research chapters:

- Chapter One, *Introduction* with an overview of the project and the current situation of the country in terms of sustainability agriculture, as well as some general points about actions taken by the government of The Gambia, developments projects evolve in the sector and the current political situation between EU and the Gambian Government. As stated in the introduction, the *Problem Formulation* comes with four sub-questions, in order to gain more rich and precise conclusion.

- Chapter Two, *Methodology* described the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select and analyse information applied to the understanding and solve the problem formulation; in *Synopsis/design* lists all the points that are developed in the chapter on methodology. Whilst *case study* is define why it has been used it, and that is a descriptive case study which involves several component elements. *Data collection* it is stated what type of information has been used; it also mentioned the two interviews have been made. *Methodological choice* aims to give a logical framework to this project through to approaches according to the knowledge obtained during the investigation. In this chapter additionally are included: *Types of research and approach and Delimitations*, where explained that in order to answer the main question and sub-questions clearly and precisely, the type of conducted research in the project was an explanatory descriptive design. Additionally, for this document also it was included a qualitative research.

- Chapter Three, *Approach and results* this section was dedicated to explaining, in a comprehensive manner, the results of its study on the basis of the methodology was applied to collect information were published. The results section indicates the findings of the investigation arranged in a logical sequence and without bias or interpretation. This section described the results generated from research, and tried to answer the four sub-questions: *What is Songhai Centre and how it works?* This describes the characteristics and values of this program and tries to understand the lack of support from EU. *What is the real involvement of the EU in development programs carried out in Gambia?* Wherein list and describe the work done by the European Union in Gambia in relation to agricultural development programs. *Is the political dialogue influence the decisions of the member states to support specific programs developed in Gambia?* Aims to enumerate and disclose the main problem that strained relations between the EU and the government after the expulsion of the EU diplomat to Gambia in June 2015. And lastly: *Are the procedures for applying to the European Development Fund too bureaucratic and requirements are difficult to reach?* Seeks to determine whether the problem of lack of support for Songhai project is related to bureaucratic issues or absence of commitment from EU representatives in Gambia.

- Chapter Four, *Analysis*, the purpose of the analysis is to interpret and describe the significance of the findings of the research problem under investigation, and to explain new ideas that appeared during the investigation into the problem after taking into consideration the findings. This analysis is connected to the introduction through the problem formulation and sub-questions raised and the literature reviewed.
- Chapter Five, *Conclusion* which summarises the findings of the project.

2.1.2 Case Study

Oxford Dictionary has two definitions of case study: “A *process or record of research into the development of a particular person, group, or situation over a period of time*” and “A *particular instance of something used or analysed in order to illustrate a thesis or principle*” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). Case studies are used as a methodological approach based on different types of source of information varying from interviews, observations, events, documents and others in order to “*capture various nuances, patterns [...] that other research approaches might overlook*” and “*uncover [...] significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon*” (Berg, 2004, p. 251). It is used as an efficient analytical technique in many study areas to explain the gap between case study and reality. This project worked with explanatory descriptive design as this type generally involves several component elements. Some of them are: study questions and prepositions, theoretical framework, logical linking of data and others (Yin, 1994:20 stated in Berg, 2004, p. 257). Likewise, this paper it was chosen a qualitative research where results has been produced, and not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Also it has been made interviews to help better understand the case study was conducted (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). When talking about qualitative analysis, is spoken of a process of interpretation carried out with the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships of the raw information, and then organize a theoretical scheme explanation. “*Some of the data*

may be quantified as with census or background information about the persons or object studied, but the bulk of the analysis is interpretative” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

2.1.3 Project layout

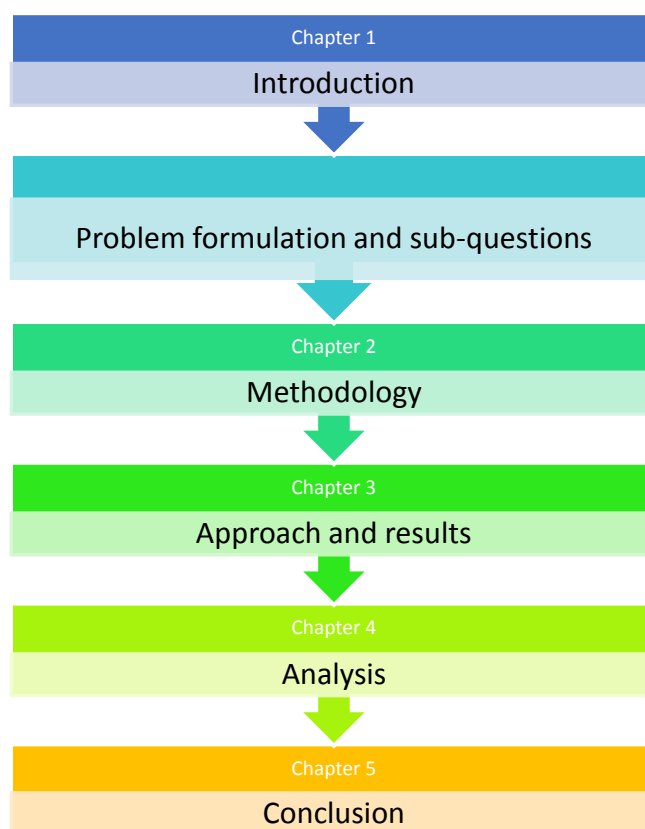


Figure 1: Project layout.

The figure above shows the basic layout of the project. As it demonstrates, the project starts naturally by introducing the topic on a general point of view followed by the problem formulation. The methodology part starts with the study case, which explains the Songhai Project itself and how is working in The Gambia. This chapter leads to the part where

gathered data will be analysed in order to answer the main- and sub-problems. A variety of methods and approaches will be displayed to further develop the topic properly.

Another chapter will reveal the approach and results which will help the evaluation and testing of the information in order to understand the problem deeper. A chapter will be dedicated to conclude and summarise the findings, facts and data. The last part will reveal ideas and put perspective towards understanding EU' evolve in development projects in the Gambia and the importance of sustainability agriculture to fight against poverty and famine. Besides analysing the possible elements that do not allow a real commitment by the European Union in development programs conducted in Gambia

2.1.4 Data collection

In relation to methods of use, this research includes qualitative data, which have to do and are used for in-depth understanding of behaviour of the European Union and examine why and how decisions are made to assist in development programs. The study of EU's engagement in agriculture sustainability in Gambia requires more specific and precise information unlike the one provided from the quantitative method of data gathering, which deals with numbers and statistical statements (Bryman, 2008, p.24).

Therefore, two crucial expert interviews will be conducted in order to show the position of the European Commission and United Nations Development Programs.⁸ The reason why it was decided to select the two particular representatives was due to the fact that both institutions have different points of view, and have different approaches related to sustainability agriculture, and how these kinds of programs can be implementing or develop in the country. As the interviews contain settled questions on the subject and are also systematic, this is considered an expert semi-standardized interview (Berg, 2001, p. 70). This method allows the interviewee to expand on their answers and thus the collection of information may be broader. The used questions were both open and close-ended searching

⁸ The interviews were conducted by Karin O. Silva (can be found in Appendix section).

for new existing data which the project is working with. It should be noted that the results of the two interviews were very useful for the project, because even though were two different points of view; politically revealing information helped to understand the attitude of the Member States with the government of Gambia; and UN expert stressed the importance of implementing programs such as the case of Songhai. The interviews are part of the primary type of data used all the way through the project as the information is collected by first-hand sources; while secondary data were managed with various sources ranging from media, online sources, official documents, reports of both the European Union and Gambian government, books, databases among others. Validity and credibility of the sources were taken powerfully into consideration, and objection has been sought. Nonetheless, the project has argued and analysed each source in order to access at a comprehensive and reliable result at the end.

2.1.5 Methodological choice

Furthermore, this paper could have used a chapter dedicated to theories (theoretical Framework). The Cambridge Dictionary defines theory as “*a formal statement of the rules on which a subject of study is based or of ideas that are suggested to explain a fact or event or, more generally, an opinion or explanation*” (Cambridge Dictionaries Online, 2014). However it was decided to approaches according to the knowledge obtained during the investigation, always using data from scholars who can reinforce the results. Finally, the analysis was carried out with the results obtained during the investigation, and to have a more solid base, it was decided trying to find theories that can support or confront the results.

It is essential for understanding the coping mechanism and policy-making that there is no general development theory which covers the reasons, processes and consequences of development programs in Africa. However, several scholars across different disciplines have tried to explain it and give a deeper understanding.

2.1.6 Type of research and approach

In order to answer the main question and sub-questions clearly and precisely, the type of conducted research in the project is an explanatory descriptive design. It provides a causal explanation and the reasons behind an issue thus it is considered to be more useful than the other type of descriptive research, which is only describing a problem (De Vaus, 2001).

Likewise, for this document also it was included a qualitative research⁹. Qualitative research is characterized by the study and collection of a variety of empirical study of the materials of the case, such as: the study of a particular case, personal experience; life story; interviews; texts and cultural products; observational, historical, interactional, and more. Accordingly, qualitative researchers perform a wide range of performance practices that are interconnected, hoping to get a better understanding of the subject matter. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

“Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities and the social and physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It is multiparadigmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multimethod approach” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

2.1.7 Delimitations

As the chosen topic conducted a study on European Union’s engagement in sustainability agriculture in The Gambia, it was important to put some limits on the project by including some delimitation that helped define the exact objectives of the research, narrow and help finding proper understanding to the problem. Firstly, the geographic area

⁹ A generic definition can be offered: Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self.

is restricted to West Africa, specifically to a small country called The Gambia. This country is the last one to develop the Songhai Project, taking in considerations that this project it have been spread to 15 West African countries in the last 20 years. However, in order to illustrate and show the proper functioning of this project of sustainable agriculture this paper described also the results obtained in other countries such as Benin, where this project was born. Moreover, the document only focused on the activities developed in Gambia.

It is important to underline that the project handled official statements, such as policies or agreements, made by the European Union, information published by the Gambian government on agriculture and reports disclosed by United Nations Developments Programs. Political and ethical considerations have been used throughout the work in order to avoid any unpleasant situations or damage of any persons involved in the events.

To explain and understand international relations policies, theories have been developed throughout the last few centuries covering topics from economy, sociology, geography, history, among others. However, the project focused only on explaining and analysis the results found during the investigation, and ultimately rely on theories that can confront the findings.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Approach and results

This chapter attempts to outline what has been found in relation to the research questions or hypotheses. The results can be presented both in numbers and in written text. The section contains the facts of the investigation, through a description of them, based on research, official documents, interviews, articles, books and personal experience. The chapter it is divided into four parts or cases.

The first part is related to the case study, here a historical description of Songhai Centre is done and it has been used information from *Entrepreneurship and socioeconomic development in Africa: a reality or myth?* (Journal of European Industrial Training, Vol. 34 Iss: 2, p.96 – 109). But especially the book *Songhai: When Africa lifts up its head* from Godfrey Nzamujo, founder of the centre. Also, to provide context for the development of this project in Gambia, official documents of the Government of Gambia, and an interview with the representative of UNDP has been used.

While in the second case or part, the information presented is on the UNDP in Africa and the contribution of this institution in the sustainable agriculture programs in The Gambia. It has been attempted to explain the work of UNDP in Africa to put into context why support the Songhai project in Gambia. Here it has been used official reports of UNDP, in addition to an interview with Abdou B. Touray, UNDP's Programmer Specialist on MDGs Poverty & Environment. Also to understand the importance of self-reliance mentioned by Touray during the interview, it has tried to explain the ideology of Pan-Africanism and the possibility that scholar Wolfgang Sachs and his post-development theory ideas also serve to understand the involvement of UNDP.

The Cotonou Agreement and the European Development Funds, information obtained from official documents(European Commission, 2016) was used to understand the role played by the European Union in development programs, in the third case. Additionally an interview with European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal is performed. And finally, for the last case or part it was necessary to explain the relation between Gambia and EU to understand how its affect the support to development programs in the country. Here I was used internal report from EU Delegation, interview to European Commission Desk Officer, European Commission reports and newspaper information about the tense situation occurred when the president of Gambia expelled EU diplomat in June 2015. This case was important because it was related to the lack of support to Songhai Project.

Each section will be analysed and will have a small conclusion or comment to try to understand the problem posed at the beginning of this thesis. To do this, it will try to answer the sub-questions that have appeared during the problem formulation. The results of each case will be examined with scholars like Sachs, Sen or Mangala, among others, ideologies and theories that serve to understand why the European Union does not support technically or economically the Songhai project?

The findings on the most important results are made with the expectation that they will develop further in the analysis section, which will attempt to use a theory or theories that can support the conclusions/results contained in this chapter.

3.1.1 Case Study of Songhai Centre

At the beginning of the 80s there was a lot of news about the famine in Africa and severe drought which affected many countries of this continent. These images portrayed Africa as a continent ravaged by bloody wars, hunger, and poverty crisis (Geburu, 2009). It was during this time that a young Nigerian, who lives in the United States, decided to return to Africa trying to contribute with his knowledge to improve Africans' quality of life. This was Godfrey Nzamujo¹⁰ a Dominican priest with doctoral degrees in electronics, microbiology, science and development, who worked as a university professor in the United States (Songhai Centre, 2015).

In his book *Songhai: When Africa lifts up its head* Nzamujo explains his vision and how he joined a group of Africans in Benin who share same ideas about level of development in Africa was grossly insufficient and sought to develop a new way that could improve the lives of African people and restore dignity and self-reliance. In the 80's he returned to Africa and for some years was seeking funding until 1985, when he founded the Songhai

¹⁰ Godfrey Nzamujo is originally from Nigeria, he travelled to the United States in 1970, where he studied computer science and graduated in microbiology and chemistry. He then became a professor of electronics and computer science in California.

Centre using the name of one of the main pre-colonial independent African kingdoms (Nzamujo, 2002). According to Godfrey Nzamujo “*the only way to fight poverty is that poor man to become an active and enterprising creator*”. Nzamujo wanted to create a living environment based on education for Africans, where they can learn techniques to help them improve their quality of life and how to feed themselves. Nzamujo believes that African lands are fertile and productive, but its inhabitants do not have the necessary tools to achieve sustainable agriculture. In this regard, he believes that with the right tools, Africans can get a long-term self-sufficiency. It is also convinced that sustainable agriculture plays a key role in the development of African countries; not only to ensure food but to change the vision of young people and turn them into entrepreneurs (Nzamujo, 2002).

The opportunity to create this centre arose in Benin where the government granted an acre of land to implement the project in Ouando¹¹. Nzamujo and his followers took based on the fundamental values that contributed to the civilization of West Africa¹² and its main objective was youth Africans (Songhai Centre, 2015). Four years after its creation Songhai Centre spread and began training young agricultural entrepreneurs (the long-term training began in Porto-Novo in 1989). The centre expanded its mission over Benin and among West African countries.

The Songhai Centre is a place of training for production, research, practical activities and development of sustainable agriculture practices. The centre has become a Non-governmental organization with the mission to fight poverty by transforming young farmers in producers and entrepreneurs. The Songhai model has been successful linking agriculture to industry and trade by leveraging local resources and promoting sustainable social entrepreneurship. One point that has made this project successful is to get empowering rural African communities, thanks to the opportunities for young people (men and women) to

¹¹ A suburb of Porto Novo.

¹² The values highlighted in West African civilization were based on courage, creativity, sense of community; discipline and solidarity fundamentally, unfortunately have tended to disappear from the customs of the African peoples in the last decades.

become entrepreneurs both livestock and agriculture. This project gives hope to young people and thus desire to fight in their own communities. It is based on the idea that if young people have tools to work and achieve economic stability, will not want to leave their hometowns

The creation of the Songhai Centre is based on the ideas of its founder and it can clearly see an influence on the ideology of Pan Africanism¹³ that is widespread among African thinkers and activists. The idea of achieving self-sufficiency through natural and human resources held by the African continent, basis in the unity of the people where it can achieve economic improvement. Songhai Centre has managed to prove that through collective unit and using resources sustainably can achieve economic and social improvement in the area. The proof is that this project has grown over the past 20 years and has greatly improved the quality of life of the area, and achieved recognition of the United Nations. Also, the idea of sustainable agriculture driven by this NGO has spread in 15 countries of West Africa with also good results. *“The results in Benin are so good. They transformed the idea of agriculture into a business and created thousands of thousands of employments. And also you can see in Benin that people who participated in the project are no longer only farmers, they are also employers”* says UNDP’s Programmer Specialist on Poverty MDGs& Environment: Abdou B. Touray. This is one of the ideas of Pan-Africanism: promoting African solution to African challenges.

¹³ Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encourages the solidarity of Africans worldwide. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social, and political progress and aims to "unify and uplift" people of African descent. As a philosophy, Pan-Africanism represents the aggregation of the historical, cultural, spiritual, artistic, scientific, and philosophical legacies of Africans from past times to the present. Pan-Africanism as an ethical system traces its origins from ancient times, and promotes values that are the product of the African civilizations and the struggles against slavery, racism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. Two icons of Pan Africanism were the former president of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah and Muammar Gaddafi, Libyan revolutionary and politician.

3.1.1.2 'Songhai Development Model-Gambia Project'

Songhai Development Model-Gambian Project is based in the experiences made in Benin where youth population got a job after being training as entrepreneurial, developing a whole new idea about farming. Taking into consideration that unemployment among the youth in Gambia is highest and remains a major national challenge, UNDP together with Gambian government decided to establish this project in North Bank Region. Agriculture is the most critical sector for economic expansion to absorb unemployed youth, and of the employment youth; only 20% are in the agricultural sector. "Agriculture is the main state of the country, and the problem is that the productivity can no go any long, because if you have 60% of the population engaged in that activity with the contribution of 25% of GDP, it means really that is not optimize", argued Abdou B. Touray¹⁴. In that sense, through this project it is trying to optimize the development of the sector, seeking self-sufficiency and sustainable development, later to get change the vision of agriculture; turning it into a business, not a way of survival. "We want to use agriculture... as a business because people will have the possibility of transforms their life in a good reliance growth, and we can only do that investing in the young citizens". These ideas can be simply seen as a neoliberal economic model, which seeks to generate capital. Whereupon it is not an innovative idea, but if the search results are analysed: these are based on self-reliance in community work in order to improve the quality of life of the people involved. If this project continuous in time and can become self-sustaining and produce benefits that impact all members of the community, then the community will have reached a goal. "Here in the Gambia has been a lot policies to ensure the benefits of develop this sector. If we are looking for achievement on this topic Songhai project is the way" points out Touray.

It seems that lack of employment's opportunities and extreme poverty are factors that cannot be fought without following a model, in this case a model marked by the image of welfare of the countries from third world. So, there is a possibility that post-development

¹⁴ Programme Specialist on Poverty MDGs& Environment at United Nation Development Program and director of Songhai Development Model-Gambian Project. Interview in appendix.

theory in Wolfgang Sachs' ideas related to follow a pattern would be the best chance it would have the Gambian government to fight extreme poverty, the biggest problem in this country and root cause of youth migration. But again, the idea of self-reliance is always present in Songhai model.

In seeking to achieve self-sufficiency, inclusive growth, youth employment and agricultural transformation are the focus areas of this project, which started in 2015 and have an estimation of duration until 2020. The project is fully aligned with The Gambian Government's objectives of empowering farmers, agricultural growth, wealth creation and poverty reduction; in addition of enhance opportunities for decent employment for youth, women and unemployed. But the main principal is spread effect in The Gambia. *"We want to spread this new idea of transforming farming into business. When those people graduate, also can teach in their hometowns to others. We want graduates who become farming entrepreneurs; becoming big farmers in rural areas"*, says director of Songhai Development Model-Gambian Project.

At the moment Songhai project has recruitment of 63 young under 30 years old (male and female) who have completed training in July 2015 at the Chamen Centre. *"Besides youth also we have what we called farm labours that are employer and also supporting these activities with their farms"*. In this sense, young people who are formed in this project gain a new vision of agriculture, where they see themselves as young entrepreneurs with the ability not only to feed itself but also to fight poverty as a generator of employment in their hometowns, which are mostly in rural areas of the country. *"Today is 15 projects spread onto Africa. Actually The Gambia is the youngest repetition on Songhai project. We are seeing results across African that has been addressed youth employments"* said Touray.

The successful development of this project is the great hope for the Gambian government and also UNDP, since they are convinced that through these kind of projects is the best way to fight poverty, as it implies sustainable development and self-reliance of the communities

where they are applied; Besides being the best way to get young people return to their villages or not wanting to emigrate.

Before embarking on joint collaboration to develop Songhai in Gambia, UNDP representatives and ministers of Agriculture and Youth, met on several occasions to discuss the feasibility of implementing the idea of Songhai Centre in the country. The two sides travelled to Benin to see first-hand the work being done there and the results obtained in the different communities. According UNDP’s Programmer Specialist, after visiting Songhai Centre in Benin *“it was easier to agree and finally a collaboration agreement between UNDP and the Ministry of Youth and Sports was signed, because although it is a program of agricultural development are directly involved young Gambians”*.

The Songhai Model

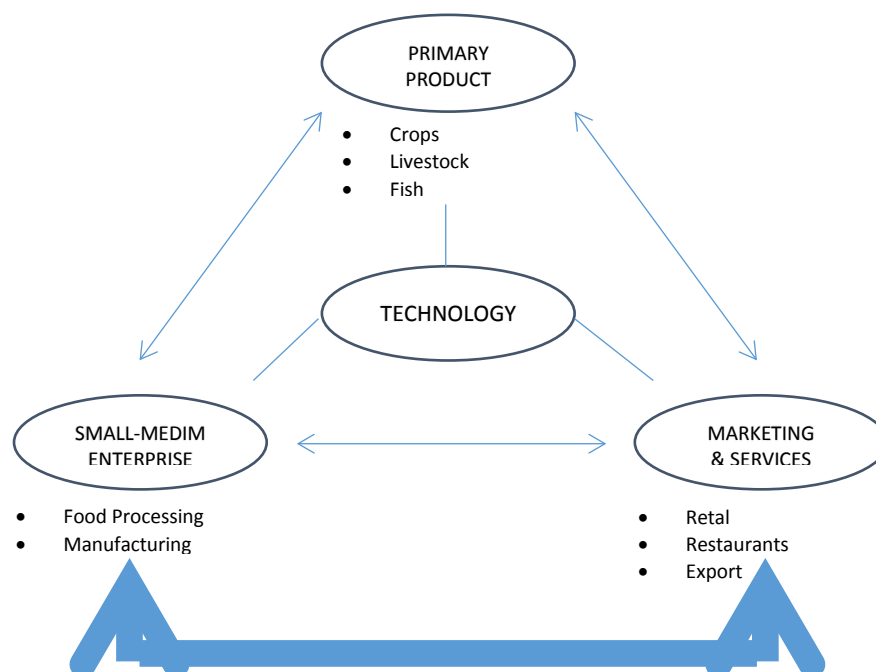


Figure 1. Source: UNDP 2016

3.1.1 United Nations Development Programme in Africa

“Aiming to eradicate poverty, violence and hunger, UNDP is assisting African countries to translate economic growth into long-lasting, inclusive human development. We work with African governments, businesses, communities and regional organizations, helping countries to develop capacity, share knowledge and mobilize funds for sustainable development” (UNDP report, 2016).

United Nations Development Programme conducts national projects in 46 sub-Saharan African countries and implements projects that provide regional development policies; also provides technical assistance to countries and sub-regional organizations. UNDP also coordinates all development activities of the United Nations (UN) at the country level as manager of UN Team.

According to reports from UNDP, its work done in Africa is based on three fundamental points: Sustainable development, Democratic governance and peacebuilding and Climate and disaster resilience; all this to help African countries develop and share solutions to the challenges of reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)¹⁵.

“UNDP works to ensure sustainability, encouraging countries to promote a kind of development that is less carbon-intensive, better suited for Africa and that uses the vast natural wealth of the continent in an economically, socially and environmentally responsible manner” (UNDP report, 2016).

¹⁵ In September 2000, building upon a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits, world leaders came together at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The Declaration committed nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty, and set out a series of eight time-bound targets - with a deadline of 2015 - that have become known as the Millennium Development Goals.

There is a specific region called Sub-Saharan Africa where UNDP is concentrate all the efforts because 41% of the population is living in extremely poverty, according to UNDP reports; therefore in 2012 the UN's global development network expenditure US\$1.08 billion in different programs (UNDP, 2016). Is in this region where UNDP is supporting Gambian government to develop Songhai Project. The support of United Nations Development Programme is economic and technical; even a technician of the institution is in charge of the project in The Gambia.

UNDP's mission in Sub-Saharan Africa

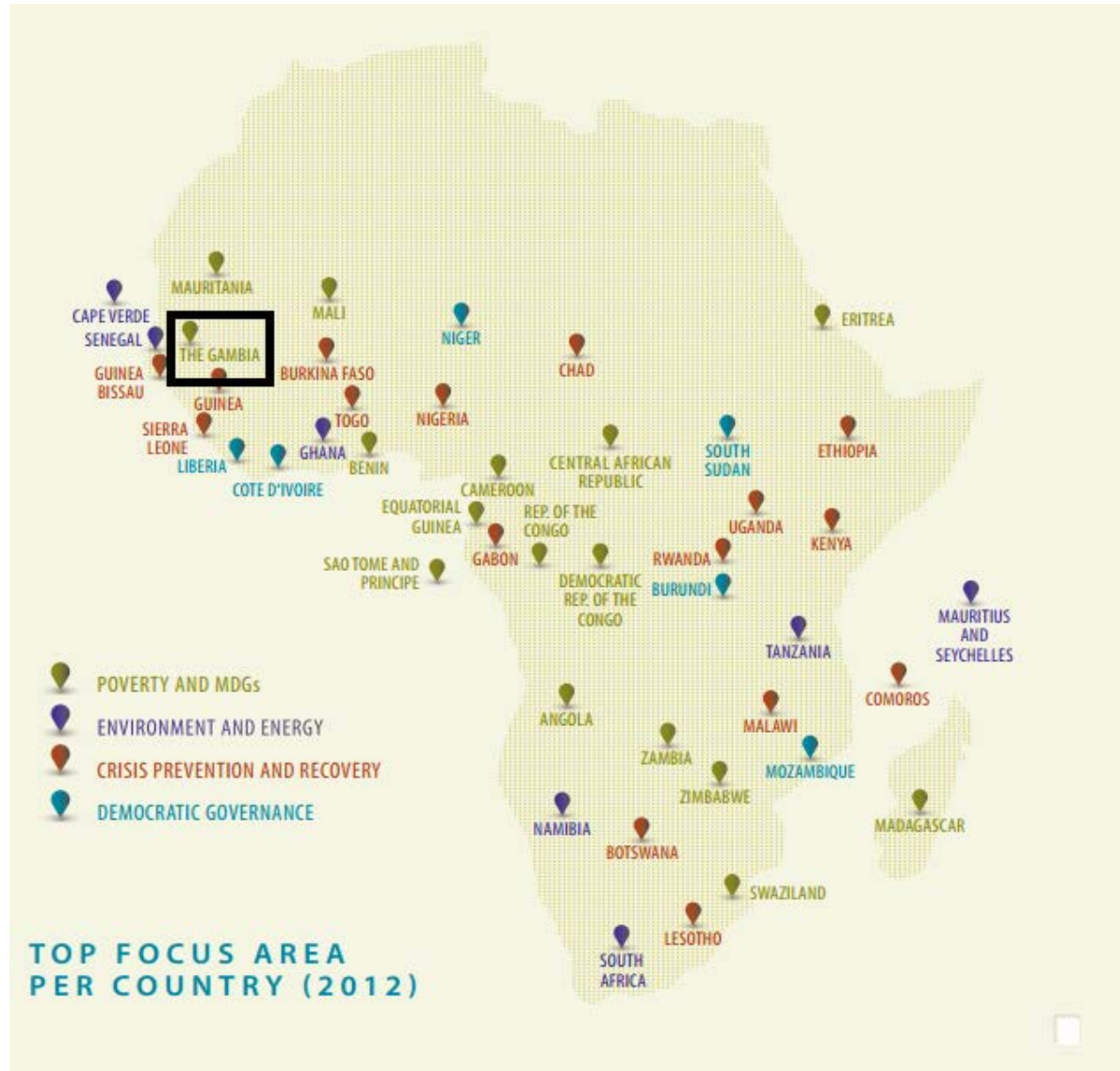


Figure 2. Source: UNDP annual report 2016

According to UNDP Sub-Saharan Africa it has made significant progress in social, political and economic aspects since the turn of the 21st century. However, in many countries economic growth has not benefited the poorest, and participation of women in decision-

making is still very low. Rapid urbanization of cities cannot provide services such as housing, health, infrastructure and employment, among others (UNDP, 2016).

Hence the intergovernmental institution focuses its support on sustainable development programs that can provide long-term benefits. In the case of West African countries, natural resources are the fundamental source of progress and to fight against poverty and famine. In this regard, UNDP focuses on the agriculture sector, since 60% of employment in Africa is generated by this sector.

3.1.2.1 UNDP support sustainability agriculture in The Gambia

In the country, UNDP and the Government of The Gambia have a basic agreement to govern UNDP's assistance to the country and which was signed by both on February 1975.

“As The Gambia formulates its own development solutions, UNDP provides ideas, access to its global knowledge networks and technical expertise to boost capacity development and to promote national efforts to eradicate poverty and attain the Millennium Development Goals” (UNDP Gambia, 2013).

The collaboration of the intergovernmental institution is linked to national economic priorities of the Government of Gambia, according to the Program for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE)¹⁶. In this sense, both work in conducting annual reports that help improve development programs carried out in the country, and serve to check the areas for improvement.

According to the report submitted by UNDP and the Government of Gambia in 2014, 40 per cent of the total population of The Gambia is economically active while a whopping 60 per cent are not economically active. *“Notwithstanding the above, close to 5% of the*

¹⁶ The Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE) is the Gambia's development strategy and investment programme for 2012 to 2015. The Gambia's achievements PAGE 2012-2015 is based on Vision 2020 and various sector strategies, and is the execution template for the government's long term vision. Consistent with the Paris Declaration's resolutions on aid efficiency and the ownership of development, PAGE acts as the main interface between the government and The Gambia's development partners.

population engages in the labour force as early as 15-19 years. The total number of employed persons in The Gambia stood at 522,670 (71.1% of the labour force) while the unemployed persons number stood at 221,414 (28.9%) in 2012. There is marked differential in male and female unemployment, with 20 close to 20.9% and 38.3%, respectively. This shows the urgent need to bridge the gender gap in employment” (The Gambia National Human Development Report: Youth Employment, 2014). Since Gambia's economy is based on agriculture, fishing and tourism, the development of various programs to promote and support farmers' organizations in the country is consider the key to fighting poverty.

One of these projects and which is based on this research, is linked to sustainable agriculture, and involves young Gambians. Two key factors in the economy and development of the country, as it mentioned above *Songhai Development Model-Gambian Project* is based in the experiences made it in Benin; and try to be an essential tool not only to combat youth unemployment, but also raise awareness of the importance of sustainable agriculture. *“Agriculture is the main state of the country, and the problem is that the productivity can no go any long, because if you have 60% of the population engaged in that activity with the contribution of 25% of GDP, it means really that is not optimized. This is why most people involve in agriculture now are poor”*, explained Abdou B. Touray, UNDP's Programmer Specialist on Poverty MDGs& Environment. It is also one of the reasons why young people leave their villages and seek better opportunities in the capital or try to immigrate to Europe. Agriculture in Gambia needs a substantial change where sustainability is the key to improving the quality of life of its inhabitants. This is the fundamental reason for which one is economically and technical support for the development and expansion of *Songhai Development Model-Gambian Project*. In that sense, Abdou B. Touray points: *“We want to use agriculture and transform it, not as have been done subsisting labour, but really using agriculture as a business because people will have the possibility of transform their life in a good reliance growth, and we can only do that investing in the young citizens”*. According to UNDP's report only 20% of young

Gambians involved in the agricultural sector. However, agriculture is the most critical sector for the expansion of the economy and to absorb unemployed youth, boost food production and reduce poverty (UNDP project report, 2014).

UNDP and the Gambian Government wants to transform the idea of farming and implanted in the minds of young Gambians the entrepreneurial ideas that contribute to the development of their communities through agricultural sector. In this case some scholars consider that *“Entrepreneurship is seen to bring benefits at both the macro and the micro levels of economic development”* (Henry et al., 2003, p. 4), whereupon this would be a good way to contribute to the fight against poverty. Taking advantage that Gambia has a fertile land and agriculture is the only tool to fight unemployment and can ensure food security. Likewise Nafukho and Muyia points out that government *“should ensure that important sectors of the economy such as agricultural... are well managed to support the self-employed in the informal sector to promote entrepreneurial spirit”* (Nafukho&Muyia, 2010, p.103), it comes to support the idea that to improve the quality of life of communities involving innovative concepts advice is needed. It is for this reason that both UNDP and the government of Gambia saw interesting the Songhai project, where young people become entrepreneurs.

With regard to economic and technical UNDP is providing to this project, it is based on support capabilities of human resources that can determine their welfare. Namely, young Gambians are human capital and supporting the development of their skills can improve the quality of life for themselves and their communities. In this sense, here it could apply the theory of human development: *“how social capital and instructional capital can be deployed to optimize the overall value of human capital in an economy”*. Amartya Sen is one of the best known theoreticians of human development. His work focuses on capabilities: what people can do and be. *“It is these capabilities, rather than income that determine their welfare”* (Sen, 1999). It should be noted that Sen’s ideas are present in the construction of Human Development Index, a human focused development as launched by UNDP in its Human Development Reports.

UNDP allocated, US\$1, 255,450 to support the project, while Government of The Gambia provided the Centre, Land, Assets and Equipment. It is estimated that support economic and technical completed in 2020 and from that date the project becomes a self-sustaining reality and can spread to other regions of Gambia, as has happened in other countries that have implemented it. The main objective of this project is to reduce poverty sustainably, fight youth unemployment and improve food insecurity; and using strategies that performed well in Benin. In this sense, both UNDP and the government of The Gambia want to get this project to grow on a large scale and get a lasting impact. *“The main objectives are to promote inclusive agricultural growth and employment. These objectives have direct causal links to the sustainable reduction of poverty and socio-political instability”* (UNDP project report, 2014).

3.1.3 European Development Fund

The European Development Fund (EDF) is the main EU instrument to provide development assistance to African, Pacific, Caribbean and countries and overseas territories (ACP), and it was created in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome and launched in 1959. Specifically articles 131 and 136 of the Treaty provided for its creation with a view to granting technical and financial assistance to African countries were still colonized at that time and with which some countries had historical links. (European Commission, 2016). The main activities of the EDF are related to cooperation in the fields of economic development, social and human development and regional cooperation and integration.

“It is financed by direct contributions from EU Member States according to a contribution key and is covered by its own financial rules. Although the 11th EDF remains outside of the EU budget, the negotiations in the Council of Ministers on the different elements of the 11th EDF have taken place in parallel with the negotiations of the external Instruments financed under the budget, to

ensure consistency. The total financial amount of the 11th EDF is €30.5 billion for the period 2014-2020". (European Commission, 2016).

To understand 11 EDF is essential to know the important goals they have set and are divided into three reasons:

- A. The 11EDF takes place in a global context that radically changes the concept of development cooperation, such as Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (SDGs) agreed in September 2015.
- B. On 11EDF it is the last action before the Cotonou Partnership Agreement (CPA) between the EU and ACP countries that expires in 2020.
- C. 11EDF's programming and implementation is a critical test of the EU institutions that deal with external action and that tests the ability of the development policy of the EU to achieve support high impact, at a time when many European governments continue a policy of fiscal austerity.

In this regard, with these three important points should be noted that programming EDF is a complicated task as it involves multiple stakeholders like the European Commission (EC), the European External Action Service (EEAS), 28 EU member states, the European Parliament, and from the other side: 74 governments from the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP).

"The 11th EDF was created by an intergovernmental agreement signed in June 2013 – as it is not part of the EU Budget – and entered into force on the 1st March 2015, after ratification by all Member States" (European Commission, 2016).

Aid from this fund is directed through the EEAS in each country. For example in Gambia the delegation of the European Union through its project managers who are responsible for analysing the country's needs (in this particular case it comes to improving the agriculture

sector and the problems caused by climate change). To subsidize the various projects presented by NGOs operating in The Gambia¹⁷.

In the area of external action of the European Union, the applicable law is made, in particular by the international agreement Cotonou for aid financed by the EDF, by the basic rules relating to the various cooperation programs adopted by the Council and the European Parliament, and by the financial regulations. The EU engagement should be link by *“the recognition of Africa’s growing strategic importance- and therefore of the imperative of the rethinking its traditional engagement with the continent... and reformulated their Africa policies to underscore a new level of strategic engagement...”* (Mangala, 2013, p. 4). As the academic Jack Mangala says in his book *Africa and the European Union*, the European Commission sees Africa as part of the heart of international politics - and the African Union in particular is emerging not as a problem of development, but with self-right to be a political actor (Mangala, 2013). If this concept is transfer to the particular case of Gambia, the involvement of the European Union is closely related to geopolitical location of the small West African country, but especially the need to collaborate in the economic improvement of the country and part of the economic growth of the continent.

3.1.3.1 Cotonou Agreement

The Cotonou Agreement, which replaces the Lomé Convention, is an agreement based in trade and assistance between the European Union and 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific, and was signed in 2000 in Benin. It entered into force in 2003 and was subsequently revised in 2005 and 2010 (European Commission, 2016).

¹⁷ This Information was obtained during my internship at the Delegation of the European Union in The Gambia, where I actively participate in meetings between project managers and the various NGOs working in the country. My work consisted in taking note of all meetings then sends a report to Brussels.

The Cotonou Agreement was created in order to reduce poverty and contribute to sustainable development and the gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy. The agreement also has been revised to add the fight against impunity, the defence of human rights and the promotion of criminal justice through the International Criminal Court. Revisions to improve this agreement are based on the values representing the European Union, but these values are examples to follow voluntarily or are imposed by the power and hegemony of developed countries? It is possible to apply the same values in societies that are diametrically opposed in cultural level? While talking specifically of West African countries like The Gambia, cultural and social values are different, starting with the religion that plays a key role in the day to day in this country.

Another point to discuss is related to the role of the EU to intervene to help the economic and social development of African countries. First EU seeks to settle a historical debt to their various colonies and also according to the Cotonou agreement the EU commitment on African development is related to be integrated into the world economy. In this sense, are the purposes of the EU also based on the hegemony of the first world countries? or is just an altruistic idea of helping others, in order to get third world countries should have the same opportunities than are in Europe. In that sense, this agreement was created to be a path of fluid communication between the EU and African countries. Through this agreement Gambia can apply for grants for development programs. These programs should be focused on the primary needs of the country, this case, the development of sustainable agricultural policies (European Commission, 2016).

This agreement is designed to last for a period of 20 years and is based on four fundamental principles:

1. Equality of the partners and ownership of development strategies. The ACP States are the ones to determine how to develop their societies and their economies.

2. Active participation. That involves not only participation of the central government as the main actor, but also other actors such as civil society, the private sector and local governments.
3. Dialogue and mutual obligations. The signatories have assumed obligations as respect for human rights, a key pillar for the European Union and will be monitored through dialogue and various evaluation meetings.
4. Differentiation and regionalization. Cooperation agreements are based on the level of development and the needs of each country and will be given a special treatment to less developed or more vulnerable countries.

The Cotonou Agreement in relation to Gambia indicates that *“EU has a budget through 11th EDF of 33 million euros for development projects during 2015-2016, and should be aligned with the Gambian government’s PAGE (Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment). This would be a first step. Then there is a second phase from 2017 to 2020”*, says European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal: Almudena Morante-Mendez¹⁸. But for The Gambia can be absorbed that budget by the government and later used to development projects, the government needs to fulfil certain important requirements that are based on human rights and improvement of political dialogue, not only with the EU but also with the civil society actors in the country. *“All requirements related to the improvement of human rights in the country and also with the ability of the Gambian government for development projects that help improve the quality of life of people, especially in the areas of sustainable agriculture, climate change and food security. EU-Gambia relations are not at their best level now and we have trouble supporting development projects. Member states reject projects to be closely linked to the government of Gambia”*¹⁹ says European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal. Due

¹⁸ Interview to European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal: Almudena Morante-Mendez. Held by Skype on Friday 12th February 2016, in Brussels, Belgium. Interview in appendix.

¹⁹ In June 2015, the president of Gambia expelled the EU ambassador in the country, creating a political conflict that still has not been resolved. Even a new EU ambassador arrived in January 2016, is still tension relations.

to problems of political dialogue the situation of development programs in the country have also been affected. Calls for proposals were “frozen” until further notice from EU’s headquarters arrived, as a form of pressure on the Gambian government. Also project managers from EU delegation viewed undermined their capacity to manage and evaluate projects in the fields²⁰.

3.1.3.2 Call for proposal: Is there enough information?

A call for proposals is the process in which applicants are selected on a competitive basis to implement co-financed projects using EU funds. The authorities responsible for the ‘calls’ are the EU Commission, the directorates and executive bodies linked to the Commission, and delegations and offices of the EU to third countries (European Commission, 2016). Calls for proposals are announced in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) or *PROSPECT* and *PADOR*²¹, portals where funding opportunities for European and international organizations are published (EC: International Cooperation and Development, 2016). The European Union through its web pages provide detailed information and guides on how to apply for calls for proposals for aid and development programs. Website is very useful tools but is not accessible to everyone. Especially in countries like Gambia where the Internet does not even have the strength of Broadband Internet²²; and also power outages make very difficult the work of institutions and NGOs.

²⁰ Information obtained during my participation in the meetings of political dialogue between member states accredited in The Gambia, where I participated as a “take note” and then send reports to EU’s headquarters. There are internal and confidential reports cannot be attached in the appendix.

²¹ PROSPECT is the electronic system developed by EuropeAid to facilitate the submission or applicants for call for proposals. Meanwhile PADOR is the Potential Applicant Data On-Line Registration (PADOR) is an on-line database in which organisations register as potential applicants to calls. Organisations are invited to regularly update their information, and EuropeAid uses it to evaluate their operational and financial capacity, as well as their eligibility to participate in calls for proposals.

²² The penetration rate of internet in The Gambia in 2014 was only 19%. Source: International Telecommunication Union, World Telecommunication/ICT Development Report and database.

Advertising calls for proposals are very important and therefore the guidelines for applicants are published not only on the EuropeAid website, but also in any other appropriate media and other websites, specialized press, local publications, etc. “*In order to ensure the widest possible participation and the requisite transparency, every call for proposals must be accompanied by guidelines for applicants*” (EC: International Cooperation and Development, 2016a).

In the specific case of Gambia, the publication of *calls for proposals* are also published in four local newspapers but the lack of infrastructure requires that EU Delegation only publish in two of them²³. So the information does not reach all institutions concerned. Given the above information, it could say that disclosure of calls for proposals did not have an appropriate dissemination. Although the EU Delegation followed the standards set by the headquarters, due to the characteristics of the Gambia, the EU representation in the country could seek other ways more in keeping with the situation.

It is important to note that *calls for proposals* are the only way that NGOs operating in Gambia have to get financial support to develop their projects. In this sense, the *Songhai Project* does not have the economic support of EU perhaps because the project representatives did not know the ways to qualify for these European funds. One possibility would be to use more instruments related to cultural traditions of the country, such as ‘*word of mouth*’ one of the greatest tools of dissemination in The Gambia. The Delegation could make information tables or informational breakfast to publicize budgets for development aid to the country, and thus also interact directly with NGOs operating in Gambia. As European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal said during an interview for this thesis: “*project managers of the delegation of the European Union in The Gambia, as they are at home, they must know first-hand NGOs and projects that can be developed*

²³ During my practice in the delegation of the European Union in Gambia I was in charge of Press and Communication, and one of my duties was to publish calls for proposals. Generally we could only publish in *The Daily Observer* (official newspaper), and the other three: *Foroyaa*, *The Voice* and *The Point* were often not published because they had infrastructure problems or were seized by the government.

in country and if there are feasible”²⁴. It is important to remember that Gambia has one of the lowest index World Human Development; with 0.441 is located in position 175 of 188 countries; with infrastructure which are also precarious even for institutions that develop projects in the country. Therefore it is necessary to adapt to the conditions that exist, as NGOs often do not have quality internet and have no access to press.

This is where the role of the EU’s project manager plays a key role as it is the person in charge to know the reality of the country. So, that contact with the beneficiary entities of ‘calls for proposals’ should be more fluid and could facilitate communication and information about the work that the European Union is doing in the country.

3.1.4 Relation between European Union and The Gambia

In the official website of European Union External Action (EEAS) it says related to Gambia: “*Relations with the EU are based on political dialogue under the Cotonou Agreement, trade and development assistance*”. This agreement is based on political dialogue, development assistance, policy and Aid. The institutional framework governing the relationship between the EU and Gambia is based on the agreement where African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) are involved and which Gambia is a signatory. The Agreement establishes a constant political dialogue to exchange information and reach a mutual understanding on the promotion of the key elements of democracy. This practice was strengthened by the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement. Now the political dialogue should acquire a new dimension under the Lisbon Treaty of the EU (Council of the European Union, 2010).

On a basis of understanding, the EU addresses issues related to the political situation in the country, both with the Government of Gambia and civil society. The EU holds regular

²⁴ Interview to European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal: Almudena Morante-Mendez. Held by Skype on Friday 12th February 2016, in Brussels, Belgium.

consultations on relevant issues with non-governmental institutions, media and other stakeholders. Political dialogue between the EU and Gambia's main objective is to strengthen the partnership between the EU and Gambia, and that the EU can play its role in supporting change and development in the country more effectively.

But relations between the European Union and the government of Gambia have gone through difficult times in the last years. Especially when it involves issues of violation of human rights by the government of Gambia: "*EU may punish Gambia over failure to prevent human rights violations*" (Stamatoukou, 2013) it was an article published in January 2013 in *New Europe*, where it can see the first disagreements between the European Union and the government of Gambia. In the article it explained that The EU called on Gambia to implement a 17 point set of demands about human rights, and Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh said that "*Gambia will not be colonized twice*". The 17 key reforms were related to abolish the death penalty, re-open closed newspapers and private radio stations, give foreign diplomats access to prisons, and repeal draconian media laws, among others. Gambian president said that EU was trying to destabilize the country and to create a puppet government. "*If they think that they can blackmail me for their chicken change, they must be fooling themselves because that will not happen in this country*" (Stamatoukou, 2013).

Since then relations have been getting denser and with various ups and downs, until June 2015 when Gambian President decided to expel diplomat of the European Union from the country, giving her 72 hours to leave. "*Gambia expels top EU diplomat*" (The Telegraph, 2015). According to the author of the information "*given orders to Agnes Guillard, charge D'affaires of the EU, it is the latest in a series of anti-Western gestures by Jammeh, who has been heavily criticized for its human rights record*". EU diplomat had only 72 hours to leave the country and for no apparent reason.

However, in December 2014 the EU had blocked about 10 million euros in aid to Gambia because of their human rights issues, particularly anti-homosexual laws; and 2015 EU was

debating whether they should retain new aid or not. During the second half of 2015 relations were at their most tense stage since the European Union decided not to send a new ambassador to The Gambia until Jammeh's government agreed to send its Minister of Foreign Affairs to Brussels²⁵. "... *In mid-2015 it was proposed to apply Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement to suspend relations with Gambia... Now EU is applying Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement which is working in the political dialogue meanwhile the financial assistance continues its course; but we always have to work with NAOSU (National Authorising Officer Support Unit) to channel aid, is the agency that the government has established for this purpose*", pointed out European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal.

For all the above, relations between the EU and the government of Gambia has been a 'tug of war', where the first wants to impose or suggest bluntly values coming from European societies and the second is revealed it considers a paternalistic action related to colonialism. One of the ways that Gambian government have to curb the influence and impositions of the EU is to work through NAOSU²⁶ agency, which requires a direct dialogue with the state, through its approval channelling aid arriving from EU for development programs in Gambia

"In relation to Gambia, EU has a budget through 11th EDF of 33 million euros for development projects during 2015-2016, and should be aligned with the Gambian government's PAGE (Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment). This would be a first step. Then there is a second phase from 2017 to 2020. But all this money needs a prudent absorption capacity from the

²⁵ Based on internal report from EU Delegation in Gambia and my personal experiences during my internship where I participated in meetings of political dialogue between EU representative and members States. I was working as 'take note' during the meetings. When I left the delegation on 15th December 2015, still was not a solution or agreement between EU and de Gambian government. So, the new EU ambassador did not arrive in the country.

²⁶ The National Authorising Officer Support Unit (NAOSU) is an agency that belongs to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and it represents the Government of The Gambia on all operations of the various projects and programmes financed by European Commission.

Gambian government, and also must comply with the agreements to improve human rights in the country". (European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal: Almudena Morante-Mendez, 2016).

All these problems also affected the various development programs undertaken in the country. Technicians and project managers of the Delegation of the European Union in Gambia paralyzed field visits and meetings with various NGOs (EU Delegation Internal report, 2015). Just at this point the Songhai Project began developing in Gambia and only with the help of UNDP.

Morante –Mendez also mark out still in 2016 EU-Gambia relations are not at their best level and the European Union have trouble supporting development projects because the Member States reject projects which are closely linked to the Gambian government. Creating a power struggle where the hegemonic power represented by the European Union tries to impose their ideas and values, in exchange for contributing economically in the country's development. While President of Gambia, seeks to create a mechanism to control the impositions and continue to receive aid; although in his speeches always try to remember that the era of colonialism is over and Gambia seeks self-sufficiency through their programs to improve the agriculture sector.

3.1.4.1 Political dialogue

In early 2016 a new political situation and dialogue started between the European Union and the Gambian government, when in February Attila Lajos arrived in the country as the new EU representative. *"The first EU resident ambassador presents letters of credence"* (Daily Observer, 2016). This is the first time that the EU sends a resident ambassador in Gambia, since in the last forty years because the Union used to be represented in the country by a Charge d' Affairs.

The new ambassador said it has opened a new page of cooperation between the two sides, and therefore further development is expected to be registered in the country. At the same time, the Gambian government stated that they want to work based on “*mutual understanding and respect*”. Since then, the new ambassador of the European Union wanted to participate in activities related to development programs supported by European funds. Thus, in March 2016 he held a three-day trip around the country to see first-hand the projects that different NGOs do (The Point, 2016).

“Ambassador Attila Lajos visited Gambia Government European Commission Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) projects under the National Environment Agency dubbed Climate Change Environmental Adaptation Resilience Project (CLEAR). Ambassador also visited Toroba Baobab Youth Association for Development Press Brick making and the Njawara Youths Fish project”. (The Point, 2016).

With the arrival of EU ambassador began a new political dialogue which is still in a phase of understanding and has the approval of both sides. For its part, the European Union has seen with good eyes that Gambian President decided in November 2015²⁷, prohibit female genital mutilation as EU believes it is a step to improve human rights in the country. Likewise, the Gambian government believes that arrival of an ambassador after 40 years is a good sign, as it gives a greater degree of commitment and respect to the country. But the political dialogue that currently exists has not been an easy path and still held weakly; it is why the new ambassador has to work hard to strengthen relations between the two actors.

Before the arrival of the new ambassador, the European Union sent Esmeralda Fernandez-Aragones, a chargé D'affaires to start political dialogue. For three months the EU diplomat was devoted to talks with member states in The Gambia. Later she made reports to

²⁷ The president Yahya Jammeh announced on 23th November 2015 that it will ban female genital mutilation (FGM) because he says it is not required in Islam.

headquarters and plan the strategy for the delicate situation that was occurring²⁸. After the information collected on the political situation in Gambia using meetings with member states in the country, EU diplomat began a series of meetings with senior representatives of the government of Gambia, for the purpose of getting the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the African country visited Brussels (EU Delegation internal report, 2015). It was a difficult and full of tensions on both sides way. But the situation improved considerably from the negotiations established during the last months of 2015, ending with the arrival of the first European Union ambassador in Gambia.

“EU is applying Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement which is working in the political dialogue meanwhile the financial assistance continues its course; but we always have to work with NAOSU (National Authorising Officer Support Unit) to channel aid, is the agency that the government has established for this purpose”. (European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal: Almudena Morante-Mendez, 2016).

In this new stage of political dialogue, apparently the ambassador Lajos is focused on recovering relations with the government of Gambia. To this end, the European ambassador is getting involved in the projects developed in the country through various visits. But it seems that he has left parked most importantly: to know what sustainable agriculture projects are viable to improve the quality of life of the population. Since the visits he made to the different projects do not expected to be sustainable over time. While Songhai project have a background of 25 years of experience in sustainability not only in Benin but also in other West African countries (Songhai Centre, 2016).

²⁸ During my internship in the European Union to The Gambia, I was assigned to take notes during the various meetings of political dialogue that led EU representative sent from Brussels. Fernandez-Aragon's had meetings with the ambassadors of England, Spain, Germany, and also with the US ambassador. All reports are confidential and were sent to the headquarters.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Analysis

The purpose of this analysis is to interpret and describe the significance of findings that can respond to the problem formulation that concerns the subject of the investigation. This analysis can also explain fresh ideas about the problem after taking into consideration the findings. To allow a more complete analysis, it has been necessary to introduce a comparative table of the results found during the investigation. Likewise, it was used theories that can support or refute the results. The theories that have been considered relevant to support or refute the results in this analysis are: post-development theory through the vision of the scholar Wolfgang Sachs; the capability approach of Amartya Sen, and scholar Max Weber's theory about bureaucracy.

- In the case of Songhai Centre is clearly defined that its creator Godfrey Nzamujo, has been influenced by the idea of Pan-Africanism. He was a returned African who wants help in the construction of a better place for African in its own continent. Nzamujo was a professor in USA and he decided to travel back to Africa to see the reality about poverty and famine; then he concluded to return and do something. In this case Pan-Africanism fosters a sense of "*cooperative movement among peoples of African origin to unite their efforts in the struggle to liberate Africa and its scattered and suffering people*" (Williams, 2015, p. 175) that can explain why Nzamujo decided to return and act. The creation of the Songhai Centre is based on the ideas of achieving self-sufficiency through natural and human resources held by the African continent, basis in the unity of the people where it can achieve economic improvement.

After 25 years of working, this model has been spread in 15 African countries with the support of UNDP and also received recognition from the United Nations in 2008 as 'Regional Centre of Excellence for Africa'. It can affirm that Songhai model has been successful linking agriculture to industry and trade by leveraging local resources and promoting sustainable social entrepreneurship, especially in youth population. At this point,

the initial ideas of self-reliance have worked but have also given way to other models related to existing ideas as a neoliberal economy. Whereupon it can understand also that this project continues to follow a pattern established since Nzamujo lived and studied in USA. Sachs²⁹ indicates that “*development itself is seeing as a social vision that is rooted in the ideals of modernization, which it is based on the economic structure and Western society as a model for others to follow*” (Sachs, 1992). But once again the idea of self-reliance it seems to appear in Gambia, where Songhai project has recruitment of 63 young under 30 years old (male and female) who have completed training in July 2015 at the Chamen Centre. The Gambian government want to spread the model all over the country; this is include in President’s Yahya Jammeh speeches about self-sufficient through developing the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment-(PAGE), where are projects like ‘Back to Land’ or ‘Grow what we eat and eat what we grow’ for food autonomy in Gambia.

- With regard to economic and technical support that UNDP is providing the Songhai project in Gambia, the collaboration is linked to national economic priorities of the Government of Gambia, according to PAGE. And Songhai Project is one of the tools both parts want to use to improve food security and unemployment. UNDP allocated, US\$1, 255,450 to support Songhai project, while Government of The Gambia provided the Centre, Land, Assets and Equipment. Economic and technical support completed in 2020 and from that date the project becomes a self-sustaining reality. Nevertheless this joint work it could has a negative side, and should not be the solution or ideal for improving the quality of life of Gambians. As Wolfgang Sachs considers that “*development on undeveloped countries are based on western models of industrialization that are unsustainable in this world of limited resources and ineffective for their ignorance of the local, cultural and historical contexts of the peoples to which they are applied*” (Sachs, 1992). Although, it does not

²⁹ Wolfgang Sachs (born 25 November 1946) is a researcher, writer and university teacher in the field of environment, development, and globalization. In 1992 he edited and co-authored the volume *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, and he is consider one of the most important scholars in Post-Development Studies.

have the same idea the intergovernmental institution that believes Gambia is needed a substantial change in agriculture, and sustainability is the key to improving the quality of life of its inhabitants. Change comes from the hand of sustainable agriculture project and entrepreneurship ideas as Songhai Centre. Both UNDP and the government of Gambia rely on the capacities of participants in this project. These capabilities are the key to make this project a useful tool in the development of the areas where will be implant. In this case, both institutions follow the ideas of Amartya Sen³⁰ when the scholar highlights the capabilities of human resources as “*individual differences in the ability to transform resources into valuable activities*”. Worth noting that Sen was one of the researchers who helped to make the capabilities approach predominant as a paradigm for policy debate in human development where it inspired the creation of the UN's Human Development Index³¹, one of the pillars on which UNDP is based to try to improve the quality of life of Gambians.

In this sense, the technical and financial support that UNDP is providing the Songhai project can be interpreted by the ideas embodied in his book *Development as Freedom* where the author speaks of human capabilities. Sen notes that “*the freedom to enter markets can itself be a significant contribution to development, quiet aside from whatever the market mechanism may or may not do to the promote of economic growth or industrialization...*” (Sen, 1999, p.7). The Songhai project has demonstrated in Benin and other countries where it has been introduced that can be part of the market and contribute to economic growth in the region. “*It is not only important to give the markets their due, but also to appreciate the role of other economic, social and political freedom in enhancing and enriching the lives that people are able to lead*” (Sen, 1999, p. 9). Give youth Gambian

³⁰ Amartya Kumar Sen is an Indian economist and philosopher of Bengali ethnicity, who since 1972 has taught and worked in the United Kingdom and the United States. He was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998 and Bharat Ratna in 1999 for his work in welfare economics. Sen's revolutionary contribution to development economics and social indicators is the concept of "capability" developed in his article *Equality of What*. He argues that governments should be measured against the concrete capabilities of their citizens. The capability approach is an economic theory conceived in the 1980s as an alternative approach to welfare economics.

³¹ A popular measure of human development, capturing capabilities in health, education, and income.

the opportunity to train to subsequently develop an economic activity in the agricultural sector, is also giving them the possibility to develop social and economic level, achieving self-sufficiency (and therefore freedom) thanks to their skills and capabilities development.

- On the other hand, EU seeks to settle a historical debt to their various colonies (including Gambia) and according to the Cotonou agreement the EU commitment on African development is related to be integrated into the world economy. In the specific cause of Gambia, for that purpose EU has a budget through 11th EDF of 33 million euros for development projects during 2015-2016, and should be aligned with the Gambian government's PAGE. In this regard, the improvement of these programs although it is based on a speech to achieve self-sufficiency; also it can be see the influence of European ideas on development. As *"Western hegemony leaves its imprint not only on politics and economics, but on minds as well... the development discourse is an outcome of the post-war era of fossil-fuel-based triumphalism, undergirded by colonial perceptions and the legacy of Western rationalism"* (Sachs, 2010, p. 12). Because the projects proposed in PAGE are also based on improvement of new technologies in the country, food security and development of rural areas, among others that follow in the wake of European countries like England (an influence in Gambia inherited from colonial times).

As already mentioned above in this research, the main tool of the EU to support African countries is based on the European Development Fund. The 11th EDF has procedures to follow in which NGOs operating in Gambia must rely for aid. 'Calls for proposals' are the only way that Non-governmental organizations operating in the country has to get financial support. But, most of them do not know the ways to qualify for these European funds because all the information is managed trough EU's websites. It is proved that Gambia has lacks of new technologies as Internet does not work well and also the country suffers from constant power outages³². Likewise, the steps to follow to get funds to develop projects

³² Based on my personal experience during my internship in the EU Delegation in Gambia. The delegation has a generator as several times a week we were without electricity, and also had constant problems with internet so we had to receive support from Senegal. Also during the months I lived in Gambia, I experienced

have countless paperwork and often NGOs representatives are lost and unmotivated to continue the process. In this sense, it could be noted that bureaucracy to carry out these procedures is an obstacle for NGOs to access European funds.

The German scholar Max Weber³³ has a theory about bureaucracy with two different and interesting points to analyse this case. Weber argues primarily that bureaucracy is the most rational and formally that human activity can be organized, and is essential to the modern world (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005). In this sense, the way the system is organized to access European funds would be correct, as has an organization with different procedures and steps; which maintains order and stability so all concerned have equal opportunities to access aid. But Weber also criticises that “*bureaucracy poses a threat to humanity, and that entrepreneurs and politicians should be a counterweight to their power*”, and it is here when the system is not working properly, as in the case of Gambia, Internet access is restricted by the poor quality. So NGOs operating in the country are not on the same equal to 'compete' and access to aid that are made in 'calls for proposals' (Taking into account that technological development of other West Africa countries such as Senegal is better). In this sense, the bureaucratic system is not working thus it is important the role of EU delegation's project managers in The Gambia..., “*bureaucratic officials need training experts, the rules are implemented by neutral officials*” the training of officers of the delegation should be focused on better understanding the reality of the country and see first-hand other more feasible tools for fluid communication between the delegation and the various institutions that carry out development programs in the country.

- Ultimately, relations between the European Union and the government of Gambia have gone through difficult times in the last years, especially when it involves issues of violation

many problems with internet and lack of electricity in the place where I lived. Finally, this paper also mentioned specific data about Internet quality in the country.

³³ Karl Emil Maximilian Weber was a German sociologist, philosopher, jurist, and political economist whose ideas profoundly influenced social theory and social research. Weber is often cited, with Émile Durkheim and Karl Marx, as among the three founders of sociology. Max Weber's bureaucratic theory is sometimes also known as the 'Legal-Rational' model. The model tries to explain bureaucracy from a rational point of view via nine main characteristics or principles.

of human rights by the government of Gambia. The problems between EU and Gambia are directly related to the values that prevail in Europe and are linked to ideas of development as Sachs notes, “...*It is impossible to talk about development without referring to concepts such as poverty, production, the notion of the state, or equality. These concepts first rose to prominence during modern Western history and only then have they been projected on the rest of the world...*” EU diplomat in Gambia was ‘cordially’ attempt to impose the ideas of respect for human rights, especially for sexual freedom when tension detonated and in June 2015 Gambian president expelled EU diplomat from the country. “*Development has so pervasively spread these assumptions that people everywhere have been caught up in a Western perception of reality*” (Sachs, 2010) but what if that reality is not in accordance with the cultural traditions of the country where development assistance is going? ... That means that aid must stop, that development programs can no longer be done? With a very tense situation EU’s Technicians and project managers in Gambia paralyzed field visits and meetings with various NGOs from June 2015. Just at this point, one month later the Songhai Project began developing in Gambia and only with the help of UNDP.

New EU ambassador is focused on recovering relations with the government of Gambia, but it seems that EU has left parked most importantly: to know what sustainable agriculture projects are viable to improve the quality of life of the population... “*But in its mainstream interpretation, sustainable development has been explicitly conceived as a strategy for sustaining ‘development’, not for supporting the flourishing and enduring of an infinitely diverse natural and social life*”(Sachs, 2010), Perhaps that is why the priorities of the new EU ambassador are focused more on the political dialogue that real support to sustainable development programs as Songhai.

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF RESULTS

SONGHAI CENTRE	UNDP	EDF	EU-GAMBIA
<p>The creation of the Songhai Centre is based on the ideas of achieving self-sufficiency through natural and human resources held by the African continent, basis in the unity of the people where it can achieve economic improvement.</p>	<p>The collaboration is linked to national economic priorities with Gambian's Government according to PAGE. Songhai Project is one of the tools both parts want to use to improve food security and unemployment.</p>	<p>EU seeks to settle a historical debt to their various colonies (including Gambia) and according to the Cotonou agreement the EU commitment on African development is related to be integrated into the world economy.</p>	<p>Relations between the European Union and the government of Gambia have gone through difficult times in the last years. Especially when it involves issues of violation of human rights by the government of Gambia. Gambian president expelled EU diplomat from the country in June 2015</p>
<p>The Songhai model has been successful linking agriculture to industry and trade by leveraging local resources and promoting sustainable social entrepreneurship, especially in youth population.</p>	<p>UNDP allocated, US\$1, 255,450 to support Songhai project, while Gambia provided the Centre, Assets and Equipment. Economic and technical support completed in 2020 and from that date the project will become a self-sustaining reality.</p>	<p>EU has a budget through 11th EDF of 33 million euros for development projects during 2015-2016, and should be aligned with PAGE. A second phase from 2017 to 2020 is based in political dialogue and participations of civil society actors.</p>	<p>It can be seen two positions: European Union wants to impose or suggest bluntly values coming from European societies and Gambian government it consider a paternalistic action related to colonialism.</p>
<p>This model has been spread in 15 African countries with the support of UNDP and also received recognition from the United Nations in 2008 as 'Regional</p>	<p>For UNDP agriculture in Gambia needs a substantial change where sustainability is the key to improving the quality of life.</p>	<p>Involvement of EU is closely related to geopolitical location of the small West African country. But especially the need to collaborate in the economic</p>	<p>During tense relations: EU's Technicians and project managers in Gambia paralyzed field visits and meetings with various NGOs. Just at this point the Songhai Project began developing in Gambia and only with the help of UNDP.</p>

Centre of Excellence for Africa’.	Change comes from sustainable agriculture project and entrepreneurship ideas as Songhai Centre.	improvement of the country and part of the economic growth of the continent.	
Songhai project in Gambia has recruitment of 63 young under 30 years old (male and female) who have completed training in July 2015 at the Chamen Centre. The Government want to spread the model all over the country.	According to UNDP’s report only 20% of young Gambians are involved in the agricultural sector. However, agriculture is the most critical sector for the expansion of the economy and to absorb unemployed youth, boost food production and reduce poverty.	‘Calls for proposals’ are the only way that NGOs operating in Gambia have to get financial support. Most NGOs do not know the ways to qualify for these European funds because all the information is managed through EU’s Websites.	New EU ambassador is focused on recovering relations with the government of Gambia. EU has left parked most importantly: to know what sustainable agriculture projects are viable to improve the quality of life of the population.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Conclusions

The answer to the problem formulation is simple and clear: the European Union does not know the Songhai project in Gambia. But to reach this conclusion it is essential to list the factors surrounding this result. In the specific case of Gambia, EU representatives in the country have dealt with very important issues such violation of human rights, and therefore

relations between both have gone through very difficult times, which has determined the lack of commitment of EU in sectors like sustainable agriculture.

Although the European Union has set a specific budget for development programs in Gambia, and assigned primarily in the agricultural sector, the EU delegation is not aware of the Songhai project. Surprisingly, a project that has achieved such good results in sustainable agriculture in 15 countries in West Africa, and has created a new vision of farming and entrepreneurship, is not known by the technicians of the delegation. During this research it has been found that lack of knowledge is related to two factors: Technicians of the European Union in Gambia do not know all the projects developed in the country; and the political conflict has paralyzed the fieldworks and the communications with NGOs for many months.

It should also be noted that the involvement of the European Union in the Gambian's development programs is related to economic backing, but not specific technical support nor own EU's projects. Even though the Cotonou Agreement stresses the importance of development programs to achieve self-sufficiency and attain the status that allows Gambia join the international market. Also, it has been found that, although the procedures for accessing financial support are standardized to obtain equal opportunities, but in the Gambia it has been not possible to implement such procedure. The Gambia is the fourth poorest country in the world and in this regard, new technologies are not available to everyone and the quality is very precarious. Hence, accessing the websites of the European Union and revising the 'call for proposal' becomes a very difficult task.

Finally, and perhaps one of the most important points found in this study are the problems of political dialogue between the European Union and Gambia. On the one hand, the Member states in the country are very concerned about the situation of the population in terms of violation of human rights and thus raised in the European Commission in mid-2015 to apply Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement (suspend relations with Gambia). On the other hand, under this European pressure, the Gambian President reacts by declaring

that his country would not follow the imposition of colonial times. With this increasing political tension the budget that had been previously approved for Gambia became 'stand by' until a solution would be reached. Also, the problems of political dialogue have led to a stagnation in the work done by EU technicians/officials, and thus the lack of involvement and unconcern of projects such as Songhai.

CHAPTER 6

6.1 Bibliography

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6.2 Appendix

Interview to European Commission Desk Officer to The Gambia and Senegal: Almudena Morante-Mendez. Held by Skype on Friday 12th February 2016, in Brussels, Belgium.

1. What is the implication of the European Union in the development of the agriculture in The Gambia?

The European Union is involve directly and actively in the Cotonou Agreement trade agreement and assistance signed in 2000 between the EU and 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) in Cotonou, Benin. The Cotonou Agreement is aimed at the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty and contribute to sustainable development and the gradual integration of ACP countries into the world economy and one of its main points is related to sustainable agriculture as a fundamental tool to eradicate poverty and help improve the quality of life of people, it’s directly related to food security too.

In relation to Gambia, EU has a budget through 11th EDF of 33 million euros for development projects during 2015-2016, and should be aligned with the Gambian government's PAGE (Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment). This would be a first step. Then there is a second phase from 2017 to 2020. But all this money needs a prudent absorption capacity from the Gambian government, and also must comply with the agreements to improve human rights in the country.

2. So, what are the requirements?

All requirements related to the improvement of human rights in the country and also with the ability of the Gambian government for development projects that help improve the quality of life of people, especially in the areas of sustainable agriculture, climate change and food security.

EU-Gambia relations are not at their best level now and we have trouble supporting development projects. Member states reject projects to be closely linked to the government of Gambia.

3. What is the current situation?

The Member states reject many projects be linked to the Government of Gambia, as political relations are not quite right. There was even a moment in mid-2015 in which it was proposed to apply Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement to suspend relations with Gambia. Ambassador of the European Union in Gambia was expelled without any logical explanation in June 2015 and since then the political dialogue had some moments of tension. Now EU is applying Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement which is working in the political dialogue meanwhile the financial assistance continues its course; but we always have to work with NAOSU (National Authorising Officer Support Unit) to channel aid, is the agency that the government has established for this purpose.

4. But other institutions like the United Nations work directly with the government of Gambia...

Indeed, United Nations Development Program works directly with the government of Gambia, and Member States do not reject these collaborations. The European Union can give money to the UNDP and co-finance projects even if they work with the government of Gambia. The problem is negotiations between the EU and Gambia, and that human rights are not respected properly in this country and the Member States are very concerned about the situation of the population.

5. How could Songhai project receive support from the EU, since it is a project of sustainable agriculture and food security?

I read of this project before we talk. Songhai Project looks interesting and is an NGO, so the right way is through "call for proposals" the EU does in Gambia to use funds from the 11th EDF ... and could also be proposed by the project managers of the delegation of the European Union in The Gambia, as they are at home and must know first-hand NGOs and projects that can be developed in country and feasible.

Interview to UNDP's Programmer Specialist on Poverty MDGs& Environment: Abdou B. Touray. Held on Monday 5th October 2015, in Bakau, The Gambia.

1. When did you start with this project?

We started with the idea of this project in July 2014, when we heard about Songhai in Benin and all the good response on this project. So, we thought that was possible to address to People's Development Challenges that contribute to food security, demographic transition and unemployment. So we travelled with the head of UNDP to Benin, including the minister of Agriculture and the minister of Youth, to go and see. After visiting Songhai Centre in

Benin it was easier to agree and finally a collaboration agreement between UNDP and the Ministry of Youth and Sports was signed, because although it is a program of agricultural development are directly involved young Gambians.

From our returned it was produced a report that were at cabinet levels and most of the recommendation was to proceed the Songhai experience in The Gambia. They see it as the only way you can commit sustainable agriculture, see agriculture as business not as usual and a way to grieving a lot of employment for youth

2. What is the importance of agriculture in the economy of the country?

Agriculture is the main state of the country, and the problem is that the productivity can no go any long, because if you have 60% of the population engaged in that activity with the contribution of 25% of GDP, it means really that is not optimize. This is why most people involve in agriculture now are poor.

3. How to change this situation?

We want to use agriculture and transform it, not as have been done subsisting labour, but really using agriculture as a business because people will have the possibility of transform their life in a good reliance growth, and we can only do that investing in the young citizens.

4. So, you want to link the poverty to unemployment of youth population?

If you look the poverty data in the country in 2014, the age group that is affected by unemployment is youth population, and the way to address this that young go back to agriculture because we have that potential, and therefore this program started, because all the participants in this project are the youth, and over 40% of them are women.

5. Are the results in Benin good?

The results in Benin are so good. They transformed the idea of agriculture into a business and created thousands of thousands of employments. And also you can see in Benin that people who participated in the project are no longer only farmers, they are also employers. Let me tell you, we are not the only country to following this project, in Nigeria, Liberia, and Togo with good results. Today are 15 projects spread onto Africa. Actually The Gambia is the youngest repetition on Songhai project. We are seeing results across African that has been addressed youth employments. Also a good point to address about Songhai is that we used only organic fertiliser because the whole philosophy is about biotechnology; we introduced vegetables that are not currently in the country.

6. Do you think that agriculture sector is helping on the idea of reliance in Africa?

Always. It is also EU's concern that African's countries find the way of self-reliance. Here in the Gambia has been a lot policies to ensure the benefits of develop this sector. If we are looking for achievement on this topic Songhai project is the way.

7. How is working the project in Gambia?

We started to implement the project in March 2015. From May to July the participants were training. Last week minister of Agriculture was in the training camp, also minister of Tourism visited it; the Environment minister was there too. So everybody goes there and see what is happening. And now the first products are coming out, they are selling high quality vegetables, the best in the country and is not only because they are organics is also because the farmers are more specialised and know much better how to work the lands in order to get more benefits. The products are first class in all senses.

8. How many people are working in the project right now?

Currently we have 63 youths that they have been trained, but besides the youth also we have what we called farm labours that are employer and also supporting these activities with the farms.

9. What is the perception of the youth that have been trained?

They are happy that this opportunity came at that time and they already are taking full advantage.

10. But when those people graduated from this project, do they really will have the possibility to star their own?

While they are finishing the training we are engaging the local authorities because the youth who are participating in this project are coming for all regions of the country. So when this first group will graduate, they will go back to their hometowns where they will be producer of their own lands; additionally, during their training we keep a small part of the benefits, so that when they graduate will have an among of money to start their own businesses.

11. The idea is to spread this project all over the country?

Exactly, we want to spread this new idea of transforming farming into business. When those people graduate, also can teach in their hometowns to others. We want graduates who become farming entrepreneurs; becoming big farmers in rural areas.

12. Do you really think youth would like to come back to their villages?

Oh yes. Actually the whole idea about people moving out is about livelihood for better life; the whole problem of migration is about that. So when youth migrate to the capital is because they want a better life and when they cannot get it here, then they decided to go to Europe. Nobody want to leave your own country and culture, is only they are forced to do it because they don't have the opportunities to stay, but if we give them stools to create those opportunities I am sure they will stay or comeback home.

13. What are the criteria to select the participants in this project?

First thing is the age, is necessary to be young. So we qualify people by age and also some bases schooling. Then we make personal interview where we find out if the participants have skills on farm and also passion for it.