



**NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE OF THE GAMBIA**

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# **PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT**

**SERVICE DELIVERY BY GAMBIA TELECOMMUNICATION  
COMPANY LTD (GAMTEL)**

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**APRIL 2024**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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ACE	Africa Coast to Europe
ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
ECOWAN	Ecowas Wide Area Network
FAT	Fiber Access Terminal
GAMTEL	Gambia Telecommunications Company Limited
GBA	Greater Banjul Area
GBPS	Gigabit Per Second
GoTG	Government of The Gambia
GPON	Gigabit Optical Network
GPPA	Gambia Public Procurement Authority
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communication
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
MDAs	Ministries Department and Agencies
MOCDE	Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy
NAO	National Audit Office
NBN	National Broadband Network
NDP	National Development Plan
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Background

The Gambia Telecommunications Company Limited (GAMTELGAMTEL), is a state-owned limited liability company, predominantly owned by the Gambian government, holding 99% of its shares, while the Gambia Ports Authority (GPA) holds the remaining 1%. It was established under the Companies Act 1955, as amended under Cap. 95.02 of the Laws of the Gambia 1990.

GAMTELGAMTEL serves as the primary provider of telecommunication services in the Gambia, playing a crucial role in facilitating uninterrupted voice and data services. Recognizing the significance of the ICT industry in national economic growth, the Government of The Gambia (GoTG) has emphasized the need to enhance the telecommunications access network, as outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018–2021. GAMTEL's implementation of the National Broadband Network project aims to expand broadband access across the country, aligning with the NDP's goal of achieving 90% broadband Internet penetration by 2021.

Additionally, as a subscriber to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063, The Gambia is committed to targets (SDG9.1) aimed at increasing access to ICT and developing resilient infrastructure to support economic development and human well-being.

## Motivation

The National Audit Office (NAO) conducted a performance audit on GAMTEL's service delivery due to several significant factors. Firstly, GAMTEL, which was once ranked as the second-best telecommunications provider in Africa in the 1980s, has experienced a significant decline in performance. By 2019, it had dropped to ninth place, primarily attributed to its failure to upgrade its network system to compete effectively in The Gambia's rapidly evolving telecommunications sector.

Additionally, as part of the government's efforts to reform State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in The Gambia, the World Bank, through the Gambia Fiscal Management Development Project, mandated performance audits of SOEs as a prerequisite for budget support.

Furthermore, investigations following the change of government in 2017, including those conducted by commissions of enquiry and special audits by Ernst & Young on all SOEs, uncovered issues of poor governance, financial mismanagement, improper spending, and state interference in the operations and management of SOEs, including GAMTEL.

## **Key Findings**

### **Inadequate supply of broadband connectivity**

During the period spanning from 2019 to 2022, it was discovered that there was a substantial demand for both Gfiber and ADSL services, far surpassing the available supply provided by GAMTEL. The audit uncovered that GAMTEL lacks the necessary infrastructure to keep up with the increasing demand, resulting in a significant portion of the population being underserved.

This deficiency was attributed to the inadequate implementation of the National Broadband Network (NBN) project, wherein fibre access terminals (FATs) were installed in locations distant from residential areas, severely restricting accessibility. Additionally, it was observed that in certain areas, customers faced difficulties in obtaining internet connectivity due to the exhaustion of ADSL cards, consequently impeding supply efforts.

### **Delays in responding to customers' service interruption/ fault**

GAMTEL has faced difficulties in promptly resolving customer faults due to operational challenges including the absence of a Fault Management Information System and mobility issues. Management noted that fault resolution, often necessitating on-site visits, could extend over weeks or even months. A customer survey indicated that 65% of respondents experienced service restoration within 3 days to 3 weeks after reporting a fault, while 35% reported restoration within the specified timeframe of 2 days (48 hours).

Additionally, management stated that some of GAMTEL's new vehicles were appropriated or impounded by the vehicle control unit of the Office of the President for non-business-related activities, exacerbating the company's mobility challenges.

Similar mobility challenges were observed at regional branches, where inadequate availability of road-worthy vehicles hampered fault restoration efforts. Some branches had only one operational vehicle, often shared among multiple branches, leading to delays in fault restoration as vehicles were frequently unavailable for use.

### **Inadequate administrative framework**

The audit revealed a significant deficiency in crucial administrative documents necessary for GAMTEL's efficient management. Essential documents such as the strategic plan, debt recovery policy, manuals and relevant policies were not developed by Gambia, hindering the company's ability to outline its vision and effectively guide its operations.

At its essence, administration encompasses strategic planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling an organization's resources. However, GAMTEL has neglected to define clear company objectives, consequently lacking the means to achieve them.

### **Inadequate debt management infrastructure**

Review into Arrears Owed to GAMTEL by MDAs and SOEs, along with discussions with GAMTEL management, unveiled that as of February 2023, GAMTEL held receivables accumulated from 2015 to 2020 totaling one hundred and fifty-two million dalasi (D152M) from various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. Additionally, there were outstanding amounts of forty-five million dalasi (D45M) from SOEs, summing up to one hundred and ninety-seven million (D197M) from telecommunication services provided by GAMTEL, encompassing both voice and internet services.

Similarly, it was observed that various private individuals and businesses also owe significant amounts to GAMTEL. However, the audit team was unable to determine the total owed by these private and business customers due to GAMTEL's lack of data on this crucial aspect of the business.

It was noted that the company does not have a credit threshold effectively indicating that customers' particularly public institutions continue utilizing GAMTEL's services without paying for them. Moreover, at the time of the audit, GAMTEL had no statutory debt recovery strategy to ensure the debts were efficiently and effectively recovered.

### **Ineffective monitoring of GAMTEL branches and exchange**

We observed significant dilapidation and management deficiencies in GAMTEL's sites across the country. We encountered leaking roofs in areas where expensive telecommunication devices are housed, as well as inadequate ventilation for such equipment. Many of these rooms containing essential and sensitive equipment were excessively humid, with non-functional air conditioning systems.

Additionally, the security of the sites was compromised, as some visited sites had faulty gates, doors, and broken windows, leaving them vulnerable to intrusion by both animals and humans. Despite housing critical equipment essential for GAMTEL's operation, these sites appeared neglected and lacked proper maintenance. Many of these facilities were constructed in the 1980s and had not undergone regular adjustments or upkeep

## **Conclusions**

### **Inadequate supply of broadband connectivity**

GAMTEL has not kept pace with the increasing demand for fiber network services across various regions, which hindered its revenue potential, primarily due to infrastructure and connectivity accessory limitations.

### **Delays in responding to customers' service interruption/ fault**

GAMTEL does not maintain a standard fault restoration system and hence is unable to efficiently and effectively manage faults reported by customers. This has resulted in customers leaving the company to join other service providers in the telecom industry affecting not only the revenue generation of the company but also diminishing the goodwill of GAMTEL.

### **Inadequate administrative framework**

GAMTEL is deficient in the necessary administrative framework to ensure efficient and effective operations. The company has neglected to establish fundamental administrative policies essential for guiding it towards achieving its objectives, lacking a standardized roadmap for success.

### **Inadequate debt management infrastructure**

GAMTEL's inefficiency in managing its receivable accounts has placed the company under significant financial strain. Despite public institutions being allocated communication budgets annually, GAMTEL has failed to suspend or terminate services in the absence of payments.

Furthermore, it has inadequately maintained data on debts owed by private businesses and individuals, resulting in substantial amounts turning into bad debts. Up until the time of this audit, government institutions continue to utilize GAMTEL's services without payment.

### **Ineffective Monitoring of GAMTEL Branches and Exchange**

Regional managers lack a written monitoring schedule, leading to some areas being unmonitored for years due to the absence of dedicated regional managers, while many branches and exchange sites lack basic amenities such as air conditioning, toilets, and proper infrastructure, with 76% of sites facing perimeter fence challenges, exacerbating security concerns.



## **Recommendations**

### **Inadequate supply of broadband connectivity**

GAMTEL urgently needs to expand its network coverage to meet the growing demand, especially considering that internet packages are its primary revenue source. This entails building more fibre access terminals and upgrading ADSL cards to adequately respond to demand. In future projects, thorough consultation and feasibility studies are essential to ensure cost-effectiveness and value for money.

### **Delays in responding to customers' service interruption/ fault**

GAMTEL should ensure the implementation of an automated fault management system to enhance coordination between the customer service unit and fault restoration department, enabling tracking of reported faults and restoration times, while also guaranteeing mobility access for departments and regional managers across all regions to optimize service delivery.

Further, The Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy (MOCDE) should promptly engage with the Office of The President to ensure the swift return of impounded fleet from GAMTEL, emphasizing the adverse impact of such actions on GAMTEL's ability to compete effectively in the telecom industry.

### **Inadequate administrative framework**

GAMTEL must promptly establish its administrative framework. Initially, a comprehensive strategic plan spanning at least 5 years should be formulated, outlining the company's approach to fulfilling its mandate. Additionally, each department should be furnished with internal policies and manuals to guide operations and facilitate monitoring and performance evaluations, thus enhancing service delivery.

The Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy as well as SOE's Commission should actively participate in this reform to ensure alignment with organizational objectives.

### **Inadequate debt management infrastructure**

GAMTEL, in coordination with its line Ministry and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (SOE Commission), must prioritize the recovery of outstanding debts owed by public institutions.

It should operate as a standard business entity, ensuring fair compensation for services rendered rather than solely providing a public service without payment.

Transparently publishing the owed amounts and implementing a robust recovery strategy is essential. Moreover, management should identify and recover outstanding debts from private entities. Additionally, GAMTEL should develop a credit control policy, with input from oversight institutions, to manage credit thresholds and enhance debt recovery mechanisms, mitigating future financial risks and ensuring timely payments.

### **Ineffective Monitoring of GAMTEL Branches and Exchange**

GAMTEL should prioritize establishing monitoring schedules for regional managers to ensure efficient service delivery, enhancing operational oversight across all villages and towns. Additionally, regional managers should work with GAMTEL management to address the lack of basic amenities in branches and complete perimeter fences to enhance security and prevent unauthorized access.

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Background of the Audit

The Gambia Telecommunications Company Limited (GAMTEL) is the primary provider of core telecommunication services in the Gambia<sup>1</sup>. Service delivery can be defined as any contact with the public administration during which customers seek to be provided with the necessary public goods and services. Hence telecommunication is subject to the regulation of administrative proceedings. These services should be delivered in an efficient, effective, reliable, and customer-friendly manner<sup>2</sup>.

The Government of The Gambia (GoTG) acknowledges the value of the information and communication technology (ICT) industry in the growth of the national economy. The significance of enhancing the telecommunications access network has positioned ICT as a facilitator for achieving the national development objectives mentioned in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018–2021. The NDP also details that GAMTEL is set to implement a National Broadband Network project to roll out additional fibre to boost access to broadband services across the country. The government intended to achieve ninety percent (90%) broadband Internet penetration in the country by 2021.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation) and target 9.5c aimed at significantly increasing access to information and communication technology and striving to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in the least developed countries by 2020. Furthermore, target 9.1 aims at developing quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure, including regional and trans-border infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all. The Gambia as a subscriber of the 2030 and 2063 development agendas has committed to the implementation and fulfillment of these targets<sup>3</sup>.

GAMTEL as a state institution is vested with the responsibility of providing efficient and effective telecommunication services to the citizenry in the form of voice and data services. GAMTEL is therefore, mandated in ensuring that the citizenry have access to uninterrupted voice and data services irrespective of location or region. However, the services provided by GAMTEL are faced with numerous challenges affecting the efficient and effective service delivery to the citizenry.

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<sup>1</sup>Gamtel Activity Report 2019 and 2020 page 3 and page 12.

<sup>2</sup> OECD Good Practice Principles for Public Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Development 9, target 9.5c

## 1.2 Motivation

The Audit is motivated by the SOE reform initiative of the World Bank. In support of the Government's drive to reform State-Owned Enterprises, the World Bank through the Gambia Fiscal Management Development Project has made a performance audit of SOEs a condition for budget support. Precipitated by the findings of the commission of enquiries into the financial dealings of Former President Jammeh and his close associates. And the special audit conducted by Ernst & Young on all SOEs after the change of Government in 2017. Both reports have revealed poor governance, poor financial management, improper spending, and state interference in the operations and management of SOEs (including GAMTEL).

GAMTEL, in the 80's used to be independently rated as the second-best telecommunications provider in Africa<sup>4</sup> behind South Africa. However, as of 2019, it is rated ninth indicating a drastic drop in its performance. According to the Ernst & Young report, the declining performance of GAMTEL is mainly attributed to GAMTEL's inability to upgrade its network system<sup>5</sup> to be able to compete in the fast-growing telecommunication sector of The Gambia. According to the Gambia Digital Economy Diagnostic report (2022), there have been numerous public outcries pertaining to the fact that GAMTEL is unable to match its demand, particularly with fibre connectivity<sup>6</sup>.

Furthermore, the Ernst and Young report dated 9 April 2019 also indicated lapses and challenges in the operations of GAMTEL, this included staff-related challenges as the report highlighted that as of December 31, 2017, GAMTEL had 1,046 permanent employees. Of the total workforce, 25% of the employees are allocated to support services, which mainly consist of cleaners, drivers, and security staff. Another 24% of the employees are allocated to customer services. The same report highlighted by Ernst and Young also highlighted that it is very difficult for GAMTEL to track staff punctuality, as not all supervisors (especially from the provinces) will update Human Resources on these matters. Further, the report indicated that the management of GAMTEL has attributed the root cause for this concern to the fear of the supervisors having their staff's employment terminated<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Discussion with management of Gamtel

<sup>5</sup> Ernst & Young report on Special Audit of the 7 SOEs in the Gambia dated 19 August 2019 page 144.

<sup>6</sup> The Gambia Digital Economy Diagnostic, <https://www.operatorwatch.com/2022/02/poor-infrastructure-is-hindering-growth.html>

<sup>7</sup> Ernst and young report on Special Audit of the 7 SOEs in the Gambia dated 9 April 2019, Slide 43 and 45.

### 1.3 Audit Objective

The objective of the audit was to assess whether the measures put in place by GAMTEL to ensure access and quality service to the citizens are efficient and effective.

### 1.4 Audit questions

1. To what extent does GAMTEL adequately plan for meeting increasing customer demand?
2. To what extent does GAMTEL ensure that service interruptions are restored on time?
3. To what extent does GAMTEL have adequate and up-to-date strategy and policy documents to guide its operation?
4. To what extent does the management control system of GAMTEL ensure that customer debts are correctly determined and collected on time?
5. Does GAMTEL have an effective monitoring system in place to monitor branches and cell sites?

### 1.5 Assessment criteria

The audit drew criteria from the National Development Plan of the Gambia 2018 to 2021 and from meetings with the management of GAMTEL. The table below highlights the assessment criteria used.

**Table 1 Shows Audit Criteria**

<b>Question 1: To what extent does GAMTEL adequately plan for meeting increasing customer demand?</b>	
<b>NDP 2018-2021 page 145</b>	<i>GAMTEL is set to implement a National Broadband Network project to roll out additional fiber to boost access to broadband services across the country. The government intends to achieve 90 percent broadband Internet penetration in the country by 2021.</i>
<b>Question 2: To what extent does GAMTEL ensure that service interruptions are restored on time?</b>	
<b>Meeting with GAMTEL Management held on 6 April 2023</b>	<i>According to an interview with GAMTEL management, on average faults are supposed to be resolved for customers within 48 hours of the complaint depending on the nature and complexity of the fault</i>
<b>Question 3: Does a management control of GAMTEL ensure that customer debts are correctly determined and collected on time?</b>	

<b>Meeting with GAMTEL Management held on 20 September 2023</b>	<i>According to our interview with the management of GAMTEL, service provided to customers should be disconnected after the D5000 consumption limit<sup>8</sup>.</i>
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<sup>8</sup> Meeting with Gamtel Management held on 20 September 2023.

## CHAPTER TWO: DESIGN OF THE AUDIT

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### 2.1 Audit Scope

The audit covered Service Delivery by Gambia Telecommunication Company. It covered the period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2022. The audit covers all the regions of the country.

### 2.2 Methods for data collection

We used the following methods in the audit to obtain audit evidence.

#### 2.2.1 Document review

The audit team reviewed documents relating to service delivery by the Gambia telecommunication company to facilitate a sound understanding of the measures put in place by them to meet the needs of the citizens of the Gambia. The table below shows the documents reviewed and the purpose for which they were reviewed.

**Table 2 shows the list and documents reviewed and their purpose for review.**

Documents	Reason for review
GAMTEL Activity Reports from 2019 to 2022	To obtain information on performance results of GAMTEL's activities relating to service delivery.
GAMTEL Turnaround Strategy 2020 to 2022	To obtain information about GAMTEL's activities and current status along with its set objectives.
Budgets and Financial Statement 2019 to 2022	To obtain information on financial budgets that are compared to the actuals and how it's funded
Ernst and Young Report 2019	To obtain information on GAMTEL's performance.
National Development Plan 2018 to 2022	To know the plans put in place for fibre expansion to boost access to broadband network services country-wide.
Board Papers of GAMTEL 2019 to 2022	To obtain information on the performance problems and why they have happened.

### **2.2.2 Interview**

The audit team held discussions/interviews with fifty-one (51) staff. This comprises technical and operational staff at the central level and the regional level. These discussions were aimed at gathering information from GAMTEL officials to corroborate and seek clarification on information obtained from document reviews.

We administered questionnaires to fourteen (14) customers across the country to obtain information on their experiences regarding accessibility and quality of service provided by GAMTEL.

**Appendix 1 shows list of staff and customers interviewed in the greater Banjul area and the regions.**

### **2.3 Sampling and data analysis**

We visited all the six (6) regions in the Gambia, the areas selected were based on those that get their services from GAMTEL. The sample selected is based on the location of GAMTEL offices, stations, and branches. We used purposive sampling techniques to select customers to interview.

We use both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the data obtained from physical verification and interviews. We use tables to present the results of these analyses.

### **2.4 Data validation**

We have presented the draft audit report to the management of GAMTEL to confirm factual accuracy of statements presented in the draft report and to present their response to the audit findings. Specific management's responses are presented at the end of each finding.



## **CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF THE AUDIT AREA**

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### **3.1 System Description of GAMTEL**

#### **3.1.1 Background of GAMTEL**

The Gambia Telecommunications Company Limited (GAMTEL) is a state-owned, limited liability Company with the Gambia government owning 99% of its shares and Gambia Ports Authority (GPA) owning 1% of its shares. It was incorporated under the Companies Act 1955 as amended under Cap. 95. 02 of the Laws of the Gambia 1990. GAMTEL being the principal telecommunication company in the Gambia is tasked with overseeing the provision of efficient, accessible, and affordable telecommunications and related services in the country<sup>9</sup>

GAMTEL holds the highest share of the ACE Gambia segment with 20%, GAMCEL holds 10% and the government of the Gambia holds 19% totaling to 49% shares altogether and the remaining 51% shares are distributed among private Global systems for mobile communication (GSM) Operators and Internet Service Providers (ISPs). This gives GAMTEL an undisputed competitive advantage as a market leader with the edge of an incumbent for being the first telecommunications company in The Gambia<sup>10</sup>.

GAMTEL is headed by a Managing Director, who is appointed by the President in consultation with the Public Service Commission. The Managing Director acts as executive director to the board of directors and he is directly assisted by the Deputy Managing Director who oversees all the directorates. Currently, the operation of GAMTEL is based on 10 Directorates that complement each other's efforts day to day to see that all plans, instructions, and directions of the Managing Director are properly observed, disseminated, and implemented<sup>11</sup>.

#### **3.1.2 Mission of Gambia Telecommunication Company**

The Gambia Telecommunication Company has no written mission statement.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [www.gamtel.gm](http://www.gamtel.gm) and Gamtel activity report 2019

<sup>10</sup> [www.gamtel.gm](http://www.gamtel.gm)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mofea.gm/soe/gamtel>

<sup>12</sup> Board Papers for the 7<sup>th</sup> Ordinary meeting of the Board's Audit and Risk Committee of Gamtel (17<sup>th</sup> June 2020) (page 5, 2.3 A.).

### **3.1.3 Vision of Gambia Telecommunication Company**

The vision statement is to be a leader in the provision of world-class telecommunication and related services.<sup>13</sup>

#### **3.1.4 Specific Objectives of the Gambia Telecommunication Company<sup>14</sup>**

- To carry on the business of telecommunication including but not limited to Global system for mobile communication (GSM) service and to carry on trades or business of telephone, telegraph cable, and wireless communication.
- To establish, work, manage, sell, hire out, and maintain telephone exchanges, cable and transmitting stations, and any other system for communications whether consisting of sound, visual images, electrical impulse, or otherwise either alone or in any combination.

### **3.1.5 Departments and their Functions**

#### **Core Network**

This unit connects all the connected devices to the relevant GAMTEL services and houses the products and services deployed to customers. The core network department has 64 equipment stations throughout the country, and these are monitored remotely by head office staff.

#### **Outside Plant**

Is responsible for the access part of the telecommunication network which is the physical infrastructure comprising wires, cables, and equipment that connect to the customers and maintain services. The department is managing two access technologies ADSL2+ and GPON. The ADSL2+ is a copper networking system that is purely managed by the Outside Plant, and the Gpon is jointly managed by the outside plant and core network.

#### **Multimedia Services**

Is responsible for the technical operations of all data services in GAMTEL. It is also in charge of the provision of internet and data services to customers such as installation of routers for internet service and fixing of the internet for towers. They also manage internet

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<sup>13</sup> Board Papers for the 7<sup>th</sup> Ordinary meeting of the Board's Audit and Risk Committee of Gamtel (17<sup>th</sup> June 2020) (page 5, 2.3 A.).

<sup>14</sup> Board Papers for the 7<sup>th</sup> Ordinary meeting of the Board's Audit and Risk Committee of Gamtel (17<sup>th</sup> June 2020) (page 5, 2.4 A.).

cafes, ADSL services, web services, Wi-Fi networks, and fiber to business and corporate customers like Banks and International Services institutions, United Nations, Embassies Western Union, etc.

### **Information Technology**

The function of this department is cross cutting and cuts across all functional units in GAMTEL. This unit helps maintain and operates all the IT related functions within the company. It also provides specification for all IT purchases (Hardware and Software) and maintains all the IT systems in GAMTEL and provides billing invoices for all GAMTEL customers.

### **Customer Service**

This department serves as the first point of entry for customers and the last point of exit for customers. It serves as the interface between customers and the company and is responsible for all the sales at the outlet level, in charge of the revenue generated for the company as well as management of customer complaints.

### **International Operation**

Is responsible for international connectivity between international carriers and GAMTEL. It takes care of the wholesale business of GAMTEL for both data and voice. Also, it connects institutions connecting to the GAMTEL network to the international world and does the negotiation of connectivity termination deals with customers.

### **Corporate Affairs**

This department is responsible for regulation, compliance, corporate communication, and corporate social responsibility of GAMTEL.

### **Planning and Development**

They are responsible for surveying, planning, and implementation and then transferring the result to an outside plant to operate and maintain. Also, the department is responsible for fault restoring from the exchange to the distribution point and expansion and building of virgin territories depending on the particulars received from the customer service department.

## **Internal Audit**

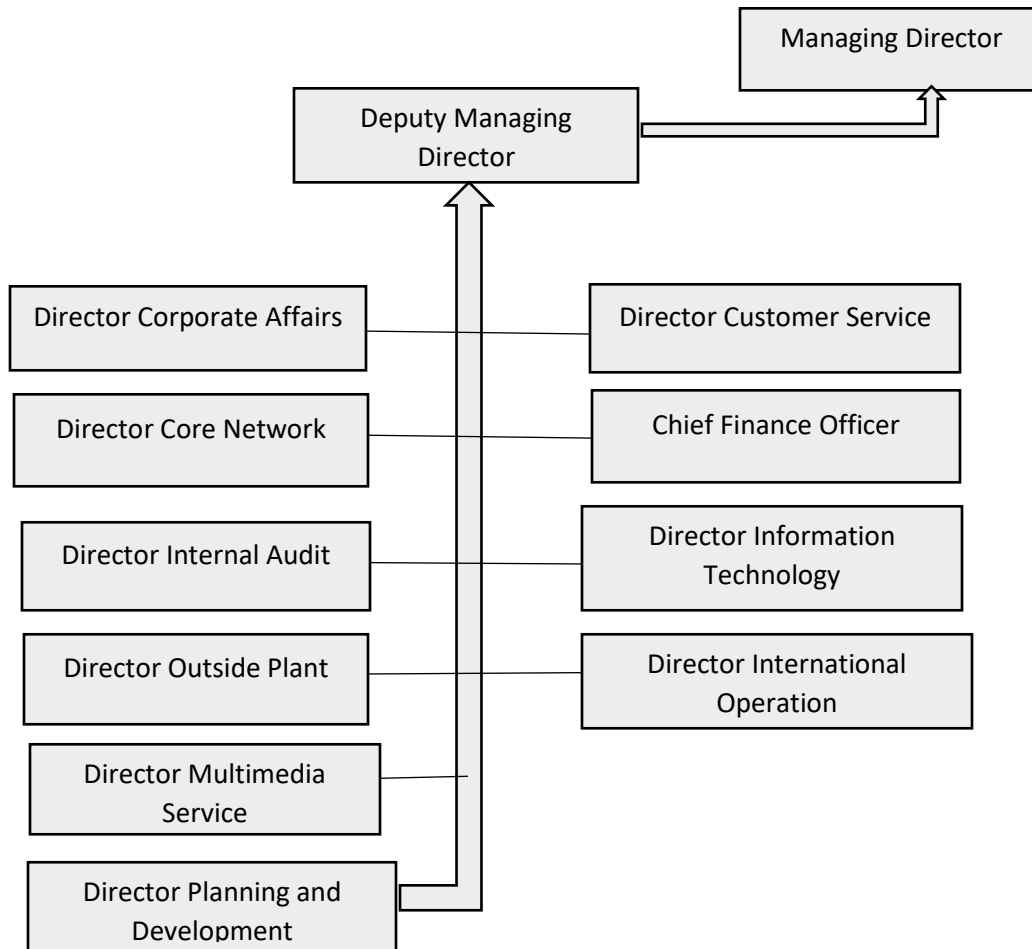
They are responsible for looking at all the financial transactions and controls like operational controls, system controls, application controls, commercial department controls, payroll, and advice management. They also monitor customer service to see what was collected and what was banked and monitor their performance.

## **Procurement**

This department is responsible for the Procurement of goods and services for GAMTEL both locally and internationally through tender. For goods above D500,000 and when single sourcing the procurement unit seeks approval from GPPA.

### 3.1.6 Organogram<sup>15</sup>

Figure 1 Organogram of GAMTEL



<sup>15</sup>[www.gamtel.gm/organisational-structure/](http://www.gamtel.gm/organisational-structure/)

### 3.1.7 Roles of Key Stakeholders

Table 3 shows key stakeholders and their functions.

Key stakeholders	Functions
Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy	Has public responsibility for building and maintaining the national communication infrastructure to support overall national development.
Public Utility and Regulatory Authority	Advise the Board (through the Director General) on issues relevant to the regulation of the telecommunications sector. It monitors investment programs, compliance with regulations, and service quality.
Gambia Ports Authority.	Holds 1% of GAMTEL's share with a representative on the Board.
Customers	Users of GAMTEL services

### 3.1.8 Services Provided by GAMTEL<sup>16</sup>

GAMTEL has two main services in the form of voice and data services to its customers depending on what they need. The voice service consists of the landline services while the data services consist of the following portfolios mentioned below.

#### G-Fiber

G-Fiber is the last mile connectivity solution from the ECOWAN core network which was launched on 26 June 2019, the access terminal is distributed countrywide, and expansion is ongoing in most parts of Greater Banjul Areas (GBA) and gradual in most rural communities.

#### Fibre to the Business (Dark Fiber and Leased line)

Dark Fibre is a strand of fibre optic cable, GAMTEL provides dark fibre strands for GSM Operators, ISPs, and companies with larger operations.

GAMTEL Lease line Fibre broadband internet connection for Businesses is a high-speed data transmission medium through optic fibre cables which provide incredibly super-fast transfer of data over a secure and reliable connection.

<sup>16</sup> [www.gamtel.gm](http://www.gamtel.gm), Gamtel Activity report 2020 and Interview with Gamtel management.

## ADSL2+

ADSL2+ is an upgraded High-Speed fixed broadband internet connection on your telephone line, with no interruption on the voice calls. It enables faster data transmission through a single connection.

## Internet Café

GAMTEL has established internet cafes all over the country to make internet services accessible and affordable to the general public. This has helped to address the internet needs of many customers across the country and at the same time generates revenue for the company.

### 3.1.9 Funding

Gambia Telecommunication Company Limited is a state-owned enterprise that funds its activities through the revenues generated from its operations. The budget is approved by the Board of Directors with a budget approval letter from the Office of the President<sup>17</sup>.

**Table 4 shows GAMTEL's revenue and expenses for the period 2019-2022**

Year	Revenue (D)'000	Expenses (D)'000	Loss (D)'000	Reserve (D)'000	Depreciation (D)'000
2019	606,338	778,399	172,061	1,059,861	254,916
2020	306,613	727,053	420,440	580,593	240,524
2021	409,522	790,800	381,278	181,318	235,731
2022 (Draft)	455,464	700,470	245,006	2,117	235,819

**Source: GAMTEL Audited Financial Statement 2019-2022**

After reviewing GAMTEL's audited financial statements, it was observed that the company incurred losses from 2019 to 2022, with the 2022 financial statement still in draft stage. These losses were attributed to the effects of the liberalization of the voice gateway and the capitalization of the National Broadband Network (NBN) project in 2021, as per GAMTEL's commercial strategy plan for 2023 and discussions with management.

The impact of liberalization began in the latter part of 2019, resulting in a D92 million drop in interconnection revenue for GAMTEL that year, leading to a loss of D172 million. In 2020, the full effect of the new liberalized conditions was felt, with GAMTEL recording a historic loss of D420 million. This significant loss was mainly due to substantial declines

<sup>17</sup>Gamtel Activity Reports and Interview with Gamtel Management.

in international and interconnection revenue, which together constituted 78% of GAMTEL's total revenue.

Furthermore, the commercialization and capitalization of the National Broadband Network in 2019 led to a surge in depreciation, rising from D78 million in 2018 to D254 million in 2019, further impacting the company's profitability. Despite experiencing losses, GAMTEL managed to sustain its operations through company reserves, although these reserves have begun to decline according to available data.

### **3.2 Process Description for the Provision of Telecommunication and Internet Services**

In the provision of telecommunication and internet services to customers the Gambia Telecommunication company has various stages ranging from customer intention, survey, feasibility report, invoicing of customers, and installation.

#### **Customer applies for the service**

Customer service is the first point of entry for customers, customers who intend to apply for the services of GAMTEL will have to declare their intentions to the customer service unit by written application or communication of intent with the relevant supporting documentation.

#### **Customer service unit assesses customers information**

Customer services after receiving the customers' applications and completing the assessment process, the request is sent to the technical departments responsible (multimedia service, core network, and outside plant) based on the service requested to survey the customer's site.

#### **Survey and producing feasibility report**

A survey will be conducted to ascertain the feasibility of the services at the customer's site. Upon completion of the survey, the responsible department (surveyors) will then produce a feasibility report to customer service which will determine whether the service will be provided to the customer or not.

The customer will then be informed about the outcome of the survey.

#### **Invoice generated for the customer to make payment**

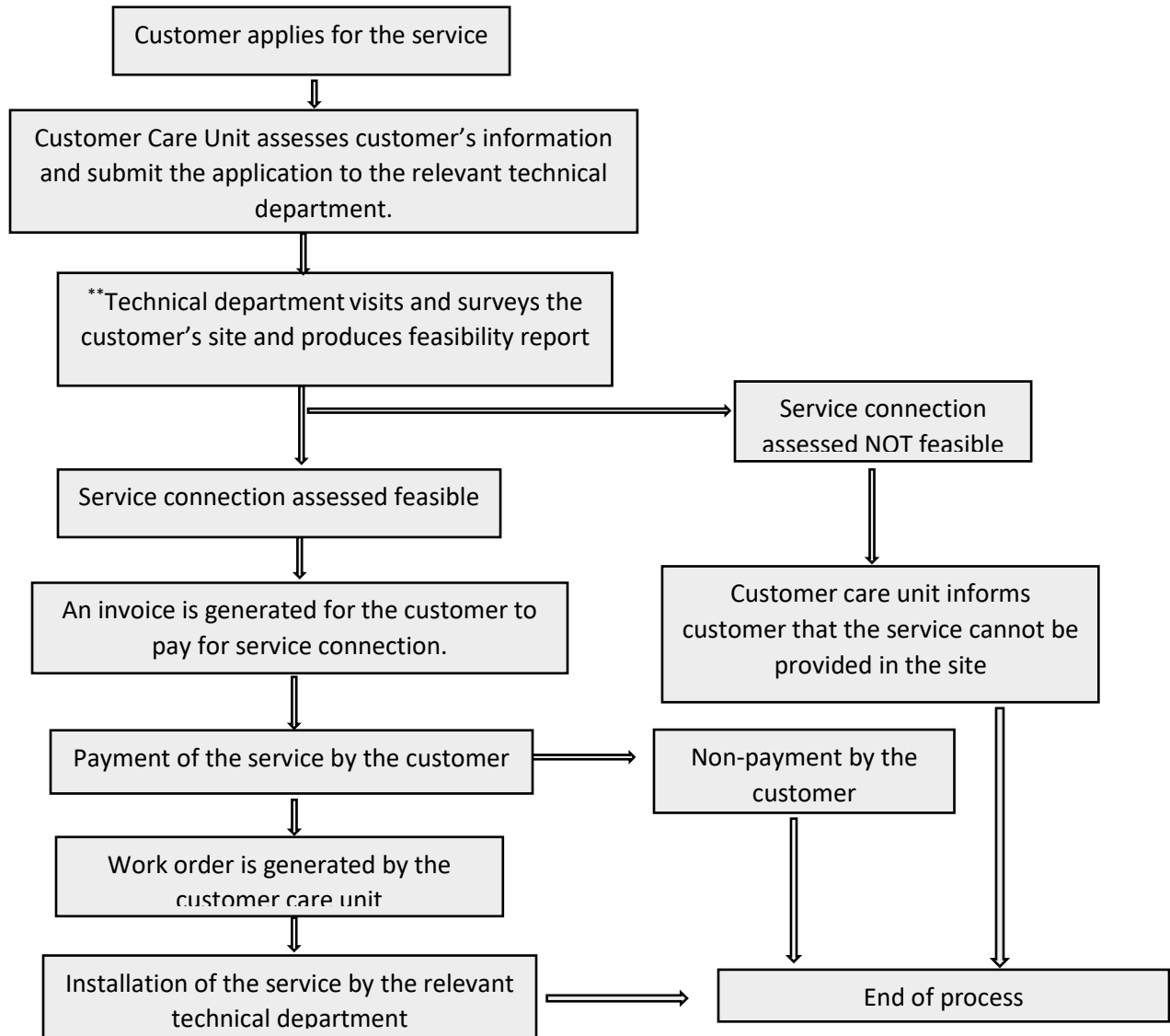
When the result of the survey is feasible, customer service in collaboration with the finance department will send an invoice to the customer to make the necessary payments at any of the customer care outlets.



### **Generation of work order and installation of the service**

When payments are made by customers, the customer service unit will send a work order to the affected exchange, to go ahead and do the installation of the requested service and inform the customer accordingly.

**Figure 2 Process of GAMTEL Service Delivery**



Source: NAO analysis, based on Interview with GAMTEL Department of Customer Service and Marketing

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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This chapter presents the audit findings, conclusions, and recommendations in relation to service delivery by GAMTEL.

### 4.1 Inadequate supply of broadband connectivity

*GAMTEL is set to implement a National Broadband Network project to roll out additional fiber to boost access to broadband services across the country. The government intends to achieve 90 percent broadband Internet penetration in the country by 2021<sup>18</sup>.*

Through documentary reviews and interviews conducted, the audit team noted that GAMTEL is not able to adequately supply customers with broadband connectivity as required. The demands for this service far outnumbered the supply from GAMTEL.

In order to address these capacity challenges, GAMTEL in collaboration with the government of the Gambia undertook or invested in two significant projects aimed at expanding connectivity: the Ecowas Wide Area Network (ECOWAN) in 2015 and the National Broadband Network (NBN) in 2017. However, the audit noted that these two projects were inadequate to broadly connect GAMTEL's customers leaving a very significant percentage of potential customers unconnected.

Despite efforts by the audit team to collect data on the total number of customers applying for these services, there are limitations due to the absence of a comprehensive system capturing all applicants. However, a review of the Gfiber list reveals that 666 customers were deemed infeasible from 2021 to 2022. This number represents a significant percentage of the total customers, indicating that there may be a substantial number of additional infeasible applicants beyond those captured in the Gfiber list.

GAMTEL is facing similar challenges with its other internet product called particularly ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line). In some areas, customers were unable to be connected due to limitations with ADSL cards. These cards, which facilitates the provision of ADSL internet services, have reached their capacity and are no longer able to accommodate additional connections. This situation indicates that there is a high demand for ADSL internet services in these areas, but the infrastructure is unable to support further expansion due to the exhaustion of ADSL cards.

The audit team conducted a customer survey to assess customers' preferences and experiences in terms of the network services provided by GAMTEL. Our analysis of the survey revealed that Gfiber has a stronger network quality and is mostly preferred amongst customers as compared to ADSL. Our analysis showed that the fiber and ADSL services were equally requested by customers in the regions.

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<sup>18</sup> National Development plan of the Gambia 2018-2021, page 145.

However, ADSL customers claimed that the reason why they request and use the ADSL is because access to the fiber in their location is difficult and even not available in some of the villages/town.

From our interviews with regional managers, we noted that FATs should be 350 meters (seven spans) away from residential areas for customers to have access. Furthermore, discussions with regional managers revealed that 90% of customers do not have access to broadband connection and this was associated with the poor implementation of the NBN project (a project worth \$25,000,000) where fibre access terminals (FATs) are installed in locations that are far from residential areas effectively limiting access.

We noted that at the initial stage of the NBN project the FATs were installed without proper consultation with the management and regional managers who knew the locations that would have been ideal and effective. Additionally, management highlighted that GAMTEL is unable to meet the demand for its two core products due to the limitation of infrastructure as well as the required material stock and equipment such as cables, splicing machines, and other accessories necessary for connectivity.

This situation does not only translate to GAMTEL's inability to provide access to telecommunication to the citizenry and thereby achieve 90 percent broadband Internet penetration in the country by 2021 as stated in the National Development Plan, but it effectively led to significantly miss the opportunity to generate significant amounts of revenue for the company since a lot of applications were not supplied.

Considering the competition in the telecom industry, GAMTEL should have taken advantage and occupied this profitable position in the market, especially during these times when the company is struggling in terms of revenue generation. In addition, the poor implementation of the NBN projects does not only limits access to connectivity, but it causes huge potential loss to the company as GAMTEL will use significant amounts of cable and poles in connecting customers from the FATs to their residences/businesses due to the remoteness of the FATs.

## **Conclusion**

GAMTEL has not kept pace with the increasing demand for fiber network services across various regions, which hindered its revenue potential, primarily due to infrastructure and connectivity accessory limitations.

## **Recommendation**

GAMTEL should establish strategies to expand its network coverage or access in areas under its mandate to meet the increasing demand. It is worth noting that GAMTEL's only significant revenue stream is the internet packages it provides. Hence there is an urgent need to expand and fill its role by responding to demand adequately. There is a need to build more fibre access terminals to bring the services to the doorstep of every Gambian, the ADSL cards must also be upgraded to meet demand.

In the future, GAMTEL should ensure there is adequate consultation and feasibility study before project implementation, this will ensure value for money in such projects.

**Management Response**

<p><b>Management Response</b></p>	<p>The two main projects highlighted in this report came to address different gaps with defined scope. The ECOWAN aims to address gaps in Backhauling from which all Mobile Network Operators, ISPs, Banks, and SMEs are currently connected perfectly to sell services to customers.</p> <p>The NBN project came to address connectivity to retail customers like residences, and small businesses with a scope of only 5,000 customers. It is worth to note that during the design stage of the NBN project GAMTEL management was not duly consulted hence the poor implementation. However, during the implementation some change requests were made to improve on the design. To further enhance last mile connectivity. GAMTEL expanded the NBN network to virgin areas, and where feasible FATs were relocated closer to customers reach.</p> <p>Furthermore, ADSL technology, which is still a revenue generating product is phasing out thus the cards are not been manufactured by the vendor.</p>
<p><b>Action to be taken</b></p>	<p>Since technology evolved rapidly, the scope of these two projects were dimensioned for specific business plan. The equipment supplied through the projects have reached their limitation against the surge demand. With a change in business strategy and increase in customer demand, GAMTEL has designed a project to expand and replaced</p>

	Network Elements of both ECOWAN and NBN to meet the surging demand.
<b>Officer Responsible for remedial action</b>	Management
<b>Date when the situation will be regularized</b>	Ongoing

**4.2 Delays in responding to customers' service interruption/ fault**

*According to an interview with GAMTEL management, on average faults are supposed to be resolved for customers within 48 hours of the complaint depending on the nature and complexity of the fault<sup>19</sup>.*

Customer surveys revealed that 65% of respondents reported a timeframe of 3 days to 3 weeks for service restoration after fault reporting, while 35% indicated their services were restored within the specified time of 2 days (48 hours).

Further, Discussions with various departments and regional managers confirmed GAMTEL's inability to effectively restore customer faults within the specified timeframe of 48hours as Management elaborated that when faults requiring on-site visits are reported, resolution typically takes weeks or even months due to the causes detailed below.

**Unavailability of Fault Information Management System/Database**

According to the interviews/discussions held with various units in GAMTEL (Customer Service Unit, Planning and Development Unit, Marketing Unit, and regional managers), it was revealed that there is no fault management information system. This deficiency impacts the timing of fault restoration. Customers typically report faults via the call center or by visiting branches. These reports are communicated to relevant departments through a WhatsApp group established by the Customer Service Unit for efficient communication. However, these complaints are not logged or recorded for easy tracking.

According to the department and regional managers, the lack of records on reported customer fault complaints hinders quantification. Consequently, the audit team faces limitations in analyzing received and resolved faults from 2019 to 2022 across all regions. Additionally, we couldn't determine fault restoration waiting times for the same reason.

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<sup>19</sup> Meeting with Gamtel Management held on 6 April 2023

**Table 5 shows data on the number of faults received, restored, and pending in the regions**

Region	Branch	Type of services provided	Number of faults received, restored, and pending
NBR	Barra	ADSL and Fiber	Not available. No system in place to capture this
	Kerewan	ADSL and Fiber	Not available. No system in place to capture this
	Farafenni	ADSL, Telephone, and Fiber	There is no data for this
CRR North	Bansang	ADSL and Fiber	Not available. No system in place to capture this
	Janjanbureh	ADSL and Fiber	Not available. No system in place to keep this
CRR South	Brikamaba	ADSL and Fiber	No record of this is kept
URR	Basse	ADSL and Fiber	There is no data for this
LRR	Jarra Soma	ADSL and Fiber (ADSL available only in Soma and Kalagi)	No record of this is kept
WCR	Brikama	ADSL and Fiber	not provided
	Gunjur	ADSL and Fiber	no data on this

**Source: Data analysis from the regional trek**

It was discovered that fault restoration processes rely on verbal communication, lacking systems for tracking restoration status and duration. In discussions with the customer service unit, the absence of an automated fault management system was highlighted as causing poor coordination between customer service and the fault restoration department. Currently, customers tend to directly contact specific GAMTEL officers they know to report faults, bypassing customer service. This leads to technicians receiving instructions without customer service's awareness, hindering fault logging and tracking.

Given the competitive nature of the telecom industry in The Gambia, the importance of promptly addressing customer complaints cannot be overstated. Delays in fault restoration could result in a shrinking customer base, leading to reduce revenue and impacting the company's performance.

## **Mobility**

We have noted from interviews with the department responsible for fault restorations that lack of mobility is also a major contributor to delays in fault restoration. The department responsible for fault restoration is unable to promptly facilitate the transportation of technicians to the sites where faults were reported due to mobility problems. The Department of Outside Plant responsible for fault restorations has challenges with non-roadworthy vehicles. According to our interview with GAMTEL management, we noted that the company maintains old fleets that were procured more than a decade ago hence most of the vehicles are at the garage awaiting maintenance and this explains why maintenance is one of the biggest cost lines of the company yearly.

Furthermore, management also claimed that some of the company's new fleets were possessed/impounded by the vehicle control unit of the Office of the President to run errands that are non-business related to GAMTEL which further aggravated the mobility challenges of the company. This was substantiated by records showing official correspondence to the Office of The President requesting the return of the company's vehicles some of which were never returned. Two vehicles were still with the Office of the President at the time of our visit.

**Appendix 3 shows *List of vehicles taken by the vehicle control unit of the office of the president.***

Similar mobility challenges are faced by the regional branches. For example, branches like Essau and Kaur share one vehicle for fault restorations, and for other business activities, mostly the vehicle will be at the disposal of one branch for days and the other branch will be without it hence affecting the time taken to restore faults. Bansang and Basse also share one vehicle and the entire West Coast Region which is the biggest region covering the Foni area has only one road-worthy vehicle at the time of our visit.

The mandate of the company is far-reaching, and it requires lot of movements to conduct surveys, connect new customers, do fault restorations as well as planning and development activities, without a well-functioning fleet the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery is compromised greatly. A case in point is how fault restorations are sometimes delayed due to the unavailability of mobility. Hence, mobility is an important component in ensuring efficient and effective service delivery to the citizenry and GAMTEL is currently grappling with this. It is worth noting that these faults do not only affect residential customers but affect businesses like banks and other institutions effectively interrupting service delivery of such businesses. It is unfair that customers subscribe to services without equally enjoying the services provided and the customer



survey conducted highlights how dissatisfied customers are forcing them to source their services elsewhere.

**Table 6 shows regions with mobility challenges**

Region	Branch	Mobility status
NBR	Barra	Vehicle not available on site for 2 years.
	Kerewan	Motorbikes is available but there is no fuel supply for 8 months.
	Farafenni	The region has only two vehicles, one, which is faulty, and the one in use covers from Essau to Kaur.
CRR North	Bansang	They share a single vehicle with Basse
	Janjanbureh	no information
CRR South	Brikamaba	Mobility, vehicle not road-worthy
URR	Basse	Mobility, vehicle not road-worthy
LRR	Jarra Soma	Mobility, only one vehicle
WCR	Brikama	Mobility, only one road-worthy vehicle
	Gunjur	Mobility, vehicle is too old

**Source: Data analysis from the regional trek**

## Conclusion

GAMTEL does not maintain a standard fault restoration system and hence is unable to efficiently and effectively manage faults reported by customers. This has resulted in customers leaving the company to join other service providers in the telecom industry affecting not only the revenue generation of the company but also diminishing the goodwill of GAMTEL.

## Recommendation

1. GAMTEL should maintain an automated fault management system for effective coordination between the customer service unit and the department responsible for fault restoration and keep track of the number of faults reported by customers and the restoration time.
2. In addition, the management of GAMTEL should ensure that departments and regional managers have access to mobility in all the regions for effective service delivery to the customers. The Ministry of Communication and Digital Economy (MOCDE), the line Ministry of GAMTEL should engage the office of The President with immediate effect to ensure that the fleet impounded from GAMTEL is immediately returned. It should be made clear to the vehicle control unit of the Office of the President (OP) that, GAMTEL competes with other operators in the

telecom industry and such actions have added to the mobility challenges faced by GAMTEL.

**Management Response**

<b>Management Response</b>	Over 80% of reported faults are resolved within 48 hours. However, in areas where major damages occur usually caused by road constructors, NAWEC or other human activities, fault restoration extends beyond 48 hours or a prolonged period. This is due to the complexity of the damages such as long distance of underground cables totally mutilated, which will require civil works and/or a consultant (in cases of fiber cuts by road contractors) to show where the infrastructure is to be relocated based on the new design. There is a Fault Information Management System (Cerellion) which was down due to technical issues during the time of the audit
<b>Action to be taken</b>	The Fault Management System (Cerelion) has been restored. Notwithstanding, to further enhance fault reporting management system, management has initiated the need to revive the 1311 toll free in which a pilot has been deployed in one of the major exchange (Serekunda Exchange)
<b>Officer Responsible for remedial action</b>	Management
<b>Date when the situation will be regularized</b>	Fault Information Management System (Cerelion) has been restored.

**Further Audit comment**

During the audit, the team requested data on received, restored, and pending faults, but it wasn't provided due to the absence of a system to record such information.

The mentioned system was said to primarily handle customer billing rather than fault management. A follow-up audit will assess this system after a significant period to evaluate its suitability for fault management purposes.

### 4.3 Inadequate administrative framework

Reviewing documents and discussions with GAMTEL officers highlighted a significant absence of key administrative documents crucial for efficient management. Notably, GAMTEL couldn't provide the audit with essential documents such as the strategic plan or other relevant policies. These documents are vital for outlining the company's vision and guiding its operations effectively.

Additionally, it was observed that despite conducting a considerable portion of its business on credit, GAMTEL lacks a standardized credit/debt recovery strategy to safeguard against bad debt. Furthermore, despite being a company with multiple departments and regional branches, there is a notable absence of manuals guiding operations at these levels. No guideline or policy documents were provided detailing the required operations of departments and regional offices. The finance department stands as the only department equipped with a financial manual.

Despite the existence of a financial manual within the finance department, concerns have been raised by the GAMTEL audit risk committee regarding its adequacy. Board papers reveal that the manual, developed in the 1980s, was only updated in 2013 to incorporate some new revenue streams and services. However, this version was phased out in 2017. Subsequently, a new financial manual has been in development since 2017, but the process has taken over five years and is currently undergoing validation<sup>20</sup>.

According to our meeting with the management of GAMTEL, the reason why the updating of the policy is taking so long because the committee that was formed in 2017 to work on it was dissolved at some point and another task force was formed in 2021 to look at the policy manual again and update it.

Failure to update the financial manual to accommodate new revenue streams and services offered by GAMTEL has resulted in the continued use of outdated guidelines. This situation could potentially lead to officers exercising discretion in handling accounting matters without adhering to established procedures. Without proper controls to address emerging risks and reflect the company's current operational realities, there is an increased risk of errors and inefficiencies in financial management processes.

Furthermore, minutes from the board meeting dated 17 June 2020 revealed the board's concern regarding GAMTEL's inadequate administrative framework, particularly noting

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<sup>20</sup> Board Papers for the 7th Ordinary meeting of the Board's Audit and Risk Committee of Gamtel (17th June 2020). (page 5, 2.3) 22 Board Papers for the 17th Ordinary meeting of the Board's Audit and Risk Committee of Gamtel (19th May 2022 page 5, 2.1).

the absence of a written mission statement. A mission statement serves as a concise articulation of an organization's purpose, intentions, and overarching objectives, providing guidance and direction to stakeholders. In response, GAMTEL developed a Turnaround Strategy for the period 2020-2022, outlining company objectives and targets along with intended strategies for achievement.

However, our review found that while the Turnaround Strategy identified the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, it fell short of constituting a comprehensive strategic plan. It lacked a clear depiction of the company's current position, desired objectives, and detailed strategies for achieving them.

Despite efforts by the audit team to inquire into the state of GAMTEL's administrative framework, management was unable to provide satisfactory explanations. Management stated that the lack of administrative strategies predates their tenure, and those responsible for developing the 2020 Turnaround Strategy were unable to provide insights into why prior strategies were not developed.

At its essence, administration encompasses strategic planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling an organization's resources. However, GAMTEL has neglected to define clear company objectives, consequently lacking the means to achieve them. This absence of guidance in the form of manuals or internal policy documents has left departments and branches without adequate direction. Consequently, assessing departmental performance becomes nearly impossible, significantly contributing to GAMTEL's subpar performance.

## **Conclusion**

GAMTEL is deficient in the necessary administrative framework to ensure efficient and effective operations. The company has neglected to establish fundamental administrative policies essential for guiding it towards achieving its objectives, lacking a standardized roadmap for success.

## **Recommendation**

GAMTEL must promptly establish its administrative framework. Initially, a comprehensive strategic plan spanning at least 5 years should be formulated, outlining the company's approach to fulfilling its mandate. Additionally, each department should be furnished with internal policies and manuals to guide operations and facilitate monitoring and performance evaluations, thus enhancing service delivery.

It's crucial to emphasize that the Ministry of Communications, Digital Economy, and the Ministry for State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) should actively engage in this reform

process as key stakeholders responsible for overseeing GAMTEL. Their involvement is essential for ensuring effective implementation and alignment with organizational goals.

**Management Response**

<p><b>Management Response</b></p>	<p>The Management recognizes the importance of administrative documents in providing a structured framework for managing operations and facilitating effective governance within the company. These documents play a vital role in decision-making, communication, ensuring compliance, transaction documentation, and risk management.</p> <p>All the basic administrative documents required for the company's operation are available, and the branches are not separate from the company. Therefore, they are governed by the company's policy manuals and regulations. The company has several policies and manuals, such as the scheme of service, staff service rule, financial manual, etc. to ensure effectiveness, compliance, accountability, and a positive work environment.</p> <p>Furthermore, the company's memorandum of understanding clearly outlines its objectives, and the Management has developed a three-year transformative strategy, 2023 – 2026 to achieve sustainable success and growth.</p>
<p><b>Action to be taken</b></p>	<p>We noted the observations that some of the policy document required update notably the finance manual and credit policy, among others. However, some of these documents have since been reviewed and awaiting board's approval.</p>
<p><b>Officer Responsible for remedial action</b></p>	<p>Management</p>
<p><b>Date when the situation will be regularized</b></p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

## Further Audit comment

We acknowledged that GAMTEL has the Turnaround Strategy and an ongoing update of the financial manual since 2017, albeit overdue. However, critical documents such as the strategic plan, credit control policy, and debt recovery strategy were notably absent despite repeated requests from the audit team.

Up until GAMTEL's response, the mentioned documents had not been provided for review, suggesting uncertainty regarding their availability within the company. These documents are essential for effective management and oversight, highlighting a significant gap in the company's administrative framework.

### 4.4 Inadequate debt management infrastructure

*According to our interview with the management of GAMTEL, the service provided to customers should be disconnected after the D5000 consumption limit<sup>21</sup>.*

Review into Arrears Owed to GAMTEL by MDAs and SOEs, along with discussions with GAMTEL management, unveiled that as of February 2023, GAMTEL held receivables accumulated from 2015 to 2020 totaling one hundred and fifty-two million dalasi (D152M) from various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. Additionally, there were outstanding amounts of forty-five million dalasi (D45M) from SOEs, summing up to one hundred and ninety-seven million (D197M) from telecommunication services provided by GAMTEL, encompassing both voice and internet services.

Similarly, during an interview with the customer service department, it was observed that various private individuals and businesses also owe significant amounts to GAMTEL. However, the audit team was unable to determine the total owed by these private and business customers due to GAMTEL's lack of data on this crucial aspect of the business.

It was noted that the company does not have a credit threshold effectively indicating that customers' particularly public institutions continue utilizing GAMTEL's services without paying for them. Moreover, at the time of the audit, GAMTEL had no statutory debt recovery strategy to ensure the debts were efficiently and effectively recovered.

GAMTEL's response to increasing debts has been limited to disconnecting or terminating services for defaulting institutions. However, executive directives often overturn these measures, leading to the restoration of services for debtors. Unfortunately, due to the lack of available data, the audit could not determine the extent of service restoration resulting from executive directives. This lack of information has hindered GAMTEL from taking necessary actions to recover the substantial amounts owed to the company.

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<sup>21</sup> Meeting with Gamtel Management held on 20 September 2023.

The credit-control unit reported that management has established a task force consisting of staff from all departments within the company to recover existing debts. Additionally, management mentioned that some of these receivables from public institutions have carried over from the previous regime to the current one.

Management also noted that recovering debts from individuals and private businesses posed challenges, as some businesses had closed and were no longer operational, and individuals had changed contact information, making it difficult to trace them. However, this explanation does not address why the company lacks data on the amounts owed by private businesses or individuals, effectively hindering debt recovery efforts.

The review of the board paper/minute of the 10th Ordinary meeting of GAMTEL's board audit and risk committee further confirmed the deficiencies in GAMTEL's receivable management system. The Internal Audit report revealed that clients of the web hosting services were not invoiced or billed for 2020, resulting in an outstanding amount of D229,000. Consequently, the company failed to receive this payment, leading to an increase in the outstanding balance due to the company's failure to bill or invoice customers.

The head of the Information Technology department responsible for billing stated that GAMTEL has encountered difficulties in renewing the license for the billing system due to resource constraints. If the company fails to pay for the license, the billing program does not function effectively, leading to issues such as those mentioned.

It is crucial to highlight that when services are provided and payments are not received, GAMTEL not only loses revenue but also incurs additional costs by paying private operators for cross-network calls made from GAMTEL to these operators. This situation negatively impacts GAMTEL's revenue base, particularly in the context of the costly telecommunications industry. Moreover, the inability to recover revenue makes it challenging for the company to compete effectively in the market due to resource limitations, ultimately resulting in poor service delivery.

## **Conclusion**

GAMTEL's inefficiency in managing its receivable accounts has placed the company under significant financial strain. Despite public institutions being allocated communication budgets annually, GAMTEL has failed to suspend or terminate services in the absence of payments.

Furthermore, it has inadequately maintained data on debts owed by private businesses and individuals, resulting in substantial amounts turning into bad debts. Up until the time of this audit, government institutions continue to utilize GAMTEL's services without payment.

**Recommendation**

To address these challenges, GAMTEL, in collaboration with its line Ministry and the Ministry of SOEs, should prioritize the recovery of outstanding amounts owed by public institutions. The company should operate as a standard business entity, ensuring it receives payment for services rendered rather than solely providing a public service without compensation.

GAMTEL should transparently publish the amounts owed by all institutions and implement a robust strategy to recover these outstanding amounts. Additionally, management should identify and recover outstanding amounts owed by private residences, businesses, and individuals.

Furthermore, GAMTEL, with guidance from its oversight institutions, should develop a credit control policy outlining credit thresholds and an effective debt recovery mechanism. This policy will help mitigate future financial risks and ensure timely payments from all customers.

**Management Response**

<p><b>Management Response</b></p>	<p>Regarding the D5,000 consumption threshold mentioned in the report, it is important to note that this facility was not available during the audit period under review. Secondly, it is no longer available as system for the past ten years. It is also important to note that even with the absent of the threshold facility, 90% of GAMTEL customers on telephone voice services were migrated from postpaid services to prepaid service platform which made this threshold service most redundant at the time. During the period of audit, the billing system was down and we were unable to provide the arrears for businesses and individual customers. The billing system is now working and the information will be available upon request.</p>
<p><b>Action to be taken</b></p>	<p>On the issue of debt recovery strategy, there is indeed one, which comprises of major stakeholders from key department, which was launched in November 2020 and since then, we experienced</p>



	<p>significant improvement in revenue collection.</p> <p>In November 2020, the team was able to recover the following amounts as follow:  In 2020, D14 million, 2021, D77.5 million, 2022, D55.2 million and 2023, D21.1 million respectively and as a result GAMTEL was able to collect a total of 176.1 million. This shows a significant improvement in the debt recovery strategy setup by GAMTEL management</p>
<b>Officer Responsible for remedial action</b>	Management
<b>Date when the situation will be regularized</b>	

**Further Audit Comment**

It's noted during the audit, that information regarding a 5000-threshold limit was provided to the audit team as a debt management strategy that is still active. While the formation of the task force was acknowledged in the report, if the information on the amounts owed by private businesses and individuals was indeed available at the time of the response, GAMTEL should have provided the total amount owed in its response.

However, this was not done, suggesting that GAMTEL does not possess this data as reported. Additionally, the audit team was unable to verify the recovered amounts as alluded to by GAMTEL as this information was not provided for verification.

**4.5 Ineffective monitoring of GAMTEL branches and exchange**

During our site visits to branches, exchange sites, switch, and transmission rooms, we observed significant dilapidation and management deficiencies in GAMTEL's sites across the country. We encountered leaking roofs in areas where expensive telecommunication devices are housed, as well as inadequate ventilation for such equipment. Many of these rooms containing essential and sensitive equipment were excessively humid, with non-functional air conditioning systems.

Additionally, the security of the sites was compromised, as some visited sites had faulty gates, doors, and broken windows, leaving them vulnerable to intrusion by both animals and humans. Despite housing critical equipment essential for GAMTEL's operation, these sites appeared neglected and lacked proper maintenance. Many of these facilities were constructed in the 1980s and had not undergone regular adjustments or upkeep.

Interviews conducted with regional managers and staff at the regional branches, along with physical inspections, revealed that offices and sites lacked functional amenities such

as toilets, air conditioning units, printers, and other stationery essential for efficient and effective service delivery.

Regional managers disclosed that the conditions of branches and exchanges in the regions have significantly deteriorated and have been reported to the head office on numerous occasions without any action taken. It was revealed to the audit team that there are no monitoring or scheduled visits from the head office, leading to a lack of awareness regarding the severity of the conditions on the ground by the management.

The conditions in these branches are not conducive for the equipment and staff, leading to suboptimal service delivery. Reported cases include systems shutting down due to overheating of the machines, highlighting the urgent need for improvements to ensure operational efficiency and staff well-being.

**Appendix 4 shows condition of GAMTEL branches and cell sites**

***Picture 1 shows the conditions of GAMTEL's cell sites***



***Source: Picture taken from the regional trek***

**Picture 2 shows sites with AC problem.**



**Source: Picture taken from the regional trek**

During our visits to GAMTEL branches and exchanges, we observed that 10 out of 13 exchanges faced challenges with perimeter fences. Some premises were partially fenced, while others were completely unfenced, resulting in large openings in the premises.

**Picture 3 shows sites with perimeter fence problem**



**Source: Picture taken from the regional trek**

From our interviews with the regional managers, exchanges managers, and staff in the regions, we have noticed that there was no standard written monitoring schedule to conduct proper monitoring visits. It was revealed that the lack of monitoring visits to the branches and exchanges by the head office has aggravated or contributed to the poor working environment in the regions as if the severity of the situation is not known to management, even though requests for adjustments were communicated by the regional managers as highlighted. We could not however substantiate whether the conditions on the ground were reported by the regional managers as records were not provided to back this claim. We could not also ascertain whether the regional managers do conduct regular visits to the exchange and report to the head office because there were no monitoring schedules or report in all the regional offices visited even though they claimed to have been conducting monitoring visits on a need basis.

Additionally, we discovered that the Janjanbureh and Bansang regional branches had been without regional managers for two years. The previous regional manager responsible for these regions had left GAMTEL, leaving the regional manager in Basse to oversee Janjanbureh and Bansang. This arrangement effectively places three regions under the oversight of one manager. Considering that each region comprises dozens of exchanges and numerous business transactions and activities, it is impractical for one manager to efficiently and effectively oversee three different regions.

The absence of an effective monitoring system has had a detrimental impact on the condition of regional branches. Without a monitoring schedule in place, regional managers have failed to regularly oversee exchanges and ensure proper maintenance. Consequently, branches and exchanges suffer from dire conditions, including inadequate security, dilapidated buildings, and poor working conditions that are not conducive to employees.

**Conclusion**

1. Regional managers do not have a written monitoring schedule but claim to conduct monitoring on an as-needed basis. Consequently, some villages and towns remain unmonitored for years, especially those without a specific regional manager assigned to those regions.
2. The majority of branches and exchange sites lack basic amenities such as air conditioning for both machines and staff, functioning toilets, standard buildings, electrical bulbs, and printing machines. Additionally, 76% of the visited sites face challenges with perimeter fences, with even those that are fenced being incomplete.

**Recommendation**

1. GAMTEL should prioritize the establishment of monitoring schedules for regional managers to ensure efficient and effective service delivery to staff and customers. This will help ensure that all villages and towns under their purview are regularly monitored, enhancing overall operational oversight.
2. Respective regional managers should collaborate with GAMTEL management to address the lack of basic amenities in branches within their regions. They should also prioritize completing perimeter fences to enhance security in the working environment and prevent animal intrusion and unauthorized access.

**Management Response**

<b>Management Response</b>	<p>Regional stations and exchanges in the provinces are monitored by regional managers and report to the required department for intervention. Routine maintenance work is done monthly by the team in the regions.</p> <p>We have noted and acknowledge the dilapidated state of some of the stations including basic amenities such as toilets, etc. However, we have been facing</p>
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	budgetary constraints to implement our planned maintenance work.
<b>Action to be taken</b>	Ongoing
<b>Officer Responsible for remedial action</b>	Management
<b>Date when the situation will be regularized</b>	

Appendix 1 shows list of staff and customers interviewed in the greater Banjul area and the regions.

POST/BRANCH	NAMES	DESIGNATION
	Lamin A. Tunkara	Managing Director
Head Quarter Banjul	Abdoulie Bass	Deputy Managing Director
	Kebba Kinteh	Chief Financial Officer
	Modou O. Bojang	Senior Finance Manager
	Ebrima Jammeh	Director Core Network
ACE Building, Brusubi.	Kebba Bojang	Director International Operation
	Abdoulie Gaye	Senior Manager NOC
	Salimatou Drammeh	Manager NOC
GAMTEL Kairaba Avenue Branch	Babucarr M. Saho	Director Out Side Plan
Abuko Branch	Adama Jallow Sallah	Act. Manager Revenue Assurance
	Yusupha Njie	Billing Officer
	James Bass	Senior Manager, Business Support System
	Omar Fatty	Head of IT
Telegraph	Nuha Jarju	Senior Manager Procurement
	Ebrima Kanteh	Director Audit
	Daniel Ceesay	Marketing Officer
	Ebrima Jatta	Manager ISP Corporate
	Nfamara Drammeh	Senior Manager Sales
	Mustapha Ceesay	Senior Manager Customer Care
	Ramou Nyass	Director Customer Service
	Sedory Manneh	Product Development Officer
	Ebrima Tunkara	Credit Control Officer
Barra	Bakary Jatta	Customer Care Officer
	Buba Kassama	Senior Sales Assistant
Essau	Ismaila Sallah	Superintendent Engineer
Kerewan	Ahamedou Faal	Customer Care Operator
	Omar Ceesay	Linesman Technician
Farafenni	Foday Jatta	Senior Superintendent
	Biran Saine	Customer Care Officer
	Omar Jobe	Network Technician
	Alieu Bah	Superintendent
	Seedou Drammeh	Power Technician
	Abdoulie Jr Fadia	Network Technician
	Modou Njie	Customer Care Officer
	Lamin Jawara	Credit Union
Kassi Kanteh	Test Clerk	
Janjanbureh	Anta Jobateh	Senior Supervisor, Customer Care
Bansang	Kebba KL Jabbi	Act. Customer Care Officer
	Malang Jammeh	Supervisor
	Tamba Gaye	Linesman
	Morro Nasso	Linesman
	Malafi Manneh	Linesman
	Sheriff Kambai	Linesman

<b>POST/BRANCH</b>	<b>NAMES</b>	<b>DESIGNATION</b>
Basse	Kawsu Danso	Act. Regional Manager
Brikama Ba	Lamin Tamba	Supervisor, Customer Care
Jarra Soma	Seedy Gannes	Reginal Manager/Expansion
	Foday Fofana	Senior Superintendent
	Bubacarr Dicko	Customer Care Officer
	Kebba Darboe	Supervisor
Brikama	Sang Jr Gomez	Regional Manager
	Lamin Conteh	Customer Care Officer
<b>LIST OF CUSTMERS INTERVIEWED IN THE REGIONS</b>		
Kerewan	Foday Fatajo	Customer
Farafenni	Babucarr Ngum	Customer
	Essa Touray	Customer
Bansang	Alhagie Nyang	Customer
	Sheriffo Kanyi	Customer
	Modou Khan	Customer
Basse	Bahoreh Fisiru	Customer
	Pa Modou Drammeh	Customer
Brikama	Mina Bojang	Customer
	Momodou Alkasum Jallow	Customer
	Madi Darboe	Customer
Gunjur	Bafulo Badjan	Customer
Jarra Soma	Malick Kudus	Customer
	Karabullie Suwareh	Customer



**Appendix 2 shows time taken to respond to customer's fault.**

Customer Name	Location	Do you experience service interruption/ fault and channel use to report such	Time taken to respond to interruption/fault
Lamin AF Touray	Gunjur	Yes, walk into the office or sometimes call to report the issue	Two weeks
Bafulo Badjan	Kartong	Yes, usually call to report	Three weeks
Madi Darboe	Brikama	Never experience any interruption	N/A
Momodou Alkasum Jallow	Brikama	Yes, usually call to report	Within a day
Mina Bojang	Brikama	Yes, usually call to report	Within one to three days
Pa Modou Drammeh	Basse	Yes, usually call to report	One to two hours
Bahoreh Fisiru	Basse	Yes, usually call to report and sometimes walk in to their office	Two weeks
Modou Khan	Bansang	Yes, call them to report	Anytime he calls
Sheriffo Kanyi	Bansang	Yes, call but sometimes walk in to their office if it is taking time.	Two weeks
Alhagie Nyang	Bansang	Yes, usually call	Within three days
Essa Touray	Farafenni	Yes, call sometimes walk in to their office	Two weeks
Babucarr Ngum	Farafenni	Yes, call them to report	Within an hour
Foday Fatajo	Kerewan	Yes, call them to report	Three days
Karabullie Suwareh	Jarra Barrow kunda	Yes, call them to report	Within two days
Malick Kudus	Jarra Pakalinding	Yes, call and sometimes work in to their office	Two to three days

**Appendix 3 shows List of vehicles taken by the vehicle control unit of the office of the president**

1.



12<sup>th</sup> January 2022  
**To Deputy SG Office of the President**

Whilst we are cognizant of the fact that Gamtel / Gamcel are properties of Government, we believe the operational efficiency of both these institutions is in the best interest of the state.

It is an open secret that Gamtel is operating under very serious vehicle constraint and to have up to 6 of vehicles taken by the state's Vehicle control unit, cripples our operation significantly.

As at the time of writing this letter the status quo is as follows

1. Gamtel 5 is on the tour to provide Public Address System for the state.
2. Gamtel 18 held at Denton bridge possibly for use during the tour
3. Gamtel 25 held at Denton bridge in 2021 and still kept by the state for Operation Bull Dozer.
4. Gamtel 50 was held for nearly 3 years from October 2018 to September 2021 used for the TRRC
5. Gamtel 9 was held for nearly 4 years from November 2019 and still not released.
6. Gamtel 59 taken in March of 2020, was involved in an accident about a year later. It has been released and we had repaired it.

The external auditors highlighted the Gamtel 9 because we at Gamtel's Fleet management do not know it's where about and certainly it is not driven by our staff.

It would be appreciated if vehicle request 48 hours before the assigned time, it will allow Gamtel to planned and swap assignment base on urgency to avoid sudden disruption to service provision. Also, we would like a review of the periods these vehicles are held for. A few days to a few weeks, is understandable. However, when it gets into months and years, it dealt a heavy blow to our business.

While counting on your usual understanding and support, please accept the assurance of our highest consideration.

Yours Sincerely  
For Managing Director Gamtel

Abdoulie Bass  
Director Facility Support  
(Gamtel / Gamcel)

CC:



12<sup>th</sup> January 2022  
**To Deputy SG Office of the President**

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It is an open secret that Gamtel is operating under very serious vehicle constraint and to have up to 6 of vehicles taken by the state's Vehicle control unit, cripples our operation significantly.

As at the time of writing this letter the status quo is as follows

1. Gamtel 5 is on the tour to provide Public Address System for the state.

**Appendix 4 shows condition of GAMTEL branches and cell sites**

Region	Village	condition of transmission and switch room	Cooling system for the machines	Perimeter Fence	Challenges
NBR	Essau	spider web in the machines	No AC in the room where the machine is place	the fence has fall down	Mobility issue, weak solar batteries,
CRRN	Janjanbureh	n/a	AC not working for a year	Height of the fence is short	door at the entrance has fallen, no toilet and water, switch and transmission room are about to fall, only one security guard at the site for both day and night shift
CRRS	Kuntaur	dusty machines	The AC has a problem for the past five months	The surround is half fence	No toilet in the premises, roof of the generator room is leaking
URR	Diabugu Batapa	n/a	AC has an issue it works sometimes and stop sometimes	perforated fence causing animal intrusion	No toilet in the premises, No generate on the site, earth cable not well buried
	Bajakunda	clean	AC not working for a year	well fence	Solar can only work during the day, no fuel supply for the generator for one year, no electricity at the site, only one security guard at the site for both day and night shift
	Gambisara	Not clean	AC not working for eight months	no fence	Solar not working for two months

Region	Village	condition of transmission and switch room	Cooling system for the machines	Perimeter Fence	Challenges
	Bakadaji	clean	AC not working for two years	premises is half fence	No solar batteries,
LRR	Pakaliba	Not clean	No at the cell site since inception	One side of the fence has fallen	n/a
	Kwinella	Not clean	AC not functioning	well fence	broken door at the entrance
	Tendaba	clean	AC not functioning for five years	premises is half fence	No bulb in the switch room, padlocks for the door need replacement, no generator at the site
WCR	Bwiam	clean	AC not working for three months	well fence	weak solar batteries,
	Kartong	clean	AC not working	entire fence has fallen down	solar batteries not working, uncondusive environment (bushy)

## Appendix 5 shows monitoring visit by regional managers

Region	Branch	Monitoring visit
NBR	Barra	Regional managers do monitor once/twice a week when the need arises. And head office staff goes for monitoring on quarterly basis but there is no record to show this.
	Kerewan	Regional managers do monitoring depending on what is needed at the time
	Farafenni	The regional manager is responsible for monitoring and the head office do monitoring but does not have a monitoring schedule
CRRN	Bansang	Bansang is without a regional manager for two years the region is overseen by the Basse's regional manager.
	Janjanbureh	Janjanbureh is without a regional manager for two years the region is overseen by the Basse's regional manager. monthly by the regional manager
CRRS	Brikamaba	No monitoring is done the team normally come when there is an issue.
URR	Basse	Regional manager does monitor in the region when the need arises and Director of outside plant monitor the regional manager.
LRR	Jarra Soma	Regional manager does monitor in the region when the need arises and Director of outside plant when for monitoring in the region once within two years.
WCR	Brikama	Regional managers do monitor in the region when the need arises and Director of outside plant monitor the regional manager.
	Gunjur	Regional manager does not go to Gunjur for monitoring

## **GLOSSARY**

**ADSL** - (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) is a technology that provides high transmission speeds for video and voice to homes over an ordinary copper telephone wire.

**Fiber** - Is a data connection carried by a cable filled with thin glass or plastic fibers or a broadband connection that can reach speeds of up to 10 Gigabits per second.

**GPON** - (Gigabit Passive Optical Network) it is increasingly being used in FTTH and FTTP networks to deliver voice, data and video services at gigabit speed or it's a type of high-speed network standard for internet access, primarily used in fiber-optic broadband.

**FATs** – (The Fiber Access Terminal) is a compact termination box used at the building premises such as residences, offices, etc.