



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Returning to The Gambia

Country Information Sheet



Source: CIA World Fact book, 2014, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ml.html.

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Political Situation¹

The Gambia became independent from the UK in 1965. Between 1982 and 1989, it formed a federation with Senegal, known as Senegambia. In 1991 the two countries signed a friendship and cooperation treaty.²

In 1994 a military coup brought Yahya Jammeh to power. Two years later the country entered a phase of civilian constitutional rule when then military leader Jammeh ran as a civilian and won the presidential elections. He subsequently won all elections, including the last ones in 2011, the credibility of which was questioned by some ministers of the Commonwealth.

Nevertheless, political continuity has not resulted in prosperity for the country.

In 2013, President Jammeh announced his decision to withdraw The Gambia from the Commonwealth, considered as a “neo-colonial” organization. According to some critics, the departure was motivated by foreign criticism over the situation of human rights in the country.

Economic Situation and Employment

Economic Situation³

The Gambia has a large untapped potential in the agricultural sector with less than half of its arable land being cultivated and significant government investments.⁴ In spite of these large amounts of unused land, three-quarters of the population depends on agriculture which, in turn, represents one fifth of the country’s GDP.⁵

Another fifth of the GDP is represented by the tourism sector, especially in eco-tourism and upscale facilities, both of which have benefitted from private and government investments.⁶

¹ BBC News, 2015, “The Gambia country profile – Overview”. Available at www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13376517 (accessed 17 March 2015); CIA World Fact book, 2014 “Africa: The Gambia”. Available at www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html (accessed 17 March 2015).

² United Nations, “Country Facts: Gambia”. Available at <http://www.un.int/gambia/gambia/country-facts> (accessed on 08 June 2015).

³ CIA World Fact book, 2014. “Africa: The Gambia”. Available at www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html (accessed 17 March 2015); Gambia Information Site, 2015. Available at www.accessgambia.com/information/economic-profile.html (accessed 25 March 2015).

⁴ CIA World Fact book, 2014. “Africa: The Gambia”. Available at www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html (accessed 08 June 2015)

⁵ Ibidem

⁶ Ibidem



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Moreover, the national economy also relies on small-scale manufacturing activities, namely, the processing of fish, peanuts and hides and, in part, remittances from workers overseas as well as income from tourism. However, 80 per cent of exports consist of re-exports.

Over the last three years, The Gambia has shown consistent and increasing economic growth with growth rates of GDP of 5.3 in 2012; 6.3 in 2013; and 7.4 in 2014.⁷

Nevertheless, unemployment and underemployment rates remain very high and the economic development in the country is very reliant on continued bilateral and multilateral aid as well as technical assistance from donors.

Employment Opportunities⁸

The economy of the country has expanded considerably over the past 15 years. In particular, there is a high demand for qualified workers in some sectors, such as hotel management and real estate, as well as in the banking and financial sector and in the field of education.

Below are some web links for job offers online in The Gambia:

www.gamjobs.com/

www.careerjet.com/jobs-in-gambia-122695.html

www.expatads.com/205943-Banjul/posts/6-Employment/301-Unskilled-Jobs

Job vacancies usually refer to an application form to be filled in; alternatively, a CV, along with which any relevant work experience is required. However, as many jobs are not advertised, applicants often need to take the initiative.

Procedures to Start Self-Employment⁹

In order to start any business in The Gambia, it is required to register it as a company, partnership, sole proprietorship, co-operative, subsidiary of other companies, and so forth.

⁷ Ibidem

⁸ Gambia Information Site, 2015, Available at www.accessgambia.com/information/find-jobs-in-gambia.html (accessed 26 March 2015).

⁹ Gambia Information Site, 2015. Available at www.accessgambia.com/information/forming-business.html (accessed 26 March 2015); World Bank Group, 2014, "Starting a Business in Gambia, The." *Doing Business – Measuring Business Regulations*. Available at www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/gambia/starting-a-business (accessed 26 March 2015).



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The procedure consists of seven steps:

- (a) Name search at the Companies Registry (at the price of GMD 500; usually the procedure is completed in one to two days);
- (b) Notarization of the company status at the Public Notary (at the price of GMD 100-150; usually the procedure is completed in one day);
- (c) Obtaining a tax identification number (TIN) from the Gambia Revenue Authority before registering with the Companies Registry by submitting a form, the articles and memorandum of association, as well as proof of the founders' identification (at the price of GMD 25; usually the procedure is completed in one day);
- (d) Registration of employees with the Social Security and Housing Finance Corporation: an employee pays 5 per cent of his/her monthly salary, while the employer contributes 10 per cent of the employee's salary (no charges apply; usually the procedure is completed in two days);
- (e) Registration of the company at the Commercial Registry: according to the new Single Window Business Regulation Act, a fixed registration fee of GMD 10,000 is to be paid by any company with a startup capital of up to GMD 500,000 (usually the procedure is completed in two days);
- (f) Obtaining the operational license at the Municipality which must be renewed annually (at the cost of GMD 5,000; usually the procedure is completed in one day);
- (g) Getting the company seal at the seal-maker; company seals are usually ordered from abroad and the price depends on the quality and the size of the seal (approximately USD 200; the seal can be obtained in 18 days).

Assistance for Returning Migrants

The IOM is committed to assisting Gambian migrants returning from abroad in becoming agents of development and change in The Gambia and ensuring the sustainability of their return to the benefit of the country, the returnees and their families.

For this purpose, the IOM has an Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme, which provides, inter alia, a ticket home for migrants wishing to return, vocational training, education and medical assistance as well as small cash grants for the purpose of setting up an income-generating activity. This assistance is carried out in cooperation with relevant government agencies and NGOs with a view to providing the most comprehensive assistance possible. In 2014, in the context of this programme, the IOM assisted 252 migrants and as of May 2015, this number was 34.



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Health Care System¹⁰

The health care system in the country consists of three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary health care. Health care services are provided by four major governmental hospitals – located in Banjul, Bansang, Farafenni and Bwiam¹¹ - the Medical Research Council (MRC)¹², a few main health centres and smaller centres, as well as the mobile clinic unit teams. There are also several privately-run clinics¹³ and a few NGO-operated clinics in the country.

At the primary level, health care services are provided in villages with a population of over 400 individuals by a village health worker and a traditional midwife, previously trained. They are responsible for community health education, providing outpatient care and ensuring a sufficient level of basic medicines.

At the secondary level, health care services are provided by large and small health centres, composed of resident staff of doctors and nurses and carrying on inpatient and outpatient treatments.

At the tertiary level, health care services are provided by four main hospitals – the most important of which is the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital¹⁴ in the capital Banjul – along with the Medical Research Council (MRC), several private clinics and NGO-run health focused clinics.

In The Gambia, traditional medicine is widely used. It represents an aspect of life in the country, just like, for, instance, farming, and it is used more often than Western remedies which are generally considered as a means of last resort. Some plant products can be purchased at pharmacies. Moreover, official legislation in this field recognizes these traditional medicines, including with a licensing process for traditional health practitioners who very often operate in the primary health care programme.¹⁵

Below is a useful web link including a list of health services available in the country:

www.accessgambia.com/extra/health-services.html.

¹⁰ Gambia Information Site, 2015. Available at www.accessgambia.com/information/health-care.html (accessed 27 March 2015);

¹¹ Ibidem, For more information about the governmental hospitals:

www.accessgambia.com/extra/general-hospitals.html.

¹² Ibidem, For more information about the Medical Research Council (MRC):

www.accessgambia.com/information/mrc-fajara.html.

¹³ Ibidem, For more information about the private run clinics: www.accessgambia.com/extra/private-health-clinics.html.

¹⁴ Ibidem, For more information about the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital:

www.accessgambia.com/information/rvh.html

¹⁵ Ibidem, For more information about traditional medicine:

www.accessgambia.com/information/traditional-medicine.html (accessed 27 March 2015).



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Housing Renting Costs

Below are several web links about current rates for various types of property for rent in The Gambia:

www.gambiapropertyshop.com/

www.accessgambia.com/houses-rent.html

www.rentalsandrealstate.eu/properties-for-rent-gambia/1/0/properties-for-rent-gambia.aspx

www.sublet.com/city_rentals/gambia_rentals.asp

Education

Educational System¹⁶

In The Gambia, education is free of charge and compulsory between the ages of 7 and 13. The first six years represent the lower basic school which continues for another three years – upper basic school – leading to a junior school certificate.

Students whose families can afford the costs of the subsequent 3 years of studies attend senior secondary school. After that, an examination leading to the senior secondary certificate is taken.

However, expenses, including for uniforms, books and supplies, make it difficult for families to enroll their children in school.

All education, apart from the Islamic schools, is carried out in English.

The last stage is tertiary education, namely vocational training courses, and undergraduate and graduate universities. Tertiary institutions include:

- (a) Gambia Technical Training Institute, which offers training in marketing, accounting, technology and technical work¹⁷;
- (b) Management Development Institute (MDI), with management, marketing and accounting, and computer-training courses¹⁸;
- (c) Rural Development Institute (RDI), with trainings in community development;
- (d) Gambia College which provides non-degree trainings in different fields, from catering and management, to agriculture, science and nursing.

¹⁶ Foreign Credits, Classbase. "Education Database". Available at www.classbase.com/countries/Gambia/Education-System (accessed 2 April 2015); Gambia Information Site, 2015. Available at www.accessgambia.com/information/economic-profile.html (accessed 25 March 2015); Gambia Education & Teaching Support. Available at www.gets-sunrise.org/index.htm (accessed 2 April 2015).

¹⁷ For more information: www.accessgambia.com/information/gtti.html

¹⁸ For more information: www.accessgambia.com/information/mdi.html



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The University of The Gambia (UTG), established in 1999, is the only university in the country. It offers undergraduate programmes in economics and management, social sciences, humanities, public health, medicine and surgery.

Below is a useful web link for other vocational training courses available in the country:

www.accessgambia.com/tag/vocational-training-courses.html

Sources:

BBC News

2015 “The Gambia, country profile – Overview”. Available at www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13376517 (accessed 17 March 2015).

CIA World Fact book

2014 “Africa: The Gambia”. Available at www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html (accessed 17 March 2015).

Foreign Credits, Classbase

2012 “Education System in The Gambia”. Available at www.classbase.com/countries/Gambia/Education-System (accessed 2 April 2015).

Gambia Education & Teaching Support (GETS)

Homepage of GETS. Available at www.gets-sunrise.org/index.htm (accessed 2 April 2015).

Gambia Information Site

2015 “Economy of Gambia”. Available at www.accessgambia.com/information/economic-profile.html (accessed 25 March 2015).

World Bank Group

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United Nations

“Country Facts: Gambia”. Available at <http://www.un.int/gambia/gambia/country-facts> (accessed on 08 June 2015).