



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Country Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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A map of Gambia and Senegal. The Gambia River is shown in light blue, flowing from the east to the west. The word 'Gambia' is written in blue along the river. The word 'SENEGAL' is written in large, light blue, spaced-out letters at the top and bottom of the map. Several locations are marked with black dots and labeled: Kerewan, Farafenni, Mansa Konko, and Georgetown. The word 'JUL' is partially visible on the left side. Longitude markers '16' and '15' are visible at the top and bottom. A scale bar at the bottom right shows 0, 20, and 40 km.

GAMBIA INFORMATIONAL REPORT

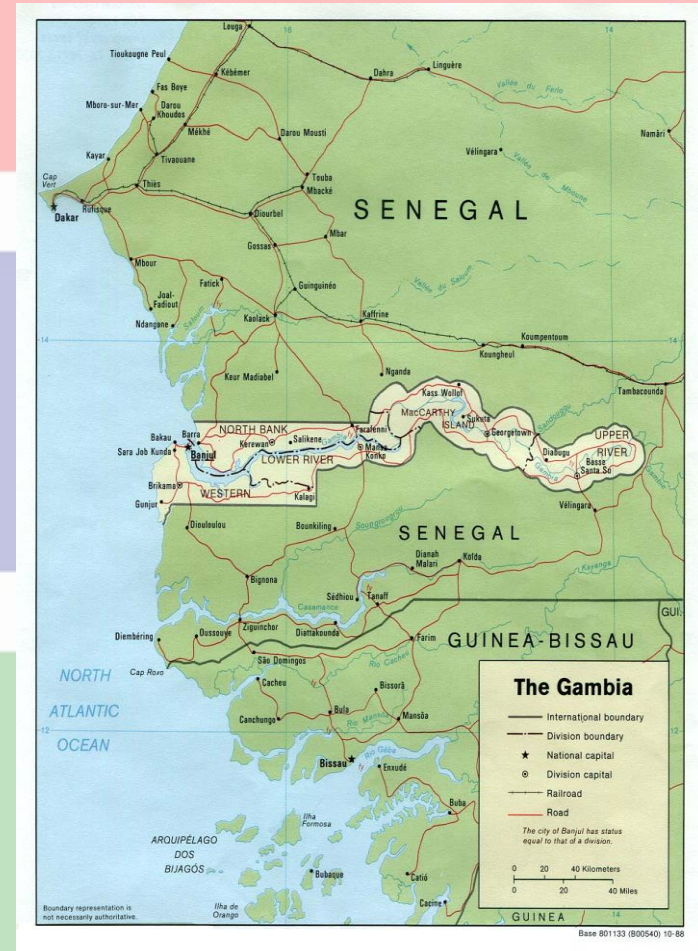
TONI AUTIELLO

TESL 539

SPRING 2013

Location

- ◆ Gambia is located on the Atlantic coastline of the western part of Africa
- ◆ It is the smallest country on the continent of Africa
- ◆ It is surrounded on the north, south, and east side by Senegal.
- ◆ Capital: Banjul
- ◆ Climate: tropical and hot



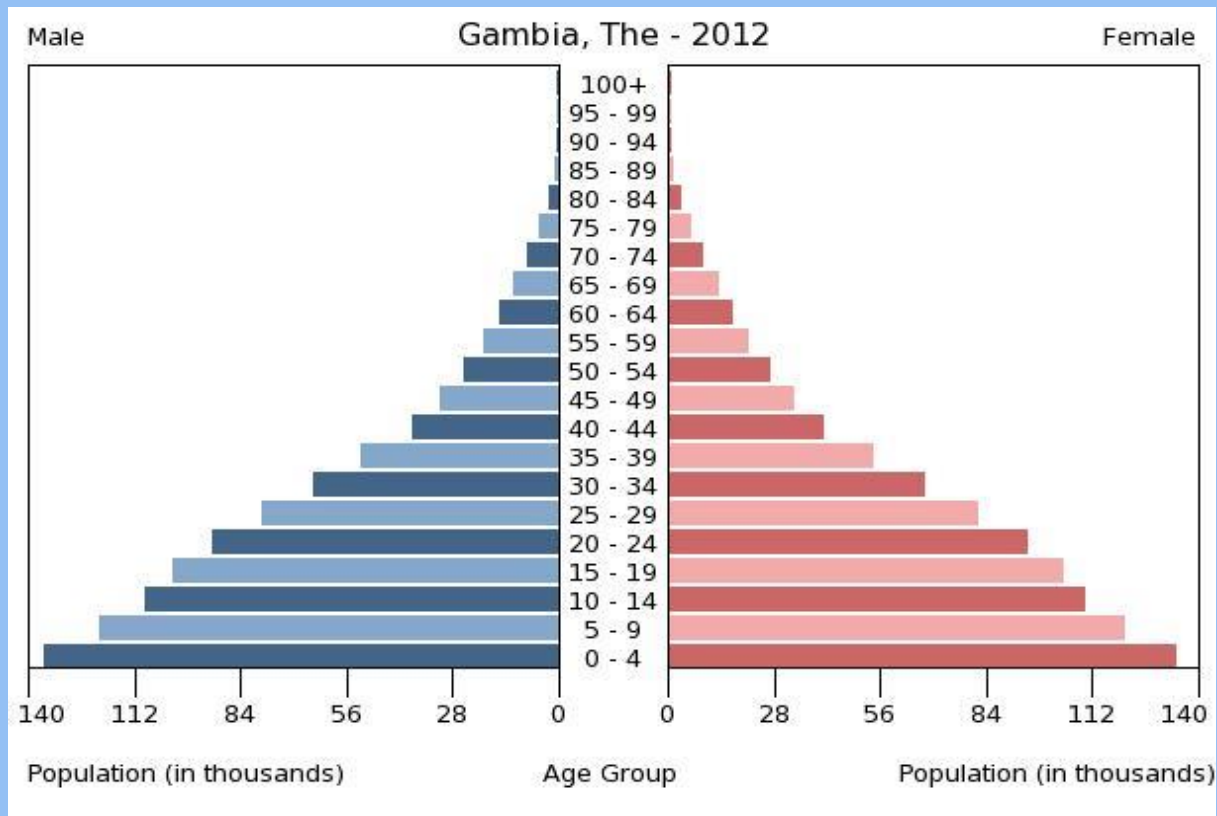
The People of Gambia



- **Population:** 1,840,454 (2012)
- **Ethnicity:** Ethnic majority is Mandinka with 40%, Fulani with 19%, Wolof with 15%, Pyola with 10%, and non-Gambians at 8%.
- **Language:** The official language is English, although much of the population speaks to each other in the local languages. Other languages are Wolof, Fula, Serer, Jola, and Mandinka.
- **Poverty:** 48.8% of the people are living below poverty.
- **Life Expectancy:** Total-63 years old-Male-61 years old-female-66 years old.
- **Disease:** People living with HIV/AIDS 18,000 (2009). Diseases that are a threat include: bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, meningococcal meningitis, schistosomiasis, and malaria.
- **Literacy Rate:** Total- 50% Male- 60% Female- 40% (2010),
- Gambia is one of the smallest and poorest nations. It ranks 168th out of 187 of United Nations Development Program 2011 HD index.

*Travel Safe Gov. (2011) Gambia
UNICEF. (2010) Gambia
CIA. (2010-2012)*

Population Chart



Political Information



Government: Republic

Gained independence from UK in February 1965

The legal system is mixed between English common law, Islamic law, and Customary law.

President: Yahya Jammeh (since 1996)

VP: Isatou Njia Saidy (since 1997)

Member of Common Wealth of Nations.

Parties: PPP, UDP, and APRC

Term = 5 years (election every 5 years)



President, VP, and Coat of Armor shown above.

Struggles in Gambia

- ◆ Southern Senegal separatists attempt to stem refugees, cross border raids, arms smuggling, and other illegal actions are also struggles.
- ◆ Social problems include poverty, disease, and lack of economic development
- ◆ Deforestation, desertification, and water pollutions are problems in Gambia. Wild life is also threatened by these situations.
- ◆ Gambia struggles with economic reform. Some say the president will spend money on things but not take into account the budget. One of the main goals is to reduce the poverty level which is very high.

Education in Gambia

- ◆ The BEAP (Basic Education in African Programme) works to improve education in Gambia.
- ◆ They have three areas of focus that include: education, curriculum policy and framework, and entrepreneurship education.
- ◆ Their goal is to create quality and relevance of education and to have an enrollment of 90% of students in the full education cycle.
- ◆ Use the 6-3-3-4 cycle of schooling which includes lower basic, upper basic, and senior secondary.
- ◆ The 6 stands for 6 years in lower basic school, the 3 stands for 3 years in upper basic school, the 3 stands for 3 years in senior secondary, and the 4 stands for 4 years in a post secondary school if they go that route.
- ◆ The constitution mandates free and compulsory primary education but lack of resources, lack of funds, and insufficient amount of schools to accommodate the students makes the implementation of this very difficult.

Schools and Curriculum in Gambia

School	Age	# of Years	Exam to pass
Lower Basic	7-13 years old	6	Grade 6 placement exam
Upper Basic	13-16 years old	3	Basic education cert. exam
Senior Secondary	16-19 years old	3	WASSCE
College/Tech	19+	4	

- ◆ Educators at Gambia College are trying to create a uniform curriculum.
- ◆ Subjects taught in schools include English, math, science, and geography. Schooling in Gambia is taught in English.

WASSCE EXAM

- At the end of Senior Secondary/High School (twelfth grade), all students take the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination, or WASSCE.

WASSCE Grading System-

Credit Grades:

A1

B2

B3

C4, C5, C6

Pass Grades: not acceptable for tertiary admission

D7, E8

Failing Grade

F9

- The minimum university standard for admission to post-secondary education is 5 credits on the WASSCE, including credits in math and English.

Education/Curriculum

- ◆ Gambia has made early grade reading a priority.
- ◆ They adopted a strategy using national languages in early grade reading to help retain students who are struggling to learn how to read.
- ◆ It is a 50 minute a day program being implemented in 125 classrooms. Students learn to read in 1 of the 5 local languages.
- ◆ Every child receives a low cost workbook that they can also take home.
- ◆ The teachers receive feedback on a monthly basis from classroom observations.

Teacher Qualification

- ◆ One of the goals of the BEAP is to increase the amount of qualified teachers in Gambia.
- ◆ Although the numbers have improved there is still a large amount of unqualified teachers in the Gambia education system.
- ◆ If unqualified, in order to teacher the candidate needs to have 3 passes on the WASSCE post senior secondary school.
- ◆ There is a higher proportion of qualified teachers in urban areas than in the rural areas of Gambia.
- ◆ 65% of trained and qualified Gambian teachers work and live abroad due to the low morale and little incentives for them in Gambia.

Student Enrollment and Classroom Environment

Primary	Male	Female
Percentage	74%	91%

Secondary	Male	Female
Percentage	39%	34%

**Primary enrollment percentage
(2011) total**

81%

CIA

Travel.State.Gov

Education in Gambia-The Primary Education

Enrollment: Both male and females are welcome into schools. Girls are assisted by the government to help with attendance at the upper and secondary level. Enrollment begins to drop after primary due to not passing the required exams, monetary difficulties, and/or value in education. Poor performance correlates to the low income families. Students whose families cannot afford fees, books, and uniforms have a hard time furthering themselves in education. Also, children may have to work instead to help support their family. School fees did prevent many children from attending school for a long time, but in February 1998 the President of The Gambia ordered the termination of fees for the first six years of schooling. Girls do make up a good portion of primary school students, but the figure is much lower in rural areas where cultural factors and poverty prevent parents from sending girls to school.

Classroom Environment: Since there are not enough schools to accommodate all the potential students, class sizes are generally large. Classes can consist of 50 or more students and have a range of grades/ages. Students may have to share desks/chairs/materials. Bathrooms are unisex. If a student does not do their homework or disobeys the teacher in anyway they are asked to stand the whole day or they are hit in front of the class by the teacher. Uniforms are worn in the majority of schools in Gambia.



Gambian Classroom

*National Planning Commission. (2013)
Access Gambia (2009)
Every Culture (2013)
National Learning Report 2011*

Culture and Values

- ◆ Great importance is placed on greetings. Wolof and Mandinka people, for example, greet one another with a ritual that lasts up to half a minute, starting with the traditional Islamic greetings Salaam aleikum and Aleikum asalaam ('Peace be with you,' 'And peace be with you.') This is followed by several more questions about the other's family, home life, village, and health. (*Massachusetts General Hospital Interpreter Services 2002*).
- ◆ Family plays a central role in Gambian society. Gambian families tend to be large and three generations may live together in one household.
- ◆ The father is normally head of the family but the wife runs the household and usually does not work.
- ◆ It is normal in Gambian society to call more than one person 'mother' or 'father', and often people with no apparent blood ties are called 'relatives'.
- ◆ Families tend to educate their sons before their daughters. Women are more often employed in some kind of farming endeavors. Numerous childbirths are normal.
- ◆ Gambians also value ingenious forms of dress and celebration.
- ◆ Religion: 90% of the population is Muslim, 8% Christian, and 2% indigenous beliefs.

Gambian Attitudes/Orientation/Immigration:

- ◆ When greeting spend at least 15-30 seconds on saying hello and asking about family and health. Do not go straight to the point. They find it disrespectful.
- ◆ Gambians are usually quiet and soft spoken. They avoid noisy conflicts and strive toward quiet settlement of disputes.
- ◆ Do not give anything using your left hand. It is seen as an insult as it is the hand used for toilet purposes and other actions deemed unhygienic.
- ◆ When entering a Gambian home remove your shoes.
- ◆ It is disrespectful to make sounds/signs of disagreement.
- ◆ Gambians are trying to make education a priority and have created a plan/goals to do so.
- ◆ They do take the English language seriously since it is their official language and education is delivered in the language.
- ◆ Gambians are immigrating to U.S. states such as to NY, California, Texas, Maryland, Virginia, NJ, and Massachusetts.

*Access Gambia
Massachusetts General Hospital Interpreter Services (2002)
Every Culture*

Resources:

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Images:

Map of Gambia (Computer Image). Retrieved March 4, 2013, from: <http://www.vidiani.com/?p=8532> (slide 3)

Grade 6 Gambia Classroom (Photograph). Retrieved March 4, 2013, from: <http://www.gambia.dk/images/grade6.jpg> (slide 14)

Gambia Coat of Arms (Art). (2013). Retrieved March 4, 2013, from: <http://www.statehouse.gm/text/coatofarms.gif> (slide 6)

IISD/Earth Negotiations Bulletin. (2006). The President of Gambia (Photograph). Retrieved on March 5, 2013, from: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gambia_President_Yahya_Jammeh.jpg (slide 6)

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CIA. (2012). Population Scale (Graph). Retrieved on March 7, 2013 from: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/population/populationtemplate_GA.html (slide 5)

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