

# U.S. Country Commercial Guides



## The Gambia

2017

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## Doing Business in Gambia

### Market Overview

The Gambia has a population of 1.9 million, which is growing at a rate of 3 percent per annum. The country has been largely stable since independence in 1965, with intermittent episodes of instability. The Gambia experienced a military coup d'état in 1994 that installed former President Yahya Jammeh. Jammeh ruled the country for 22 years until he lost the December 1, 2016 presidential election to current President Adama Barrow.

The Gambian economy has not performed at as high a rate as most of its neighbors over the past few years. The GDP per capita in 2016 was \$1600 (purchasing power parity). Between 2010 and 2016, the GDP averaged a growth of negative 1 percent. Inflation in The Gambia has been low relative to other West African countries that do not belong to a monetary union. In the first quarter of 2017, the inflation rate stood at 7.9%, up approximately 2 percentage points since 2015. Part of the reason for this increase is the large budget deficit financed by high domestic borrowing. In February, 2017, the Finance Minister and Economic Affairs indicated that The Gambia would require a \$12 billion injection into the economy to remove it from distress.

The drivers of economic growth in The Gambia are agriculture and tourism. Multiple shocks, including droughts and the 2014/2015 Ebola crisis in the sub-region, caused these sectors to contract in recent years. The Gambia's agricultural fortunes rise and fall with the level of rainfall. Located in the Sahel, The Gambia experiences far less average rainfall than other West African coastal countries much farther south. As the tourism sector was recovering from the impact of the Ebola crisis, the political impasse following the December 2016 presidential election took its toll on the 2016/2017 tourism season. Nevertheless, tourism remains the economy's largest foreign exchange earner. Remittances from Gambian migrants abroad are another major source of foreign exchange, amounting to approximately \$183 million in 2016. The US-based diaspora is the second largest source of remittances to The Gambia.

The major trading partners of The Gambia are China, India, Brazil, Senegal, and The Netherlands. The country exports mainly primary agricultural commodities and imports largely manufactured goods. The Gambia runs a trade deficit with almost all its trading partners, a major factor in explaining the current account deficit (8.5 percent of GDP in 2016) or \$104,444,444.45. The US is The Gambia's 7th largest trading partner, with a total trade value of about \$46 million in 2014. The country runs a trade deficit with the US, importing about 170 times more in value than it exports.

The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) is the main government body tasked with encouraging foreign direct investment in the country.

It has instituted a number of incentives to attract investors. Some of these incentives include a one-stop shop for business registration and extended tax exemptions for qualifying investments in priority sectors.

The business climate presents many challenges. The Gambia ranked 145 out of 190 countries in the 2016 World Bank's Doing Business Report. Obtaining construction permits, getting electricity connections, and property registration are easier in The Gambia than in the average sub-Saharan African country. However, the country's poor infrastructure quality and high borrowing costs represent significant constraints for businesses. During the former regime, there were reports of instances of companies being compelled to agree to business partnerships with former President Jammeh or his associates in order to continue doing business in the country.

The major ports of entry are the Banjul International Airport and the Banjul Sea Port. While there are currently no direct flights to the US, the airport is connected to a number of European countries by several flights a week, particularly during the tourist season. The seaport in Banjul is served by major container lines such as CMA-CGM/Delmas, Maersk, MSC, and Grimaldi.

Due to concerns about human rights violations, The Gambia became ineligible for liberalized access to US markets under the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) effective January 1, 2015. However, following the installation of a new, democratic government committed to the rule of law and respect for human rights, The Gambia is expected to regain its AGOA eligibility.

### Market Challenges

One of the primary challenges in The Gambia has been the lack of predictable policies. Several times in the past few years (most recently in April/May 2016), the government intervened in the foreign exchange market by fixing exchange rates. Arbitrary interventions in the foreign exchange market directly affect importers and exporters. This policy unpredictability increases risks, impacting long term investment prospects. The new government has stated that it supports a market-driven economy and will not intervene in the foreign exchange market.

The main market challenge in The Gambia is poor infrastructure. The country's low Doing Business ranking of 145 out of 190 countries is driven partly by this problem. The Gambia, however, does quite well in terms of the ease with which property can be registered. Access to electricity stands at 35 percent, and blackouts are frequent, largely as a result of the previous government's neglect, which the new administration is treating as a high priority area. In addition, energy costs in The Gambia are among the highest in the sub-region at close to 25 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh). Despite some major constraints, there have been investments in the



country's energy sector, which should result in improved electricity supply in the near future.

The Gambia's small market is also a significant hindrance to major investments. The country registered GDP of only \$3.2 billion (PPP) in 2016, as well as a low per capita income of only \$1,600 (PPP). The country's limited integration with other economies would make it difficult to serve other markets through a Gambia-based operation.

### Market Opportunities

Despite its small market size, there are potentially many sectors that offer market opportunities. Due to the constraints in the energy sector, there is a high demand for quality generators, energy storage equipment, and renewable energy machines. While most of the manufactured products for construction come from China and India, increasing demand for quality materials and equipment provide market openings for countries whose products are considered to be of superior quality.

Potential investment opportunities in electricity generation are substantial, given projected growth in demand, but are currently constrained by the bad energy policies of the previous government which failed to adequately update the power generation infrastructure to meet the rising energy demand. An additional 40 megawatt (MW) of electricity is needed just to meet current national demand. Electricity demand is expected to reach 200 MW by 2025. Once the present gaps in transmission lines are addressed, investment opportunities in electricity in generation will be significant. Given the high number of sunlight hours throughout the year, a potentially lucrative market for solar energy exists. Other renewables such as wind energy and biofuels present significant opportunities, given windy coastal areas and the presence of agricultural produce with high residue-to-kernel ratios.

The agricultural sector depends almost exclusively on imports for machinery and irrigation equipment. Demand for efficient post-harvest storage is increasing, given, among other things, a shift towards perishable horticultural produce.

The Gambia is becoming increasingly urban. The urbanization rate is 60 per cent, and it is increasing at a rate of about seven-tenths of a percentage point annually. This has led to a high demand for processed food. Imported US rice is already widely consumed, and the market for other food items such as processed dairy produce, other cereals, and animal produce continues to expand.

### Market Entry Strategy

US businesses have the option of establishing their own operations in The Gambia or working with local partners. English being the official language of The Gambia, in

addition to the fact that the process for business registration has been streamlined, means that both routes are easily accessible to US firms. The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) is a good resource for locating reputable local firms that can serve as agents, partners, or distributors.

While it is not strictly necessary, acquisition of the services of a lawyer is recommended when registering a business. The U.S. Embassy has a close relationship with the Gambian Bar Association and has a comprehensive list of practicing local attorneys. The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) also shares information to facilitate the registration of businesses for foreign investors.

## Political Environment

### Political Environment

Background notes can be found by going to:

[State Department's Report on The Gambia](#)

## Selling US Products & Services

### Using an Agent to Sell US Products and Services

American businesses have the option of working with agents or distributors. The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) is a reliable resource of information on businesses across sectors in the country. The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) maintain information on business regulations and procedures for foreign investors. The American Chamber of Commerce of The Gambia is also another resource on Gambian entrepreneurs, with links to the US market. The Political and Economic Office of U.S. Embassy Banjul maintains current information on commercial activities through its links with government ministries and departments, as well as businesses.

### Establishing an Office

The Gambia Investment and Export Proportion (GIEPA) assist foreign investors to establish businesses in The Gambia. According to the 2016 Doing Business report, it takes 7 procedures and, on average, over 25 days to start a business in the country. These procedures include registering a unique company name, obtaining a tax identification number, registering employees with the Social Security and Housing Finance Corporation, registering with the Commercial Registry, obtaining an operational license, and designing a company seal. While this can be done by anyone in theory, a local attorney who is familiar with the system can facilitate the process. The incorporation fee is GMD 10,000 (\$217). Other procedures also require fees, but those are much smaller. In 2010, a Single Window Business Registration Desk was established at the GIEPA offices. This initiative has reduced the number of days it takes to register a business in the country to one day.

Establishing an office in The Gambia is not difficult. Real estate prices are low relative to the country's income level even in urban areas. Several modern commercial centers are under construction, which should add to the supply of office buildings and further lower rental costs.

### Franchising

The Gambia is a small country with a small consumer base, which limits opportunities for US franchises. Consequently, there are only a few US franchises in the country; these include Coca Cola and Hertz. Several Gambian businesses have expressed interest in US franchises, and have participated in franchising conventions in the US. While they may not be present, US brand names are well known and are associated with high quality.

## Direct Marketing

The Gambia has only a few marketing and advertising firms. Due to increasing connectivity through mobile phones with 3G connections, the cost of reaching consumers is low. Opportunities for receiving marketing materials through the mail are minimal, since the reach and quality of the Gambian postal service is low. Media such as print, radio, and TV also present ways of reaching consumers easily.

## Joint Ventures/Licensing

The Gambia has no restrictions on joint ventures between local businesses and foreign investors. GIEPA actually has investment incentives in the form of tax holidays for foreign investments in their priority sectors. Normal due diligence is, however, recommended when partnering with local businesses.

## Selling to the Government

Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks. Please refer to “Project Financing” Section in “Trade and Project Financing” for more information.

The Public Procurement Act of 2014 regulates public procurements and established the [Gambia Public Procurement Authority](#). The law itself is posted online on the GPPA’s website. This agency regularly publishes rules and procedures to which all government entities must adhere. These appear on GPPA’s website but are not regularly updated. The agency requires all government suppliers to be registered.

Several international institutions such as the World Bank, African Development Bank and specialized United Nations agencies (e.g. FAO, UNDP, IFAD, UNESCO, UNICEF, etc.) regularly fund projects that require the procurement of goods and services. Often, the provision of these goods and services is open to both local and international companies. Therefore, there are opportunities for US businesses to bid for these contracts. The Gambia does not abide by the World Trade Organization Government Procurement Agreement and is not a party to any U.S. Free Trade Agreement.

## Distribution & Sales Channels

The entryway for goods in The Gambia is Banjul, the capital city, which is where the only seaport in the country is located. There are few major importers. These importers distribute to a network of wholesalers, and goods move further down to retailers. The Gambian-Lebanese community controls most of the top end of the market. However, Indian businesses have started to become major players in the market.

Customs duties are almost always collected for entering goods, given concerted efforts by the government to maximize revenue collection due to decreasing foreign aid. It is a common practice for many importers to undervalue goods declared so as to reduce custom duties. However, the government has been cracking down on this practice and violators have been known to face stiff fines. This practice is expected to be continued by the new administration under President Adama Barrow.

Trade finance or trade credit is not common. This is a reflection of the generally limited access to finance in The Gambia, largely as a result of high interest rates. However, large importers and exporters with longstanding relationships with banks are able to get financing through letters of credit or overdraft facilities. But even these connected businesses can face interest rates in excess of 25 percent per annum.

### Express Delivery

The Gambia is served by major package delivery companies such as UPS, FedEx, and DHL. However, within country express delivery is limited. Each of the major international companies usually has a single office or agent where packages can be picked up or delivered. The delivery of packages by The Gambia Post Office is unreliable even though it has offices across the country. The local postal service is therefore not recommended for commercial use.

### Selling Factors & Techniques

The use of billboards is very common, especially among local distributors of international brands. Given that English is the official language, all signs are in English. However, advertisements on TV and radio are frequently made in local languages. Recently, some large companies such as Africell (a mobile phone company) have been regularly running infomercials on the only local TV station. The Gambian market therefore offers multiple opportunities for marketing and has no language barrier for US companies.

### eCommerce

#### Overview:

E-Commerce is almost non-existent in The Gambian market. Internet access is increasing but is still low (15-19 percent). Personal computer ownership among individuals is low. However, the mobile phone penetration rate is very high (exceeding 100 percent in 2015), and offers promising opportunities for e-commerce. The proportion of mobile phone users with data connection is approximately 14 percent, but has been growing rapidly at an average annual rate of 40 percent for the past 2 years. The industries that currently make use

of mobile technology are the banking and mobile phone sectors. All the major commercial banks provide some e-banking services, and at least two of the mobile companies (Africell and Qcell) offer mobile money transfer services. Besides these two sectors, the percentage of products or services sold online is almost zero, due to the the lack of electronic check out options.

Several Gambians, based outside the country (principally in the US), have begun setting up online services that sell goods to Gambians. However, this practice is new, with an unknown market size. Furthermore, local knowledge about such services is very limited since the existing customer base seems to be other Gambians in the diaspora.

#### Current Market Trends:

No new government laws or regulations affecting online businesses were passed within the past year. Goods are increasingly being advertised online, but final sale or sales transaction are done in person. Reduced data charges would significantly boost the number of internet users and hence the number of individuals that can be reached via e-commerce. Trends to encourage more cashless transactions, such as setting up POS systems at retail shops, might also incentivise more Gambians to opt for online shopping.

#### Domestic eCommerce (B2C):

Mobile money will likely continue to be the area where eCommerce activity is concentrated in The Gambia over the next few years. Utility payments like energy purchases will also continue to integrate eCommerce infrastructure, given the ability of households to purchase pay-as-you-go energy tickets, locally referred to as the “Cash Power Ticket Syetem”, at ATM points and via mobile money platforms. In 2017, conventional money transfer systems have also facilitated the purchase of Cash Power tickets overseas by Gambians in the diaspora for family members in The Gambia. The local authorities have not made any major announcements with regard to ecommerce in The Gambia, but many expect e-governance initiatives to become available online under the new government.

#### Cross-Border eCommerce:

Gambians in the diaspora often sell goods to each other via eCommerce platforms, with relatives in The Gambia being the intended end user. The United States remains the top country where goods are purchased online via popular platforms such as eBay and Amazon, but personal and up-and-coming websites are also being utilized. Household items are the most popular items purchased online. The principal challenge to cross-border eCommerce remains the low internet usage among Gambians. This creates

the need for agents who act as ‘middle men’ in the distribution of goods and services. Several Gambians in the diaspora also operate money transfer platforms and provide cross-border eCommerce services.

#### **B2B eCommerce:**

Business to business transactions are seldom done via eCommerce platforms. The Gambian market is overwhelmingly characterized by cash transactions. Tax evasion plays a major role in determining the preference of business parties for engaging in cash transactions over eCommerce.

#### **eCommerce Services:**

Many Gambian businesses do not operate with a website and among those that do, even fewer have websites with ‘international standards’. Among the youth demographic, a few have started developing mobile-based eCommerce platforms, but the majority of these only serve to advertise goods and services online, listing a point of contact with whom buyers can meet to conduct the transaction in person.

#### **eCommerce Intellectual Property Rights:**

The Intellectual Property Rights environment is practically non-existent for eCommerce. The Gambia’s IPR environment is generally weak and characterized by a lack of regulations. The Gambia Police Force (GPF) is making efforts to establish and enforce regulations which was largely impossible until recently, due to the lack of expertise in the field.

#### **Popular eCommerce Sites:**

Due to the infant stages of eCommerce culture in The Gambia, there are currently no known fully functioning eCommerce websites. The majority of the websites that came into being, are third party websites.

#### **Online Payment:**

Online payments are not very common in The Gambia as many ‘eCommerce’ platforms only advertise goods and services that depend on cash payments for final sales.



#### Mobile eCommerce:

The mobile eCommerce ecosystem is in the early developmental stages. In 2016, a mobile based eCommerce application was launched, but it was only in use for one year before becoming inactive. High data costs in The Gambia are a major deterrent to greater eCommerce activity in the country.

#### Digital Marketing:

Digital/online marketing is often conducted using Facebook services. It is not uncommon for companies to invest in short online campaigns to ensure wider reach for their services. Instagram usage is also growing, as many people prefer it's image-based direct advertising over text-based advertising. Finally, Twitter use is increasing as the platform continues to gain popularity, though not particularly for digital marketing use.

#### Major Buying Holidays:

The major buying holidays are during the two major Islamic celebrations (Eid Ul Fitr and Eid Ul Adha) and during Christmas (Christian).

#### Social Media:

There is a Social Media presence in The Gambia. The majority of the activity is concentrated on Facebook, which hosts a fair amount of local advertising. There is a lesser presence on Twitter and other social media platforms such as Instagram.

#### Trade Promotion & Advertising

There are many avenues for advertising in The Gambia. These include newspapers, one TV station, and several radio stations. Radio advertising has the broadest coverage, especially outside the coastal areas, but requires the use of local languages for maximum reach. Virtually all advertisement in print media is in English, while TV advertisement is done in both English and local languages. A few companies have begun to take advantage of the country's high mobile penetration rate by advertising through SMS messaging, though this is mostly limited to event advertising rather than sales of merchandise. There are also a few online newspapers run by Gambians based overseas, including in the US, Senegal and the UK.

Trade fairs are becoming common and several are held within the year. The [Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#) is the best source of information on upcoming trade fairs.

## **Gambian Newspapers**

[The Point](#)

[The Standard](#)

[Foroyaa](#)

[Daily Observer](#)

[The Voice](#)

The Gambia Daily

## **Television**

[Gambia Radio and Television services \(GRTS\)](#)

### **Major Radio Stations**

AfriRadio Gambia - 107.6 FM

Capital FM - 100.4 FM

Paradise FM - 105.5 FM

West Coast Radio - 95.3 FM

Unique FM - 100.7 FM

Star FM 96.6 Banjul

Taranga FM - 97.5 FM

Gambia Radio GRTS - 91.4 FM

Gambia Radio GRTS - 648 AM

Senn FM Radio - 90.5 FM

## **Pricing**

With the introduction of value-added tax (VAT) in The Gambia in January 2013, all prices are inclusive of VAT. The VAT on imported goods in The Gambia is 15 percent. Qualifying investors may be exempted from VAT and other taxes if they meet conditions established by GIEPA. In general, prices of all published goods include all applicable taxes. Goods imported from the US face stiff competition from merchandise coming from Asian markets such as China and India. Given low incomes and corresponding tight budgets for many businesses and consumers, and the fact that access to credit is limited, affordability is the main consideration.

## [Sales Service/Customer Support](#)

After-sales support for customers is not a standard practice in The Gambia. However, consumers expect some support for sophisticated products such as heavy machinery, major electronics, and IT equipment. Such services are best provided by local distributors. While printed materials may be distributed in English, local distributors that can communicate in local languages are essential to ensure continued demand for foreign sourced goods and services.

## [Protecting Intellectual Property](#)

There have been no reports of intellectual property cases in The Gambia, largely due to a lack of in-country experts in the field.

In any foreign market companies should consider several general principles for effective management of their intellectual property. For background on these principles please link to our article on [Protecting Intellectual Property](#) and also [Corruption](#).

## [Due Diligence](#)

The U.S. Embassy in Banjul offers assistance to U.S. companies seeking information on a range of economic and commercial issues. This can be supplemented with information from the Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) and the Gambia Import and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) to verify information about businesses and sectors. The American Chamber of Commerce The Gambia is also an available resource for information on Gambian businesses. Commercial information brokers are not available; for instance, there are no private credit bureaus. Though the Central Bank of The Gambia runs a credit reference system, it is mainly used for banking supervision rather than serving as an information sharing system among private parties.

## [Local Professional Services](#)

[The Gambia Bankers Association](#)

[Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

[The American Chamber of Commerce The Gambia](#)

[Gambia Bar Association](#)

[The Gambia Association of Accountants](#)

[Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia](#)

## Principal Business Associations

The main business association in The Gambia is the Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI). GCCCI advocates for the interest of the private sector and is the main liaison body for raising issues of interest to the private sector with the government. Government agencies and international organizations regularly consult the GCCCI. Membership is open to all businesses operating in the country. The American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) in The Gambia is another active business association in the country; however, it is not affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Trade facilitation between The Gambia and the US is listed as the AmCham's primary goal.

## Limitations on Selling US Products and Services

There are no limitations on the selling of US goods and services in any sector.

## Web Resources

[Access Gambia](#)

[Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency](#)

[The Gambia Country Brand](#)

[Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

## Leading Sectors for U.S. Exports & Investment

### Energy Sector:

#### Overview:

The Gambia has major future investment opportunities in the energy sector. The total installed capacity is 125 megawatts (MW) and actual generation is about 75MW, about 40 MW short of current demand. About 35 percent of Gambians have access to electricity. This means that there is significant room for growth in the energy market. Recent legislation (the Electricity Act of 2004) has partially liberalized the energy market. Specifically, electricity generation is open to investors. Transmission and distribution remains the exclusive domain of the government. Currently, there is one independent power producer (IPP) operating in The Gambia, supplying about 10 percent of the power generated in the country.

POWER PRODUCTION				
Unit Gigawatt Hours (GWh)	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	312	386	435	491
Total Exports	0	0	0	0
Total Imports	0	0	0	0
Imports from the US				
Total Market Size (investment needed) \$US thousands	99,000	68,000	85,000	\$74,000
Exchange Rates	40	42	44	45

\$US thousands (total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

### Power Africa:

Launched in 2013, Power Africa is a market-driven, U.S. Government-led public-private partnership to double access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa. It also serves as a one-stop shop for private sector entities seeking tools and resources to facilitate doing business in Africa's power sector. In 2016, the Electrify Africa Act unanimously passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law, institutionalizing Power Africa and establishing two goals; to add 20,000 MW of generation capacity and expand electricity access to 50 million people in sub-Saharan Africa by 2020. In bringing together more than 140 of the world's top companies, development institutions, and financial entities, Power Africa employs a transaction-centered approach to directly address key constraints to project development and investment in the power sector. These interventions aim to de-risk investments and accelerate financial close -- from facilitating project bankability with financing and risk mitigation, to providing technical and transaction support, to engaging with host-government counterparts. Learn more about the [full Power Africa toolbox](#) at or other opportunities offered by [Power Africa](#).

### Leading Sub-Sectors

The best future opportunity for investors is the liberalized electricity generation segment. The Gambia needs to significantly increase electricity generation to meet the projected energy demand in the country. This demand is increasing due to several factors, including a rising urbanization rate (60 percent). The main difficulty is that the country is experiencing a transmission bottleneck that would hamper transmission and distribution even if extra generation occurs. This problem is being addressed with the help of multi-lateral development institutions such as the World Bank, the

African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank. In the interim, there are limited opportunities for provision of fast track power.

The Gambia is a signatory to the ECOWAS pledge to have a renewable energy account for 10 percent of the total energy generated in the country by 2020. Currently, 100 percent of the power generated and distributed by the National Water and Electricity Company (NAWEC) comes from fossil fuels. Several options for renewable energy remain viable options.

**Solar:** The potential for solar energy is immense. Solar power radiation in the country could produce at least 4kWh per square meter per day.

**Wind:** Wind energy is the only renewable source that once supplied power through the national grid. Most effective in the coastal region between the (winter/spring) months of January and May, wind is a highly variable source of energy.

**Bio-fuel:** Biomass also offers an alternative source of energy. A large number of crops, such as groundnuts, have a huge residue-to-kernel ratio and could be a high source of supply of bio-matter as fuel.

**Hydro-power:** The African Development Bank and the World Bank are completing a regional project implemented by OMVG (Organisation de Mise en Valeur du Fleuve Gambia - Gambia River Basin Development Organization) that will provide hydro-electric power via dams in Senegal and Guinea to Senegal, Guinea, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. The project is slated for completion in 2020.

### Opportunities

There are several opportunities in the energy market. The World Bank, the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank are each financing projects in the energy market in the country. Virtually all the projects funded require procurement of equipment and expertise from abroad since the local industry cannot supply them. These two areas present opportunities in the short term (within the year).

The renewable energy sector also provides significant areas of entry for US businesses. Currently, all equipment used in the growing solar industry comes from China. However, there is increasing demand for higher quality equipment, which can provide entry opportunities for US exporters. The renewable energy sector and fast-track power through Heavy Fuel Oils (HFOs) present several opportunities in the medium term (one-to-two years).

## Web Resources

[The National Water and Electricity Company \(NAWEC\)](#)

[The Public Utility Regulatory Agency \(PURA\)](#)

## Agricultural Sector:

### Overview:

Agriculture is a major driver of growth in The Gambia. It accounts for about a quarter of GDP and employs 70% of the labor force. Between 2013 and 2014, agriculture is estimated to have contracted by 8.4%, but the sector's output has been growing steadily, contributing approximately 25 percent to The Gambia's GDP in 2016. However, agricultural output in The Gambia only meets 50 percent of the country's food needs. Crop yields are generally low, with an average of 1.5 tonnes/Ha compared to an estimated potential of 3-4 tonnes/Ha for cereals, excluding rice, for which yields of up to 6 tonnes/Ha have been obtained elsewhere. The main agricultural products grown locally are peanuts, rice, millet and sorghum. Key fruits produced include mangoes and cashews. These are also the major cash crops, while rice is the staple. Only about 38% of the total land area of the country or about 430,000 Ha is arable.

AGRICULTURE MARKET				
Unit US Dollars (\$)	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Exports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Imports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Imports from the US*	311,792	896,754	659,487	n/a
Total Market Size	206,000	223,250	221,500	209,250
Exchange Rates	40	42	44	45

\$US thousands (*total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports*)

\*US Trade by Industry, NAICS

### Leading Sub-Sectors

The Gambia has one of the highest per capita consumption rates of rice in the region. Local production only accounts for a small fraction of the amount of rice consumed and most of the rice consumed is, therefore, imported. Given the high population growth rate (about 3 percent per annum), the demand for

imported rice will remain strong. This is a good opportunity for US rice exporters. US rice is already being consumed in significant quantities.

### Opportunities

The Gambia is an increasingly urban population. Urbanization is a major determinant of processed food demand. US exporters are already present in the rice and flour market in the country. Other processed food commodity opportunities also exist.

One of the main constraints facing the agricultural sector is the lack of irrigation technology. This means that there is an untapped demand for irrigation equipment in the short term (within the year). These include centrifugal water pumps, submersible water pumps, drip irrigation system and other irrigation fittings.

Labor- saving agricultural machinery also provides opportunities for US exporters. Tractors, power tillers, ploughs, sprayers and harvesters are being used in commercial farms. While the current market is dominated by Indian and Chinese imports, a quality niche market may exist with investments in the medium term (one-to-two years).

Multilateral development agencies such as the World Bank, African Development Bank, and specialized United Nations agencies (e.g. UNDP, IFAD, and FAO) frequently fund agricultural projects in the country. Some of these projects require the supply of machinery and other equipment that need to be imported. These projects therefore provide entry opportunities for US exporters.

### Web Resources

[African Development Bank](#)

[The World Bank](#)

[Food Administrative Organization](#)

[International Fund for Agricultural Development](#)

### Construction Sector:

#### Overview:

The construction sector accounts for 5.5 percent of GDP. The construction sector comprises infrastructure, residential, and business structures. Given the small size of the manufacturing sector, virtually all construction materials



are imported. These materials include (but are not limited to) cement, steel, tiles, plumbing materials, electrical materials, and major household appliances. The market for materials for small-scale construction projects is dominated by imports from China and India.

CONSTRUCTION MARKET				
Unit US Dollars (\$)	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Exports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Imports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Imports from the US	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Market Size	45,320	49,115	48,730	46,035
Exchange Rates	40	42	44	45

\$US thousands (total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

### Leading Sub-Sector

The best opportunities for US exports involve major infrastructure projects funded by multilateral and bilateral development agencies. For instance, a recent bridge project funded by the African Development Bank worth \$85 million was open for international bids.

### Opportunities

Beyond supplying materials for major construction projects in the short term, other opportunities include technical studies and architectural and feasibility studies for major construction projects, which fall in the medium term.

### Web Resources

N/A

### Oil and Gas Sector:

#### Overview:

The Gambia depends on imported petroleum to meet its commercial energy needs, including the generation of electricity which relies on the importation of Heavy Fuel Oils (HFOs). Under former President Yahya Jammeh, permits to import HFOs were exclusively in the hands of a Gambian-Lebanese Businessman. On March 10, 2017 the new administration announced the liberalization of the importation of fuels into The Gambia. It is estimated that

The Gambia consumes 84,000 metric tons of HFO annually. The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy houses the Gambia National Petroleum Agency (GNPC) which is responsible for fuel storage and supply. The value of imports of petroleum products decreased from D3.5 billion in 2014 to D3.1 billion in 2015.

PETROLEUM MARKET				
Unit US Dollars (\$)	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Exports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Imports*	87,500,000	73,809,524	n/a	n/a
Imports from the US	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Market Size	n/a	n/a	n/a	46,035
Exchange Rates	40	42	44	45

\$US thousands (*total market size – Petroleum Products = (total local production + imports) - exports*)

\* Minister of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment

### Leading Sub-Sector

Oil exploration and drilling licenses present the best prospects in the oil and gas sector. In 2016, drilling in a Senegalese oil field adjacent to one of the Gambian offshore oil blocks confirmed the presence of sizable crude oil deposits, suggesting that the potential for crude oil in The Gambia is quite high. The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy engages in direct negotiations (e.g. at conferences and similar events) with oil companies that have expressed interest in the country, rather than issuing tenders for companies to submit bids, a process it calls “an expensive one.”

### Opportunities

There are opportunities for investment in the oil and gas sector, which The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) lists as a priority sector. Two companies have been issued mineral exploration and exploitation licenses for the preliminary exploration of onshore and offshore oil based on encouraging findings of crude oil deposits in neighboring Senegal. These exploration licenses also present the best short term opportunities in the sector. The importation of seismic data mapping technology along with drilling licenses presents medium term market opportunities in The Gambia.

### Web Resources

[The National Water and Electricity Company \(NAWEC\)](#)

## The Public Utility Regulatory Agency (PURA)

### Telecommunications Sector:

#### Overview:

The telecommunication sector is an active market for foreign investors. The four main cellphone companies are: Africell (foreign-owned), Comium (foreign-owned), Gamcel (state-owned) and Qcell (private, domestic). The penetration rate of mobile phones is well over 100 percent. The largest mobile phone company (Africell) has about 1.3 million customers, about 57 percent of the market. Gamcel, Comium, and Qcell have, respectively, 10 percent, 17 percent, and 16 percent of the market in terms of subscribers. The regulatory authority for the telecommunication industry is the Public Utilities Regulatory Agency (PURA), which was created in 2001.

There are multiple internet service providers. The main internet service providers are Netpage, Qcell, Gamcel, and Africell. With the launch of the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) submarine cable in 2011, the quality of connectivity has significantly increased.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS MARKET				
Unit US Dollars (\$)	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Exports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Imports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Imports from the US	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Market Size	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Exchange Rates	40	42	44	45

\$US thousands (*total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports*)

#### Leading Sub-Sectors

Wireless technology, computer information systems, servers, routers, laptops, desktop computers, tablets, and other computer accessories are the best sub-sector prospects within Telecommunications.

#### Opportunities

Even with the launch of the ACE cable, there is still scope for additional connections to submarine cables to enhance the country's connectivity to other parts of the world. This presents opportunities for undersea cable lying in the medium term. In the short term, more linkages can be made with

mobile money and pay-as-you-go systems such as what is already being done in with the supply of electricity.

With the recent establishment of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) directorate, the government has identified several priority sectors for long-term concessions. Among these is the telecommunications sector, where there is a need for a private partner in setting up a national data center in a PPP scheme. The private investor is expected to hold a stake of 51 percent. Another potential PPP project where the government is looking for a private partner is the GAMSWITCH project, which will involve the development of a switch for clearing electronic payments and transactions through ATMs. The fourth component of the Gamswitch modernized payment system is still ongoing.

#### Web Resources

[Africell](#)

[Gamcel](#)

#### Pharmaceuticals Sector:

##### Overview:

The Gambia has a small medical services industry. There are only a few clinics. Patients requiring advanced medical care or treatment usually go abroad, most frequently to Senegal. Over the past five years, a few private clinics have opened. These include Afrimed and Medicare clinics. Specialist care and advanced medical equipment are in very short supply. Most medical establishments are publicly run, and equipped with lower quality equipment and facilities than privately-owned ones.

PHARMACEUTICALS MARKET				
Unit US Dollars (\$)	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Exports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Imports	0	0	0	0
Imports from the US	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Market Size	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Exchange Rates	40	42	44	45

\$US thousands (total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

### Leading Sub-Sectors

The demand for medical services will continue to grow in the country, and more private clinics and hospitals are expected to be built. This growth will increase demand for medical equipment. Equipment in particularly short supply includes EKG equipment, scanners, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and other diagnostic equipment.

### Opportunities

The African Development Bank recently approved financing for a modern, privately-run maternal health hospital that will operate in The Gambia. This is an opportunity for the supply of equipment such as x-ray, scanners, MRI, laboratory testing, and other medical equipment in the medium term. In the short term, opportunities to engage with international NGOs on the provision of less advanced medical and health technology present several opportunities for US SMEs.

### Web Resources

[The Gambia Ministry of Health and Social Welfare](#)

## Travel and Tourism Sector

### Overview:

The tourism industry is an important sector in The Gambia, and contributes about 20% to GDP. It is the largest source of foreign exchange earnings for the country. Most tourists who visit The Gambia come from Northern Europe (UK, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway). Tourist arrivals were expected to reach 200,000 in 2017, but uncertainty in the runup to the December 1, 2016 Presidential elections and the political impasse that followed between December 2016 and January 2017 severely affected the 2016/2017 season. Recently, tourists from Italy, Spain, and France, have also started visiting The Gambia. A few tourists come from the US, mainly to attend the biennial Roots Festival.

The industry is highly seasonal as the bulk of the tourists arrive during the European winter (October – April). Average hotel occupancy reaches 90% in the winter months, but barely reaches 25% during the rest of the year. Most (84%) of the tourists arrive through tour operators. Almost all tourists stay at hotels. Unlike some destinations in Africa, there are no major national parks. The country has two main reserves, a small park for crocodiles, and a river island that is home to many chimpanzees, in addition to numerous craft markets.

The hotel industry has a supply of about 5,000 rooms, mostly located on the coast. A few establishments exist in the interior of the country. Eco-tourism remains nascent in the country, though there is a major eco-lodge (Makasutu) along the river.

Air links with the rest of the world are limited. Most tourists are brought to The Gambia by chartered flights, which are active during the European winter months.

TOURISM MARKET				
Unit US Dollars (\$)	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Estimated)
Total Local Production	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Exports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Imports	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Imports from the US	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Market Size (visitors)	107,120	116,090	115,180	108,810
Exchange Rates	40	42	44	45

\$US thousands (*total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports*)

### Leading Sub-Sectors

The opportunities for growth in the tourism industry are limited as the country has many competitors such as Senegal and Cape Verde. An area of opportunity is the niche market of eco-tourism. The river that bisects the country (River Gambia) provides opportunities for commercial hubs along its banks. Gambian tourism authorities are particularly interested in increasing U.S. tourism through its biennial Roots Festival.

River transport, especially as part of tourism, presents likely business opportunities. The River Gambia is highly navigable for a major portion of its course, but is not used by any transport service for goods and services.

### Opportunities

The country offers several incentives for investments in the tourism sector. For new hotels in designated areas, as medium term goals, investors will be offered land free of charge. For other investments above the threshold of \$250,000, incentives include a 10-year tax holiday.

Some of the major hotels have received outside funding from sources such as the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group. This is not uncommon for hotels that are of 4- or 5-star standards. These provide opportunities for procurement during construction, as well as equipment and facilities for operations in the short term.

Web Resources

[Gambia Tourism Board](#)

[Ministry of Tourism and Culture](#)

[Gambia Tourism](#)

[The Gambia Experience](#)

[International Roots Festival](#)

## Customs, Regulations, & Standards

### Trade Barriers

Overall, The Gambia has a liberal trading regime. However, temporary import duties and outright bans on imports are periodically placed on potatoes and onions to protect local producers. These bans come into effect at the harvest time of local producers; harvest times are not fixed. The country has occasionally also placed a ban on poultry products. On April 22, the Government of The Gambia (GOTG) announced a reduction on the import duty on flour from 47 per cent to 20 per cent and a removal of the five per cent excise tax on goods and the GMD 1 per kilo tax on cement imports.

### Import Tariff

As a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), The Gambia applied for the bloc's Common External Tariff (CET) in 2007. Since implementation on January 1, 2017, the CET has reduced The Gambia's average tariff rates. The four tariff bands are as follows: 0 percent for basic social goods, 5 percent for raw materials, capital goods, and specific inputs; 10 percent for intermediate goods; and 20 percent for final consumer goods. There is a 1.55 percent processing fee, and an ECOWAS levy of 0.5 percent on all imports.

Tariff exemptions are extended to several imports, which includes the importation of goods for investments; the Minister of Trade can extend exemptions at his or her discretion. At certain times of the year, temporary duties are applied on onion and potato imports to protect local producers.

### Import Requirements & Documentation

The requirements for imports include the following: bill of lading, commercial invoice, certificate of origin, custom import declaration, and health certification (for applicable food or agricultural commodities).

There are several registered agents who facilitate the importation of goods into The Gambia. While businesses are not required to use their services, registered agents can be helpful in reducing the hassles that are common at the port.

### Labeling/Marking Requirements

Labeling requirements are enforced by the Food Safety and Quality Authority (FSQA) where labeling/marketing requirements are also available. All importers must register with FSQA. Importers must fill out import declaration forms, provide certificates of origin and furnish certificates issued by the food safety competent authority of the exporting country. The FSQA also enforces restrictions on false



advertisement. Advertisement of tobacco and tobacco products has been legally banned in The Gambia since 2003.

### [U.S. Export Controls](#)

The Gambia currently does not face any particular US sanctions. However, businesses are urged to adhere to all applicable requirements for particular goods and services when exporting to The Gambia.

### [The consolidated export screen list](#)

### [Temporary Entry](#)

The Gambia is not a major transit point or transshipment hub, even though some goods transit the country en-route to Senegal, Guinea Bissau and other countries in the ECOWAS sub region. Goods in transit are not assessed custom duties.

### [Prohibited & Restricted Imports](#)

The following materials are either banned or controlled, and the ban applies equally on warranty and non-warranty items entering the country/economy for repair (as applicable):

- Illegal Narcotics;
- Firearms, explosives and ammunition;
- Skin bleaching ointments;
- Pornographic material;
- Unapproved radio-communication equipment;
- Counterfeit goods; and
- Meat and poultry products.

### [Customs Regulations](#)

[The Gambia Revenue Authority](#) (GRA) is responsible for all taxes and customs duties. Since 2004, the country has moved from the Brussels Definition of value to the WTO agreement on Customs Valuations. The GRA provides up to date information on the customs regulations in the country.

Address:

78/79 Liberation Avenue

Banjul, The Gambia

West Africa

## Standards for Trade

### Overview

The Gambia Standards Bureau (TGSB) is the body charged with standardizing methods, processes and products in the country. This body is relatively new and was created by a law passed in 2010. GSB started operations in 2011. It is jointly managed by the government and the private sector. TGSB does not develop its own standards, as it is a member of an international government standards body. In that sense, it takes standards developed by others. The Gambia generally has standards in strategic and priority areas for national development, but the application of these standards often does not follow procedures. The Gambia is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which also develops standards. When adopted, The Gambia will be bound by the ECOWAS treaty to apply European Union (EU) standards through the EU's Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) an association agreement with ECOWAS.

### Standards

[The Gambia Standards Bureau \(TGSB\)](#) is the national standards body in The Gambia. It does not develop unique national standards and largely transposes standards developed by other organizations. The TGSB uses standards developed by the International Organization for Standardization. Entities that do not have a manufacturing presence cannot participate in national standards development.

+220 99 77 035

### Testing, inspection and certification

The conformity assessments offered by The Gambia Standards Bureau (GSB) include testing, inspection and certification. Please contact [GSB](#) for further details. The Gambia Standards Bureau helps organizations get certification standards, including ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. Certification requirements do not burden U.S. exporters of products or service providers. The GSB is a member of the International Electro-technical Commission (IEC). The GSB is not a member of the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) or the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), but it is a member of the International Organization for Standardization (IOS), and The Standards

and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC). Test certificates from foreign laboratories are accepted by the GSB. U.S. testing laboratories can operate in the market and test U.S. products to comply with domestic regulatory requirements.

#### [Publication of technical regulations](#)

The government publishes a national gazette. Proposed technical regulations are published in the national gazette but these are announcements and not open to comment by US or local entities. The Gambia does not maintain an annual regulatory agenda. To date, the Gambia Standards Bureau has not issued a publication. For inquiries on future publications, please consult their office directly.

#### Contact Information

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130 Kairaba Avenue

P.O. Box 2384

[thegambiasb@gmail.com](mailto:thegambiasb@gmail.com)

#### [Trade Agreements](#)

The Gambia is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and acceded to the World Trade organization (WTO) in 1996. The country lost its eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2015 due to concerns about human rights violations. The Gambia does not have a bilateral trade agreement with the US.

##### [ECOWAS](#)

##### [WTO](#)

#### [Licensing Requirements for Professional Services](#)

The Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Employment, The Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA), The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) and The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) are all good resources for providing information related to licensing requirements for businesses in The Gambia.

Web Resources:

[The Gambia Standards Bureau](#)

[The Gambia Trade Portal](#)

[The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency](#)

[Access Gambia](#)

[The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#)

## Investment Climate Statement

### Executive Summary

The Gambia has an active private sector with a new government that is very interested in encouraging local investment and foreign direct investment. The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency is dedicated to attracting foreign investment, promotes exports, and provides guidelines and incentives to all investors whose portfolios qualify for a Special Investment Certificate. Adama Barrow was elected in December 2016, ending the 22-year autocratic reign of Yahya Jammeh who reportedly bankrupted the government with his lavish spending habits and stifled investment as a result of his penchant for siphoning profits from successful companies. A lack of transparency in regulatory and administrative procedures negatively impacted investment promotion throughout former President Jammeh's presidency. Barrow's election has paved the way for greater private-sector investment and accountability in The Gambia.

The Barrow administration has demonstrated a willingness to listen to, and cooperate with, U.S. business and commercial interests. Within the Office of The President, a Permanent Secretary for Investment was appointed within the first 100 days of Barrow's presidency. American companies seeking to invest in The Gambia must work through a local lawyer and be open and transparent in all their dealings. The new administration will focus on the following sectors: energy (oil exploration and exploitation, renewable energies, specifically solar); natural resources (heavy mineral sands); agriculture (rice and cereal production, but also processed foods); tourism (increasing the number of American tourists); and finally, infrastructure (roads, telecommunications systems, drainage systems, and bridges).

The Gambia is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a regional economic union of 15 countries located in West Africa. Foreign investors hail from the Middle East, North Africa, East Asia, Nigeria, and a limited number of European and American-owned businesses. Trade relations with China, India, and Turkey have also increased in recent years. There is no legal distinction between the treatment of foreign and domestic investors.

There are opportunities for investment in several sectors. The agriculture sector employs approximately 75 percent of Gambians and comprises 30 percent of the country's GDP. The sub-regional body known as SeGaBi (Senegal, The Gambia, and Guinea Bissau) was included in the USDA Priority Countries in the 2017 Food for Progress program, with a focus on the cashews industry. The services sector, including tourism, comprises approximately 60 percent of GDP, while industry comprises 10 percent. The country has a functional banking system with 12 commercial banks.

Gambian law provides the legal framework for the protection of private ownership of property and for adequate and prompt compensation in the event of compulsory acquisition. Some outstanding land disputes remain from previous years that appear to be the result of disputes between the previous government and private landowners. Most remain unresolved, but the legal reforms the new government has initiated will provide a proper mechanism to resolve many of the cases.

As a result of the previous government’s poor human rights record, the economy suffered and on January 1, 2015 The Gambia lost its eligibility to participate as a trade beneficiary under the provisions of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). AGOA enhances market access to the United States for qualifying Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. Qualification for AGOA eligibility is based on a set of conditions (e.g., each country must be working to improve its rule of law, human rights, and respect for core labor standards). President Adama Barrow’s administration seeks to regain AGOA eligibility and has taken steps with respect to human rights and rule of law that will help restore The Gambia’s eligibility for AGOA.

Similarly, the decision to rescind The Gambia’s Millennium Cooperation Challenge (MCC) eligibility in 2006 was based on evidence of human rights abuses and increased restrictions on political rights, civil liberties, and press freedom by the Jammeh government, as well as worsening economic policies and reduced anti-corruption efforts. In June 2006 The Gambia lost its MCC eligibility. Regaining access to the MCC will provide the GOTG with much needed assistance in infrastructure development, and in the agriculture and energy sectors. While the process to reinstate The Gambia’s AGOA eligibility can be achieved relatively quickly, the review for MCC eligibility is a lengthier process involving several organizations.

*Table 1*

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Index/Rank</b>
<a href="#">TI Corruption Perceptions Index</a>	2016	26 of 175
<a href="#">World Bank’s Doing Business Report “Ease of Doing Business”</a>	2016	145 of 190
<a href="#">Global Innovation Index</a>	2016	N/A
<a href="#">U.S. FDI in partner country (\$M USD, stock positions)</a>	2015	N/A
<a href="#">World Bank GNI per capita</a>	2015	N/A

## Openness To, and Restrictions Upon, Foreign Investment

### Policies Towards Foreign Direct Investment

The GOTG welcomes investment in all sectors of the economy. However, eight were identified as "priority sectors" which attract a Special Investment Certificate (SIC) that provides a number of incentives, including duty waivers and tax holidays. The eight sectors are agriculture, air services, energy, fisheries, Information Communication Technology (ICT), light manufacturing, river transportation, and tourism. There are no laws or practices that discriminate against foreign investors, including U.S. investors.

The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) facilitate foreign investment in The Gambia. GIEPA's mandate includes export promotion and support for small and micro enterprise (SME) development. The list of priority sectors and incentives for investors are available on the [Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency \(GIEPA\) website](#).

GIEPA offers the following services:

- Investment Generation (e.g. administer and advise on incentive packages);
- Investment Facilitation (e.g. help businesses obtain licenses, land, clearances, etc. for business operations);
- Business Development Services (e.g. provide market survey and research support);
- Export Development (e.g. provide advisory services and training to potential and current exporters);
- Support to Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (e.g. matching grants facility (depending on the availability of funds);
- Image Building and Branding; and
- Policy Advocacy

Additionally, The Gambia Competitiveness Improvement Forum was created as part of the 2015 GIEPA Act to maintain dialogue with investors, but to date the forum has yet to be formally commissioned.

### Limits on Foreign Control and Right to Private Ownership and Establishment

Foreign and domestic private entities have a right to own business enterprises and engage in remuneration activities in all fields that are deemed lawful economic activities in The Gambia.

There are no limits on foreign ownership or control of businesses except in the operations of defense industries, which have historically been closed to all private sector participation, irrespective of nationality. The Gambia has no known defense industries.

While no sector-specific restrictions, limitations, or requirements were legally applied to foreign ownership and control (outside of defense-related activities), former President Jammeh informally influenced the business decisions of some

(profitable) foreign companies. In 2015, temporary restrictions were imposed on the importation of onions and potatoes. These restrictions, which were designed to protect domestic suppliers of vegetables, were lifted in April 2017.

There is no mandatory screening of foreign direct investment, but such screening may be conducted if there is suspicion of money laundering or terrorist financing. The GOTG also screens inbound foreign investment of those who seek to invest in or operate an enterprise considered prejudicial to national security, detrimental to the natural environment, public health, or public morality, or which contravenes the laws of The Gambia. An embargo on the establishment of private security companies imposed in previous years was lifted in 2015. All investments are subject to conditions established by the GIEPA Act. There is no current information on how the GIEPA review process for investment proposals works, or the duration period for such reviews.

### Other Investment Policy Reviews

In 2016 UNCTAD conducted a fact-finding mission to produce an Investment Policy Review (IPR) for The Gambia. The results of the IPR were presented in April 2017 and the Gambian government has committed to implementing the recommendations contained in the IPR. The IPR will be posted on [UNCTAD' website](#).

### Business Facilitation

The Gambia promotes business facilitation through the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA), which is mandated to facilitate the establishment, operation, and development of businesses in The Gambia. Business enterprise development is a stand-alone department in GIEPA. The GIEPA Act of 2010 was revised as the GIEPA Act of 2015, and its accompanying regulations are currently being amended. A Private Sector Strategy document was also prepared under former President Jammeh, but the document never went to the cabinet for approval. Tax and trade policies of The Gambia, with regard to specific services, are all publically communicated by GIEPA.

In 2010, a Single Window Business Registration Desk was established at the Ministry of Justice under the World Bank-sponsored Growth and Competitiveness Project. The initiative has reduced the number of days it takes to register a business from 27 days to 1 day. Clear instructions on registering a business in The Gambia are available online, but the actual registration process must be done in person (by the applicant or a representative) at either the Ministry of Justice or the Kanifing Municipal Council head office in Serrekunda.

### Outward Investment

The Gambia promotes outward investment through services provided by The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) and The Gambia Chamber of



Commerce and Industry (GCCl). The GOTG does not promote outward investment to a particular set of countries or sectors but historically the target regions for The Gambia’s exports are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union (EU), and Asia, where India, China, and Vietnam are the target markets. There are no set restrictions to domestic investors investing abroad.

### Bilateral Investment Agreements and Taxation Treaties

The Gambia has Bilateral Investment Agreements with the following countries:

Gambia - Guinea BIT (2002)
Gambia - Iran, Islamic Republic of BIT (2007)
Gambia - Kuwait BIT (2013)
Gambia - Libya BIT (1995)
Gambia - Mali BIT (2004)
Gambia - Mauritania BIT (2001)
Gambia - Morocco BIT (2006)
Gambia - Netherlands BIT (2002)
Gambia - Qatar BIT (2002)
Gambia - Spain BIT (2008)
Gambia - Switzerland BIT (1993)
Gambia - Taiwan Province of China BIT (2010)
Gambia - Turkey BIT (2013)
Gambia - Ukraine BIT (2001)
Gambia - United Kingdom BIT (2002)

The Gambia does not have a bilateral taxation treaty with the U.S. The Gambia has bilateral investment agreements with Mauritania, Morocco, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. However, only the agreement with Switzerland has gone into effect.

In 2013, Value Added Tax (VAT) was introduced in The Gambia and has remained unchanged at 15 per cent. In 2015, Corporate Income Tax was reduced from 35 percent to 30 percent. The Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA) collects excise duties on locally manufactured products (per unit). On April 22, President Barrow announced a reduction on the import duty on flour from 47 per cent to 20 per cent and a removal of the five per cent excise tax on goods.

### Legal Regime

#### Transparency of the Regulatory System

The GOTG uses transparent policies and effective laws to foster competition on a non-discriminatory basis to establish “clear rules of the game.” The Gambia’s legal, regulatory, and accounting systems are transparent and consistent with international norms. A Competition Act was enacted in 2007 and a Competition

Commission was established in 2009. The Act mandates the Commission to advocate for competition in The Gambia; and to determine and impose penalties or appropriate remedies to ensure businesses comply with prohibited restrictive practices, and monitor compliance, among other things.

The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) regulates telecommunications and broadcasting, water and sewage, transport and electricity. The Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (GCCP) is a commercial watchdog that ensures the protection of consumers from unfair and misleading market practices, and administers the prohibition of illegal business practices. These laws are available to the general public.

There are no informal regulatory processes that are managed by nongovernmental organizations or private sector associations. Rule-making and regulatory authority exists with the President, his cabinet of Ministers, and the committee members under the National Assembly of The Gambia, and various government parastatals.

The accounting, legal, and regulatory procedural systems of The Gambia are consistent with international norms. Draft bills or regulations are made available to the public for commenting through public meetings and targeted outreach to stakeholders, such as business associations or other groups. This practice is in line with the U.S. federal notice and comment procedures, and applies to investment laws and regulations in The Gambia.

There is no centralized online location where key regulatory actions or their summaries are published. A contract was concluded with LexisNexis in 2009 for the publication of the entire country's legislation; however access is not free of charge. The nature of the content is unknown because it is not publically available.

There is no specialized government body tasked with reviewing and monitoring regulatory impact assessments conducted by other individual agencies or government bodies. No new regulatory system reforms have been announced since the last ICS report, but regulatory reform efforts announced in prior years are being implemented – the Investment Policy Plan of The Gambia is still in the draft stage. Regulations are developed internally by Ministries, Departments and Agencies of The Government of The Gambia. A Bill or motion may be introduced in the National Assembly by a member of the cabinet or by a member of the National Assembly and the National Assembly gives consideration to Bills and motions introduced.

According to the Constitution of The Gambia “Where a bill passed by the National Assembly is presented to the President for his or her assent, the President shall, within thirty days, assent to the Bill or return it to the National Assembly with the request that the National Assembly reconsiders the Bill” and if that is the case, “the President shall state the reasons for the request and any recommendations for amendment of the Bill.” A bill which has been duly passed by the National Assembly and assented to by the President shall become law as an Act of the National

Assembly and the words of enactment shall be, “Enacted by the President and the National Assembly.” When a bill is introduced into the National Assembly, it may be allocated to an appropriate committee for examination, and a report made thereon to the National Assembly.

The judicial power of The Gambia is vested in the courts and shall be exercised by them according to the respective jurisdictions conferred by an Act of the National Assembly. There are two types of courts in The Gambia, the Superior Courts (Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, the High Court, and the Special Criminal Court) and the Magistrates Court, which include the Cadi Court, District Tribunals, and such lower courts and tribunals as may be established by an Act of the National Assembly.

Regulations are not reviewed on the basis of scientific or data-driven assessments. There are no known scientific studies or quantitative analysis conducted on the impact of regulations made publicly available for comment, but there is a public agency, The Gambia Bureau of Statistics, that does develop data based on enacted legislation. Public comments received by regulators are not made public.

### International Regulatory Considerations

The Gambia is a member of ECOWAS, and as such, is a signatory to the 1975 ECOWAS Treaty, which harmonizes investment rules. In cases of investor-state and state-state disputes, the parties can refer their cases to a national court or tribunal or, in the case of disagreement, to the ECOWAS Court of Justice. The ECOWAS Supplementary Acts are passed to supplement the ECOWAS Treaty. These Acts are binding on Member States and the institutions of the ECOWAS Community. The Council of Ministers enacts Regulations and Directives and issues Decisions and Recommendations. Regulations have general application and all their provisions are enforceable and directly applicable in Member States. Therefore, the ECOWAS regional regulatory system has more authority than the national regulatory system of The Gambia.

The international norms and standards of the United Kingdom are referenced and incorporated into The Gambia’s regulatory system. The Gambia has its own regulatory system, which it designs with stakeholders from the international community of NGOs, but international norms or standards referenced or incorporated into the country's regulatory system are often based on the UK system of regulations.

The Gambia is also a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The government does not notify the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) of all draft technical regulations. However, draft technical regulations are available to relevant stakeholders, like the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), if requested.

### Legal System and Judicial Independence

The Gambia's legal system is based on English common law, and there is a legal framework for enforcing property and contractual rights in courts. The Gambia does not have a written commercial and/or contractual law as its legal system is based on Common Law. The Gambia has 8 specialized courts, including a Commercial Court and Labor and Industrial tribunal Court, but not a civil court.

In principle, the judicial system is independent of the executive branch, but there were incidents in the recent past in which the executive interfered in judicial matters. The judicial process is, however, procedurally competent, fair, and reliable, and is expected to become more so under the new administration as the country re-establishes adherence to the rule of law.

Regulatory or enforcement actions are appealable. Appeals against regulations or enforcement actions may be adjudicated with the lower courts, the High Court, and the Supreme Court, which is the highest court of appeal in the country.

### Laws and Regulations on Foreign Direct Investment

The legal and regulatory framework is generally open to FDI. The investment laws and regulations of The Gambia apply equally to local and foreign investors. The GOTG has made efforts to attract foreign investment by opening all but a few sectors to investment, including defense. However, several factors generate uncertainty and deter investment. These include unclear provisions of some of the laws related to investment, such as competition, labor and corruption, and, in some instances, regulations do not exist to implement the laws effectively. Additionally, the institutions mandated to implement these laws face insufficient financial and human resources.

For information on the laws, rules, procedures and reporting required, foreign investors can visit the website of the [Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency \(GIEPA\)](#). GIEPA is a government agency set up to promote investment, export, and entrepreneurship development.

Potential investors to The Gambia can also visit [The Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission](#) (GCCPC) website to access laws and rules, procedures for investors interested in The Gambia.

No major investment related laws/ regulations, and judicial decisions came out within the past year.

### Competition and Anti-Trust Laws

The Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (GCCP) is a commercial watchdog that reviews transactions for competition-related concerns and ensures the protection of consumers from unfair and misleading market practices, and administers the prohibition of illegal business practices. No significant competition cases have been reported over the past year.

### Expropriation and Compensation

The Gambian Constitution of 1997 provides the legal framework for the protection of private ownership of property and only provides for compulsory acquisition by the state if this is found to be necessary for defense, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, town, and country planning.

There is a history of expropriations in The Gambia. During President Jammeh's 22 years in office, state paramilitary officials were known to arrive unannounced on private property and tear down any standing structures on the property in question. Under Jammeh, the GOTG widely ignored its responsibility to offer compensation in cases of expropriation. There is widespread speculation that former President Jammeh benefitted personally from these land grabs.

Both the Constitution and the Compulsory Acquisition Act require the state to effect adequate and prompt compensation in such cases. According to local media reports, the provision has generally been respected, but there have been cases where the government ignored court injunctions and tore down private property.

In April 2017, the GOTG expropriated the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction's (APRC) political bureau in Kanifing South on the grounds that the previous administration had unlawfully seized the property and failed to pay rent for the building for many years. The building had never legally belonged to the APRC.

In January 2014, the Government of The Gambia terminated the petroleum exploration, development and production licenses awarded to three oil companies – African Petroleum, Buried Hill, and Oranto. A statement from the Office of the President said the companies concerned had failed to meet their licensing obligations. The statement said the government would not allow companies “to acquire licenses only to keep them for speculation.” However, in November 2014, the government announced that it had reinstated the license of African Petroleum after a commitment by the company to drill its first well by September 1, 2016. In 2015, African Petroleum discontinued two ICSID claims against the Government of The Gambia after its licenses were reinstated.

In April 2011, the Gambian government announced it had taken control of all Libyan assets in the country, which included a number of hotels and an amusement park in

reaction to the crisis in Libya. In May of the same year, a high court judge ruled that the Gambian government could take control of the Libyan assets until a United Nations-backed political force emerged from the crisis. There were no further statements on the status of the properties, even after the Transitional National Council assumed power in Libya.

In February 2008, the Government of The Gambia announced it had cancelled the license it granted to an Australian mining company in December 2005 to extract and process heavy mineral sands containing zircon, ilmenite, and rutile. The decision to cancel the company's mining license came nearly a month after the government gave it a 24-hour ultimatum to provide information about the type and quantity of minerals it had mined and the international value of tonnage already exported. The deadline was later extended for two weeks and after it elapsed, the authorities arrested the company manager, who was charged with economic crimes. The trial did not continue after the manager jumped bail and left the country. The company filed a \$31 million claim against the Government of the Gambia in ICSID in 2009. In January 2014, The Gambia's Special Criminal Court delivered a judgment in the government's case against the company and its manager, and ordered it to pay USD 200 million. According to the judgement if the company defaults, it will forfeit all of its machines and other assets to the state. In July 2015, the ICSID found in favor of the company and awarded it \$23 million in damages, including legal costs. The Jammeh government did not comply with the ruling, maintaining its history of delaying or not complying with compensation rulings.

In the above cases, claimants alleged a lack of due process and compensation.

## Dispute Settlement

### *ICSID Convention and New York Convention*

The Gambia is a member of the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), but there is no specific legislation providing for enforcement of ICSID awards. There are no known cases of foreign courts rendering judgments affecting the government.

The Gambia is not a signatory to the New York Convention of 1958 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards.

### *Investor-State Dispute Settlement*

The Gambia is a signatory to the 1975 ECOWAS Treaty that was revised in 1993 toward the establishment of a Community Investment Code to harmonize investment rules. In cases of investor-state and state-state disputes, the parties can refer their cases to a national court or tribunal or, in the case of disagreement, to the ECOWAS Court of Justice.

The Gambia does not have a BIT or FTA with the United States.

Over the past 10 years, there has been only one trade dispute involving a U.S. person or other foreign investor. In June 2013, the government announced a ban on the importation of frozen poultry parts, which constituted the largest U.S. export to The Gambia, worth over USD 7 million a year. The ban was lifted in November 2013, but a statement issued by the Ministry of Trade imposed a new condition that all shipments of poultry products entering the country required Societe Generale de Surveillance (SGS) certification that they are hormone-free. This trade issue was resolved in early 2014. Later that year, in October, the government banned the importation of beef offal (liver and kidney) due to concerns over the manner in which it was handled and sold to the public. There was no distinction in the origins of these products but a significant amount of these imports come from the United States. The ban was lifted in December 2014.

Local courts do recognize and enforce foreign arbitral awards issued against the government. However, due to executive interference in previous years, local courts were not able to enforce foreign arbitral awards issued against the government. The current government is expected to recognize and enforce foreign arbitral awards issued against it.

The GOTG has taken extrajudicial action against foreign investors in the past. The last major dispute with foreign investors was with the Swiss group Alimenta over the assets of The Gambia Groundnut Corporation in 1998. This groundnut processing plant at Denton Bridge is the biggest industrial complex in the country, and its hostile takeover by the government in 1999 sparked a protracted legal battle. The government eventually settled out of court and paid Alimenta USD 11.2 million compensation; Alimenta discontinued the claim it had filed with ICSID.

#### *International Commercial Arbitration and Foreign Courts*

The Gambia is a member of the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), but there is no specific legislation providing for enforcement of ICSID awards. However, there is an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism as a means for settling disputes between private parties. The law creating the ADR mechanism was enacted in 2005 and the ADR Secretariat became fully operational in 2008.

Arbitration is governed by the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act of 2005, and is generally based on the UNCITRAL Model Law, with some provisions adapted from the UNCITRAL Rules. The Gambian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) is currently engaged in setting up a Dispute Resolution Center.

Local courts recognize, and can enforce foreign arbitral awards; however executive directives and interference prevented them from enforcing those awards in the past.



Reforms by the current political administration are expected to make it easier for these local courts to enforce foreign arbitral awards if the need arises.

Information on the percentage of cases that were ruled in the favor of SOEs is not available. There have been reports of complaints about the court processes which, during former President Jammeh's regime, tended to overwhelmingly rule in favor of the GOTG.

### Bankruptcy Regulations

Bankruptcy is covered by the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act of 1992. Creditors, equity shareholders, and holders of other financial contracts may file for both liquidation and reorganization. Bankruptcy is not criminalized in The Gambia.

### Industrial Policies

#### Investment Incentives

The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) Act, signed into law in 2010, sets out the administrative and legal requirements for investing in The Gambia and makes provisions for business incentives, protection against compulsory acquisition, settlement of disputes and the transfer of funds. The 2010 GIEPA Act specified criteria that investors must meet to qualify for special investment certificates.

Special Investment Certificate (SIC) applicants shall be granted incentives if engaged within any priority investment category as specified under the GIEPA Act for a period of eight years. Such investments will be entitled to the following incentives:

- Exemption from corporate tax and turnover tax;
- depreciation allowance;
- exemption from import value added tax; and
- exemption from import duty in respect of capital goods in accordance with the Customs and Excise Act, 2010.

#### Foreign Trade Zones/Free Ports/Trade Facilitation

The GIEPA Act provides for Export Processing Zones (EPZ) to be established in separate selected areas to which special customs territory status shall be conferred as well as for the establishment of single factory EPZs for which GIEPA will be the regulator. The aim of the EPZ is to build a conducive business environment for export oriented investment enterprises through the provision of additional incentives, simplifying the import-export procedures, and facilitating the acquisition of land, permits and licenses.

An area measuring 164 hectares at Banjul International Airport has been designated an Export Processing Zone (EPZ). There are also some bonded



warehouses at the Banjul port which have not yet been designated as EPZs.

An investor operating within an export processing zone that exports at least eighty percent of its output is exempted from the payment of:

- import or excise duty and sales tax on goods produced within or imported into an export processing zone unless the goods are entered for consumption into the customs territory;
- import duty on capital equipment;
- corporate or turnover tax; and
- municipal tax.

An investment enterprise located outside an export processing zone that exports at least thirty percent of its output is entitled to the following incentives:

- a ten percent corporate or turnover tax concession for five years;
- participation in training courses, symposia, seminars and workshops on export promotion;
- financial planning services and advice;
- export market research;
- advertisement and publicity campaigns in foreign markets; and
- product design and consultancy.

Incentives for investors in the EPZ are valid for maximum period of ten years. Foreign-owned firms have the same investment opportunities as local companies.

### Performance and Data Localization Requirements

The government mandates local employment. There is no legislation that applies this scheme to senior management and boards of directors.

The Government of The Gambia restricts the ability of foreigners to invest in The Gambia to the extent that the GIEPA Act states that “a person shall not invest in or operate an investment enterprise which is prejudicial to national security, detrimental to the natural environment, public health, or public morality, or which contravenes the laws of The Gambia.” The government does not pursue “forced localization,” requiring foreign investors to use domestic content in goods or technology. There is no known legislation in the investment policy of The Gambia that follows “forced localization” production methods. It is not difficult to obtain visas, residence, and work permits or other requirements inhibiting mobility of foreign investors and their employees.

Non-Gambians cannot exceed 20 percent of a company’s staff, according to the law. Companies are also required to pay an annual expatriate quota (or payroll tax) fee of GMD 10,000 (USD 256.40) for ECOWAS citizens and GMD 40,000 (USD 1,025.64) for all other foreigners. Such foreign workers are also required by law to pay an annual

registration fee of about USD 54 and a work permit fee of about USD 11. A regulation that set up the Expatriate Quota Board is intended to encourage businesses to hire qualified Gambian staff but is not targeted toward specific industries. If a company chooses to hire an expatriate for a job that can be done by a Gambian, they are required to pay the equivalent of USD 345 in tax annually. An amendment to the Payroll Tax Act approved by the National Assembly in April 2008 set the limit of non-Gambians that businesses can employ to 20 per cent, except in the case of specialized professionals. There have been no publicly issued statements on state intentions to maintain, increase, or decrease performance requirements.

The above performance requirements are required of both foreign and domestic investors. In theory, these are uniformly applied systematically to both domestic and foreign investors.

The Consumer Protection Act of 2014 prevents companies from freely transmitting customer or other business-related data outside The Gambia. Such measures do not exceed requirements applicable to data transferred within the country. There are no known laws that require foreign IT providers to turn over source code and/or provide access to encryption to the local government.

As mandated by the Competition Act of 2007 and the Consumer Protection Act of 2014, the GCCPC is the agency responsible for the enforcement of rules on local data storage within the country/economy. The GCCPC Enforcement Committee provides the agency with all the legal and enforcement expertise necessary for it to fulfill its mission of championing competition for growth and choice. Specifically, the Legal Committee Division takes the lead in enforcement action and applies rigorous legal analysis in all investigations and notifications under the Competition Act. It also undertakes critical review of the Competition Act, subsidiary legislation and the GCCPC guidelines, performs all in-house legal advisory work required in the execution of GCCPC's functions, and represents GCCPC in all court and appeal proceedings.

## Protection of Property Rights

### Real Property

Property rights and interests, though clearly protected under the laws, were not enforced under the old regime. However, the new administration has vowed to uphold the laws going forward. Mortgages and liens exist but are largely unused. The Department of Lands and Regional Government issues title deeds which are reliable. There are specific regulations regarding land lease or acquisition by foreign and/or non-resident investors. In 2007, the Lands Commission Act was established by the Ministry of Lands and Regional Government.

Section 14 of the act provides for the following functions: "A "The Commission shall:

- (a) advise the Secretary of State on political matters relating to land administration to ensure strict adherence to those policies and transparency in land allocations;
- (b) investigate disputes on land ownership and occupation in any area in The Gambia;
- (c) assess land rent and premium for properties within any area in The Gambia;
- (d) monitor the registration of properties and inspect land registers and records;
- (e) be responsible for all matters relating to national boundaries, including monitoring and reporting to the Secretary of State; and (f) perform such other functions as the Secretary of State may assign.

The exact proportion of land without clear title is not publicly available. However, all indications of land re-selling suggest that this figure is in excess of 10 percent. The GOTG is committed to identifying property owners and registering land titles. In 2013, the Land Governance Assessment Framework (LGAF) was launched to assess the number of lands without clear title, but to date, the LGAF implementation has been practically non-existent.

In the case of legally purchased property that is unoccupied, property ownership can revert to other owners under agreeable terms to both parties. Legal owners normally allow squatters to occupy empty lands until they are ready to begin construction, at which time disputes often result in the squatters and “other owners” being evicted.

### Intellectual Property Rights

The GOTG has taken several measures to ensure the protection of IP within The Gambia. Due to a lack of IP experts, the legal structure for IP protection is largely weak, thus there has been a history of infringement on rights in The Gambia. According to the Gambia Police Force (GPF), few IP crimes have been reported in The Gambia due to the lack of IPR experts in country. Reports of theft are low and so the phenomenon is relatively uncommon.

The Gambia is a signatory to both the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property and the Bern Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works. In 2003, the country enacted its own Copyright Act. This law provides adequate protection for intellectual property, patents, copyrights and trademarks. In 2005, the GOTG enacted the Business Registration Act. The Ministry of Justice also hosts the office of the registrar of Intellectual Property.

No new IP related laws or regulations have been enacted in The Gambia in the past year. There are also no reform bills pending in parliament. However, through the Ministry of Justice, the GOTG is currently in the draft stages of issuing an Intellectual Property and Trademarks Act. Since there has not been a history of IP prosecution in The Gambia, the extent to which the Act would improve/hinder the protection of IP rights is unknown, but the introduction of legislation is expected to promote greater competition in the economy.

In April 2017 The Gambia Police Force (GPF) announced that it will be establishing an Anti-Intellectual Property Crime Unit at the Police Headquarters in Banjul. The Gambia does keep track of seizures of counterfeit goods. However, there have been no recent reports of the government seizing counterfeit goods, despite the prevalence of counterfeit goods such as pirated movies, music CDs, toothpaste, and cigarettes imported from China.

The Gambia does not prosecute IPR violations.

The Gambia is not listed in USTR's Special 301 report, nor is it listed in the Notorious Market report.

## Financial Sector

### Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment

The GOTG encourages foreign portfolio investment but there is no effective regulatory system to encourage and facilitate portfolio investment. Sufficient liquidity does not exist in the markets to enter and exit sizeable positions. The Gambia does not have a stock market.

Existing policies do not facilitate the free flow of financial resources into the product and factor markets. However, while there are no existing policies broadly directed at facilitating the free flow of financial resources, there are no policies in place that impede such activity.

The private sector has access to a variety of credit instruments. Credit is allocated on market terms and foreign investors are able to get credit on the local market. The GOTG respects the IMF Article VIII obligations for member countries.

### Money and Banking System

The Gambian banking sector has experienced rapid growth over the past few years, driven by important foreign direct investment inflows and intensified competition, with the number of banks doubling between 2007 and early 2010. This growth has helped deepen financial intermediation, and credit provisioning to the private and public sectors has grown by around 4.5 percent a year over the period to reach 17 percent of GDP.

The microfinance sector has experienced significant growth in the past few years. By 2015, Village Savings and Credit Associations (VISACAs) and microfinance institutions (MFIs) reached approximately 90 per cent of households. As of March 2013 The Gambia received no long-term sovereign credit rating from any of the major credit rating agencies.

The Gambia banking sector is healthy. According to the Minister of Finance's December 2016 Budget Speech, as at the end of September 2016, the estimated total

assets of the 12 commercial banks in the country was GMD 31.3 billion (\$ 683.6 million). The Gambia has a central bank system.

There are no restrictions on a foreigners opening a bank account. Foreign banks or branches are allowed to establish operations in The Gambia. They are subject to the banking regulations of The Gambia. No correspondent banking relationships were lost in the past three years. No corresponding banking relationships are in jeopardy.

## Foreign Exchange and Remittances

### *Foreign Exchange*

There are no restrictions on foreign investors converting or repatriating funds in The Gambia. Investors can repatriate funds (e.g. profits and dividends) through commercial banks or licensed money transfer agencies at prevailing exchange rates.

Funds associated with any form of investment can be freely converted into any world currency in The Gambia. However, the Gambian Dalasi (GMD) is not readily convertible to foreign currencies in non-neighboring countries.

The national currency, the Dalasi (GMD), has a floating exchange rate that fluctuates, based on market forces.

### *Remittance Policies*

There have been no recent changes or plans to change investment remittance policies in The Gambia. There are no time limitations on remittances. There are no plans to tighten access to foreign exchange for investment remittances. Investors may repatriate profits and dividends through commercial banks or licensed money transfer agencies at prevailing exchange rates.

## Sovereign Wealth Funds

Neither the host government nor a government-affiliated maintains a Sovereign Wealth Fund.

## State-Owned Enterprises

SOEs are active in tourism, aviation, maritime services, public transport, power generation, water service, telecommunications, road building, and housing. All SOEs have a Board of Directors which is appointed by their line ministry. Members of the Board are usually comprised of key stakeholders in the sector and some government officials who serve as ex-officio members. Management reports to the line ministry, which has final responsibility to approve Board decisions. All SOEs are required to submit their annual report and audited accounts to the National Assembly. There is no publicly available directory which lists the number of SOEs that are wholly-owned, the number that are majority-owned, the total assets of SOEs, the total net income of SOEs, and the number of people employed by SOEs. Exact figures on the number of SOEs and the particulars of that ownership, including the total assets of those SOEs, total net income of SOEs, stake of the

government in those SOEs and the number of people employed by SOEs are not available. This is partially due to the fact that there is no published list of SOEs. SOEs competing in the domestic market do not receive non-market based advantages from the GOTG. U.S. investors are not affected by any form of non-market based advantages the GOTG provides to SOEs. SOEs in The Gambia generally adhere to the OECD Guidelines on Corporate Governance. By using the Guidelines to form an integral part in organizing good practices among their state-owned enterprise sectors, promoting the implementation of the Guidelines in establishing their ownership practices, defining a framework for corporate governance of state-owned enterprises, and disseminating this Recommendation of the Guidelines among Ministries. Additionally, the GOTG is open to a review by the Working Party on State Ownership and Privatization Practices and for follow up on the implementation of the OECD Council on Corporate Governance of State-Owned Enterprises' Recommendations. As recommended in the guidelines. The GOTG is also expected to report to the Council no later than five years following adoption in 2015.

There is no publicly available published list of SOEs. However, a publically available list of parastatals is [published online](#).

### Privatization Program

The Gambia does not utilize privatization programs. The new government has not announced the initiation of privatization programs.

### Responsible Business Conduct

The notion of corporate social responsibility is not well known in The Gambia and only some state-owned enterprises and some private companies such as banks and mobile phone companies adopt Responsible Business Conduct as a policy.

Gambian laws generally contain a provision that ensures social and environmental protection of its citizens, regardless of activity and its potential for income for the country. These domestic laws are actively and fairly enforced. Currently no national action plan on RBC has been enacted. Agencies that promote or enforce RBC include the Public Utilities Regulatory Agency (PURA), The Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (GCCPC), The Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA), The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI), the Standards Bureau, and the Gambia Revenue Authority. GCCP and the Standards Bureau in particular ensure the protection of investment stakeholders across diverse sectors of The Gambia.

The Gambia Standards Bureau was enacted in the 2010 Gambia Standards Bureau Act, but only began operations two years later in 2012. It was mandated to standardize methods and products produced in the Gambia. In 2015, the Director General of The Standards Bureau established the first Technical Committee (TC) on food which reviewed and adopted ten (10) standards on food and related matters in

The Gambia. The launching was announced at a briefing to the Public Accounts Committee/Public Enterprise Committee of the National Assembly where the Director General stressed that standards on food and connected issues, e.g. hygiene and labeling, were a top priority both for government and the public. In 2016, the Standards Bureau launched the National Quality Awards in collaboration with the West Africa Quality System Program (WAQSP). It aims to promote a quality culture within the public and private enterprises, and encourage quality performance in competition. The Bureau is currently formalizing the National Standards for Food Imports in The Gambia.

In the recent past, there have there been no high-profile, controversial instances of private sector impact on human rights. The Gambia has adopted several measures to support environmental protection and reducing the impact of environmental damage. Any project with potential environmental impact is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted by the National Environment Agency (NEA) before a license or permit is granted. These projects include hotels, roads, bridges, mining, large-scale agricultural projects, processing and manufacturing industries, fish processing, waste disposal, installation of electrical lines, etc. Despite its efforts to enforce domestic laws, the NEA is heavily underfunded and short of resources to implement adequate environmental protections.

According to the GIEPA Act, “The Government shall take all necessary measures to protect investments and the property of investors in accordance with the laws of The Gambia and the bilateral investment Treaties.” (Section 41). In most cases, the understanding of RBC is limited to the allocation of funds to charitable causes such as supporting schools and health projects, disaster relief, and environment enhancement. However, the banks and mobile phone companies often use such donations for publicity and marketing reasons. These firms are often viewed favorably by the Gambian public.

Foreign and local enterprises are encouraged to follow RBC principles such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Areas where natural resources are extracted are not subject to conflict; GOTG does not specifically promote the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Afflicted and High-Risk Areas.

The Gambia does have a budding extractives industry, but GOTG does not participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Standards or the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. There are no domestic transparency measures requiring the disclosure of payments made to government and/or of RBC/BHR policies or practices.



## Corruption

There are laws in place to combat corruption by public officials in The Gambia. These laws are largely ineffective because the committees which are commissioned to enforce them are yet to be fully established. In cases when trials are conducted, they are conducted in a non-discriminatory manner.

The anti-corruption laws of The Gambia extend to family members of officials and political parties alike. The anti-corruption laws of The Gambia contain laws or regulations that counter conflict-of-interest in awarding contracts or government procurement.

The GOTG encourages private companies to establish internal codes of conduct that prohibit bribery of public officials. The constitution of The Gambia calls for internal codes of conduct (Section 222), as do the OECD Guidelines on Corporate Governance to which The Gambia is a signatory. Private companies use internal controls and other programs to detect and prevent bribery of government officials.

The Gambia has signed and ratified the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences, but has not ratified the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions. In May 2014, The Gambia ratified the UN Anticorruption Convention.

During former President Jammeh's rule, the GOTG did not provide protections to NGOs involved in investigating corruption. However, such protections are likely as part of the new administration's pledge to take action regarding the African Union convention on preventing and combatting corruption.

At least one U.S. firm complained in 2016 of corruption as an obstacle to FDI. This was reported in the water resource management sector and involved a commercial dispute between the GOTG and a U.S. firm. The firm has since indicated that the new administration is taking steps to resolve the matter.

### Resources to Report Corruption

Contact at government agency or agencies are responsible for combating corruption:

Commanding Officer, Fraud & Commercial Crime Unit  
Gambia Police Force  
Police Headquarters  
ECOWAS Avenue  
Banjul, The Gambia  
(+220) 4223015 / 4222307



## Political and Security Environment

The Gambia experienced its first episode of politically motivated violence or civil disturbance since its Independence in 1965 in a failed military coup in 1981. In 1994, another military coup installed military dictator Yahya Jammeh, who ruled The Gambia until January 18, 2017. Former President Jammeh banned political activity, drafted a new constitution, and held a presidential election in 1996 which he won. In 1997 the new constitution was passed and the country transitioned back to civilian rule. Jammeh was re-elected president in all subsequent elections until the December 2016 Presidential elections, when he was defeated at the polls by a coalition of seven political parties. Jammeh's presidency was rife with politically motivated violence that included the arrest, torture, and killing of many citizens, forcing many, particularly youths, to flee the country.

On April 14, 2016 and again on April 16, 2016, Gambians took the streets in what the regime labeled "unauthorized demonstrations." Members of the country's largest political opposition party, the United Democratic Party (UDP), staged peaceful protests in the greater Banjul area, and several dozen UDP members, and even bystanders, were arrested, beaten, and held without charge in excess of 72 hours, the constitutionally mandated period beyond which no one should be held without charge. On July 20 and 21, 2016, thirty UDP supporters arrested during the protests were convicted and sentenced to three years imprisonment. During their incarceration, two detainees died in custody. These peaceful demonstrations were in retrospect the opening stages of a campaign against Jammeh that would lead to his December 1, 2016 electoral defeat.

On December 1, 2016 Gambians voted to remove President Jammeh and his Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) party that had ruled The Gambia for 22 years from power. On December 2, 2016 several cases of vandalism were reported in Serrekunda, in which elated Gambians tore down street sign posters that had even the slightest relation to Jammeh and the APRC, including privately sponsored billboards with images of Jammeh. Eight opposition parties and one independent candidate successfully contested the election under a coalition ticket.

In the 22 years of his brutal reign in power, Jammeh reduced the Gambian population to what Human Rights Watch described in 2016, as a "state of fear," that ultimately ironically bred a fearless determination to get rid of Jammeh. Human Rights violations were endemic across The Gambia and included several instances of impunity, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly, arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, and deaths in police and state custody.

Over the past ten years, there have been no examples of damage to projects and/or installations due to the political and security environment. After the coalition victory and Jammeh's departure in the face of an ECOWAS military intervention on January 21, 2017 a renewed sense of optimism returned to The Gambia with many of the diaspora returning, including many eager to invest. It also emboldened the populace to react and comment on events in the political arena. In the April 6, 2017

National Assembly election, the UDP won an overwhelming majority, and there were some reports of public clashes between supporters of the various political parties, particularly between the supporters of the Mandinka dominated UDP and the Jola dominated APRC. These clashes, and the UDP dominance in the government, have led to some fears of increasing tribalism and a politicized environment that could negatively affect development plans. Government officials have visited affected areas and have publicly condemned these clashes. The Jola dominated areas of the country (the Fonis), where former President Jammeh drew his principal support, remains somewhat volatile, but indications are that tolerance will prevail nationwide.

### Labor Policies and Practices

The Gambia's total economically active population is estimated at 400,000. The labor force participation rate is about 74 percent. About 75 percent are engaged in agriculture, 10 percent in industry, commerce, and services, and 8 percent in government. In the last labor force survey conducted in 2014, youth unemployment stood at 38 percent, while current figures are estimated to be in excess of 50 percent. The local workforce is affected by a lack of skills and knowhow; this gap is filled by foreign/migrant workers, mainly from Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, and Guinea Bissau.

The Gambia suffers from high unemployment and underemployment, compounded by a shortage of skilled workers and trained professionals. About 59 percent of the labor force has no formal education. Many of the skilled workers in the construction and mechanical industries are foreigners from neighboring ECOWAS countries. However, many Gambians are now taking up these trades.

The Empretec program in The Gambia is funded by UNDP and Government of the Gambia and anchored at GIEPA. Since September, 2014 when the first training was commissioned, Empretec center has trained over 736 entrepreneurs including 164 farmers, some of whom have started manifesting success in their businesses. The Business Development Sector (BDS) component has also trained 93 BDS advisers and 61 of whom are actively providing advisory services to 293 businesses. The Gambia Startup Incubator also trains young entrepreneurs on skills to manage their businesses.

The government policies that require the hiring of nationals are the following:

- The Labor Act of 2007
- The Payroll Tax Act of 2008
- The Companies Act of 2005
- The Business Registration Act of 2005

The Labor Act requires employers to disburse all remuneration and accrued benefits to an employee at the termination or completion of a contract. There are no restrictions on employers adjusting employment to respond to fluctuating market

conditions, including requirements with respect to severance. Workers laid off for economic reasons are entitled to receive a redundancy of six months regular remuneration. Labor laws in The Gambia do differentiate between layoffs and firing (w/ severance).

Labor laws are not waived in order to attract or retain investment. There are no additional/different labor law provisions in special economic zones, foreign trade zones or free ports compared to the economy as a whole. International labor rights, such as freedom of association, the elimination of forced labor, child labor employment discrimination and minimum wage, are recognized within domestic law.

Collective bargaining is especially common in the transportation and ports industry. The Gambia Workers Confederation, formed in 1985, coordinates union activities. Sectoral data on coverage of collective bargaining agreements by sector is not available.

The Gambia has a Labor Tribunal which is presided over by a Magistrate and a panel of members appointed by the Chief Justice, on the recommendation of the Secretary of State. The 2007 Labor Act of The Gambia also authorizes an appointed Labor Commissioner to authorize a public officer to assist in conciliation of labor disputes.

The Gambia experienced a labor strike at the Gambia Milling Corporation (GMC) that began on February 27, 2017. The workers protested against the management of the company, alleging unfair treatment. The workers had eight demands:

- i. Qualified Gambian Human Resource personnel to be appointed per Personnel Management policies;
- ii. That the company provide Medical insurance including family members and dependents;
- iii. Full time employment for contractors to employees after 6 months' probation period;
- iv. Salary increment and better incentive, including respect for employees and customers;
- v. Creation of a staff association;
- vi. Provide loan access to all employees;
- vii. That the company employ the right qualified people in the right positions; and
- viii. Provide transportation in the form of staff buses; provide Promotion and upgrading of staffs among other things.

On the 11th of April, staff of the GMC, Officials of the Department of Labour (DoL), the Human Resources Manager of GMC, the Workers' Union and the Lawyer of the Company held a meeting at the DoL but failed to find a solution. The Permanent

Secretary at the Ministry of Trade informed workers on the April 11, 2017 that the government has every intention of resolving the matter, and that the Minister of Trade would meet with all parties involved.

There are no gaps in compliance in law or practice with international labor standards that may pose a reputational risk to investors. However, child sex trafficking has been identified by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as an area where the law or practice falls short in comparison to international labor standards. No new labor related laws were enacted during the last year and there are no pending draft bills.

### OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs

There are currently no active OPIC projects in The Gambia. OPIC has considerable potential to make an influence in the following sectors: energy (oil exploration and exploitation; renewable energies, specifically solar); natural resources (heavy mineral sands); agriculture (rice and cereal production, but also processed foods); tourism (targeting American tourists); and finally (hard) infrastructure (roads, telecommunications systems, drainage systems, and bridges).

There is no OPIC agreement between The Gambia and the United States.

### Foreign Direct Investment and Foreign Portfolio Investment Statistics

Table 2: Key Macroeconomic Data, U.S. FDI in Host Country/Economy

	Host Country Statistical source*		USG or international statistical source		USG or International Source of Data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat; UNCTAD, Other
Economic Data	Year	Amount	Year	Amount	
Host Country Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (\$M USD)	2015	\$893	2015	\$938.8	<a href="#">World Bank</a>
Foreign Direct Investment	Host Country Statistical source*		USG or international statistical source		USG or international Source of data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat; UNCTAD, Other
U.S. FDI in partner country (\$M USD, stock positions)	N/A		N/A		<a href="#">BEA Data</a>

	Host Country Statistical source*	USG or international statistical source	USG or International Source of Data: BEA; IMF; Eurostat; UNCTAD, Other
Host country's FDI in the United States (\$M USD, stock positions)	N/A	N/A	<a href="#">BEA Data</a>
Total inbound stock of FDI as % host GDP	N/A	N/A	

\*Source: Central Bank of The Gambia

**Table 3: Sources and Destination of FDI**  
Country data not available.

<b>Direct Investment from/in Counterpart Economy Data</b>					
<b>From Top Five Sources/To Top Five Destinations (US Dollars, Millions)</b>					
<b>Inward Direct Investment</b>			<b>Outward Direct Investment</b>		
Total Inward	Amount	100%	Total Outward	Amount	100%
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

"0" reflects amounts rounded to +/- USD 500,000.

**Table 4: Sources of Portfolio Investment**  
Country data not available.

<b>Portfolio Investment Assets</b>								
<b>Top Five Partners (Millions, US Dollars)</b>								
<b>Total</b>			<b>Equity Securities</b>			<b>Total Debt Securities</b>		
All Countries	Amount	100%	All Countries	Amount	100%	All Countries	Amount	100%
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### Contact for More Information

Kebba-Omar Jagne

Economic/Commercial Specialist

Kairaba Avenue, Fajara. P.M.B. 19 Banjul, The Gambia /AIT

(220) 439-2856

PolEconBanjul@state.gov

## Trade & Project Financing

### Methods of Payment

Most commercial banks in The Gambia provide trade finance instruments such as letters of credit. These letters of credit usually need confirmation by a US commercial bank. However, since the cost of financing is generally high, bank-intermediated trade finance is not as common as in other countries. Open account arrangements for cross-border transactions are rare since few Gambian distributors are large enough to be known internationally. Consequently, many Gambian importers pay exporters directly before delivery. Unless there is a pre-existing relationship with a Gambian distributor, an open account arrangement is not recommended. US exporters are advised to use letters of credit or demand pre-payment. All major credit and charge cards are used in The Gambia, including Visa and MasterCard.

### Banking Systems

The Gambia has 12 commercial banks, one of which is an Islamic bank. The banking system is supervised by the Central Bank of The Gambia. The sector is dominated by subsidiaries of Nigerian banks. It should be noted that these subsidiaries are fairly independent of their parent institutions and are usually majority-owned by Gambian entities. The banking system is highly liquid and most banks are profitable. Most banks meet the regularity requirements of the central banks in terms of capital adequacy and liquidity. While the sector is profitable, the banks disproportionately depend on government assets (treasury bills). Lending to individuals and businesses is not high as interest rates are very high. There are no restrictions on foreign businesses opening accounts in The Gambia. Investors can repatriate funds through the banking system. There are no known features or rules/laws of The Gambia banking system that might impact U.S. businesses.

### Foreign Exchange Controls

The foreign exchange rate is a managed float. For the most part, the exchange rate fluctuates based on supply and demand. During the regime of former President Jammeh, the government occasionally intervened in the foreign exchange market. The most recent case involved the fixing of the exchange rate to the dollar, pound sterling and euro from May 2015 to January 2016. The current government of President Adama Barrow is not expected to interfere with the exchange rate, and poses no risk to U.S. businesses.

## US Banks & Local Correspondent Banks

There are no US banks currently operating in The Gambia. However, several Gambian banks have correspondent relationships with US banks that help facilitate the remittance of foreign currency funds. The Export-Import Bank of the United States has no known projects in The Gambia.

## Project Financing

The Gambia is a member of many multi-lateral development institutions, including the World Bank and the African Development Bank, as well as specialized multi-lateral UN institutions which provide the bulk of project financing in The Gambia. Both development banks have recently approved financing for GOTG led projects. As a condition for approving and financing projects, strict procurement rules are followed. Bidding for these procurements are open to US firms.

*Multilateral Development Banks:*

### **U.S. Commercial Service Liaison Offices at the Multilateral Development Banks (African Development Bank, World Bank)**

The Commercial Service maintains Commercial Liaison Offices in each of the main Multilateral Development Banks, including the African Development Bank and the World Bank. These institutions lend billions of dollars in developing countries on projects aimed at accelerating economic growth and social development by reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and education, and advancing infrastructure development. The Commercial Liaison Offices help American businesses learn how to get involved in bank-funded projects, and advocate on behalf of American bidders. Learn more by contacting the [Commercial Liaison Offices to the African Development Bank](#) and the [World Bank](#).

### **Web Resources**

[Commercial Liaison Office to the African Development Bank](#)

[Commercial Liaison Office to the World Bank](#)

### Financial Web Resources

[International Trade Administration](#)

[Export-Import Bank of The United States](#)

[Overseas Private Investment Corporation \(OPIC\)](#)

[International Finance Corporation](#)

[African Development Bank](#)



## Business Travel

### Business Customs

Business attire in The Gambia is a combination of traditional dresses and western business outfits. The country is conservative, so attire should be on the conservative side. Exchanging business cards during first meeting is common and frequently expected. Gift exchanges among business partners or acquaintances are not common.

### Travel Advisory

Travelers are recommended to consult with the [State Department](#) for the latest travel advisories.

### Visa Requirements

US citizens need visa to travel to The Gambia. The Gambia has an embassy in the U.S. Information on requirements can be found here:

[The Gambian U.S. Embassy](#)

### Currency

The Gambia's local currency is the Dalasi (GMD), and it is the only currency used in day to day transactions. International transactions are usually quoted in US dollars. The dalasi is convertible with other currencies. Most local ATMs accept US-issued credit and debit cards with Visa and MasterCard logos, but only dispense the local currency. Travelers' checks are rarely used, and therefore travelers are not recommended to rely on them.

### Telecommunications/Electric

Internet connection in The Gambia has been improving. The country recently connected to the ACE undersea cable, which has significantly improved internet connection speed. Mobile penetration rate is high (over 100 percent), and there are 4 mobile phone operators (Africell, Gamcel, Qcell and Comium). Direct international telephone calls can be made on all phone lines. The country code is 220. All the major mobile phone companies provide data services (3G) that allow reasonably good internet connection. All major hotels have internet connections.

The electric current supplied in The Gambia is 220-240 volts, and the primary socket type is the British BS-1363. However, adaptors are easy to find at local electronic stores.

## Transportation

*Air Transport:* Banjul International Airport is a small airport with only a few daily flights. The main direct flights are to Brussels, Casablanca, Dakar, London, Lagos and Nouakchott. During the tourist season (November to April), several chartered flights from Europe serve the country. There are no direct flights to the U.S. The best ways for U.S. travelers to reach the country are through Casablanca, Dakar, London or Brussels. Further information on airport transport can be assessed on: [www.banjulairport.com](http://www.banjulairport.com)

*Sea Port:* The Gambia port is serviced by several major lines including CMA- CGM/Delmas, Maersk, MSC and Grimaldi. Most of the ships that dock at the port are smaller vessels arriving from major transshipment ports such as Casablanca and Malaga.

*Ground Transport:* The quality of road infrastructure in the country is low. An increasing number of roadway construction projects have begun since the change of government in January 2017. In addition, the River Gambia bisects the country, and the absence of a bridge that fully spans it is a major source of delay in traveling across the country. However, a bridge financed by the African Development Bank is currently under construction, despite major setbacks. Small taxis operating within the major towns are painted in yellow, with green stripes on the sides. These taxis do not have meters. Most taxis run on fixed routes with fixed fares, but fares for specific destinations can be negotiated. Several car rental agencies operate in the country, and an arrangement with one of these is recommended for extensive local travels.

## Language

The official language in The Gambia is English, and it is spoken by a large number of people in urban areas. The other major common languages are Wolof, Mandinka, and Fula. Almost all signs are written in English.

## Health

While the country has many hospitals and clinics, few meet basic international standards or have state-of-the-art facilities. Most will not accept international or foreign health insurance cards, and will therefore require upfront cash payment. There are a large number of small pharmacies that sell medications (mostly generics) with or without prescriptions. Malaria is endemic in the country and it is therefore recommended that US travelers bring prophylactics. Travelers are recommended to travel with their yellow fever vaccination cards. While the document is not always required at airport entry, it is occasionally requested.

## Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

The time zone of the country is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). The Gambia does not observe daylight savings time. Therefore, the time difference with US time zones changes during the year. For example, there is a 4-hour difference with Eastern Standard Time when daylight savings is in effect and a 5-hour difference when it is not. Government offices open from Monday to Thursday, 8:00am to 4:00pm and Fridays from 8:00am to 12:30pm during a normal week. Most private businesses operate from Monday to Saturday.

The national holidays are:

New Year's Day	1 January
Independence Day	18 February
Good Friday	14 April
Easter	17 April
Labour Day	01 May
Africa Liberalization Day	25 May
Eid el Fitr	No fixed date (1st day of 10th month of the Islamic Lunar calendar)
Eid el Adha	No fixed date (10th day of 12th month of the Islamic Lunar calendar)
Revolution Day	22 July
Assumption Day	15 August
Yoamul Ashora	No fixed date (10th day of 1st month of the Islamic Lunar calendar)
Mawlud Nabi	No fixed date (12th day of the 3rd month of the Islamic Lunar calendar)
Christmas	25 December

## Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings

With the exception of goods on transit, the requirements for the entry of temporary goods are the same as goods being brought in permanently.

## Web Resources

[The Gambian Embassy in the US](#)

[The U.S. Embassy in The Gambia](#)

[State Department](#)

[CIA World Fact Book](#)

[Official Gambia Website](#)