

The Gambia



FACTS & FIGURES

Country name:
Conventional long form:
Republic of The Gambia
Conventional short form:
The Gambia

Location:
Western Africa, bordering
the North Atlantic Ocean
and Senegal

Area – comparative:
Slightly less than twice the
size of Delaware

Climate:
Tropical; hot rainy season
(June to November); cooler
dry season
(November to May)

Population:
1,735,464
(July 2008 est.)

**GDP
(purchasing power
parity):**
\$1.338 billion (2007 est.)

GDP – real growth rate:
7% (2007 est.)

Industries:
Processing peanuts, fish,
and hides; tourism,
beverages, agricultural
machinery assembly,
woodworking, metalworking,
clothing

Exports – commodities:
Peanut products, fish,
cotton lint, palm kernels,
re-exports

Exports – partners:
India 38.6%, UK 15.9%,
Indonesia 7.9%, France 7%,
Italy 4.6% (2006)

Source: CIA World Factbook

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▶▶▶ THE GAMBIA RIVER HAS MARKED THE LIVES OF THE 1.7 MILLION RESIDENTS OF THIS TINY NATION. HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO, SLAVE TRADERS USED IT TO ACCESS THE FORTRESS ON JAMES ISLAND. TODAY, WITH NEW BRIDGES AND DAMS PLANNED, THE RIVER HAS ANOTHER MEANING: MODERNIZATION. BUT PERHAPS ITS MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION? TRANQUILITY



President of The Gambia Yahya Jammeh, who was re-elected for his third term in 2006

A history of peace

THE GAMBIA RIVER is a dominating feature of life in The Gambia. This great West African river stretches from the country's Atlantic coast 186 miles into its interior, dividing residents into north or south bank inhabitants. Steamers can navigate the river for 140 miles inland, which, for the first 80 miles, is fringed with mangrove-covered banks, later giving way to red cliffs topped with green vegetation. Dotted with ferries, fishermen in dugout canoes and cutters loaded with groundnuts, the river offers the occasional glimpse of hippopotami and crocodiles surfacing, and baboons playing along its banks.

Alex Haley, who wrote the American novel *Roots*, said that it was the Gambia River that helped him trace his ancestors. Of the few African words passed down in his family, *Kamby Bolongo* had survived. He discovered that *bolongo* was a moving water, or river, in Mandinka, the language of The Gambia's main ethnic group. Later, when he traveled to Jaffure, a village on the north bank of the river, his theory was confirmed. The Mandinka language does not have a 'g' sound; the river is thus pronounced *Kambiya* rather than *Gambia*.

The tranquility of the river is reflected in

the peaceful nature of those who reside along its banks. Located around the flood plains of the Gambia River, and occupying an area roughly half the size of Maryland, is Africa's smallest nation. Geographically surrounded by Senegal on all sides except for its 50 miles of Atlantic coastline, The Gambia is one of West Africa's most peaceful nations, and according to the World Economic Forum, one of the top three least corrupt countries on the continent.

The nation's love for peace extends beyond its borders. The Gambia has played an important role in regional peace processes – it recently hosted the African Union Summit, and President Yahya Jammeh, who was reelected for his third term in 2006, has been actively involved in mediating the Guinea-Bissau peace process and ensuring stability in the Senegalese region of Casamance.

"Peace and stability are indispensable pre-requisites for human development. Without them, we cannot move forward," states the President. "If we live according to tribes, there is bound to be conflict; and if we live based on races, there's bound to be racism. Our diversity in color and cul-

ture is the strength of humanity, and as far as we are concerned, religion should be a unifying factor rather than a dividing factor."

The stability that has reigned in The Gambia since President Jammeh assumed power in 1994 has allowed the country the freedom to achieve significant economic progress. Today, The Gambia boasts a liberal, market-based economy, a growing tourism industry and a thriving re-export trade built around its port. Growth has been above 6% for the last few years, infrastructure has been strengthened and continues to be expanded, and the country is open to foreign investment. Bold steps are being taken to ensure the country's goal of achieving developed status by 2020.

"To achieve Vision 2020, we must ensure that our citizens acquire the skills required through quality education. That is the strategy. It is not just about reaching Vision 2020 but sustaining it," says the President. "Next, we must create an environment conducive to development, an atmosphere that gives investors confidence, and one in which the private sector is the engine of growth. For the private sector to be competent and realize its potential, there must be a transparent relationship with the government. Whatever we do in this country is in partnership with the private sector, and the private sector is indispensable in the achievement of Vision 2020.

"This country has always been cited as the smallest country on earth. However, good things can come from small countries like ours. My vision was to make The Gambia one of the best countries in the world. If a small country like Singapore can do it, why not The Gambia? My hope was to make the smallest country on earth the best country on earth. To this day, that is the vision that I have."

ECONOMY BUILDS MOMENTUM

IMF, Paris Club applaud, debt relief granted

The ability to reach its fiscal targets has endeared the country to world creditors

IN DECEMBER of 2007, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted The Gambia a milestone debt relief package worth \$140 million. In a statement at the time, the IMF said that the country had made sufficient progress in strengthening tools to boost growth and combat poverty, and had reached a "completion point" under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

In January of 2008, the Paris Club followed suit. The club of creditors, representing 19 of the world's richest countries, reached a deal with the Gambian government to cancel \$11.6 million of the country's total \$40 million debt. The real icing on the cake came, however, in March when the IMF announced that The Gambia had met the requirements for full debt relief, and that the country was well placed to consolidate and deepen its poverty reduction strategy while maintaining strong gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

The fact of the matter is that the Gambian economy has proved remarkably resilient over the past three years, backed by strong monetary policy from the central bank and growing macroeconomic stability. The economy grew at an average 6.4% between 2003 and 2006, and was estimated at 7% last year, buoyed by a 11.3% increase in the service sector's value-added production. Furthermore, efforts to diversify the economy through tourism and re-exports have been successful in broadening the country's export base, fuelled by rising levels of foreign direct investment (FDI).

"The recent economic growth in The Gambia has been driven by the services sector; mainly in the field of telecommunications, construction, and tourism," confirms the central bank's governor,

Momodou Bamba Saho. "All these have been driven by significant flows of FDI. To a certain extent, this is due to the strong macroeconomic stability in The Gambia. The government has implemented significant reforms over the past few years, both in the Central Bank and the Department of State for Finance, as well as the other sectors, to make sure that we achieve and maintain this macroeconomic stability. Our fiscal position was also strengthened significantly. In 2007, for the first time in a decade, we had a fiscal surplus. We have been able to restore the confidence of foreign investors in the economy. All these are factors that have contributed to the growth in the economy."

All this has had a positive effect on the national currency, the Dalasi. In 2007, it appreciated nearly 20% against the U.S. Dollar. 2008 forecasts are for the Gambian currency to remain stable. Saho comments, "As a result of the appreciation of the Dalasi, we are able to keep prices low. That has had a positive impact in terms of inflation, which is still single-digit. If you look at other places around the world, the price of oil and food has gone up significantly. In The Gambia, we have been able to keep prices in check."



MOMODOU BAMBA SAHO
Governor of the Central Bank

Intercom Ltd. would like to extend a special thank you to:

- ▶ **His Excellency, President ALHAJI Dr YAHYA A.J.J. JAMMEH**
President of the Republic of The Gambia
- ▶ **ALHAJI MOMODOU SANYANG**
Director General of the Gambia Radio & Television Services
- ▶ Management team of **GAMPETROLEUM**

- ▶ **Mr. MICHAEL TENN**
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The Gambia

New super bank offers development financing and conventional banking



From left to right: Dodou Bammy Jagne, Deputy General Manager, Niania Dabo, Head of Retail Banking, and Mohamed Khaled Shalbek, General Manager

FOLLOWING MEMBERSHIP IN THE Sahelo-Saharan (CEN-SAD) Community, comprised of 26 countries in the region, The Gambia also became a member of the group's regional bank, Banque Sahelo-Sahérienne Pour L'Investment et Le Commerce (BSIC). The bank group, which is chaired by Alhadi Alwarfalli, now boasts twelve affiliate banks operating in Libya, Chad, Mali, Niger, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Benin, Togo, Senegal, The Gambia, Ghana and Central Africa, and plans are to have affiliates in most member countries within five years.

BSIC is a super bank as it is chartered to provide services as a development bank for the medium- and long-term financing of projects in cooperation with other regional and international financial institutions and specialized investment guarantee institutions, such as WABD, ADB, IDB, FAGACE, GARI, and FSA, with an emphasis on poverty reduction. The bank also offers full conventional banking.

According to BSIC General Manager Mohamed Khaled Shalbek, "The main purpose for setting up the bank was to contribute to The Gambia's economic development in line with the government's Vision 2020." Consequently, the bank offers products and services that are far more competitive than any other bank operating in the market. This is possible because the bank's capital of €500 million is backed by shareholder CEN-

Sad member states. In The Gambia, President Yahya Jammeh himself gave the green light for Secretary of State for Finance and Economic Affairs M.G. Balla Gaye to acquire shares on behalf of the government.

Deputy general manager, Dodou Bammy Jagne, says, "The duality of BSIC's charter makes it distinctly unique but also heightens its responsibility to ensure that through their operations, BSIC will be a key actor in the transformation of the economy." Head of retail banking, Niania Dabo, adds: "Within the next five years, we want to be a major contributor towards bringing interest rates down in the economy." Already, BSIC has set new standards by significantly reducing the minimum deposit for savings accounts to almost a quarter of the industry rate, proving that, indeed, BSIC Gambia is the 'people's bank'.

Shalbek says that BSIC plans to introduce Visa Cards and Electronic Payment Services shortly in The Gambia's cash-driven economy. He invites the Gambian diaspora and international investors to join in and grow with BSIC.

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SSHFC

'A catalyst for development'

The state social security agency is investing heavily in The Gambia's economy, and is a prime mover in the construction sector where opportunities for partnerships abound



ONE OF THE GAMBIA'S largest financial institutions is not a financial institution per se, but the country's Social Security and Housing Finance Corporation (SSHFC).

With net profits of \$94 million last year and stakes in most of the country's banks, SSHFC, whose funds are worker-held, has activities in both social security and housing development as well as being a major investor in the national economy.

"By far, our biggest portfolio is the social security component," says Managing Director Tumbul K. Danso. "Because of the amalgamation of all the resources in these companies, we are the number one financial institution in the country. We are far bigger than all the banks operating in The Gambia. Because of that, we have strong links with almost all the financial institutions.

"In addition, we have been actively investing in housing projects since 1982, and we are the biggest provider of mass housing in the country."



SSHFC oversees the entire project management for its housing developments

Danso adds that SSHFC has also invested heavily in the central bank's treasury bills, where the institution boasts of the largest portfolio of T-bills. Apart from its involvement in the country's financial sector (SSHFC owns 37% of Trust Bank Ltd, 16% of Standard Chartered Bank, and 23% of AGI Bank), SSHFC also has equity investments in many of the country's small- and medium-sized companies, effectively providing capital support to a number of budding industries.

"This way, we are able to ensure that some of these companies that are not doing very well can pick themselves up and start operating successfully," says the managing director.

SSHFC also generates economic activity through its housing developments, creating employment in construction and stimulating related industries such as building materials. The agency oversees the entire project management on its projects from hiring contractors to managing mortgages.

The agency is keen on involving private companies in its activities. Danso says, "We are very interested in any viable partnership. We see ourselves as a catalyst for development, and we keep ourselves open to all sorts of opportunities."

www.sshfc.gm

Building the gateway to Africa

Bridges, roads, buildings, railway, ports and airports: The Gambia is flexing its infrastructure strength, laying, in the process, the foundations to support Vision 2020 and its bid to establish itself as a regional trade gateway.

'As far as infrastructure is concerned, we have the port and airport expansion, the bridge work across the country, and private contractors can invest in them or become the financiers,' says the man overseeing all this construction frenzy



Nearly 90% of The Gambia's trade now flows through the Port of Banjul, which is growing at an unprecedented rate



CIVIL AVIATION & PORTS AUTHORITY

Sometimes, small is beautiful

While Banjul International Airport is making strides in setting itself apart from regional competitors, the Port of Banjul continues to make its own waves

FANSU BOJANG has big plans for Banjul International Airport. The director general of the Civil Aviation Authority wants to see the airport establish itself as a regional base for long haul flights. He wants to see regional air connectivity increase. He wants the airport to take on a greater role in stimulating regional trade. And he wants to establish a Gambian-based carrier. His ambitions are not misplaced.

First of all, Banjul Airport still has excess capacity with room to take on a number of new flights. The airport has and continues to undergo expansion and modernization, which has made it one of the region's best. The Civil Aviation Authority is also a

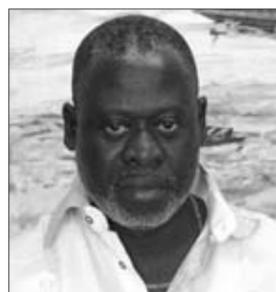
regional benchmark, and the security level at Banjul is one of Africa's highest. The airport has been cleared for flights to the States by the FAA, and participates in the Open Skies agreement. Banjul also offers the lowest tariffs in the region, which include the exemption of landing and take-off charges in some cases. The airport has a new Free Zone, just operational, with state-of-the-art infrastructure. In short, it has more than a handful of advantages over other regional airports to become a West African air hub, and this is exactly what the government has been aiming for.

"A good air transport system is more than significant for the economic growth for any country. The Gambian government has provided an opportunity for this, and The Gambia is a country that needs it," says Bojang. "That is why we pay particular attention to quality in terms of both infrastructure and service. Although we are accessible by land, we are on the Atlantic coast of Africa. By our nature, we need air access, really, not only for regional integration, but also for intercontinental accessibility. Therefore, we have put a lot of emphasis on the development of this sector so that Banjul becomes easily accessible both by air and by sea."

Air service is particularly important in developing nations such as The Gambia as it allows the country to develop its trade activities even though road infrastructure may be weak. "The state of the road service is a well-known fact and it hampers the movement of trade in terms of people and goods, therefore a reliable air access in terms of credible and reliable airlines is a must if we are to promote regional integration," adds Bojang. "Along the way, we will look at the road service, and at some point they also need to be brought up to speed to improve on the efficiency of the movement of goods and services."

Until then, the government is investing heavily in Banjul Airport, which since 1994 has received a new terminal building and a new tower. The airport's runway is now being resurfaced and lighting has been placed along it. Next up is a new fire service station, expansion of the airport's existing capacity and renewal of the entire navigation and communication aid system. In short, the airport is an attractive base for airlines looking for stopover points on the west coast.

"We have excess capacity and that is one of our strongest selling points now in



MUHAMMED LAMIN GIBBA
Managing Director, Gambia Ports Authority



FANSU BOJANG
Director General, Civil Aviation Authority

addition to having one of the most competitive airports in the region," says Bojang. "Congestion is not a problem. We can provide turnaround for most airlines we use here. We also have specialized packages for new airlines that are wishing to establish operation to Banjul or from Banjul to other destinations. Sometimes we give up to a 50% annual discount on some of the existent tariffs or complete free-landing in extreme cases. Normally, however, we would work with airlines and look at the cost and core structure to see what we could do as a tarmac to help them accept the high costs that are associated with starting operations."

Looking ahead, the biggest challenge for the airport is to establish a credible long haul airline based in the country, according to Bojang, who says that once that is achieved, the rest is history. "We can get to South Africa through a Gambian airline. It is certain to divert almost all the North American and European flights through Banjul." The other side of the coin in The Gam-

THE GAMBIA IS a country under construction. You can see it wherever you look: to the west, the port is growing, scurrying to keep up with rising demand. Around the capital, the airport is gleaming with new facilities, a repaved and newly-lit runway and a new Free Zone. Along both banks of the Gambia River, heavy machinery grinds daily to lay new roads. New hotels, new buildings and new homes are going up, and they are bigger and better quality than ever.

The country's Vision 2020, in which it aims to be a modern, developed state by that year, is literally visible on a daily basis. Lamin A. Bojang is The Gambia's Secretary of State for Infrastructure, Works and Construction. In short, he is the man charged with overseeing this beehive of activity. Here he speaks on the most important developments now going on in the country, and what opportunities exist for foreign companies to become involved.

Infrastructure is fundamental to the modernization and competitiveness of a nation, and is the first thing an investor will look at. What is current state of infrastructure in The Gambia?

When it comes to road transport, right now we are building

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

Stability

A Bank that Stands for Stability

The Central Bank of The Gambia is strongly committed to achieving and maintaining price and exchange stability underpinned by a sound and vibrant financial system as its contribution to sustainable economic development and increasing investor confidence.

Central Bank of The Gambia www.cb.gm

The Gambia

CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

the roads on the south end [of the river], so within 12 or 18 months, you will be able to reach any part of the country by car. We are also working on the airport. We aim to have an airport that is as good as any airport in the region in the sense of size and with state-of-the-art infrastructure. We have a good ICAO rating. Even the FAA has given us security clearance. This is very important for us. These days security for airports is very important. If you do not have that kind of clearance, you cannot operate fully; fortunately for us, we have it. You can depart from Gambia to any destination in the West. We ensure that security is guaranteed. We have a good port too, and right now we have a project for port expansion. The only aspect of the infrastructure which we have not addressed yet is the river port. There is still no construction on that. We are also looking at the possibility of putting a railway system in place. This has to try to link up with the hinterland of the West of Africa from Senegal all the way to Mali.

What is the priority at the moment?

Right now, the priority is road construction. It is a huge project. The roads need a lot of maintenance. The network had been left to decay. Much of it just fell apart. We are trying to

implement a better maintenance system. We are hoping to connect communities that have never had roads before. The key role of this department is to make sure that the road network will be reinstated, and we have two contracts at the moment. One end section is being built by Kharafi Group. It is important to have another investor there. It would make a big difference as both banks of the river would be fully covered.

What opportunities are available for foreign investors?

One of the projects we are looking at is building a major bridge to Senegal. Senegal has two sides, the north and the south, and it has to cross that. Transport traffic is high so this is one of the main things we are working on. As far as infrastructure in concerned, we have the port and airport expansion, and the bridge work across the country, and private contractors can invest in them or become the financiers. One of the key things that our president has in mind is the development of a government that allows



LAMIN A. BOJANG
Secretary of State for Infrastructure,
Works and Construction

the private sector to lead in the country. The private sector is really taking the lead role in driving the economy.

Is the necessary infrastructure in place to support the Gateway Project, which seeks to establish the country as a major export and trade center?

I think there is still room for improvement. We have developed the Free Zone at the airport. We have warehouses there, and that is part of the infrastructure. I think a lot of work can still be done in that area, though. We will take the initiative to develop this. There is a lot of land that is well placed both for airport and seaport. This can develop fast into an expanded area for the free zones.

In 2006, the construction sector grew by 40%. Do you think this growth will continue?

When we look at the construction sector, we have more or less two sectors. We have the construction of roads or bridges. Those are big projects, in which we are able to use international con-

tractors. Then we have a lot of small and medium-sized contractors, who are highly-skilled. That is one of the sectors that is moving very fast and creating a lot of employment. It is not only in the tourism sector either, but also in the private sector. There is a lot of construction going on. Houses are being built. The economy is very vibrant. The thing about this country is mortgages are not freely available, unlike developed countries. Here it comes from your pocket. If there is a lot of building going on, that means people have a lot of money. What's more, the kind of houses that we have been building in the last 15 or 20 years are not the same as the ones we are building today. They have become more attractive and more expensive. That means something good is happening in the economy. It is a good indicator.

With so much growth going on, what do you see as your biggest challenge in the future?

The big challenge for me is funding. It is an issue. The major development and projects in works and infrastructure, we will accomplish in time. We are also involved in an urban infrastructure project now as the urban sector is expanding very fast and infrastructure is not catching up. One of the biggest challenges for the future will be to develop urban infrastructure that provides quality of life. So, urban infrastructure is another challenge.

KHARAFI GROUP

Integrated, independent, international

Global contracting giant Kharafi Group has a presence throughout Africa, arriving in The Gambia in 2003, where it has a number of mega-projects underway to boost development

YOU START OUT in the Balkans. Catch a flight in Sofia Airport, Bulgaria, hop on over to Albania, landing in the snow at Rinas Airport. It's cold but you've got some comfort in mind. You're booked at the Sheraton Tirana Hotel & Towers. A cab travels over the 25 kilometers or so to the city center and you're getting the five-star treatment in no time. After a drink in one of the bars, you go for a swim. For dinner, you've got a treat planned—the Chateau Linza on the outskirts of the city near Dajti Mountain. As you dine on some of the best gourmet food in those parts, your gaze lingers on the lights of Tirana spread like jewels before you.

No time to waste, though. You've got business in Beirut. You pick up your rental in the underground parking at Beirut International Airport and speed off to the Four Seasons. Next day, you're driving down the Latakia Ariha Highway in Syria on your way to Aleppo. More business. You check into the Bab Al-Faraj Sheraton. Next it's the Marsa Alam International Airport in Egypt, some diving while you stay at the Coral Beach Al-Arish Resort, a layover in the Male International Airport in The Maldives before on to South Africa, where you stay in the Sheraton in Pretoria. Finally, you arrive in The Gambia.

You touch down at Banjul International Airport, your window offering tantalizing glimpses of the North Atlantic. You head for the five-star Kairaba Beach Hotel & Resort, and the golden sands of Kololi beach, just twenty minutes from the airport in the Kombos tourist area. After checking in, you visit the health club. Then it's another dip in the pool, where you have a drink at the pool bar. It's been a great trip, and one that has, in fact, been brought to you by Kuwait's Kharafi Group—the company that built all of the above.

A multi-national company with an annual turnover of \$5 billion and a workforce of over 100,000 employees working in 28 countries, Kharafi Group (MAK) is a Grade A international contractor. Not only the name behind a number of the world's airports and hotels, Kharafi Group has also constructed many of its hospi-

tals, housing developments, irrigation systems, water treatment plants, oil and gas pipelines and ports. MAK is a majority shareholder in Americana, the largest and most successful restaurant and food manufacturing company in the Middle East, owner of Albania Airlines, and has majority investments in a number of Kuwait's leading financial institutions and listed companies. Its diversified activities worldwide include infrastructure development, real estate, agro-industries, manufacturing, investment and tourism development.

Active, of course, in Kuwait and the greater Gulf region, where it was founded as a trading company more than 100



years ago, Kharafi has established a growing presence in south-eastern Europe, the Caribbean and Africa, arriving in The Gambia in 2003.

Mohamed Nagaty, West Africa area manager for the group, says that The Gambia is promising, and in comparison to its neighbors, very progressive. "We are very optimistic about the growth of the country, and we expect to develop more projects. Really, I am impressed. The country is very open. The government is very helpful in terms of promoting investment and providing the environment conducive for business. It is one of the better countries in this regard."

Nagaty says Kharafi, which currently has projects in construction, tourism and agriculture in The Gambia, initially entered the country to fulfill a corporate mission of contributing to development in lesser developed regions. "It's not just about making a profit," he adds. "We are creating opportunities and generating employment. 99% of the manpower that we use is local. We promote knowledge

transfer and leadership on how to construct complicated projects."

In infrastructure development, Kharafi has been building highways on both the north and south banks of the Gambia River. The south bank road construction in particular, says Nagaty, should help ease transport in the country, and allow Gambians better access to the interior as well as to neighboring Senegal. Kharafi is also the main contractor on the Banjul Airport renovation, phase one of which it expects to complete this spring. Comprising a complete runway upgrade (the Gambian airport has one of the longest runways in Africa), the work will enable greater flight capacity for the capital's airport, effectively boosting tourism.

"Other than road projects, we are also involved in the first branded 5-star project in The Gambia, the Sheraton. We are the employer and the contractor, working with Starwood. It was a \$45 million project, and this is its first year of operations. So far, it has helped promote tourism, attracting a whole new breed of tourists into the country. It also gives The Gambia an edge in hosting the African Summit successfully."

It is in agriculture, however, that Kharafi is perhaps making its most significant mark in the country. It has invested more than \$6 million in farms and packaging plants that produce a variety of fresh vegetables for export to Europe. More importantly, they also provide food security at home.

Nagaty comments, "There should be fewer problems in terms of importing food and dealing with the complications of transport. If you have a steady source of food internally, you are safe. This is one of the reasons behind this strategic decision. Secondly, the country will save a lot in terms of foreign currency because they do not have to import. Thirdly, we are generating employment. This is quite labor-intensive, especially in terms of harvesting, packing, etc. Fourthly, we intend to train the surrounding farmers or villagers in how to plant onions and potatoes so they can do it on their own in their own farms in order to improve local production."

NAWEC

Raising investor confidence and developing infrastructure



AS THE GAMBIA'S ECONOMY flourishes, demands for energy, water and sewerage services to fuel and nourish development projects increases. The National Water and Electricity Company Limited (NAWEC) has the important role of overseeing that those demands are met in a timely and efficient fashion. Thus far, the state-owned company has done very well with limited resources; however, it would like foreign investors to step in and collaborate in the process of extending water, electricity, and sewerage services to all corners of the country.

"Electricity is the driving force behind development. Unreliable electricity supply affects all sectors," observed Momodou Jallow, managing director for NAWEC. He and other officials know that if they want to support The Gambia's economic growth they will need to get power to more areas of the country.

Involvement from the private sector has already worked well in The Gambia. The government commissioned the construc-

tion of a private power plant and saw its investment completed and operational seven months later. The addition of the 25MW plant gave Gambians a solid foundation to build upon. "We now have a reliable 24 hour electricity supply from NAWEC, which we believe will bring back investor confidence in the country," Mr. Jallow said. The government is following up the success of the project with additional investments that will add more than 20 megawatts.



The Kotu power plant has made a reliable, 24-hour electricity supply possible.

While officials would be happy to receive further investment in the sector to supply the whole country, their focus is more on the transmission and distribution infrastructures. "There are a lot of people within the greater Banjul area and the western region who need electricity but are outside the network coverage area. This is why we need some investments in the transmission and distribution network as soon as possible."

The Gambia is now ahead of most of its neighboring countries in terms of coverage. More than 40 percent of the country is covered. Bringing electricity to the majority of regions where it is unavailable is a major priority and part of a national grid plan. There has been talk of introducing alternative energy sources such as wind and solar energy to rural communities.

As far as legal guarantees go, Mr. Jallow said: "We have the legal framework and a regulator in place. It encourages the participation of investors and assures them that we have systems in place that safeguard their investments, guaranteeing free and fair competition once they are ready to participate."

CFAO

The leader in specialized distribution in Africa

With a presence in 33 African countries, CFAO sold nearly 70,000 new cars last year and delivered 136 million boxes of medicine

"THE GROUP WAS CREATED IN 1887 in Marseille, France. It was a trading company at this time and the first branch was set up in St. Louis du Senegal.

The company imported goods into Africa, and exported local goods from various points in the African continent—from Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea, Ivory Coast... That is how it started," states Cyril Gilger, Managing Director of CFAO in The Gambia.

"We used to sell rubber, machines and cars. Since 1997, we have expanded into the Maghreb in North Africa and to Eastern and Austral Africa. As for The Gambia, we used to have activities all around the river, we used to be far bigger, indeed, than what we are now," he continues.

"There was a time when we were the only big foreign company here. With the liberalization and globalization of the market, we have investors coming in from all over the world. It's easy to see why—the market is attractive despite its size. The Gambia is strategically located and it has political stability."

CFAO Group is a whole subsidiary of PPR Group, a global player in retail and luxury goods and the name behind Gucci, Yves

Saint Laurent, Puma, and Fnac. Europe's leading retailer of cultural and technology products. With more than 10,200 employees across the globe, CFAO is active in 40 markets worldwide, and is the leading automobile and pharmaceutical company in Africa, where it has a presence in 33 countries, as well as the French Overseas Departments and Territories and Vietnam.

Last year, the company had a turnover of 2.5 billion euros from its four divisions: CFAO Automotive, which represented nearly 60% of revenues; Eurapharma, its pharmaceutical division and second-largest revenue generator; CFAO Industries and Trading, involved in the production and distribution of consumer goods and equipment; and CFAO Technologies, dedicated to the distribution and integration of information and communication technologies, mainly in the voice, data and images processing and networking markets.

"Worldwide, we sold 69.8 thousand new vehicles and delivered 136 million boxes of medicine last year," says Mr. Gilger. "We bring our knowledge and expertise into the continent and set the standards for our sector. We are an example of how a business can be successful in Africa."



GIPFZA

GIPFZA leads Gateway Project

First stop for investors is also responsible for converting the nation into trade gateway

SINCE IT WAS formed in 2001, the Gambia Investment Promotion and Free Zones Agency (GIPFZA) has lost no time in launching the country's ambitious Gateway Project. Indeed, it was the first program to be implemented by the fledgling body, hand-picked for the superior business knowledge of its staff. Aimed at positioning The Gambia as a globally competitive export and processing center, the Gateway Project is a key component of the government's strategy for achieving broad-based, export-oriented and sustained growth.

The Gateway Project was designed to be implemented in two five-year phases, the first of which has just been completed. Phase one involved putting the physical infrastructures in place for an operational Free Zone at the airport as well as the creation of GIPFZA itself to oversee the Free Zone and promote trade and investment activities. Later phases will include technical assistance for the

Gambia Divestiture Agency, the financing of training for both the private and public sector involved in investment and Free Zone-related business (with briefings on U.S. and European market access regulations), project management, environmental studies and mitigation measures.

"The Gateway Project is a development program funded by the Government of The Gambia and The World Bank. It has a 10-year lifespan. We have just concluded the first five years, and are looking forward to the second phase," says GIPFZA managing director Kebba Njie. "The objective of the project is to establish The Gambia as a competitive destination for foreign and domestic investments. To achieve this, it was necessary to improve the operating environment and the investment climate with respect to the legal framework, infrastructure, skills development, and fiscal support for investment. That is what we have been basically engaged in for the past six or seven years since the agency was established."

GIPFZA, whose elite management team was chosen for their sharp business ac-

men, had the wisdom to bring in International Development Ireland Ltd., known globally for their investment promotion and Free Zone activities, to aid in the start-up of the project. For the first two years, the Irish company sent consultants back and forth to The Gambia, maintaining one permanent employee in the country for the duration of that time. This, says Njie, got the project off on the right footing, and has "put us in a very sound position."

The new Free Zone, which occupies 160 hectares near the airport in Banjul, is now fully operational. Investors can literally set up business in a day, according to Njie.

"Apart from the national grid, we have installed a backup of 1.3 MW. The sewage and treatment of waste is installed. We also have a water backup system, in addition to the national grid. We have developed 200,000 square meters of shopping and office space. It's built and ready," he adds. "We have also just established our first tenant in the park. They are in the garment industry. Initially, they expect to create 200 jobs, which will eventually move up to 500 jobs."

Invest in The Gambia

The Gambia Investment Promotion & Free Zone Agency (GIPFZA) is the agency mandated to promote, facilitate and support investments in The Gambia. GIPFZA invites investors, both local and foreign, to come and take advantage of the excellent opportunities available supported by attractive incentives and a conducive environment. A liberalized market and a welcoming investment climate await you.

Promoting Successful Partnerships

THE GAMBIA INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND FREE ZONES AGENCY
Tel: 00 220 4377377 / 4377661 / 4377668
E-mail: info@gipfza.gm, www.gipfzazgm

The Gambia

Distribution, storage big business here

Service companies are cleaning up in this oil industry

IS THERE OIL in The Gambia? While seismic studies have indicated the possible presence of both oil and gas, and the government claims to have irrefutable proof of their existence, exploration is ongoing. For now, the country continues to import 100% of its oil and gas needs. This has led, however, to a thriving storage and distribution sector as companies such as Total and Elton Oil Company enhance their service sta-

tion networks, providing everything from lubricants to Internet access and, in the process, connecting rural areas.

Gam-Petroleum is building the sub-region's largest oil and gas storage container facility which is set to boost supply not only in The Gambia but also in neighboring countries, and could become a top West African stopover for refueling on the world's international shipping routes. The government, for its part, is promoting renewable energy sources; The Gambia has high potential for both solar and wind energy.

GAM-PETROL

Mandinari to boost oil and gas supply in the region

The new storage facility will have capacity for six months of reserves of national consumption

PROBLEM number one: lack of a domestic oil supply. Problem number two: insufficient storage capacity for oil imports. These factors have been limiting the reliable supply of petroleum in The Gambia over the last decade, and while domestic oil production still looms tantalizingly on the horizon, increasing storage capacity is not only a possibility but with the new Gam-Petroleum Storage Depot is soon to be a reality. Not only will the new storage facility provide enough capacity to maintain reliable supply in The Gambia, it will also provide for six months of reserves – a first in the country's history.

The long overdue fuel depot is be-

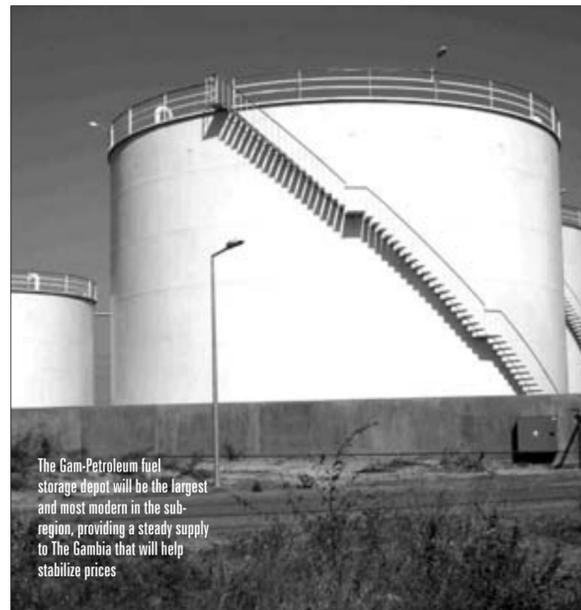
ing built according to international standards with regards to quality and safety and environmental standards. Launched in 2005, the project through its increased fuel storage capacity will have attendant ripple effects on availability and prices which in turn have major bearing on domestic developments. The one existing terminal in the country was built in the 1940s, and has a limited capacity of just one month of national fuel consumption. This has meant that petroleum imports had to be timed precisely. When shipments were delayed, it often resulted in stock-outs, and a stop in supply. Worsening the situation has been the growth of residential areas surrounding the old terminal, creating an environmental hazard for residents.

After winning a tender for the new terminal four years ago, Gam-Petroleum began a comprehensive search for a new location. This was complicated by the fact that much of the suitable areas were located too close to the Gambia River, where the soil was not firm enough. After several tests, the company decided on Mandinari in north Banjul.

"Consequently, we commenced the construction phase for a depot with sufficient capacity for at least six months of local consumption which gives the country a safety cushion in case of world market crisis," states Gam-Petroleum's managing director Mohamed Bazzi.

Built according to international standards with SGS certification, the total storage capacity of the project is 51,000 metric tons of light and heavy fuel oils as well as liquid propane gas, and includes 19 loading bays for tanker trucks, three sub-marine pipelines of 2,500 meters each, state-of-the-art technology in gauging and metering equipment and a full LPG bottling plant. The total cost of the project is estimated at €30 million over a three year period. Financing is partly equity from Gam-Petroleum's holding group, partly from Total International, which will be the exclusive supplier of petroleum products for the new terminal, and partly from European and local banks.

Although initial costs were higher than



The Gam-Petroleum fuel storage depot will be the largest and most modern in the sub-region, providing a steady supply to The Gambia that will help stabilize prices

expected due to special building requirements, Bazzi says that the terminal will pay itself off shortly as it gains in regional significance. He says, "The significance of the project lies in the fact that we have had to build on a very weak soil, thus leading to a much higher civil works cost arising from the need for stronger foundations. This was compounded by the fact that we had to lay three submarine pipelines over a distance of 2.5 kilometers to access a suitable draft for birthing big fuel tankers.

"However, neighboring countries in the sub-region such as Mali and Guinea Bissau, amongst others, are currently accessing their fuel requirements from distant supply hubs at a very high cost, and would be very happy to substitute their supply channels with our terminal, which is better geared to supply these neighboring countries efficiently. Furthermore, we foresee the termi-

nal acting as a bunkering hub for vessels en route to South America and South Africa. It could become a refueling station for those vessels."

Indeed, the Gam-Petroleum fuel storage depot will be the largest in the sub-region, providing a steady supply to The Gambia that will help stabilize prices and creating a better environment for foreign investors. The terminal will include a storage facility for heavy fuel oil. The only other heavy fuel oil storage facilities in the country are located at the power plants, which has meant extra costs in transport as fuel was tanked to the plants from the ships. Bazzi says that the new depot will eliminate this cost by direct transfer of the heavy fuel oil into the tanks with no waiting period, and that this cost reduction will be felt directly by the consumer in lower prices.

TOTAL

A small but important market

International energy group is set to stay in what is a minor market with major opportunities

SINCE 1987, Total has been growing steadily in The Gambia, providing nationwide coverage with its network of service stations. The Gambia is a small but very important market for this international energy group, active in 130 countries. In The Gambia, Total is sharing its global wealth of expertise, experience and high quality services, while bringing better products to the market and offering higher environmental safety standards.

As a sign of continued commitment to The Gambia, Total recently inaugurated new headquarters in the national capital. Albert Roger Boum, Managing Director of Total-Gambia Ltd (TGL), says the new office symbolises the image of Total in the country as a company that has become part of the Gambian landscape. He remarks, "Total has decided



ALBERT ROGER BOUM
Managing Director of Total-Gambia Ltd.

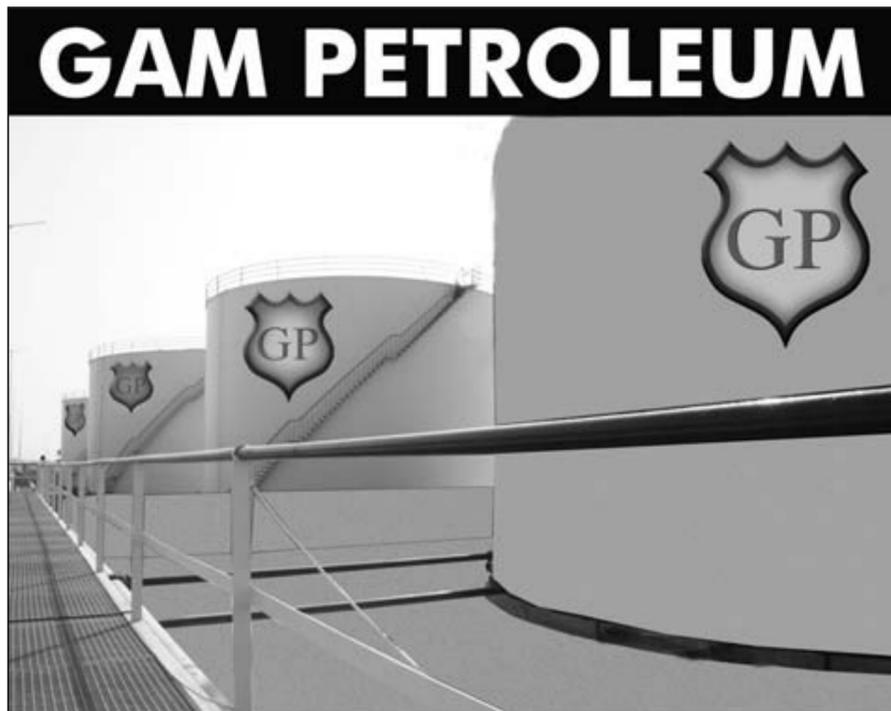
that it is a part of The Gambia. This is what we also said during the inaugural ceremony here, with the new head office, and it was also decided with the head office in Paris. We are going to stay here."

Through its service station network and other services, TGL has become one of the country's leading companies.

It currently operates 11 service stations in the Greater Banjul area and 8 service stations in the provinces, which are helping to connect rural areas. All are strategically located nationwide providing various quality services: fuels, lubricants, vehicle servicing, car wash facilities, and convenient boutiques. Although the company's core activity is the operation of its service stations, it is also actively involved in liquid storage and distribution, in aviation and as a lubricant distributor.

In line with Total's commitment to actively participating in the development of each country it operates in, TGL also plays an active role in CSR in The Gambia, promoting initiatives to fight AIDS and malaria, and sponsors activities in youth development and health and social assistance. "We do not want to be in a country that has problems without helping," says TGL's managing director. "This is an important part of our business. Every year, we have a program. Total has decided that 2008 will be the year to fight against malaria."

GAM PETROLEUM



Supply & STABILITY

The newly built Gam Petroleum fuel storage depot is the biggest in the sub-region. It provides The Gambia with adequate fuel reserve and helps to stabilize prices.

The total storage capacity of the terminal is 51,000 metric tons of light and heavy fuel oils as well as liquid propane gas. The depot encompasses 17 tanks, 19 loading bays, 3 sub-marine pipelines of 2,500 each, state-of-the-art technology in gauging and metering equipment, as well as a full LPG bottling plant, all of which have been built according to international standards with SGS certification.

The terminal will also act as a primary supply hub for the neighboring countries in the sub-region.

With Gam Petroleum, fuel supply problem... solved.



ELTON

Want modern? Refuel in The Gambia

IS IT STILL POSSIBLE for travelers to come across an oasis in the modern surroundings of The Gambia? Edrissa Mass Jobe, managing director of the Elton Oil Company, an up-and-coming Gambian oil distribution firm, wants to believe so. He wants motorists to feel as if they are stepping into an oasis each time they stop at one of his company's service stations. The petrol stations are equipped with restaurants, cybercafés and business centers, giving them more of a feel of a miniature town than a service station.

Elton inaugurated its first service station in 2002 and has since fought off fierce competition for control of The Gambia's petrol market. In just six years of operation, the company has risen to second place in terms of retail. "We have the advantage of not seeing ourselves merely as an oil company," Mr. Jobe stated. "We see ourselves as a retailer and fuel is just one of the products that we offer."

Customers are treated to a range of services that redefine the phrase 'full-service', including cybercafés, car washes, service centers and restaurants. Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of the service stations

is its advanced customer recognition technology. "We introduced E-ZEE, which uses smart card technology and allows you to buy fuel if you don't have cash with a credit-based system. We even have an automated system that recognizes your car, your fueling requirements and even keeps a historical record for you."

It is remarkable to think that in the heart of sub-Saharan Africa, drivers can get more advanced pump technology than what is available in greater Europe and the United States. Mr. Jobe claims the strategy is part of his long-term investment plan for the company. "Investment in infrastructure like what Elton is

doing can only be done if you have a long-term view."

Elton's quick ascent and sustained profits parallel the rise of The Gambia as a whole. The country has worked hard to modernize its infrastructures and improve the business climate. "You have to give the President a lot of credit for his courage and ambition for this country."

Solid leadership and economic reforms have given Gambian entrepreneurs the drive and framework not only to succeed in their own country but on the world market. "Our vision for the future is to make Elton a global brand. Our ambition is to one day go to London and have a petrol station in Leicester Square."



Elton offers more than just a place to fill your tank; you can also eat, shop, and surf the Net

Gambia Ports Authority – "The Nation's Gateway"

Banjul Port, the fast track to the ECOWAS Market, offers you the opportunity of delivering your goods to your customers "right on time".

So many reasons to do business in The Gambia. The Gambia Ports Authority is proud to provide first-class services at the port and has been recognized over the years for being one of the safest and most efficient in West Africa.

Excelling as a leading maritime center for trade, logistics and distribution.



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The Gambia

Internet boom ahead, set to drive development skyward

Gambians can't get enough of modern communications and are behind a soaring demand for new services

IF THERE IS one thing that Neneh Macdouall-Gaye, Michael Tenn and Rein Zwolsman have in common it is the belief that telecommunications will play a pivotal part in the development of The Gambia, and that Gambians are hungry for connectivity. Neneh Macdouall-Gaye, Secretary of State for Communications, Information and Technology, a new state department set up by President Jammeh to oversee the sector's growth, calls it "a catalyst for development, underpinning the growth of all sectors, social or economic, public or private."

"The power of ICT as an engine of growth cannot be stopped and delaying it only puts us at the back of the global race. ICT is critical for competitiveness just as the combustion engine was during the industrial revolution, when the countries that embraced it are recognized today as the developed world," says the Secretary.

Rein Zwolsman, who heads up the finance department for the national operator GAMTEL, says there is a huge demand for Internet connection in the country, and although rates are reasonable, it really wouldn't matter. Gambians are determined to have access, and this can mean only one thing — there is an Internet boom on the horizon, and one that is going to propel economic development in a way that has not been witnessed before.

"There is a huge demand for CDMA, which allows people to get online. Computers are getting cheaper by the day. There is high potential demand, and rates are not very high so it is affordable to a lot of people. Of course, the amount of money people spend is not the same but people are able to find the money to make those calls, one way or

the other, because it increases the quality of their lives, even if they are small farmers. If they want to sell their product, they need to know what the market price is. There is always a demand for information. The moment that people can access the information they need from other places, their income and the quality of their lives will increase," he says.

Consequently, the correlation between income, revenue and telecommunication density is a straight line, according to Zwolsman, who adds, "Everywhere on the continent, tele-density is rising. People need to access this information and they are prepared to pay for it."

Michael Tenn, GAMTEL's CEO and also head of Spectrum International, a Beirut-based telecommunications giant which bought 50% of GAMTEL last year, says that strong telecoms infrastructure also benefits development by creating a better environment for investors.

He remarks, "Telecommunication is surely a main driver for any economy and it's a key indicator of its growth. The



MICHAEL TENN
CEO OF GAMTEL

better telecom infrastructure you have and the better services you provide encourage investors to come in, as this is a main necessity nowadays. It facilitates their establishment and operation within the country."

For this reason, Spectrum's participation in GAMTEL was one of the most newsworthy events of 2007 in the country. Indicative of the government's emphasis on the importance of ICT development, the move was intended to bring GAMTEL up to international

standards, and to improve accessibility throughout the country. It followed on the heels of the outsourcing of the company's management to Detecon International, one of the world's top consulting firms for management and technology and a subsidiary of T-Mobile, Deutsche Telekom's cellular arm.

"The government made the decision to liberalize and divest 50% of the company, and to outsource the top management to a reputable company. Detecon are experts in managing telecom companies. It is a big company with offices in Johannesburg, South Africa and Sydney, Australia, which are run by highly recruited teams of leading consultants and software and telecom engineers. Detecon is active in many African countries either as consultants or managers. Here at GAMTEL, we have the responsibility to run the company for the next two years," explains Zwolsman.

The injection of new capital and new know-how came at an opportune time for GAMTEL. The company, which once enjoyed regional prominence, had begun to suffer from its incumbent status. As the sector liberalized, it lost ground to newer companies entering the market. This is a trend that CEO Michael Tenn plans to put an end to.

He states, "GAMTEL is a key company in the country. Years back, it was known to be the number one in the region. We do not want to brag much about a success until we have credibility behind it. When we tell the customer that we are going to provide them good services, it means we are committed and ready to answer to their needs. When we say that we will gain market share that means I can back it up with real facts and figures. We are housecleaning first, getting things in shape, then we will get our message across loud and clear."



The national operator has brought in the big guns in an ambitious bid to recover former prestige

COMIUM

Middle Eastern and African telecom leader homes in on The Gambia

Comium's recent entry into the mobile market in The Gambia is set to change the face of communications. The company recently introduced the first 2G GSM mobile phone network



COMIUM

Comium commenced formal business operations in 1994 and has since earned a firm position in the upper echelons of the Middle Eastern and African telecommunications sectors. Paramount to the group's success has been customer-focused organization, strategic expansion planning, and a wide range of telecom services. Offering mobile phone, Internet, e-commerce, and data operations technologies, the group currently boasts one million customers in Africa alone.

In over a decade in operation, the group has learned the value of nurturing relationships. The operative word for discussing Comium's philosophy towards others is care. The group cares for its customers by providing friendly staff and high-quality products; looks after its employees by creating healthy work environments that offer avenues for advancement; helps support the environment and local communities by funding social and green initiatives; looks out for its shareholders by offering a high degree of transparency in its operations; and lastly, watches over its business partners by engaging in committed, honest relationships.

Comium views the African continent as a largely untapped market. With less than 14% of the mobile market penetrated, and a mere 3.6% of the Internet market penetrated, Comium is committed to helping Africa develop its telecom sector. The company presently has business interests in Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia, among other nations. In The Gambia, Comium is furthering its expansion by introducing new, advanced telecom technologies that will reshape the way Gambians communicate.

Adaptation to market trends and fluctua-

tions will ensure the continued evolution of Comium. The group develops technologies to meet the needs and desires of its customers. The customer-centered approach is apparent in its careful development and introduction of technologies according to country and region. Strategies such as product branding are culturally tailored to local markets. For example, in The Gambia, one prepaid line of phones is called "Nakam," which translates as "How are you?" in Wolof, one of the local dialects.

Not surprisingly, their targeted strategies have paid off. Within its first six months of operations in The Gambia, Comium secured a quarter of the market share, tallying more than 100,000 subscribers. The group has plans for further expansion in The Gambia, beginning with an aggressive effort to offer service in rural, underserved regions of the country. The initiative coincides with the group's commitment to improving the lives of citizens by opening communication channels for previously out-of-reach customers and to promoting the economic development of the country by offering better coverage, lower prices, and more services, encouraging Gambian business on a whole.

Comium recognizes corporate social responsibility as one of the most important elements in its success as an international venture. A large portion of its profits is due to the relationships the organization has forged with local cultures. Respect for regional values, culture, and heritage has solidified trust between the customer and the group.

To achieve its full potential in the future, the group plans to expand network coverage, to introduce more added-value services, and to identify new challenges and opportunities. The goal is to build on past successes and expand into new markets and countries. Comium hopes its products and services will transform and improve the lives of people across the globe.

Coming home 'inspiring'

Festivals form part of the attraction of The Gambia for the world's travellers

'HE NEVER forgot his roots, and fought for his freedom, and for those that followed after him. Although he was a slave, he was born a free man, and in spirit died a free person. His legend was brought to life by his great, great, great grandson Alex Haley.' Such reads the introduction on the website of the Gambia Tourism Authority. Birthplace of Kunta Kinte, one of 98 slaves shipped to Maryland aboard the Lord Ligonier in 1767, and made famous in Alex Haley's 1976 novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, The Gambia today represents a coming home for many tourists worldwide.

During his ten years of research for the novel, Haley visited the village of Juffure where Kunta Kinte grew up, near the for-

mer slave fortress of James Island. There, Haley recorded the stories of a tribal historian who told him about Kinte's capture. *Roots*, which went on to be translated in 37 languages, won Haley a special Pulitzer prize in 1977, and sparked increasing public interest in genealogy.

This interest is celebrated in The Gambia with its Roots Home Coming Festival. Taking place in early June every second year (2008 is a festival year), the festival is a highly emotional and inspiring event that focuses on the spiritual, cultural, and historical orientation of the celebration of freedom. Taking place over the course of a week, it features excursions to a sacred pool, fairs with African artefacts and cloths, a musical bonanza of artists from across the continent, theatre and an initiation into the rites of passage and other longstanding African religious traditions.

KAIRABA AND OCEAN BAY

Smiling coast increases its attractions



POPULARLY KNOWN as 'the Smiling Coast of Africa', The Gambia boasts numerous unspoiled beaches. The miles of empty white sand beaches attract tourists from around the globe seeking rest and relaxation. And fortunately for them, the beautiful scenery is complemented by exquisite local accommodation. The Ocean Bay Resort, located on the beach in Cape Point, Bakau, and the Kairaba Hotel, found on Kololi beach, are the outstanding hotels in the region and have hosted many famous national and foreign personages.

"The hotel was officially opened by His Excellency Dr. Alh. Yahya A. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of The Gambia, in July 2004," says Ocean Bay's General Manager Lucien Gibiser. "We are located along the beach on the mouth of the River Gambia, with a breathtaking view of the Atlantic Ocean, undeniably the best beach in The Gambia."

Travelers love both the Ocean Bay Resort and Kairaba Hotel for their proximity to breathtaking beaches and spectacular amenities. The award-winning Ocean Bay

Resort boasts 195 rooms, each with a complete bathroom, individually controlled air conditioning, direct dial telephone, electronic safe and 24-hour room service. Guests enjoy a lovely pool stashed between the resort's Gambian-inspired villas.

For a true dining experience, the Ocean Bay's famous restaurant, The Ocean Clipper, offers a fusion of Thai and Mediterranean food, an exclusive selection of wines stored in its signature cellar Cave Bacchus, and a range of handmade branded Cuban cigars and premium cognacs, all of which have helped it earn a distinct reputation amongst diplomats and foreign officials.

The luxurious five-star Kairaba contains equally impressive facilities. Located in the middle of 40 acres of lush tropical gardens and miles of sandy beaches, the Kairaba has more than 150 rooms, and boasts a spectacular swimming pool and gardens with over 60 different species of birds. Not surprisingly, guests have trouble leaving the hotel.

"People come to the Kairaba Hotel to relax and unwind," says Gerard Lombardo, General Manager of the hotel. "That is why our guests keep returning. Sixty percent of

our clients have been here before and have come back." It not uncommon to find many of them enjoying a cocktail by the pool or strolling in the gardens before going to eat at the resort's renowned restaurants.

After sumptuous meals, long walks on the beach and many hours by the pool, many guests want an added bit of pampering. The Vitala Beauty Studio is the beauty and health center and combines the ultimate in relaxing treatments and beauty services.

Exceptional amenities are complemented with an exceptional staff. The employees of both the Ocean Bay and Kairaba offer world-class service and professionalism thanks to good training and employee incentive programs. The range of amenities and quality of the staff were recognized in 2005 and 2006 when the hotels were awarded the Thomas Cook Mark of Excellence Award. Furthermore, both are members of the Great Hotels of the World.



SHERATON

New spa resort is a 'feast for the eyes'



'A FEAST FOR THE EYES' is how Jennifer Buhr, the General Manager, likes to describe the new Sheraton Spa and Resort in Serrekunda. The recently finished five-star complex has travelers and Gambians alike bubbling with enthusiasm and pride.

"Visitors who come here can expect

a whole new experience," Mrs. Buhr says. "There have been African Village themed hotels before, but the whole structure of our hotel—the simplicity of it, the colors of the rooms, the lighting, the amenities, the African art, the wardrobe of the staff, the shampoo, the soaps and the other toiletries in the guests' rooms, the infinity pool that is on the same level as the waves of the

Atlantic Ocean—these little details mark the difference."

Indeed, the new resort is raising the bar for luxury accommodation and tourism in The Gambia, catering to high-end customers, many of whom are foreign officials and business executives aiding in the development of the country. Overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, the new 195-room, five-star resort is the first of its kind in The Gambia with luxury villas and facilities that blend the Gambian aesthetic with international conveniences.

"The moment you come here, you are completely mesmerized," observes Ms. Buhr. Boasting spectacular views, tasteful design and serene landscaping, the complex offers guests the ultimate in relaxation and comfort. In addition, the hotel is just 20 minutes from The Gambia's capital Banjul, and ten minutes from The Gambia's international airport.

The Sheraton recently hosted the 42nd African Union Summit in its 780-person conference center. The hotel brings first-world comforts, like state-of-the-art conference rooms and WIFI, to the emerging country. The combination of business-friendly facilities and world-class comfort has already enticed many foreign companies to host important events in the seaside complex.

Apart from its superior business facilities, The Gambia offers and organizes a splendid range of activities. Guests can charter a sailboat and see dolphins, ride horses along the hotel's beautiful beach, join a camel safari, or explore a local nature reserve.



The recently finished Sheraton Spa and Resort offers top-of-the-line luxury along with soft ocean breezes

Africa's newest emerging transportation hub

The Gambia Civil Aviation Authority is entrusted with the management of Banjul International Airport and the regulation and management of the civil aviation industry in order to facilitate safe, regular and efficient air transportation.

The Banjul International Airport is putting itself on the map as an ever-increasingly important regional stop, receiving more air traffic each year. The GCAA welcomes investors, entrepreneurs and more airlines to help us expand and fulfil the needs of a growing industry.



The Gambia Civil Aviation Authority

www.gambia.gm/gcaa