

1.2 Demographic context

The Gambia is a small country in West Africa and is surrounded on three sides by Senegal and boarded on the west by the Atlantic Ocean. The population is estimated at 1.038 million and 1.361 million at the 1993 and 2003 population censuses with population densities of 97 and 127 persons per square kilometer respectively. The population of the Gambia is mainly young with more than half (about 63.55%) is below 25 years. Elderly persons of 65 years and above account for 3.36% of the population. The urbanisation rate increased from 30.8 % in 1983 to 37.1% in 1993. In 2003, this rate is estimated at 50.3%; which means that presently, more than half the population live in urban areas.

The Gambia's social diversity is reflected in the different ethnic groups. The main ethnic groups are the mandinkas (39.5%), Fula (18.8%), Wollof (14.6%), Jola and Karoninka(10.6%) and rest comprises of the minority groups. The majority of the population are Muslims (95%). A small minority are Creoles (1%), most of whom are Christians. Despite this ethnic pluralism, there is a measure of homogeneity in cultural practices. It has also a fairly undeveloped human capital base, with an illiteracy rate of 75 percent and primary school enrolment rate of 56 percent in (2002).

Table 1 : Basic demographic indicators

Indicators	1983	1993	2003	2006f
Population				
Total	687,817	1,038,145	1,360,681	1,509,928
- Urban	211,889	385,400	684,158	820,193
- Rural	475,928	652,745	676,523	689,735
Urbanisation rate %	30.80 %	37.12 %	50.28 %	54.32%
Population density per Km ²	64	97	127	138
Annual population growth rate (%)	3.8	4.2	2.7	2.7
Structure of Population per age group %				
- 0 to 14 years	43.76%	43.80%	41.98%	43.11%
- 15 to 49 years	45.12%	45.60%	48.13%	49.43%
- 50 to 59 years		3.95%	3.94%	4.05%
- 60 years and above	10.03%	4.98%	5.05%	5.19%
- (Not Stated)	1.08%	1.68%	0.90%	0.92%

Source : Gambia Bureau Of Statistics (GBoS); f = forecast

This population is increasing rapidly; the average annual growth rate estimated at 3.8% in 1983 increased to 4.2% in 1993. This remarkable growth, one of the highest in world, is attributed to high fertility and in-migration. The annual growth rate reduced slightly in

2003 to 2.7%. This population of 1.361 million inhabitants in 2003 is unequally distributed in the eight Local Government Areas (LGA) of the country (see Table 2).

Table 2 : Distribution of population per Local Government Area (LGA)

Local Government Area	1993			2003			2006f		
	Urban	Rural	Total Population	Urban	Rural	Total Population	Urban	Rural	Total Population
Banjul	42,326	0	42,326	35,061	0	35,061	33,131	0	33,131
Kanifing Municipal Council	228,214	0	228,214	322,735	0	322,735	358,133	0	358,133
Brikama	41,761	193,156	234,917	236,446	153,148	389,594	310,590	142,866	453,456
Mansakonko	10,206	54,940	65,146	13,302	58,865	72,167	14,324	60,096	74,420
Kerewan	33,102	123,360	156,462	34,720	138,115	172,835	35,196	142,876	178,072
Kuntaur	5,305	62,469	67,774	5,040	73,451	78,491	4,920	77,108	82,028
Janjangbureh	8,556	79,691	88,247	16,598	90,614	107,212	19,500	94,174	113,674
Basse	15,930	139,129	155,059	23,409	159,177	182,586	44,399	172,615	217,014
Total	385,400	652,745	1,038,145	687,549	678,897	1,360,681	820,193	689,735	1,509,928

Source : Gambia Bureau Of Statistics (GBoS)