



International Youth Programme

The Gambia (West Africa)

INFORMATION PACK

AFRICA MAP



GAMBIA



Proposed Residential Dates:

Mon 6th July to Wed 15th July 2026

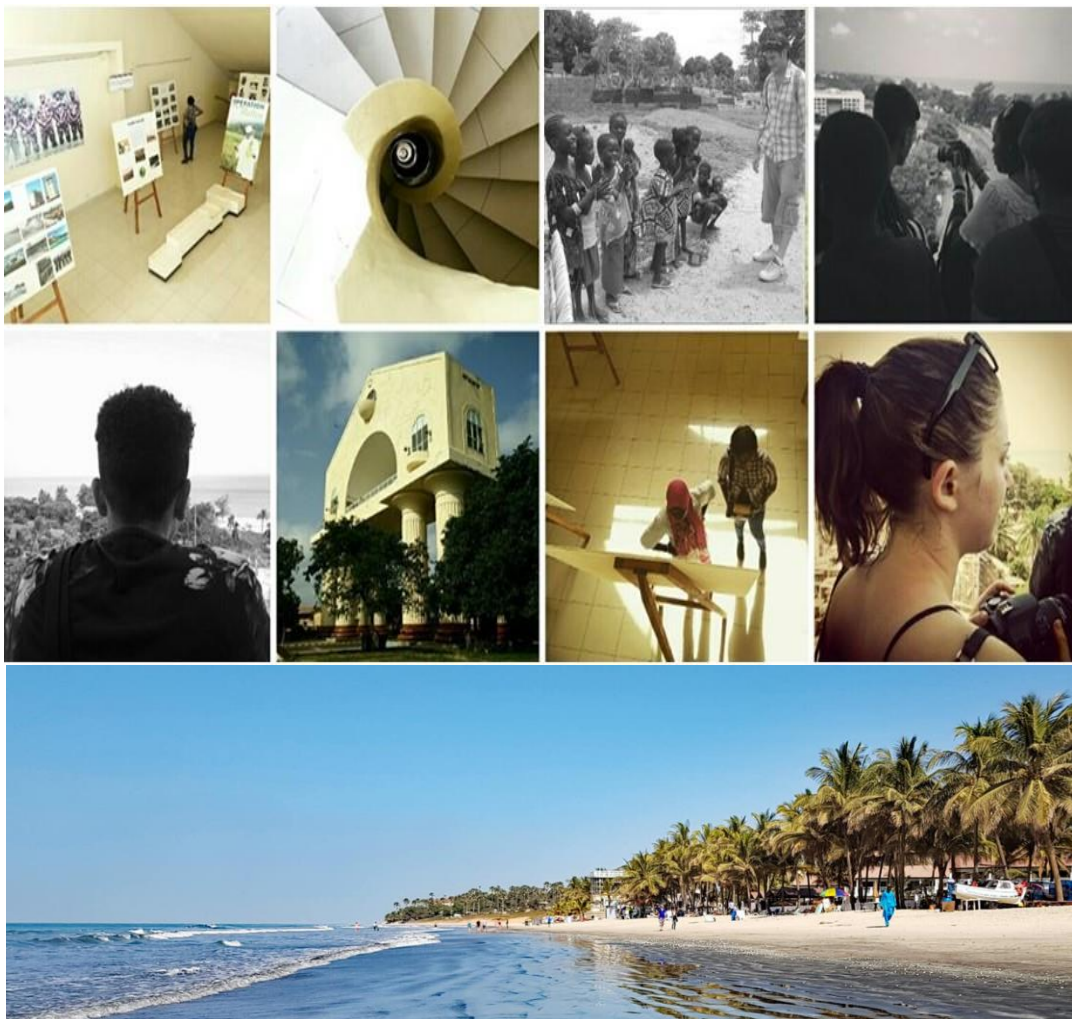
INTRODUCTION

Groundwork London's 'Head of Youth Development' has established ongoing partnerships with National Youth Programmes, Schools, and Skills Centres in The Gambia for over more than 25 years. In that time, he has safely and successfully organised more than forty joint UK/Gambia projects for young people (aged 16 to 21) from schools, colleges, and youth organisations across London.

The President's International Award (PIA) is the leading national youth programme for young people in The Gambia. Since 1998, they have hosted joint programmes with UK-based youth organisations. Their staff provide a safe and inclusive environment for planning and delivering these joint youth-led international ventures.

For the wellbeing of young people, we usually base ourselves at a hotel that provides good security and close to the tourist district. An area staffed by tourist police and local enforcement. We travel most days to our operational base at PIA's school in Bakau. PIA's base accommodates a vocational skills centre for students of similar ages to our visiting UK groups (16 to 19 Years Old). They will have the opportunity to meet students who are undertaking courses in ICT, tailoring, catering, carpentry, metal work, car mechanics, electrical installation, and office skills.

Groundwork London will be relaunching this initiative in partnership with The President's International Award next year. Our first venture will take place in July 2026 following national exams, with participants coming together from school sixth-forms, colleges, and youth groups from across London.



PLANNING & PREPARATION

We will consult young people in the planning of their international programme. We undertake to fully prepare and support everyone for the upcoming venture. We will...

- facilitate an initial 'Briefing Session' online: to discuss proposed venture and fully respond to any questions from carers, parents, and young people prior to signing up
- facilitate two planning meetings with young people in advance of programme departure (these will be held 'in person' on a Saturday at our offices in Hackney)
- facilitate a final online meeting with carers, parents, and young people approx. 10 days prior to programme departure (*for final questions and arrangements*)
- set up a dedicated Facebook and WhatsApp group for young people to receive regular updates and comms prior to and during the programme. We will utilise social media networks to introduce everyone to each other in advance of programme departure - inc. UK staff and young people, Gambian young people, and Gambian Staff. These will provide a virtual platform for everyone to liaise on the planning and coordination before coming together in July.
- provide comprehensive insurance information and risk management information well in advance of the venture taking place.
- provide branded T-Shirts with the project name
- organise car shares for participants to get to and from Gatwick Airport
- manage all planning and organisation whilst in The Gambia
- request comprehensive Medical Forms and Carer/Parent Consent Information and liaise on individual needs, adjustments, and requirements.

IMPORTANT: Unfortunately, we are unable to take any young person with a nut allergy. Nuts being the main food produce in The Gambia means that most foods and cooking oils contain nuts or traces of nuts.



INTRODUCTION TO THE GAMBIA

The Gambia is the oldest English-speaking country in West Africa. It gained independence in 1965 and remains part of the Commonwealth. The Gambia offers participating young people a fascinating culture to explore, with a climate that is hard to beat. It is a beautiful place to visit, with a remarkable coastline, diverse wildlife, and friendly welcoming people. The majority of Gambia's 2.5m population is Muslim, living peacefully alongside smaller Christian communities and other tribal/cultural/faith groups.

The banks of the River Gambia have been a hive of activity for centuries. The River Gambia was a slave trading post, which has been immortalised by the best-selling book 'Roots' by Alex Haley (also available in TV & film versions). The first English settlement was founded on James Island (AKA Kunte Kinteh Island).

The Gambia, often referred to as '*The Smiling Coast of Africa*,' is the continent's smallest country. Despite its size, The Gambia is home to more than 540 species of birds, with its exotic wildlife, cultural adventures, diverse cuisine, fabulous beaches, and friendly local people; this positively adds to the breadth of experiences that this international venture can offer. Another benefit is that The Gambia sits within the same time zone as the UK, meaning no jet lag. For previous programmes, it has provided a safe and 'soft introduction' to Africa for young people.



THE PROGRAMME

We will consult with both UK and Gambian young people for the purposes of planning their chosen joint Social Action and/or Cultural Exchange Projects. Projects may involve young people teaching or helping in village schools and nurseries, undertaking environmental work, refurbishing classrooms, donating educational resources; or programmes can simply focus on an enriching cultural exchange, and teambuilding experience.

The itinerary on the next page is based on the learning and feedback from over forty previous programmes in The Gambia and from the feedback of over 450 participants.

We are confident that the proposed programme provides sufficient space for young people to gain a comprehensive insight into the country and culture whilst providing valuable time for them to reflect on their experiences, learning and challenges. We can scale up or scale down any aspect of the programme, this will depend on the balance of experiences young people are seeking; between the cultural learning, teambuilding, and/or their chosen project.

Please note that the programme and sample itinerary on the next page is based on one flight option and timetabling/dates may need to be adjusted once flights are confirmed.

PROGRAMME & SAMPLE ITINERARY

DAY: 1

TRAVEL & SETTLE IN

6.00 am	Independently Travel to Airport
7.00 am	Arrive at Check-In Desk at London Gatwick South Terminal (Meet Staff)
10.15 am	Flight Leaves Gatwick
2.10 pm	Flight Connection in Barcelona (1 Hour Wait)
3.55 pm	Flight Departs Barcelona
7.15 pm	Flight Arrives at Banjul International Airport (<i>Time difference – 1 Hour</i>)
8.00 pm	Minibus Transfer to Hotel
9.00 pm	Settle into hotel room, freshen up
9.50 pm	Meet & Greet Gambian Staff in Senegambia (<i>Dinner Provided</i>)
11.30 pm	Sign Back into Hotel – Goodnight!

DAY: 2

ACCLIMATISATION

8.30 am	Rise & Shine! (Hotel Breakfast)
9.30 am	Briefing by Groundwork Lead (<i>Revisit Risks, Boundaries & Codes of Conduct</i>)
10.00 am	Briefing by Gambian Staff
11.00 am	Travel to PIA & Vocational Skills Centre (<i>Youth Programme Base in Bakau</i>)
12.00 pm	Arrive – Meet and Greet Gambian Counterparts, Students and Staff
1.00 pm	Visit Crocodile Pool and Museum (<i>with Gambian Counterparts</i>)
3.30 pm	Return to Hotel & Free Time
6.30 pm	Daily Briefing & Evaluations with Staff
7.30 pm	Dinner in Senegambia
11.00 pm	Sign Back into Hotel – Goodnight!

DAY: 3

PROJECT DAY #1

8.00 am	Rise & Shine! (Hotel Breakfast)
9.30 am	Travel to Project Site (<i>Environmental Project, Skills Centre, School, Nursery</i>)
10.15 am	Arrive – Meet and Greet Students and Staff
10.30 am	Social Action/Cultural Exchange Project Delivery
4.00 pm	Return to Hotel & Free Time
6.30 pm	Daily Briefing & Evaluations with Staff
7.30 pm	Dinner in Senegambia
11.00 pm	Sign Back into Hotel – Goodnight!

Day 4

PROJECT DAY #2

7.45 am	Rise & Shine! (Hotel Breakfast)
9.15 am	Travel to Project Site (<i>Environmental Project, Skills Centre, School, Nursery</i>)
9.45 am	Social Action/Cultural Exchange Project Delivery
3.30 pm	Return to Hotel & Free Time
6.30 pm	Daily Briefing & Evaluations with Staff
7.30 pm	Dinner in Senegambia
11.00 pm	Sign Back into Hotel – Goodnight!

Day 5

TOUR DAY – TIME TO RELAX

8.30 am	Rise & Shine! (Hotel Breakfast)
10.00 am	Tour Briefing by Gambian Staff
10.30 am	Travel to Tanji Fishing Village (<i>Up-Country – Gambian Provinces</i>)
1.30 pm	Brufut Beach (Smile Café) (<i>Lunch Provided</i>)
5.00 pm	Return to Hotel & Freshen Up

7.00 pm Daily Briefing & Evaluations with Staff
8.00 pm Dinner in Senegambia
11.00 pm Sign Back into Hotel – Goodnight!

Day 6 PROJECT DAY #3

7.45 am Rise & Shine! (Hotel Breakfast)
9.15 am Travel to Project Site
(*Environmental Project, Skills Centre, School, Nursery*)
9.45 am Complete Social Action/Cultural Exchange Project Delivery
3.30 pm Return to Hotel & Free Time
6.30 pm Social Action/Cultural Exchange Project De-Brief with Staff
7.30 pm Dinner in Senegambia
11.00 pm Sign Back into Hotel – Goodnight!

Day 7 EXPLORE GAMBIAN CULTURE

7.30 am Rise & Shine! (Hotel Breakfast)
9.00 am Travel to Skills Centre (*Bakau*) – *Pick Up Gambian Counterparts*
9.10 am Travel to Independent Arch in Banjul (*The Gambian Capital*)
11.00 am Travel to African Craft Market (*Prepare to Haggle*)
12.30 pm Lunch at Kunte Kinteh Beach Restaurant
4.30 pm Beach Trek to Hotel & Freshen Up
6.30 pm Daily Briefing & Evaluations with Staff
8.00 pm Dinner in Senegambia
11.00 pm Sign Back into Hotel – Goodnight!

Day 8 HOMESTAY WITH GAMBIAN COUNTERPARTS

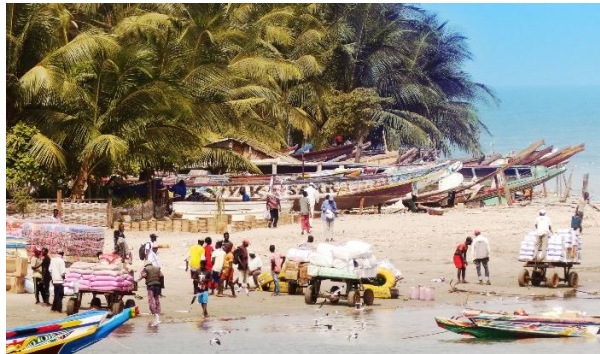
8.00 am Rise & Shine! (Hotel Breakfast)
9.00 am Travel to Vocational Skills Centre (*Bakau*)
9.30 am Homestay with Counterparts (*Spend the day with a Gambian Family*)
3.00 pm Return to Hotel & Free Time with Counterparts
6.30 pm Debrief on Homestay Experience
7.30 pm Final Farewells with Counterparts, Staff & Guides (*Dinner Provided*)
11.30 pm Sign Back into Hotel – Goodnight!

Day 9 FINAL DAY (EVALUATION & TRAVEL)

8.30 am Rise & Shine! (Hotel Breakfast)
9.00 am Final De-Brief & Evaluation Session
10.30 am Safety briefing on 'Home Travel' arrangements
12.00 pm Check out of rooms and settle any outstanding hotel bills
12.30 pm Lunch
1.30 pm Final shopping at local craft market or relax in hotel
4.00 pm Minibus transfers to Banjul International Airport
5.15 pm Group book in at Check-in Desk (2 x Restaurants at Airport for Dinner)
8.15 pm Flight Departs

Day 10 TRAVEL HOME

3.05 am Flight Connection in Barcelona (3 Hour Wait)
7.00 am Flight Departs Barcelona
8.30 am Flight arrives Gatwick
9.30 am Independently Travel Back Home



£1,400 Per Head

(Does not include spending money)

INTERESTED?

Please complete this
Expression of Interest Form.

[LINK HERE](#)

Or Scan the QR Code



NEXT STEPS

EOI Forms should be submitted by Friday 20th February. We will be holding an online information event (including Q&A) on Thursday 26th February at 5pm.

At this meeting we will provide information on how to sign up for this venture. We will request a first payment of £750 when signing up; this allows us to book and confirm flights. A final payment of £650 will be payable at the end of April, at which point we will book and share details of the hotel.

Two Planning Meetings will take place at our offices in Hackney on Saturdays (11am to 3.30pm); one in April and one in May. Dates will be confirmed with young people, based on their availability, and once the registration process is complete.

ABOUT GROUNDWORK'S YOUTH SERVICES

Our vision is for every young Londoner to be able to reach their full potential. That is why we support and coach young people to become stronger, healthier, and happier. We work collaboratively with partners across the youth, education, and mental health sectors to develop projects tailored to support young people to overcome the challenges they are facing. We meet young people on their terms; on the street, in schools, in youth centres, on residential. Groundwork is an experienced and trusted youth services partner. We deliver local youth projects, borough wide youth services, and London wide youth programmes.

WEB - [Working with Young People - Groundwork](#)
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