MSDG PROJECT
MIGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE GAMBIA
www.gambiandiaspora.net

MSDG Briefing Paper (BP): No. 9

Overview of the Gambian Diaspora Population (Oct 2020)

© GK Partners (2020), Banjul and London

Overview of the Gambian Diaspora Population

Emergence of the Gambian Diaspora

In the early post-colonial period of the 1960s/70s, there was already a small Gambian diaspora, which Faal (2018) categorised into five groups based on migratory patterns:

> *"firstly, traders, workers and adventurists settled in African countries...secondly, those referred to as 'old-timers' who settled in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s as part of the post-World War II inflow of workers...thirdly, the students in the US who settled after their studies...fourthly, the mostly low skilled young men who migrated to the Nordic countries (mainly Sweden, Denmark and Norway), following the development of the tourism industry.....fifthly, the small numbers of people referred to as 'hustlers', who stowed away in cargo ships, or travelled across the Sahara as irregular migrants"*[1].

Kebbeh (2013) explained how economic challenges in postcolonial Gambia fuelled migration, initially in the form of rural-urban drift, and then the flows of international emigration. The trend intensified during the period of dictatorship which started with the coup d'etat of 1994 by Captain Yahya Jammeh. Large numbers of Gambian refugees and asylum seekers joined the Gambian diaspora communities, especially in Europe and USA. Gajigo (2017) highlighted the range of push and pool factors that defined Gambia's emigration trend. In the 20 years 1996 to 2016, Gambians abroad developed a strong sense of being a community away from home, who were involved in the changing economic, political and social dynamics and realities back home. Taal (2016) and Jaw (2017) demonstrated the nexus between diaspora engagement and political activism, with Taal arguing that whilst it may be useful

> *"to maintain the distinction between development and politics...in practice the two are inseparable...politics in The Gambia is an 'anti-development machine', as formal political engagement is a barrier to active development in the country"*. Faal (2018) stated that: *"...a relatively large Gambian diaspora emerged, actively involved in supporting the economy through their remittances, whilst trying to dislodge the dictatorship through democratic advocacy"*.

Data on the Global Gambian Diaspora

Estimates of the global Gambian diaspora population are provided by three main sources. The Population Division of UNDESA estimates 118,485 (UNDESA 2015; 2019), the Gambian economist Cherno O. Kebbeh puts it at 140,000 (Kebbeh 2017; 2019), and the Government of The Gambia (GoTG 2018) asserts in its National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21) that the diaspora population can be as high as 200,000, taking into account irregular migrants and the multigenerational diaspora[2].

[1] It should be noted that a small number of Gambians used trans-Saharan routes for irregular migration to Europe in the 1970s/80s. These 'hustlers' as they were called preceded the large number of 'backway' migrants of the 2010s

[2] The MSDG project worked with GoTG to produce an estimate of the Gambian diaspora, which informed the design of the 2018 Gambian Diaspora Strategy (GDS). The estimate of 200,000 Gambians resident in the diaspora, rationale for the estimate, and the entire GDS are incorporated in the Gambia National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21), see page 238:
http://gambiandiaspora.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Gambia-National-Development-Plan-NDP-2018-21.pdf

Using the lower UNDESA estimate which is based on data officially published by national and international institutions, Gambia has one of the highest rates of emigration in Africa, in proportion to its population. UN DESA estimates that 66 percent of the Gambian diaspora are male and 34 percent female. This imbalance is due to the high number on young male 'backway' irregular migrants to Italy, Spain and Germany.

Figure 1: Estimates of the Global Gambian Diaspora Population

Year	UN DESA Estimate			C.O. Kebbeh Estimate	GoTG & MSDG Estimate
	Male	*Female*	Total		
2019	*77,979*	*40,506*	**118,485**	**140,000**	**- - -**
2018	*- - -*	*- - -*	**- - -**	**- - -**	**200,000**
2017	*- - -*	*- - -*	**- - -**	**140,000**	**- - -**
2015	*54,256*	*35,998*	**90,254**	**- - -**	**- - -**
2010	*48,148*	*29,751*	**77,899**	**- - -**	**- - -**
2005	*36,999*	*24,267*	**61,266**	**- - -**	**- - -**
2000	*26,239*	*19,190*	**45,429**	**- - -**	**- - -**
1995	*22,148*	*16,237*	**38,385**	**- - -**	**- - -**
1990	*20,808*	*15,472*	**36,280**	**- - -**	**- - -**

Figure 2: Top 5 Countries of Residence of the Gambian Diaspora

Top 5 Countries of Residence of the Gambian Diaspora Using Lower Estimates from Formal Sources as of 30 June 2020		
No.	**Country**	**Number of Gambians**
1.	United States of America	25,007
2.	Italy	22,840
3.	United Kingdom	20,000
4.	Spain	19,849
5.	Germany	15,535

Of these top five countries[3], population data from Italy, Spain and Germany is comprehensive and credible as these countries have mandatory federal and municipal population registration schemes, linked to access to public services. The schemes are for all residents, irrespective of nationality or immigration status.

On the other hand, the official population data of the USA and UK is prone to underestimation of foreign nationals, and generally excludes irregular migrants and those reluctant to participate in surveys. Based on this background, the MSDG Project undertook further detailed studies of Gambians in the UK and USA[4].

The UK case study (Faal 2000) shows that the ***Gambian-born diaspora population in the UK is 36,279, being 81 percent more than the estimate of 20,000 provided by the UK Office of National Statistics***.

[3] The data of 'Top 5 Countries of Residence of the Gambian Diaspora' is from: UN DESA (for USA); UK National Statistics Office (ONS); Spanish National Statistics Institute (INE); Italian Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (Istat); and German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis)

[4] The economist Cherno O. Kebbeh is working on a study on Gambians in the USA, to be published later in 2020

Case Study of Gambian Population in the United Kingdom

Figure 3: Demographic Profile of the UK Gambia-Born Diaspora

Demographic Profile of Gambia-Born Diaspora Resident in the United Kingdom as of 1 January 2020								
Age Groups	Legally Settled Gambians (28,720)		EEA Family Members (6,133)		Gambian Irregular Migrants (1,426)		Total Gambia-Born UK Diaspora (36,279)	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
65+	861	*3%*	0	*0%*	0	*0%*	**861**	***2.4%***
56-65	5,744	*20%*	0	*0%*	71	*5%*	**5,815**	***16.0%***
46-55	8,042	*28%*	0	*0%*	428	*30%*	**8,470**	***23.4%***
36-45	10,052	*35%*	184	*3%*	571	*40%*	**10,807**	***29.8%***
26-35	2,872	*10%*	1,349	*22%*	285	*20%*	**4,506**	***12.4%***
16-25	1,149	*4%*	307	*5%*	71	*5%*	**1,527**	***4.2%***
0-15	0	*0%*	4,293	*70%*	0	*0%*	**4,293**	***11.8%***
TOTAL	**28,720**	***100%***	**6,133**	***100%***	**1,426**	***100%***	**36,279**	***100%***

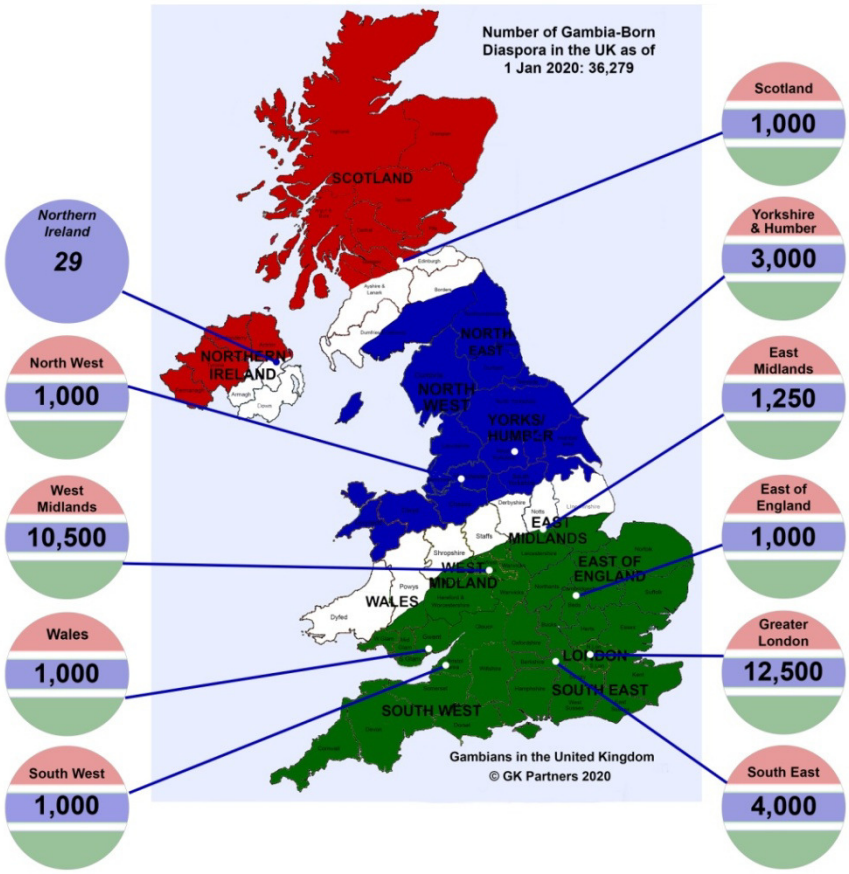
Figure 4: Population Profile of the UK-Born Second Generation Gambian Diaspora

Population Profile of the UK-Born Second Generation Gambian Diaspora as of 1 January 2020					
Gambian-Born UK Diaspora Age Groups	Gambian-Born UK Diaspora Population	Population who are Parents		Average No. of Children Resident in the UK	Second Generation Population
		%	No.		
65+	861	70%	603	2	1,206
56-65	5,815	70%	4,071	2	8,142
46-55	8,470	65%	5,506	2	11,012
36-45	10,807	50%	5,404	2	10,808
26-35	4,506	5%	225	1	225
16-25	1,527	2%	30	1	30
0-15	4,293	0%	0	N/A	N/A
7 Groups	**36,279**	**N/A**	**16,262**	**N/A**	**31,423**

Figure 5: Geographical Location of the Gambia-Born Diaspora in the UK

Geographical Location of Gambian-Born Diaspora in the United Kingdom *(ONS round up its data to the nearest 1,000)*				
No.	United Kingdom Regions & Main Cities and Towns	*APS Estimate (ONS 2020)*	Revised Estimate (No.)	Revised Estimate (%)
1.	**Greater London:** Barking & Dagenham; Hackney; Newham; Tower Hamlets	*3,000*	12,500	34%
2.	**West Midlands:** Birmingham; Coventry; Sandwell; Solihull; Wolverhampton	*3,000*	10,500	29%
3.	**South East:** Brighton; Crawley; Reading; Slough; Southampton; Watford	*3,000*	4,000	11%
4.	**Yorkshire and The Humber:** Bradford, Hull; Leeds; Wakefield	*2,000*	3,000	8%
5.	**East Midlands:** Leicester; Nottingham	*NIL*	1,250	3%
6.	**Wales:** Cardiff; Newport	*2,000*	1,000	3%
7.	**South West:** Bournemouth; Bristol; Plymouth	*3,000*	1,000	3%
8.	**North West:** Liverpool; Manchester; Oldham	*1,000*	1,000	3%
9.	**Scotland:** Edinburgh; Glasgow	*1,000*	1,000	3%
10.	**East of England:** Bedford; Luton; Peterborough	*NIL*	1,000	3%
	Other Cities/Towns: (Inc. 29 Gambians in the Belfast Area of Northern Ireland)	*2,000*	29	N/A
Gambian Diaspora Population in the UK		***20,000***	**36,279**	**100%**

Figure 6: City and Regional Map of Gambians in the UK



Building of the detailed study of the Gambian population in the UK, and using the methodology developed for estimating diaspora populations, the MSDG project has commissioned further studies about Gambian diaspora populations in the USA and other countries. These studies will provide further technical information regarding the demarcation of diaspora constituencies for voter registration, and the election of Gambian parliamentarians in accordance with Gambian law.

Suggested Citation: Faal, Gibril (2020), *Overview of the Gambian Diaspora Population*, Banjul and London, GK Partners

References:

Faal, Gibril (2018), *Notes on the Emergence of The Gambian Diaspora*, London, GK Partners
Faal, Gibril (2020), *Estimating Diaspora Populations: Case Study of Gambians in the United Kingdom*, London, GK Partners
Gajigo, Ousman (2017), *The Gambia's Unprecedented Migration Wave and The Need for Clarity from Hon. Hamat Bah*, Online Article
GoTG (2018), *The Gambia National Development Plan (NDP 2018-2021)*, Banjul, Government of The Gambia
Jaw, Sait Matty (2017), *Restoring Democracy in The Gambia? An Analysis of Diaspora Engagement in Gambian Politics*, MPA Thesis, University of Bergen
Kebbeh, C. Omar (2019), *A Statistical Portrait of Gambians Living Abroad*, Washington DC, C.O. Kebbeh
Taal, Sainabou (2016), *For The Gambia, Our Homeland: The Diaspora, Development and Politics,* PhD Thesis, University College London
UN DESA (2019), *International Migrant Stock 2019, (UN Database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2019)*, New York, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division

MSDG is a Technical Cooperation Project (TCP), financed by: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC):	The TCP was designed by GK Partners, implemented by GKP, In partnership with the Government of The Gambia (GOTG):
Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft Confédération suisse Confederazione Svizzera Confederaziun svizra Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC	

© GK Partners (2020) 111 Buckingham Palace Road, Victoria, London SW1W 0SR
GKP (Gambia), Near Petroleum House, Brusubi, West Coast Region, The Gambia

Tel: (+220) 701 6571 Email: pmsidibeh@gkpartners.co.uk www.gambiandiaspora.net