

Dear Sisters and Associates/Companions -- Today, on this seventeenth week (May 6) of our 2024 Global Coordinating Group calendar, we are invited *to listen to the heart of the world* and hold in our prayers the Sisters and Associates serving in **Gambia** as well as all the people in that nation.

The Sisters belong to the Anney Congregation who began their West African mission in 1960 in Senegal - expanding to other West African countries in 2004. Today, in Gambia (also called 'The



Gambia'), the Sisters are involved in health care, AIDS programs, women's promotion, education and parish work. They serve in both English and 'Wolof' (a language of Senegal, Mauritania and the Gambia). [This article](#) by Anney Sister Rupanjoli Sja entitled "My Experience in West Africa - Gambia (Basse Community)" describes her recent journey to the region and her experiences meeting school children (see image), national and local dignitaries, and visiting the important work of local social agencies.



**Country Background:** As one of the smallest and most densely populated countries in West Africa, the Republic of Gambia is entirely surrounded by Senegal except for its western coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. Historically, Arab traders provided the first written accounts of the area in

the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the region was disputed by the colonial powers of Portugal, Britain and France. During the transatlantic slave trade, as many as 3million people may have been taken from the region. With a current population of 2.8million (2024) – more than half of whom live in urban and peri-urban centers -- Gambia's economy is dominated by farming, fishing and tourism. Despite significant poverty reduction gains realized during the early 2000s, today the country ranks as one of the poorest in the world (with an average annual income of just over \$400 USD). The Republic also faces significant environmental challenges with drought and deforestation having led to significant soil erosion and desertification in the country. (Sources: Anney Congregation website, International Centre website, The Gambia Poverty and Gender Assessment 2022 report, Wikipedia, World Bank, Worldometer)



United in prayer, the Global Joseph Family, 7850 Sisters, 5700 Associates, 34 Agrégées in 45 countries, listening to the heart of the world.