

Banjul Marathon

Celebrating 30 Years
of Self Help Africa in
The Gambia



**26th April –
4th May 2025**

TRIP ITINERARY

26th April – 4th May 2025

DAY	ACTIVITY
Saturday 26th	Travel from Dublin to Banjul, Gambia Welcome, orientation and country brief
Sunday 27th	Banjul Marathon 30th Anniversary Celebrations
Monday 28th	Visit women oyster farmers followed by a short drama presentation on mangrove forest conservation
Tuesday 29th	Visit Kalaji Women Gardner's followed by a meeting with Isatou of Women's Initiative Gambia. Tree planting activities
Wednesday 30th	Visit Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute followed by bursary presentation and workshop with students
Thursday 1st	Visit Farmer Field School Demo Farm Tree Planting Activities
Friday 2nd	Trip to Bijilo Forest Park
Saturday 3rd	Evening Flight to Dublin
Sunday 4th	Land into Dublin 07:50am



THE BANJUL INTERNATIONAL MARATHON



The Banjul International Marathon is inviting all long-distance runners, professionals, amateur or tourist running for fun to participate in this edition of the marathon. The race will offer different categories so that there is something for everyone who wants to participate whether you are a seasoned or a first timer. There will be **42km, 21km, 10km, 5km run and 4km walk for health.**



THE GAMBIA

Stretching 450km inland along the Gambia river, The Gambia is surrounded by Senegal except for its 60km beachfront on the Atlantic Ocean.

The economy relies upon agriculture, tourism and remittances home from expatriate Gambians to their families.

Poverty and food insecurity are widespread, and nearly half its estimated 2 million people live in poverty. Forty per cent of inhabitants live in rural areas where 73.9 per cent live below the poverty line.

Over 60 per cent of Gambians depend on farming for their livelihood. Farmers and agricultural workers, especially women and young people, form a large part of the poor and extremely poor. Many are illiterate, and lack knowledge, skills, economic opportunities and access to productive resources such as credit, land ownership, and support services.

Weather-induced crop failures and shortages of cash often force farmers to sell part of their produce immediately after harvest, when prices are at their lowest, and buy grain at high prices during the hungry

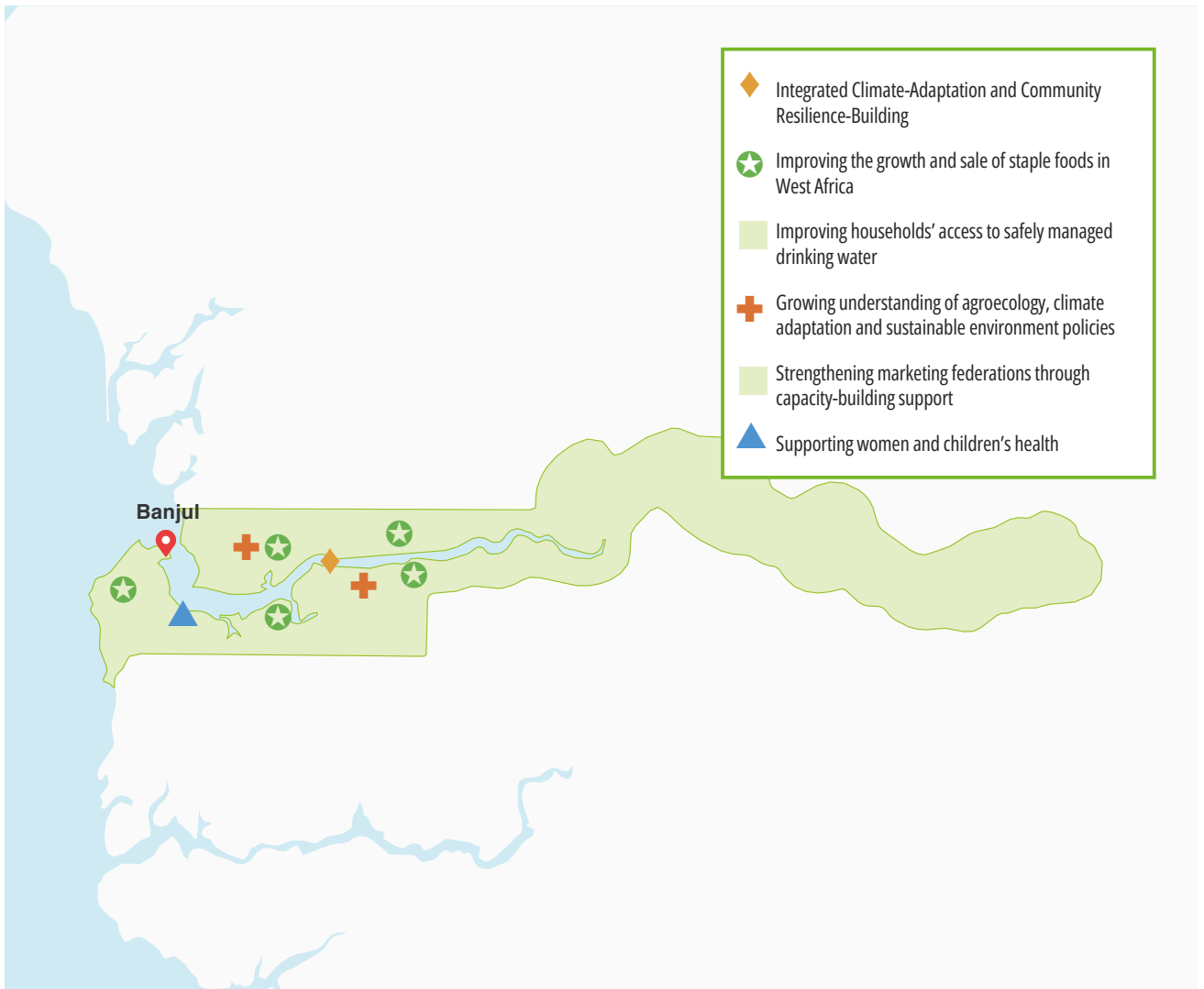
season (July–September). They are caught in a circle of low income, risk aversion and the use of low-output technologies

The challenges for The Gambia in producing enough food include:

- reliance on rainfed production;
- depleted soils and climate change;
- salt water incursion;
- illiteracy, impeding adoption of improved technologies;
- economic exclusion of youth and women;
- poor access to good quality inputs and appropriate financial services; and
- weak organization of farm-to-market value chains.

Traditionally, women do not own or control land, yet are more than half of the agricultural labour force. They lead production of rice, vegetables, fruit and small livestock, without access to credit.





SELF HELP AFRICA IN THE GAMBIA

Self Help Africa was established 50 years ago in Ireland, and in the past half century has worked with local communities across close to 20 countries to end hunger and extreme poverty.

The primary focus of our work has been on supporting rural communities to produce enough food and earn a sustainable income.

This focus on small-scale agriculture is because upwards of 70% of the extreme poor in the countries where we work live and rely on farming for their survival. With the right support, most of these farms have the potential to grow much more and generate better incomes than they do at present.

A particular focus of our work is on supporting African women, who do much of the work on small farms - yet receive a much smaller share of its rewards.

That is because women are often denied access to the same opportunities as men - within farmers cooperatives, in land ownership, in being able to access markets for their produce, and in being able to access small loans to allow them to invest in their small farms.

Self Help Africa has been working in The Gambia for nearly 30 years and in Senegal for 20 years.

This work was carried out for much of that time as United Purpose, a UK-based development organisation that was taken over by Self Help Africa in 2021.

Our work in The Gambia focuses primarily on ending poverty and hunger by working with local communities. Upwards of 56% of the people that we work with in The Gambia are women.

While the challenge of global warming is making it harder for communities to grow enough food on their land, our experience has built an expertise in addressing climate change and its impact on food production.

THE GAMBIA'S GROWING POTENTIAL



"I have paid my school fees for my child, another woman has opened a tearoom and another has a salon."

A new 'demonstration farm' in The Gambia is helping the next generation of farmers successfully grow more organic fruit and vegetables – to eat and sell.

Traditionally, The Gambia has relied heavily on imported fruit and vegetables to stock markets and dinner plates – limiting farmers' earning potential and costing families more.

But, our demonstration farm – managed by Ousman Manneh and his small team of agricultural experts – has been showcasing climate-smart and chemical-free growing practices to local communities, farmers and even school pupils. Despite climate-related weather changes, Ousman's team are successfully growing papayas, bananas, pineapples, strawberries, ginger and garlic. A natural pesticide mixed on site allows crops to grow chemical-free and a focus on recycling 'waste'

includes using discarded plastic as mulch and tyres as planting beds. "This demonstration farm is a place where people can come and learn," Ousman said. "We bring students, farmers, even civil servants to show them what they believe cannot be grown in The Gambia, can be grown here. Seeing is believing."

The farm has also successfully grown onions during the rainy season, which farmers didn't do previously. The women-led co-operative farms we support across The Gambia are

now growing them year-round, with great results. Sheikh Tijan Jallow, Coordinator of the Transforming Access to Markets project and a farmer himself, said: "We try to show people that within farming you can have a stable source of livelihood. The poverty level here [is rising], it's difficult to cope, but we have to bear with it because if we don't feed the nation, nobody will do it for us. We have to take up the opportunity, the challenge, and know that we must grow what we eat and eat what we grow in our country."





Marie Demba, oyster farmer at The Gambia's mangroves, 2024

SAVING WEST AFRICA'S MANGROVES

Mangroves are the lungs of the world. They can store up to seven times more carbon than other forests.

Growing where land meets water, these vital ecosystems are also home to a wide range of animals, plants and more – providing food and income for local communities, including oyster farmers like Marie Demba (pictured) while protecting coast and river banks from erosion and flooding.

Unfortunately, almost a third of the world's mangrove forests have been lost in the last 25 years. But the good news is that a global effort is underway to reverse this trend. And we're playing an important part in that.

In Senegal and The Gambia, we're supporting international efforts to regenerate and replant 500 hectares (1100 acres) of mangroves.

So far, the equivalent of 1,260 football pitches have been restored and replanted. And we're just getting started!

In our work we are supporting and incentivising local communities to preserve and protect this remarkable natural habitat - and incentivising this conservation by supporting women to produce and farm oysters in the mangrove swamps.

The initiative is being supported by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Senegal's Ministry for the Environment and corporate partners.

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- You can read more about [the pioneering women who have become the stewards of The Gambia's fragile mangroves](#) at The Guardian at the link here.
- Also, check out Sheik Jallow speaking about recently about his work in The Gambia. https://youtu.be/_iAyFaCBAkY

THE GAMBIA - 10 FACTS

1. The Gambia is the smallest country in mainland Africa - a long strip of land that follows the course of the River Gambia. It is slightly smaller than Jamaica.
2. It's incredibly narrow, measuring less than 30 miles wide at its widest! Although small, the country is densely populated with approximately 2.28 million people.
3. The Gambia is home to nine different tribes. The largest of these tribes is the Mandinka, along with the Fula and Wolof, all of whom live together harmoniously. This does make learning any of the local language a bit trickier as there are several variations. As a former British colony, English is widely spoken.
4. During elections, Gambians vote using marbles. In a private booth, voters are presented with holes in the ground marked with each candidate. They then simply drop their marble into the hole they choose.
5. The Gambia once sat at the centre of the slave trade. James Island was once a major waypoint of the transatlantic slave trade, and became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003.
6. Kunte Kinte Island, the current name of James Island, is named after the central figure in American author, [Alex Haley's award-winning slavery epic 'Roots'](#), a best selling book that was made into a blockbuster TV mini-series in the 1970s. Haley traced his own great-grandfather, Kunte Kinte's roots back to the banks of the River Gambia.
7. The peculiar shape and size of the country are the result of territorial compromises made during the 19th century by Great Britain, which controlled the lower Gambia River, and France, which ruled neighbouring Senegal.
8. It is often claimed by Gambians that the distance of the borders from the Gambia River correspond to the range that British naval cannon could reach from the river's channel. Beyond the cannon's range lay what became Senegal. There is no historic confirmation of this claim.
9. Agriculture is a major source of income, with 80% of people earning their living from subsistence farming.
10. The Gambia's economy relies heavily on tourism, its main foreign tourist market being Great Britain, from where there are direct flights every week.

SELF HELP AFRICA - 10 FACTS

1. The current [Self Help Africa is the result of a series of mergers of smaller Irish and UK based development organisations](#) over the course of 50 years. These include Self Help Development International, Harvest Help, Africa Now, United Purpose, and Gorta, Ireland's first international development organisation.
2. Our patron is the President of Ireland.
3. One of Self Help Africa's first major funders was Bob Geldof's Band Aid Trust, who awarded more than \$1m to work in Ethiopia following the Live Aid concerts of 1985.
4. Self Help Africa's first major project was to ship 2,000 tonnes of a variety of Irish potato to Ethiopia. Today, potato is the fifth largest cash crop grown in Ethiopia.
5. Self Help Africa also has a number of social enterprise subsidiaries - including Partner Africa, which provides ethical auditing services to Western companies wishing to do business in Africa, and training and consultancy services to African businesses exporting to the West.
6. CUMO Microfinance, another social enterprise subsidiary of Self Help Africa is the largest microfinance lender to the rural poor in Malawi.
7. Self Help Africa runs two large-scale enterprise development investment funds in Kenya and Zambia - and has supported more than 70 businesses to create tens of thousands of jobs by adding value to agricultural crops that are grown in these countries.
8. These funds have created profitable markets into which over 100,000 small-scale farmers in Kenya and Zambia have been able to sell their produce.
9. Self Help Africa was first launched in the United States in 2010 by former Irish President Mary Robinson, who was then a UN High Commissioner.
10. Across its programmes in 17 countries, 56% of people with whom Self Help Africa works are women - as are half of its leadership team overseas.

COSTS

Participants are asked to submit a registration form together with a **€150** booking deposit.

€2,000 is due by 26th January, with the remaining balance of **€2,000** due by May 5th.

The fundraising amount (**€4,150**) should be achieved by 5th May.

YOUR TRIP WILL INCLUDE:

- Return flights from the Dublin to Banjul, The Gambia
- Meals and Accommodation
- Entry into the Banjul Marathon

OUR SUPPORT

If you wish to participate and need a hand fundraising to take part, please contact Sarah in our office. We have some great suggestions and will help you every step of the way. We can also provide you with t-shirts, coin collection units, sponsorship forms and posters to help with your fundraising efforts.

For more information on the trip contact Sarah on **01 677 8880** or at sarah.carroll@selfhelpafrica.org



SUPPORTING SELF HELP AFRICA



Fatou Mjie, Touba Pakala Village, The Gambia

Self Help Africa is an international development organisation that works through agriculture to end hunger and poverty.

The organisation works in 16 countries across sub-Saharan Africa. In 2022, our work in Africa supported millions of people to grow more food and earn a better living.

Self Help Africa has been working to end hunger and poverty amongst rural communities in Africa for over 30 years.

Our work seeks to empower local communities with training and knowledge, and to support smallholder farming families to produce more, earn more, and access new markets and better prices for the crops that they grow.

Your participation will provide a valuable contribution to our work.



**Self Help
AFRICA**

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OUT
MORE**

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