

Name: Jacinda Bowman

Local Name: Yassin Sallah



Country: The Gambia

Sector: Education



Country Information

What is the country population?

1.849 million

What is the climate and geography like?

Dry, flat scrubland that follows the Gambia River

What is the population of your site?

About 3,000 people

Describe your living arrangements.

A room at the end of a row house in a family compound with 20 people



Culture

What do people wear?

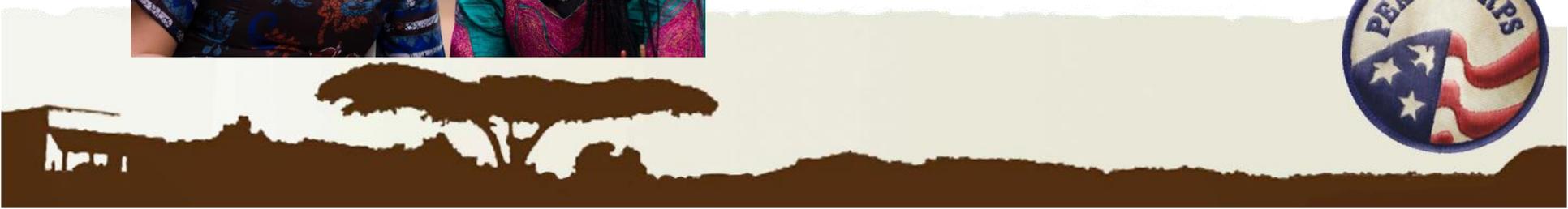
Women wear brightly patterned fabric dresses and skirts. Men wear traditional long tunics or Western clothes.

What is the food like?

Most meals consist of rice or millet. Peanuts are the main crop in the Gambia, so they are in many traditional dishes.

What is the main religion?

Islam



Culture

What holidays do people celebrate?

Tobaski or Eid al-Adha

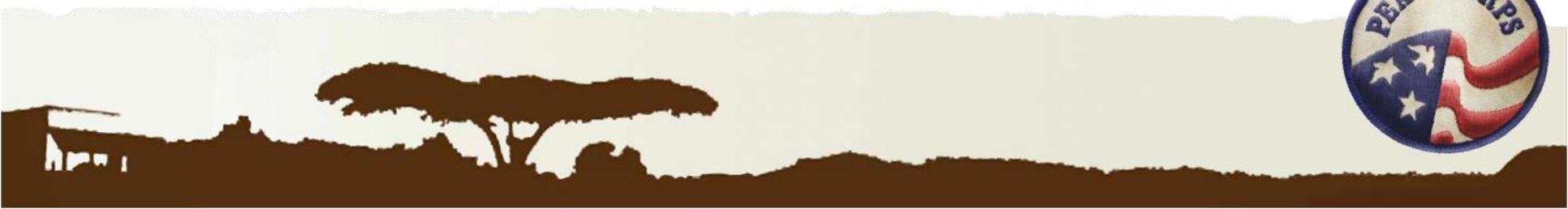
Koriteh or Eid al-Fitr (The end of Ramadan)

Are there any interesting customs or traditions?

Beautification like tattooing and facial scarring, circumcision ceremonies involve masked creatures that terrorize people and dance around the village, naming ceremonies, and elaborate wedding ceremonies

How does transportation work?

Most people don't own a vehicle. You can take a donkey or horse cart or, for longer distances, people load up in buses or large, falling-apart vans.



Work

What is your primary project?

I train teachers at the school in my village.

What are your secondary projects?

Tutoring students in my compound,
coordinating literacy activities for my post.

What has been your biggest success?

Making genuine connections and friendships in
my host family compound.

What has been your biggest setback? The
sense of “otherness” that I always carry with me.
I will never be Gambian because I am not from
here, no matter how hard I try.



Fun Facts

What is your favorite moment in your service so far?

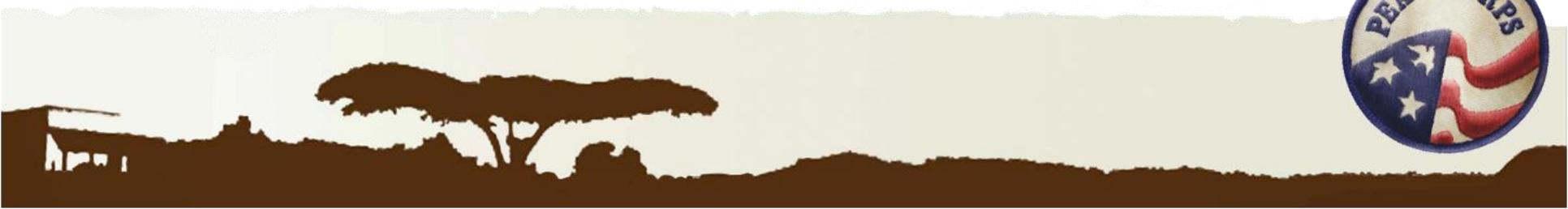
Carrying my sleeping baby brother in my arms, walking around my compound while the sun sets in the big, African sky.

What is the strangest thing that has happened to you as a Volunteer?

I realized that I prefer not using toilet paper!

What is your favorite part of being a Peace Corps Volunteer?

Expanding my world and being a part of an even larger family.



Fun Facts

What is your favorite word or phrase in the local language?

Wonki am. (Meaning “my soul” in Pulaar and my nickname for my host Grandma)



What are things that you’ve found that are done better in your host country than America?

Spending time with family and community.
Caring for others.

What aspects of your host country do you wish you could bring back to America?

Hospitality. People drop everything to make a guest feel welcome. They share their food, home, clothes, and family with guests.

