The Republic of The Gambia

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

January 2026

Table of Contents……....i

Acknowledgements……...…….v

Executive Summary……..……..v

- Key objectives and strategic approach
- Summary of priority actions
- Expected outcomes and benefits

Chapter 1: Introduction and Context…….……1

1.1 Background and context……1
1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan…….1
1.3 Alignment with National Strategies and Plans……..……2
1.4 Alignment with International Biodiversity Commitments……3
1.5 The Importance of Protected Areas for The Gambia…….……4
1.6 Key Challenges Facing Protected and Conserved Areas…….……..5
1.7 Rationale for the PASAP 2025-2035…..……6
1.8 Structure of the PASAP……...……..6

Chapter 2: Vision, Mission, Principles and Strategic Objectives…….……7

2.1 Introduction……7
2.2 Vision Statement……..……..7
2.3 Mission Statement…….……7
2.4 Guiding Principles……...……..7

2.5 Strategic Objectives (2025–2035)……..9

2.6 Contribution to National Targets and the Global Biodiversity Targets……..….10

2.7 Conclusion……..…….12

Chapter 3: Status of Protected Areas in The Gambia…..……13

3.1 Introduction…….…….13
3.2 Overview of the National Protected Area system……13
3.3 Ecosystem Diversity within Protected Areas……...……14
3.4 Existing Protected Areas: Categories and Distribution.……..…14

3.5 Governance of Protected Areas in The Gambia……..15

3.6 Management Effectiveness: Current Status…….16

3.7 Biodiversity Status Within Protected Areas……..……..17

3.8 Threats to Protected Areas in The Gambia……..18

3.9 Opportunities for Strengthening the Protected Area System…..…….….19

3.10 Key Gaps Identified…….…….…19

3.11 Conclusion…….20

Chapter 4: Strategic Framework (PoWPA Elements 1–4)…….……21

4.1 Introduction……..21
4.2 PoWPA Element 1: Protected Area Planning, Design, Establishment and Management…...21
4.3 PoWPA Element 2: Governance, Participation, Equity and Benefit Sharing.……..…23
4.4 PoWPA Element 3: Enabling Policy Environment, Capacity, and Sustainable Financing….24

4.5 PoWPA Element 4: Standards, Assessment, Monitoring and Adaptive Management……25

4.6 Cross-Cutting Priorities…..……..26

4.7 Conclusion…..……..27

Chapter 5: Protected Area Expansion Plan…….……28

5.1 Introduction…….…….28
5.2 Rational for Protected Area Expansion……....28
5.3 Targets for Protected Area Expansion…….29
5.4 Priority Areas for expansion…….……..….29
5.5 Recognition and Integration of OECMs…….…….…30
5.6 Approaches to Protected Area Expansion……...31

5.7 Ecological Corridors and Connectivity Areas…….32

5.8 Integration with Climate Change Adaptation……..32

5.9 Expected Outcomes (By 2035)……....33

5.10 Conclusion…….33

Chapter 6: Sustainable Financing Strategies for Protected Areas…..……...…..34

6.1 Introduction……..34
6.2 Vision and Objectives of the Financing Strategy……....34
6.3 Current Financial Gaps and Challenges…..……..34
6.4 Principles Guiding the Financing Strategy……..35

6.5 Priority Financing Mechanisms (2025–2035).……35

6.6 Strengthening Financial Management…….38

6.7 Financing Needs Assessment (2025–2035)…….....39

6.8 Expected Outcomes (By 2035)…….....39

6.9 Conclusion……...39

Chapter 7: Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Strategy (2025-2035)……...40

7.1 Introduction…….40
7.2 Vision and Objectives…….....40
7.3 Key Stakeholders…….41
7.4 Strategic Priorities for Stakeholder Engagement…….42

7.5 Key Tools and Approaches…….43

7.6 Expected Outcomes (By 2035)…….43

7.7 Conclusion……...44

Chapter 8: Risk Assessment, Implementation and Monitoring Framework (2025-2035)....45

8.1 Introduction…….45
8.2 Risk assessment……...45
8.3 Implementation framework…….....46
8.4 Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) Framework…….47

8.5 Risk Management in Monitoring and Evaluation.……..48

8.6 Expected Outcomes by 2035……...48

8.7 Conclusion……...49

Chapter 9: Conclusion and Way Forward……50

9.1 Summary of key achievements and strategic directions……..50
9.2 Strategic benefits (ecological, social, economic)……50
9.3 Implementation priorities for the Way Forward……..51
9.4 Commitment and Call to action……...51

9.5 Conclusion……..52

Annexes

- **Annex 1: Priority Protected Area Sites and OECMs……..……53**

  - List of priority terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine sites
  - Community-managed and private OECMs
  - Site-level biodiversity and ecosystem details
- **Annex 2: Financing Mechanisms and Cost Estimates……..57**
  - Estimated 10-year costs by Protected Area type and component
  - Funding sources: government, trust fund, PES, ecotourism, donors
  - Financial sustainability measures
- **Annex 3: Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators and Data Sources……...……61**
  - Ecological, management, socioeconomic, financial, and governance indicators
  - Data sources, frequency, and responsible institutions
  - Adaptive management framework
- **Annex 4: Stakeholder Matrix and Engagement Plan……...65**
  - Stakeholder identification and roles
  - Engagement methods and frequency
  - Principles of participatory, equitable, and inclusive engagement
- **Annex 5: Theory of change…….69**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) for The Gambia (2025–2035) Aligned with the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

The Gambia's rich biological diversity—ranging from savanna woodlands and gallery forests to freshwater wetlands, mangrove estuaries, farmland mosaics and coastal marine systems—forms the ecological foundation of the country's economy, culture, and resilience. Protected areas (PAs) play a crucial role in safeguarding these ecosystems while enhancing climate resilience, supporting food security, and sustaining rural livelihoods.

This Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035 provides a comprehensive blueprint for strengthening The Gambia's national system of protected and conserved areas, aligning national actions with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA), the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2025–2035 and the National Development Plan and climate change policies.

The PASAP outlines a coordinated, inclusive, science-based, and financially sustainable approach to conserving biodiversity and ecosystem services while recognizing the essential role of local communities, traditional knowledge, and equitable benefit-sharing.

Although The Gambia is small in land area, it supports a diversity of ecosystems that provide essential services such as water regulation and freshwater supply through wetlands and upper watershed protection, climate adaptation via mangrove ecosystems buffering against sea-level rise, food security through fisheries nurseries and forest resources, soil conservation and erosion control, carbon storage, particularly in forests, savannas and mangroves and tourism, recreation & cultural identity. However, these ecosystems face increasing threats such as agricultural expansion and fragmentation, deforestation, bushfires and charcoal production, illegal logging and wildlife exploitation, coastal erosion, sand mining and saline intrusion, pollution and unsustainable fishing, climate impacts (droughts, flooding, heat stress) and weak enforcement and limited management resources.

Existing protected areas cover important biodiversity sites, but the network faces critical gaps such as underrepresentation of some ecosystems (e.g., marine, freshwater, savanna corridors), fragmentation and lack of ecological connectivity, insufficient management capacity and funding and limited community participation and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

This strategy addresses these challenges through a decade-long program of reforms, expansion, capacity-building, restoration, and governance strengthening.

The vision (2035) of the PASAP is *a resilient and well-connected national system of protected and conserved areas that safeguards The Gambia's biodiversity, supports climate resilience, enhances livelihoods, and contributes to sustainable national development.*

The Strategic Goals are as follows:

1. Expand and enhance the ecological representativeness of protected and conserved areas (land, freshwater, coastal and marine).
2. Ensure effective, inclusive, and equitable governance of all protected areas.
3. Strengthen the management effectiveness of all protected areas.
4. Secure long-term, diversified, and sustainable financing.
5. Integrate biodiversity and PA considerations into national policies and sectoral planning (land use, agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure).
6. Enhance climate resilience of ecosystems and communities through nature-based solutions.
7. Establish national systems for monitoring, research, reporting, and adaptive management.

The Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP**)** is aligned with PoWPA in the following ways: PoWPA Element 1 – Planning, Selecting, Establishing and Managing Protected Areas, PoWPA Element 2 – Governance, Equity and Participation, PoWPA Element 3 – Enabling Environment and PoWPA Element 4 – Standards, Assessment and Monitoring.

The Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) proposes a **phased and strategic expansion** of the national PA network to achieve ecological representation across:Savanna and woodland ecosystems, riverine forests and freshwater wetlands, mangrove and estuarine ecosystems, coastal dune systems and beaches, marine ecosystems within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and migratory corridors and wildlife dispersal routes.

Preliminary modelling suggests expansion could range from **5–12% additional terrestrial coverage** and **3–8% new marine protection**, depending on political feasibility and socio-economic considerations.

The plan includes the identification of **Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)** to formally recognize biosphere, community and privately conserved areas contributing to national biodiversity targets.

The PASAP promotes an inclusive model recognizing that effective conservation requires the participation of government agencies, local communities, traditional authorities, private landholders, NGOs and academic institutions, women, youth and vulnerable groups and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).

Governance reforms will encourage co-management agreements, strengthen local stewardship and traditional ecological knowledge, enhance transparency, accountability, and rights-based management and support livelihood diversification in PA-adjacent communities.

Sustainable financing is essential for achieving long-term biodiversity outcomes. The PASAP includes a diversified financing plan such as government budget allocations (gradually increasing), tourism and park-use fees, payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), blue carbon and REDD+ opportunities, biodiversity offsets and environmental levies, trust funds or conservation endowments, donor support and climate financing and private sector partnerships. By 2030, the aim is to reduce donor dependency while creating stable, domestic financing streams.

AS regards monitoring, reporting and adaptive management, the Strategy establishes a national biodiversity monitoring system, standardized indicators for species, ecosystems, Protected Area governance, and finance, periodic management effectiveness evaluations (METT, IMET, or GSI), a centralized GIS and data management platform and annual reporting and 5-year reviews to align with NBSAP and CBD requirements. Results will feed directly into adaptive management at site and national levels.

The expected outcomes of the PASAP are as follows:

- A **representative, climate-resilient network** of terrestrial, marine, and freshwater protected areas and OECMs
- Improved **ecological integrity**, restored habitats, and enhanced wildlife populations
- Increased **community participation** and equitable benefit-sharing in conservation
- Enhanced national capacity for enforcement, management, research, and governance
- Stable, diversified **financing mechanisms** supporting long-term sustainability
- Integration of biodiversity across all national development sectors
- Strengthened national resilience to climate change impacts
- Compliance with GBF targets, CBD commitments, and NBSAP 2025–2035 goals

The PASAP represents a significant step towards ensuring that The Gambia's natural heritage is secured for present and future generations. Through an integrated approach grounded in global best practices, national priority-setting, and community participation, The Gambia can build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainably financed system of protected and conserved areas that supports biodiversity, livelihoods, and national development.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) for The Gambia (2025–2035) Aligned with PoWPA and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

1.1 Background and Context

The Gambia, a narrow West African nation following the course of the River Gambia from inland savannas to the Atlantic coast, is home to a rich mosaic of ecosystems. Despite its small size and dense human settlement, the country possesses exceptional biodiversity value relative to its land area — from tidal wetlands and mangrove forests to savanna woodlands, riparian ecosystems, freshwater marshes, and coastal marine habitats. These ecosystems provide the ecological, economic, and cultural foundations upon which millions of Gambian livelihoods depend.

However, this natural heritage faces unprecedented pressure. Rapid population growth, agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, overexploitation of natural resources, and the impacts of climate change are eroding natural capital and ecosystem resilience. In the last decades, habitat degradation has intensified, wetlands have shrunk, mangroves have been lost, and formerly abundant wildlife has become increasingly scarce. Traditional rural communities, whose livelihoods depend directly on natural resources, bear the greatest burden from this ecological decline.

Protecting and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services is therefore essential not only for ecological integrity but also for human well-being, poverty reduction, climate adaptation, and national development. Protected areas — when effectively planned, governed, managed, and sustainably financed — are globally recognized as one of the most effective mechanisms for safeguarding nature. They form the backbone of in situ conservation and serve as living laboratories for sustainable development practices.

The Government of The Gambia has long recognized the importance of protected areas. However, the existing system requires modernization, expansion, scientific strengthening, improved governance, stronger community participation, and sustainable financing. The Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035 is therefore a strategic intervention designed to upgrade, harmonize, and future-proof the national protected area network in line with global biodiversity commitments and national development priorities.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan

The PASAP serves as the national blueprint for the establishment, governance, management, financing, monitoring, and expansion of protected and conserved areas for the period **2025–2035**. It is intended to guide government agencies, local authorities, communities, private sector partners, NGOs, researchers, and development partners in coordinated action toward a common vision.

The objectives of the PASAP are:

- To provide a coherent national framework aligned with the Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
- To strengthen The Gambia's role in achieving GBF Target 3 ("30% of land and sea areas under protection or conservation by 2030").
- To guide the identification, creation, governance, and management of protected and conserved areas.
- To integrate protected areas into national land-use planning, climate strategies, and development processes.
- To promote sustainable financing, community-based solutions, and benefits for local livelihoods.
- To establish a robust system for monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and adaptive learning.

The PASAP covers:

- Terrestrial ecosystems
- Freshwater systems
- Coastal and marine environments
- Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)
- Both government-managed and co-managed or community-managed areas as well as privately-managed

It complements and supports implementation of The Gambia's **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2025–2035**, which sets the broader policy context for biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

1.3 Alignment with National Strategies and Plans

The PASAP directly supports and operationalizes several national policies and frameworks:

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2025–2035)

The PASAP is a key implementation tool of the NBSAP and aligns with national biodiversity goals, including ecological restoration, species conservation, landscape-level planning, and mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors.

National Development Plan

Protected areas are integral to agriculture, tourism, fisheries, water resources, and climate resilience. Strengthened Protected Area (PA) systems support sustainable growth, green jobs, blue jobs and national stability.

Climate Change Policies

The Gambia's National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and climate resilience plans identify ecosystems — especially **mangroves, forests, wetlands**, and

marine systems — as core pillars of climate adaptation. Protected Areas therefore contribute directly to the country's climate commitments.

Sectoral Policies

The PASAP supports multi-sectoral integration:

- **Agriculture and forestry policies:** addressing land-use expansion, agroforestry, bushfires, charcoal production.
- **Fisheries and coastal zone policies:** ensuring sustainable harvesting and marine conservation.
- **Land-use and spatial planning:** guiding zoning, ecological corridors, and avoidance of habitat fragmentation.
- **Tourism development strategies:** promoting ecotourism and nature-based enterprise.

1.4 Alignment with International Biodiversity Commitments

The PASAP ensures The Gambia remains compliant and relevant within global biodiversity conservation frameworks:

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Gambia is obligated to conserve biological diversity, use biological resources sustainably, and ensure fair and equitable benefit sharing. Key articles relevant to protected areas include:

- **Article 8:** in situ conservation
- **Article 10:** sustainable use
- **Article 14:** impact assessment
- **Article 18:** scientific cooperation

Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA)

The four PoWPA elements form the backbone of this strategy:

1. Protected Area System Planning & Management
2. Governance, Equity and Benefit-Sharing
3. Enabling Environment (policies, capacity, knowledge)
4. Standards, Assessment and Monitoring

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

Key GBF targets reflected in this PASAP include:

- **Target 3:** 30% of land, freshwater, and marine areas conserved by 2030
- **Target 4:** halt human-induced extinction
- **Target 8:** ecosystem resilience and climate adaptation

- **Target 11:** restoration of degraded ecosystems
- **Target 14:** mainstream biodiversity in all sectors
- **Target 19:** sustainable biodiversity finance
- **Target 22:** equitable governance and rights recognition

Other Conventions & Agreements

- **The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention,** wetlands)
- **The Convention on International Trade in Endangeerd Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES,** wildlife trade)
- **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS,** migratory species)
- **The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS,** marine governance)
- **Economic Community of West African States and the African Union (ECOWAS and the AU, regional commitments)**

1.5 The Importance of Protected Areas for The Gambia

Protected areas are essential to The Gambia's long-term sustainability. They:

1. Safeguard Biodiversity

- Protect endangered species, endemic species, key bird habitats, mangroves, spawning grounds, and unique West African ecosystems.

2. Support Food Security

- Fisheries spawning zones, inland water systems, and pollinator habitats contribute to agricultural productivity and nutrition.

3. Enhance Climate Resilience

- Mangroves shield communities from storms and erosion.
- Forests and wetlands regulate water cycles and reduce drought impacts.

4. Provide Livelihoods

- Communities depend on forest products, fisheries, grazing, ecotourism, and ecosystem services.

5. Drive Sustainable Economic Growth

- Ecotourism and nature-based enterprise can generate both green and blue jobs and state revenue.

6. Protect Cultural Heritage

- Sacred forests, community lands, and traditional stewardship practices form part of the nation's cultural identity.

7. Improve Human Health and Well-being

- Clean water, reduced pollution, and healthy ecosystems support public health and disease regulation.

1.6 Key Challenges Facing Protected and Conserved Areas

Despite progress, the PA system faces structural and operational challenges:

A. Underrepresentation of Key Ecosystems

- Marine zones
- Freshwater wetlands
- Riparian forests
- Savanna corridors connecting wildlife populations

B. Weak Enforcement Capacity

- Limited ranger staff, equipment, transport, and training
- Insufficient legal tools to prosecute environmental crimes

C. Community-Livelihood Conflicts

- Unclear land tenure
- Human-wildlife conflict
- Restricted access to livelihood resources
- Limited tangible benefits from conservation

D. Limited Sustainable Financing

- Overreliance on donor projects
- Declining government allocations
- Weak revenue collection mechanisms

E. Climate Change Pressures

- Increased salinity in wetlands
- Loss of mangroves
- Coastal erosion
- Heat stress and drought affecting ecosystems

F. Fragmented Governance

- Overlapping mandates
- Poor coordination among ministries, agencies, and local authorities

These challenges underscore the need for a comprehensive decade-long strategy that strengthens the entire system — legally, institutionally, financially, ecologically, and socially.

1.7 Rationale for the PASAP (2025–2035)

The PASAP is needed because:

1. The Gambia must increase ecological representativity and connectivity to meet GBF Target 3.
2. Current protected areas require improved management effectiveness, enforcement and community engagement.
3. Ecosystems are vulnerable to climate change, requiring nature-based adaptation strategies.
4. There is no unified national system linking conservation, development, climate, and finance.
5. Community rights and governance need stronger recognition to ensure equitable outcomes.
6. Sustainable financing is urgently needed to ensure long-term viability.
7. Science, data and monitoring systems are insufficient and must be upgraded.

The PASAP provides a roadmap for transforming the national protected area landscape into a resilient, inclusive, well-connected network that supports ecological integrity and national development.

1.8 Structure of the PASAP

This strategy is organized into nine chapters covering:

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction & Background
3. Vision, Mission, Principles, and Strategic Objectives
4. Status of Protected Areas in The Gambia
5. Strategic Framework (PoWPA-aligned)
6. Protected Area Expansion Plan
7. Sustainable Financing Strategy
8. Stakeholder Engagement & Communication
9. Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management

Each section includes detailed analysis, recommended policy and governance actions, and a decade-long action framework (2025–2035).

CHAPTER 2: VISION, MISSION, PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) for The Gambia (2025–2035)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter articulates the guiding vision, mission, principles, and strategic objectives that underpin the Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035. These foundational elements serve as the philosophical and direction-setting backbone of the national approach to conservation, governance, partnership, and sustainable development.

The vision and mission statements define the desired future state and core purpose of the protected area system. The principles guide decision-making and implementation, while the strategic objectives translate commitments into actionable, measurable results. Together, these elements ensure coherence, accountability, and alignment with national priorities, global biodiversity frameworks, and community aspirations.

2.2 Vision Statement

By 2035, The Gambia manages a resilient, ecologically representative, well-connected and equitably- governed system of protected and conserved areas that safeguards biodiversity, supports climate resilience, enhances sustainable livelihoods, and contributes to national development.

This vision reflects an integrated and forward-looking approach that recognizes protected areas as both ecological assets and socio-economic pillars for The Gambia's long-term prosperity.

2.3 Mission Statement

To conserve The Gambia's biodiversity and ecosystems through inclusive governance, effective management, sustainable financing, science-based decision-making, and the full participation of communities and stakeholders, ensuring equitable benefits and resilient landscapes across the country.

The mission underscores the critical functions of protected areas as engines of conservation, climate adaptation, community prosperity, and national well-being.

2.4 Guiding Principles

The PASAP is guided by a set of principles derived from international best practice, national priorities, and local values. These principles inform all aspects of planning, governance, management, financing, and monitoring.

1. Ecological Integrity and Representativeness

The protected area system must conserve the full diversity of ecosystems, species, and ecological processes across terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine zones. Priority is given to areas of high biodiversity value, threatened ecosystems, ecological corridors, and climate-resilient landscapes.

2. Inclusivity, Equity, and Rights-Based Governance

Conservation must respect community rights, uphold Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), empower traditional resource users, and ensure equitable sharing of benefits. Women, youth, indigenous custodians, and vulnerable groups must play central roles in decision-making and governance.

3. Science, Evidence, and Traditional Knowledge

Decision-making must be based on the best available ecological science while valuing traditional ecological knowledge and local stewardship practices. Adaptive management is essential to respond to emerging threats and new information.

4. Climate Resilience and Nature-Based Solutions

Protected areas must contribute to national climate adaptation and mitigation goals by safeguarding natural buffers, sequestering carbon, maintaining freshwater systems, and reducing vulnerability to climate shocks.

5. Sustainable Financing and Economic Sustainability

The protected area system must be underpinned by diversified and long-term financing mechanisms, including tourism revenues, Payment for Environmental Services (PES), carbon finance, partnerships, and government commitments. Conservation must contribute to socio-economic development and community prosperity.

6. Good Governance, Transparency, and Accountability

Clear mandates, strong institutions, coordinated policies, and transparent decision-making are essential. Governance must combat corruption, ensure accountability, and foster trust among stakeholders.

7. Partnership and Collaboration

The PASAP promotes collaboration across ministries, local governments, communities, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), private sector actors, and international partners. Transboundary and regional cooperation are encouraged where relevant.

8. Precautionary Principle

Where threats of serious or irreversible damage exist, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be a reason to delay conservation action or protective measures.

9. Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Conservation should support regulated, sustainable use that aligns with ecosystem limits, national legislation, and community well-being. Resource extraction incompatible with biodiversity protection should not occur in protected areas.

10. Intergenerational Responsibility

The PASAP recognizes the need to protect natural heritage for future generations of Gambians, ensuring the long-term functioning of life-support systems and ecological processes.

2.5 Strategic Objectives (2025–2035)

The strategic objectives translate the PASAP's vision and mission into concrete targets and action areas for the decade. They align with PoWPA elements and the Kunming-Montreal GBF.

Objective 1: To strengthen and expand the ecological representativeness of The Gambia's protected and conserved areas.

- Identify, prioritize, and designate new protected areas across terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems.
- Integrate climate refugia, ecological corridors, and connectivity into land-use planning.
- Recognize and support OECMs, community conserved areas, and privately conserved areas.

Objective 2: To improve the management effectiveness of all national protected areas.

- Ensure all PAs have up-to-date management plans, staffing structures, and governance frameworks.
- Strengthen enforcement capacity, infrastructure, monitoring systems, and restoration programs.
- Use Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool (IMET), or Geographic Information System (GSI) tools to evaluate performance across all PAs.

Objective 3: To enhance inclusive governance, community participation, and equitable benefit-sharing.

- Promote co-management agreements with local communities and resource user groups.
- Establish rights-based governance mechanisms and FPIC processes.

- Ensure communities benefit from ecotourism, sustainable harvesting, PES, and conservation investments.

Objective 4: To establish enabling legal, institutional, and policy environments to support an effective PA system.

- Harmonize legislation governing forestry, wildlife, fisheries, land, and climate.
- Clarify institutional mandates and improve coordination between agencies.
- Promote biodiversity mainstreaming into agriculture, tourism, coastal management, and infrastructure planning.

Objective 5: To ensure sustainable and diversified financing for the Protected Area system.

- Develop a national PA financing plan.
- Expand tourism revenues, conservation trust funds, PES, carbon finance, biodiversity offsets, and partnerships.
- Increase government investment and promote private sector engagement.

Objective 6: To strengthen biodiversity monitoring, research, information systems, and knowledge management.

- Develop a national biodiversity monitoring framework.
- Expand ecological research, GIS systems, species inventories, and habitat surveys.
- Build national capacity for data collection, reporting, and adaptive management.

Objective 7: To promote protected areas as engines of climate resilience, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable development.

- Integrate nature-based solutions into national climate adaptation strategies.
- Restore degraded ecosystems (wetlands, mangroves, forests).
- Promote ecotourism, green jobs, blue jobs and livelihood diversification in PA-adjacent communities.

Objective 8: To strengthen education, outreach, communication, and environmental stewardship.

- Increase awareness of the value of biodiversity, protected areas, and ecosystem services.
- Promote conservation attitudes among youth, schools, and local communities.
- Engage media and civil society in promoting environmental responsibility.

2.6 Contribution to National Targets and the Global Biodiversity Targets

The strategic objectives contribute directly to the following key NBSAP targets which are highly aligned to Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets:

Target 1.1: Protect and effectively manage 35% of The Gambia's terrestrial and marine ecosystems through a mix of protected areas and OECMs by 2035.

- **Target 1.2**: Achieve 50% of PA management effectiveness of 10 important PA by 2035
- **Target 2.1**: Restore and increase Gambian mangrove cover by 10% (area) from the 2025 baseline by 2035. prioritizing natural regeneration and community-based planting.
- **Target 2.2**: Reduce disturbance at key turtle nesting sites so that documented nesting success increases by 40% by 2035 (relative to baseline).
- **Target 3.1**: Increase the proportion of fish stocks assessed as sustainable (within safe biological limits) to 70% by 2035.
- **Target 3.2:** Establish and operationalize community-managed no-take zones/nurseries covering at least 15% of key estuary/mangrove nursery areas by 2035.
- **Target 4.1**: Maintain or improve ecological condition of 80% of mapped high-value riverine wetlands by 2035 (condition index).
- **Target 4.2**: Restore 5,000 ha of degraded riparian buffer by 2035 to reduce sediment load and support fish migration.
- **Target 5.1**: Restore 10,000 ha of degraded forest and agro-landscape by 2030 through planting of native-species, economically-important species and assisted natural regeneration.
- **Target 5.2**: Increase area under climate-smart agroforestry by 30% in priority rural districts by 2030.
- **Target 9.1**: Implement EbA measures in 100 coastal and flood-prone communities, reducing vulnerability scores by 30% by 2035.
- **Target 9.2**: Quantify and increase blue/terrestrial carbon sequestration in restored landscapes by X $MtCO_2e$ (target to be defined by national carbon accounting) by 2035.
- **Target 10.2**: Secure long-term community-based conservation agreements for all key migratory bird staging sites by 2035.
- **Target 11.1**: Mobilize and secure an incremental $X million per year (public + private + donor) for biodiversity actions by 2026 (baseline to be set) and establish at least one national biodiversity trust fund by 2035.
- **Target 11.2**: Ensure 50% of communities adjacent to PAs have alternative livelihood programs (eco-enterprises, sustainable fisheries/agroforestry) benefiting at least 25,000 households by 2035.
- **Target 12.1**: Establish a national biodiversity monitoring system with baseline data for all major ecosystems (coastal, mangrove, riverine, savannah) completed by 2035, and annual reporting thereafter.
- **Target 12.2:** Train 2,000 community rangers/extension agents in biodiversity monitoring, sustainable resource management and enforcement by 2035.

The strategic objectives also contribute directly to key GBF targets:

- **Target 1 and 2:** Spatial planning and ecosystem restoration
- **Target 3:** 30% of land and sea conserved by 2030
- **Target 4:** Species recovery and extinction risk reduction
- **Target 8:** Climate resilience and disaster risk reduction
- **Target 11:** Restoration of degraded ecosystems
- **Target 12–14:** Mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors
- **Target 19:** Increasing biodiversity finance
- **Target 22:** Inclusive and equitable governance

Thus, the strategy positions The Gambia as an active contributor to global biodiversity ambitions.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter sets the philosophical and strategic foundation of the PASAP. The vision defines what the country seeks to achieve by 2035, while the mission describes how to achieve it. The principles guide the ethical and practical dimensions of implementation. The strategic objectives, aligned with national priorities and international obligations, provide clear direction for all subsequent chapters.

The following chapter builds on this strategic foundation by assessing the current status, gaps, strengths, and opportunities within The Gambia's protected area system.

CHAPTER 3: STATUS OF PROTECTED AREAS IN THE GAMBIA

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

3.1 Introduction

The Gambia's protected area estate forms the backbone of national biodiversity conservation efforts. Despite its relatively small geographic size, the country hosts a wide diversity of ecosystems, ranging from dry savanna woodlands and riparian forests to rich mangrove systems, coastal dunes, estuarine environments, and nearshore marine waters. These landscapes are crucial natural assets that sustain ecological integrity, regulate climate, support rural livelihoods, and contribute significantly to national development.

This chapter provides an overview of the current status of protected areas in The Gambia, including their extent, distribution, governance structures, management challenges, ecological importance, and contribution to biodiversity conservation. The analysis highlights achievements and identifies key gaps that the PASAP must address.

3.2 Overview of the National Protected Area System

The national protected area system comprises a mosaic of protection categories, including:

- National Parks
- Nature Reserves
- Indigenous Community Conservation Areas (ICCAs)
- Forest Parks and Forest Reserves
- Wetlands of international importance
- Marine and coastal protected areas
- Biosphere Reserves
- Other Effective are-based Conservation Measures OECMs (emerging)
- Private Nature Reserves

These areas protect representative samples of key ecosystems and provide essential ecological functions such as water regulation, carbon storage, habitat for wildlife, and buffering against climate change.

The national PA system is complemented by community-managed forests, sacred groves, and traditionally conserved sites, which increasingly play recognized roles in conservation.

There are 29 Wildlife protected areas (excluding biosphere reserves) covering 139,065. ha or 9.70% of the surface area of The Gambia. These PAs include national parks and reserves as well as Indigenous Community Conservation Areas (ICCA). Even with these achievements, the PA system remains **ecologically incomplete and unevenly distributed**, requiring targeted expansion, improved connectivity, and strengthened governance.

3.3 Ecosystem Diversity Within Protected Areas

The Gambia's protected areas cover several major ecological zones:

1. Savannah Woodlands and Grasslands

Dominant across the country's interior, these ecosystems host antelope, primates, raptors, termite-dependent species, and regional flora characteristic of the Sahel-Sudan transition zone.

2. Riverine Forests and Gallery Woodlands

Concentrated along the River Gambia and its tributaries, these corridors are biodiversity hotspots critical for primates, birds, amphibians, and tree species reliant on high moisture environments.

3. Freshwater Marshes and Inland Wetlands

These wetland systems provide feeding and staging grounds for migratory birds, essential fish nursery areas, and water regulation functions.

4. Mangrove Forests and Estuarine Systems

Among the most productive ecosystems in the country, mangroves protect shorelines, support fisheries, store carbon, and sustain traditional livelihoods.

5. Coastal Dunes, Beaches, and Marine Ecosystems

These habitats support marine turtles, fish spawning areas, and coastal vegetation that stabilizes dunes and protects communities from erosion.

6. Anthropogenic Landscapes with Biodiversity Value

Agroforestry mosaics, fallow fields, and community forests provide biodiversity refuges critical for maintaining ecological connectivity.

Despite this diversity, some ecosystems—especially marine and freshwater systems—are **underrepresented** in the current PA network.

3.4 Existing Protected Areas: Categories and Distribution

The categories and distribution of existing protected areas are as follow:

A. National Parks

National Parks represent one of the highest forms of protection. Typically, they focus on biodiversity conservation, ecological processes, and low-impact tourism.

B. Nature Reserves

Nature Reserves protect sensitive habitats, breeding sites, and areas of scientific interest. Human activity is often restricted to research, monitoring, and regulated tourism.

C. Forest Parks and Forest Reserves

These areas are managed primarily for sustainable forestry, biodiversity conservation, and community use. Despite their potential, they often face pressures from firewood collection, grazing, and bushfires.

D. Marine and Coastal Protected Areas

Marine spatial protection remains limited but is increasingly recognized as a national priority due to fisheries pressures, coastal erosion, and habitat degradation.

E. Community-Conserved Areas and Sacred Sites

Many communities maintain traditional forest groves, mangrove patches, and sacred sites that contain important cultural heritage and biodiversity values. These areas are potential OECMs under the GBF.

F. Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites)

Several wetlands qualify as critical habitats for waterbirds, migratory species, and threatened ecosystems. Their conservation status is vital for international obligations.

Current Distribution Challenges:

- Unequal representation of ecosystems
- Concentration of terrestrial PAs inland, with limited marine coverage
- Fragmentation of landscapes
- Gaps in ecological corridors between protected areas
- Lack of a proportional regional distribution of DPWM protected areas

3.5 Governance of Protected Areas in The Gambia

Governance of protected areas is shared among several institutions, primarily:

1. National Agencies

- Departments responsible for wildlife, forestry, environment, fisheries, and coastal zone management
- Mandates often overlap, requiring improved coordination

2. Local Government Authorities

- Key actors in community engagement, land management, and enforcement

3. Community and Traditional Authorities

- Manage community forests, sacred groves, grazing lands, and fish landing sites
- Increasingly involved in co-management and benefit-sharing arrangements

4. NGOs and Civil Society Organizations

- Provide technical support, training, monitoring, and community mobilization

5. Private Sector

- Engaged in ecotourism, carbon projects, and sustainable resource use initiatives

6. International Partners

- Provide financial and technical assistance through donor projects

Governance Challenges Identified:

- Limited clarity and coordination between agencies
- Inadequate recognition of community governance systems
- Weak enforcement capacity
- Fragmented decision-making and inconsistent management approaches
- Inadequate political will

Strengthening governance—both legally and operationally—is essential for an effective protected area network.

3.6 Management Effectiveness: Current Status

Management effectiveness varies widely across the PA system.

Strengths

- Some protected areas have active management plans
- Growing involvement of communities and co-management platforms
- Increasing attention to ecotourism potential
- Improved patrolling and monitoring in select sites

Common Weaknesses

- Outdated or absent management plans

- Insufficient staffing, equipment, and operational budgets
- Limited ecological monitoring and data availability
- Unregulated access to resources
- Weak enforcement of laws and regulations
- Inadequate infrastructure such as ranger posts, boats, and communication tools

Regular evaluation using tools such as **METT (Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool)** is needed to strengthen adaptive management across the PA network.

3.7 Biodiversity Status Within Protected Areas

Protected areas harbor many species of conservation interest:

1. Mammals

- Primates: Guinea baboon (*Papio papio*), Calithrix monkey (*Ceropithecus sabaeus*), Western red colobus (*Piliocolobus badius*))
- Antelopes: Harnessed bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*), Common duiker (*Sylvicapara grimmia*)
- Carnivores: African civet (*Civettictis civetta*), Banded mongooses (*Mungos mungo*), Side-stripped jackal (*Canis adutus*)
- Declines have been noted in large mammal populations due to hunting and habitat fragmentation

2. Birds

- National parks and wetlands are critical for migratory and resident species
- There has been declines in some raptor and waterbird populations due to habitat loss

3. Reptiles and Amphibians

- Coastal and riverine habitats support turtles, monitors, crocodiles, and amphibian species
- Marine turtles face increasing nesting threats along the coast

4. Flora

- Key species include mangroves, mahogany, Afzelia, palm species, and savanna woodland trees
- Habitat fragmentation threatens ecological resilience

5. Marine and Aquatic Biodiversity

- Estuaries, seagrass beds, and shallow marine waters support fisheries
- Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, overfishing and pollution are serious threats

The need for targeted restoration, species protection programs, and habitat connectivity is clear.

3.8 Threats to Protected Areas in The Gambia

The major threats include:

A. Land-Use Change and Habitat Degradation

- Agricultural expansion
- Urbanization and infrastructure development
- Sand mining and land conversion

B. Overexploitation of Natural Resources

- Illegal logging
- Bushmeat hunting
- Fuelwood and charcoal production
- Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing

C. Bushfires

- Annual fires degrade woodlands and reduce wildlife habitat
- Annual fires kill numerous wildlife species

D. Pollution

- Agricultural chemicals, waste, and coastal pollution
- Sedimentation in wetlands

E. Climate Change

- Sea-level rise
- Coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion
- Drought and extreme heat events
- Mangrove die-off

F. Weak Law Enforcement and Capacity Constraints

- Limited ranger numbers
- Insufficient patrols, equipment, and legal deterrents
- Weak enforcement of the anti-littering legislation.

These threats reduce ecological integrity and undermine the long-term effectiveness of protected areas.

3.9 Opportunities for Strengthening the Protected Area System

Despite challenges, The Gambia has several opportunities:

A. Strong National Commitment to Biodiversity

- Updated NBSAP and alignment with GBF Target 3

B. Community Engagement Potential

- Expansion of co-managed and community conserved areas

C. Ecotourism Potential

- National parks and coastal ecosystems have high tourism value

D. Climate Finance and Carbon Markets

- Mangroves and forests provide carbon storage opportunities

E. Regional Cooperation

- Collaboration with neighboring states for migratory species and river basin management

F. Expanding OECMs

- Sacred forests and traditional conservation areas can be formally recognized

G. Technological Advances

- GIS, drones, remote sensing, and mobile apps can improve monitoring

These opportunities create strong momentum for modernizing and expanding the PA network during 2025–2035.

3.10 Key Gaps Identified

The analysis reveals critical gaps:

- Underrepresentation of marine, coastal, freshwater, and certain savanna ecosystems
- Weak landscape connectivity between existing Protected Areas
- Incomplete governance frameworks and inconsistent co-management systems
- Insufficient financing to support long-term management
- Lack of comprehensive biodiversity monitoring and research
- Limited integration of Protected Areas into broader land-use planning
- Insufficient community incentives for conservation

- Lack of management plans for some protected areas

Addressing these gaps is central to achieving a resilient Protected Area system.

3.11 Conclusion

The Gambia's protected areas provide a crucial foundation for conserving biodiversity, supporting livelihoods, and strengthening climate resilience. However, they face significant ecological, governance, financial, and operational challenges that must be addressed through a comprehensive strategy.

The findings of this chapter inform the strategic framework presented in the next sections of the PASAP, ensuring that future interventions are grounded in a clear understanding of existing strengths, limitations, needs, and opportunities.

CHAPTER 4: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (PoWPA ELEMENTS 1–4)

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the strategic framework for strengthening The Gambia's protected and conserved area system between 2025 and 2035. The framework is fully aligned with the **Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA)**, the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**, and The Gambia's **NBSAP 2025–2035**. It operationalizes the vision, mission, and strategic objectives outlined in Chapter 2 with actionable and integrated guidance.

The framework is structured around the four elements of PoWPA:

1. Planning, Selecting, Establishing and Managing Protected Areas
2. Governance, Equity, Participation and Benefit Sharing
3. Enabling Policy, Institutional Capacity and Sustainable Financing
4. Standards, Assessment, Monitoring and Adaptive Management

This structure ensures coherence with global best practices and provides a systematic approach for developing an ecologically representative, inclusive, and sustainably managed national protected area system.

4.2 PoWPA Element 1: Protected Area Planning, Design, Establishment and Management

This element addresses spatial planning, ecological representation, management planning, and effective conservation within The Gambia's PA network.

4.2.1 Strategic Priority 1: Achieve Ecological Representativeness and Expand the PA Network

Although The Gambia has made progress in designating protected areas, several ecosystems remain underrepresented — especially **marine zones, freshwater wetlands, mangroves, savanna corridors**, and **riparian forests**. Improving representativeness is essential for meeting GBF Target 3.

Key Actions (2025–2035)

1. Conduct a comprehensive PA Gap Analysis using national habitat maps, climate refugia assessments, species distribution models, and community conservation areas.
2. Identify priority areas for new designation, including:
    - Freshwater wetlands and inland marshes
    - Remaining intact mangrove blocks
    - Coastal dune and beach systems
    - Marine zones within the EEZ

    - Savanna corridors to improve ecological connectivity
3. Expand terrestrial protected areas by 5–12% through new designations or expansion of existing PAs.
4. Expand marine protected areas by 3–8% to secure fisheries nurseries, turtle nesting beaches, and estuarine habitats.
5. Recognize and register OECMs, including community forests, sacred groves, and sustainably managed coastal areas.
6. Promote ecological corridors connecting major PA clusters through riparian zones, community forests, and agroforestry landscapes.
7. Integrate PA expansion into national land-use and spatial planning frameworks.

These actions will create a more resilient, representative, and connected national PA system.

4.2.2 Strategic Priority 2: Strengthen Protected Area Management Planning

Effective management plans are essential for guiding decision-making and ensuring ecological integrity.

Key Actions:

1. Ensure all PAs have updated, participatory management plans aligned with GBF and NBSAP targets.
2. Develop landscape-level management strategies linking adjacent PAs, wetlands, forests, and community lands.
3. Incorporate climate risk assessments into all PA management plans.
4. Strengthen fire management strategies, including early warning systems and community fire brigades.
5. Integrate ecological restoration plans for degraded mangroves, forests, grasslands, and wetlands.
6. Adopt zoning within PAs, including:
    - Core conservation zones
    - Regulated use zones
    - Community-use zones
    - Ecotourism zones

4.2.3 Strategic Priority 3: Improve Management Capacity and Infrastructure

Many PAs lack adequate staffing, equipment, and infrastructure.

Key Actions:

1. Increase the number of trained park rangers and provide improved salaries, insurance, and career paths.
2. Equip ranger units with vehicles, boats, radios, patrol equipment, and GIS tablets.
3. Establish new ranger posts, visitor centers, research stations, and patrol routes.

4. Introduce digital patrol systems such as Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Toool (SMART) or Management Oriented Monitoring System (MOMS) for data-driven enforcement.
5. Strengthen coordination between enforcement agencies, including environment, forestry, fisheries, and police.
6. Provide continuous training on species monitoring, law enforcement, conflict resolution, first aid, and community engagement.

4.2.4 Strategic Priority 4: Species Conservation and Ecosystem Restoration

The Gambia's ecosystems are vulnerable to climate and anthropogenic pressures; restoration is essential.

Key Actions:

1. Develop species recovery plans for threatened mammals, birds, turtles, and mangrove species.
2. Establish community-based ecological restoration programs targeting:
    - Mangrove reforestation
    - Riparian forest rehabilitation
    - Grassland restoration
    - Wetland regeneration
3. Promote natural regeneration and assisted restoration in degraded forest areas.
4. Control invasive species through monitoring, community action, and national policy frameworks.
5. Strengthen fire management to restore savanna woodland health.

4.3 PoWPA Element 2: Governance, Participation, Equity and Benefit Sharing

Inclusive governance is essential for effective conservation and community support. This element addresses rights, participation, co-management, and equitable benefits.

4.3.1 Strategic Priority 1: Strengthen Rights-Based and Inclusive Governance

Key Actions:

1. Recognize and secure community rights in PA buffer zones and resource management areas.
2. Institutionalize Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for PA creation, expansion, or management decisions.
3. Establish co-management agreements between government and community forest committees, fisheries groups, women's oyster cooperatives, and traditional authorities.
4. Support community governance structures with legal recognition, training, and financial support.
5. Strengthen conflict resolution mechanisms for land-use disputes and resource access.

4.3.2 Strategic Priority 2: Promote Equitable Benefit Sharing

Communities must benefit meaningfully from protected area conservation.

Key Actions:

1. Develop benefit-sharing frameworks for ecotourism, Payments for Environmental Services (PES) programs, and sustainable harvesting areas.
2. Support community ecotourism enterprises, guiding services, homestays, and craft cooperatives.
3. Create conservation-linked livelihood programs, including beekeeping, mangrove oyster harvesting, sustainable fishing, and agroforestry.
4. Provide financial incentives for communities participating in restoration, fire management, and monitoring activities.
5. Enhance women and youth participation in PA governance and revenue-generating programs.

4.3.3 Strategic Priority 3: Strengthen Multi-Stakeholder Coordination

Effective governance requires coordinated action.

Key Actions:

1. Establish a National Protected Area Coordination Mechanism across ministries, civil society, local governments, and academia.
2. Create site-level PA Management Committees involving communities, authorities, NGOs, and private sector actors.
3. Develop protocols for transparent decision-making, information sharing, and joint enforcement.
4. Promote public-private partnerships in ecotourism, restoration, and biodiversity monitoring.

4.4 PoWPA Element 3: Enabling Policy Environment, Capacity, and Sustainable Financing

This element focuses on strengthening institutions, policy frameworks, capacity, and long-term financing mechanisms.

4.4.1 Strategic Priority 1: Strengthen Policy, Legal, and Institutional Frameworks

Key Actions:

1. Review and harmonize national legislation governing forests, wildlife, fisheries, land use, environmental protection, and climate adaptation.
2. Clarify mandates among key institutions and reduce overlap or conflict.
3. Integrate protected areas into national development planning, including tourism, agriculture, fisheries, energy, and spatial planning policies.
4. Develop policies recognizing OECMs, community forest rights, and traditional conservation areas.

5. Strengthen enforcement mechanisms, including updated penalties, prosecution capacity, and environmental courts or tribunals.

4.4.2 Strategic Priority 2: Build Institutional and Human Capacity

Key Actions:

1. Develop national training curricula on biodiversity monitoring, PA management, GIS, anti-poaching, restoration, and community engagement.
2. Strengthen academic partnerships with universities and research institutions.
3. Support continuous professional development for PA staff and community partners.
4. Improve staffing levels, including rangers, ecologists, GIS technicians, managers, and social mobilizers.

4.4.3 Strategic Priority 3: Develop a Sustainable PA Financing Framework

Sustainable financing is a cornerstone of effective long-term conservation.

Key Actions:

1. Develop a National Protected Area Financing Plan, including:
    - Government budget increases
    - Conservation trust funds
    - Tourism revenues
    - Park entry fees
    - Biodiversity offsets
    - Environmental levies
    - Carbon markets and blue carbon initiatives
2. Promote private sector investment, including ecotourism concessions and corporate conservation partnerships.
3. Establish Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes, especially for mangroves and freshwater systems.
4. Access climate funds such as GCF, GEF, Adaptation Fund, and bilateral donors.
5. Develop community livelihood financing facilities linked to conservation outcomes.

4.5 PoWPA Element 4: Standards, Assessment, Monitoring and Adaptive Management

A strong monitoring and evaluation system is essential for accountability, learning, and adaptive management.

4.5.1 Strategic Priority 1: Strengthen Management Effectiveness Assessment

Key Actions:

1. Conduct baseline METT/IMET assessments for all PAs by 2026.
2. Develop national standards for PA management effectiveness.
3. Implement METT/IMET assessments every 3 years across all PAs.
4. Integrate assessment data into national reporting, including CBD and NBSAP updates.

4.5.2 Strategic Priority 2: Establish a National Biodiversity Monitoring System

Key Actions:

1. Develop a national biodiversity monitoring framework with indicators for species, habitats, governance, climate, and socio-economic benefits.
2. Establish site-level monitoring units involving rangers, communities, and researchers.
3. Adopt digital monitoring tools, including GIS, drones, SMART/MOMS, and camera traps.
4. Develop a national biodiversity database, including maps, inventories, and ecological trends.
5. Strengthen collaboration with universities, NGOs, and citizen science platforms.

4.5.3 Strategic Priority 3: Strengthen Research and Knowledge Management

Key Actions:

1. Support research on climate impacts, species trends, and ecosystem health.
2. Expand species inventories for threatened species, key habitats, and migratory routes.
3. Document and integrate traditional ecological knowledge in PA management.
4. Promote knowledge exchange through conferences, training, and regional collaboration.

4.5.4 Strategic Priority 4: Strengthen Adaptive Management Frameworks

Key Actions:

1. Institutionalize adaptive management through annual reviews of PA plans.
2. Use monitoring data to inform management decisions and PA zoning revisions.
3. Develop rapid response mechanisms for emerging threats such as fire, flooding, invasive species, or poaching.
4. Integrate climate change early warning **systems** into PA operations.

4.6 Cross-Cutting Priorities

Several cross-cutting themes integrate across all PoWPA elements:

Climate-Smart Conservation

Integrate climate adaptation into all planning and management.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Empower women, youth, and vulnerable groups in decision-making and governance.

Sustainable Livelihoods

Promote livelihoods that support conservation and reduce pressure on ecosystems.

Digital Transformation

Use modern technology for monitoring, enforcement, and community engagement.

4.7 Conclusion

The strategic framework provides a holistic approach to transforming The Gambia's protected area system into a resilient, well-governed, inclusive, and sustainably financed network. The next chapters operationalize these strategies through concrete plans for Protected Area expansion, financing, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring.

CHAPTER 5: PROTECTED AREA EXPANSION PLAN (2025–2035)

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

5.1 Introduction

Expanding and consolidating The Gambia's protected and conserved area network is a central pillar of meeting national biodiversity commitments, strengthening climate resilience, and fulfilling global obligations under the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**—particularly **Target 3 (30x30)**. This target aims aims to conserve 30% of land, waters and seas by 2030.The expansion plan outlined in this chapter sets strategic directions, spatial priorities, and implementation approaches to achieve a more ecologically representative, connected, and resilient protected area system.

This chapter builds on the gap analyses, ecosystem assessments, and strategic priorities described in Chapter 4, defining the **where**, **why**, and **how** of protected area expansion, including the integration of **OECMs**, marine areas, and community-led conservation zones.

5.2 Rationale for Protected Area Expansion

Expanding the national protected area coverage is necessary due to:

1. Ecological Underrepresentation

Several ecosystems—including coastal dunes, freshwater wetlands, riparian forests, and marine habitats—remain inadequately represented in the current PA network.

2. Habitat Fragmentation and Connectivity Gaps

Wildlife movement corridors, especially along the River Gambia and across savanna landscapes, are increasingly fragmented by agriculture, settlements, and infrastructure.

3. Climate Change Resilience

Protected areas can serve as climate refugia, buffering against coastal erosion, salinization, drought, and extreme weather.

4. Community Demand for Conservation Recognition

Many communities steward important biodiversity areas through long-standing traditions that need formal recognition as OECMs or co-managed sites.

5. Global and National Commitments

The 30x30 target and NBSAP 2025–2035 provide strong policy backing for expansion.

6. Economic Development Opportunities

Ecotourism, blue economy initiatives, and carbon finance depend on intact and well-managed protected ecosystems.

5.3 Targets for Protected Area Expansion (2025–2035)

The expansion plan aims for **realistic yet ambitious targets** that reflect national priorities and capacities.

5.3.1 Terrestrial Targets

- Increase terrestrial protected areas by **5–12%** by 2035.
- Achieve **ecological representation** across all major terrestrial ecosystems.
- Secure key wildlife movement corridors and climate refuge zones.

5.3.2 Marine and Coastal Targets

- Expand marine protected areas by **3–8%** within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- Protect critical habitats including:
    - Turtle nesting beaches
    - Seagrass beds
    - Estuarine fisheries nurseries
    - Coastal wetlands and mangroves

5.3.3 OECM Integration Targets

- Recognize, map, and register at least **10–20 OECMs** by 2030.
- Include community forests, sacred groves, sustainable fisheries zones, mangrove commons, and agroforestry mosaics.

5.3.4 Connectivity and Restoration Targets

- Establish **at least five ecological corridors** connecting major PA clusters.
- Restore **10,000–20,000 ha** of degraded forest and mangrove areas to support connectivity.

5.4 Priority Areas for Expansion

Priority sites were identified based on ecosystem representation gaps, climate vulnerability, species importance, and community demand.

5.4.1 Priority Terrestrial Expansion Areas

1. Riparian Corridors Along the River Gambia

Are critical for primates, birds, amphibians, and biodiversity requiring continuous forest cover.

2. Savannah Woodland Corridors

Are essential for ecological connectivity between existing forest parks and national parks.

3. Freshwater Wetlands and Inland Marshes

Are important for migratory birds, fisheries, and drought resilience.

4. Undegraded Forest Blocks

Include intact woodland mosaics within central and eastern regions.

5. Buffer Zones of Existing Protected Areas

Expand or reinforce buffer zones around national parks to reduce human-wildlife conflict and improve habitat security.

5.4.2 Priority Coastal and Marine Expansion Areas

1. Mangrove-Dominant Estuaries

Are important for carbon sequestration (blue carbon), fisheries, and shoreline protection.

2. Coastal Dune Systems and Beaches

Are critical for turtle nesting and coastal biodiversity; highly vulnerable to erosion and development.

3. Nearshore Marine Zones

Support artisanal fisheries productivity and provide habitat for juvenile fish populations.

4. Seagrass Beds

Are key for carbon storage, fisheries nurseries, and marine biodiversity.

5. Coastal Lagoons and Barrier Systems

Serve as important bird habitats and buffers against storm surges.

5.5 Recognition and Integration of OECMs

Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures play a major role in achieving the 30x30 target and recognizing traditional stewardship systems.

Key OECM Categories to Prioritize:

- Community forests under customary law

- Mangrove areas sustainably managed by local women's oyster collectives
- Sacred forests protected for cultural reasons
- Community rangelands and commons
- Informal wetlands under traditional authority control
- Sustainably managed artisanal fisheries zones

Actions for OECM Integration:

1. Develop national criteria for OECM recognition.
2. Conduct participatory mapping of all potential OECMs.
3. Establish a national OECM registry.
4. Integrate OECMs into national protected area reporting (e.g., WDPA).
5. Provide incentives, training, and co-management structures.

5.6 Approaches to Protected Area Expansion

The expansion process must be inclusive, scientifically sound, and socially just.

5.6.1 Participatory Spatial Planning

Use participatory GIS mapping, community consultations, and ecological assessments to ensure expansion meets biodiversity and community needs.

Key tools include:

- Habitat maps
- Species distribution modeling
- Climate vulnerability mapping
- Ecosystem service valuation
- Community knowledge

5.6.2 Free Prior and Informed Consent-Based Expansion Processes

Ensuring community rights and acceptance is essential.

Actions:

- Conduct FPIC consultations before designation.
- Co-develop management objectives.
- Provide clear benefit-sharing arrangements.

5.6.3 Legal Designation Pathways

Protected areas can be designated under:

1. **Wildlife legislation** (national parks, reserves)

2. **Forestry legislation** (forest parks/reserves)
3. **Fisheries and marine legislation** (marine protected areas)
4. **Local government regulations** (community reserves)
5. **Special environmental zones or coastal protection laws**

The expansion plan encourages **multi-institutional coordination and stakeholder participation** for coherent designation.

5.6.4 Community-Based and Co-Managed Expansion

Many new areas—especially mangroves, forests, and wetlands—are best managed through co-management systems.

Key measures:

- Strengthen community forest management agreements.
- Support women-led coastal resource groups.
- Promote shared enforcement and monitoring.
- Provide incentives tied to conservation performance.

5.7 Ecological Corridors and Connectivity Areas

Connectivity is a priority for resilience to climate change and habitat fragmentation.

Proposed Ecological Corridors (examples):

1. **River Gambia Riparian Corridor**
2. **Eastern Savannah Woodland Connectivity Zone**
3. **Coastal Mangrove Connectivity Belt**
4. **Wetland-to-Forest Corridor in central districts**
5. **Forest Park Cluster Corridors**

Key Actions for Corridors:

1. Map wildlife movement routes
2. Integrate corridors into national land-use planning
3. Restore degraded habitats
4. Engage communities in corridor management
5. Promote sustainable land-use practices
6. Implement incentives for maintaining connectivity

5.8 Integration with Climate Change Adaptation

Protected area expansion is a core climate adaptation strategy.

Priority Climate Adaptation Measures:

- Protect erosion-prone coastlines and dunes
- Conserve and restore mangroves for flood buffering
- Expand wetlands to manage floods and droughts
- Conserve forest blocks that serve as climate refugia

Climate-smart PA design will enhance resilience for both ecosystems and communities.

5.9 Expected Outcomes (By 2035)

By implementing this plan, The Gambia will:

- Achieve substantial progress toward the 30x30 target
- Protect previously underrepresented ecosystems
- Establish a more cohesive, connected PA network
- Enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Improve climate resilience for communities and infrastructure
- Promote sustainable livelihoods and ecotourism
- Strengthen national and local governance systems
- Recognize and support community-led conservation traditions

5.10 Conclusion

The Protected Area Expansion Plan provides a clear, strategic, and inclusive roadmap to strengthen ecological representation, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and community livelihoods. It lays the foundation for integrating new protected areas, expanding existing ones, and formally recognizing community-governed sites as part of a nationwide conservation mosaic.

The next sections of this PASAP operationalize the financing, stakeholder engagement, risk management, and monitoring systems needed to ensure successful implementation.

CHAPTER 6: SUSTAINABLE FINANCING STRATEGY FOR PROTECTED AREAS (2025–2035)

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

6.1 Introduction

A sustainable financing system is the foundation for an effective and resilient protected area network. The current protected area system in The Gambia faces chronic underfunding, dependence on short-term donor projects, insufficient government allocations, and limited mechanisms for revenue generation. These challenges undermine management effectiveness, enforcement capacity, climate adaptation, and community incentives for conservation.

This Sustainable Financing Strategy aims to establish **a diversified, long-term, predictable, and equitable funding system** that ensures all protected and conserved areas—government-managed, co-managed, and community-led—receive adequate financial support throughout the 2025–2035 period.

The strategy integrates national policies, GBF commitments (especially Target 19), and emerging opportunities for nature-based financing, climate finance, and partnerships with the private sector.

6.2 Vision and Objectives of the Financing Strategy

Vision

To create a robust, diversified, and sustainable financing system that ensures long-term, equitable, and effective conservation of The Gambia's protected and conserved areas while enabling community benefits and climate resilience.

Objectives

1. **Increase and diversify revenue sources** for PA management.
2. **Strengthen financial planning, transparency, and accountability** in PA institutions.
3. **Enhance government commitment and budget allocations** to the PA system.
4. **Develop innovative financing mechanisms**, including carbon markets, PES, and ecotourism.
5. **Mobilize climate and biodiversity funds**, including global, bilateral, and private sources.
6. **Ensure communities receive fair benefits** from conservation-linked financing.
7. **Build capacities for financial management** at national and site levels.

6.3 Current Financial Gaps and Challenges

The present PA financing system is constrained by:

1. Insufficient Government Budget Allocations

Protected Area agencies often receive inadequate operational budgets, limiting patrols, staffing, monitoring, infrastructure, and law enforcement.

2. Dependence on Donor Funding

Many activities rely on short-term donor projects, creating sustainability risks when projects end.

3. Weak Revenue-Generating Mechanisms

- Low ecotourism revenues
- Limited use of park entry fees
- Few partnerships with private operators
- Limited community enterprises

4. Lack of Long-Term Financial Planning

Most Protected Areas lack business plans or multi-year financial plans aligned with management strategies.

5. Limited Access to Climate and Carbon Finance

Mangroves and forests offer high carbon value but remain largely untapped.

6. Limited Capacity for Financial Management

Including budgeting, revenue management, audits, and reporting.

These gaps highlight the need for a stronger, more diversified financing architecture.

6.4 Principles Guiding the Financing Strategy

1. Diversification: Use multiple revenue streams to reduce dependence on a single source.
2. Equity: Communities participating in conservation should receive tangible, fair benefits.
3. Sustainability: Funding should be long-term and predictable.
4. Transparency and Accountability: Clear financial reporting frameworks are essential.
5. Cost-Effectiveness: Efficient allocation of funds to priority conservation needs is critical.
6. Climate-Smart Investment: Financing should be aligned with climate resilience and adaptation goals.
7. Partnership-Based**:** Engaging the private sector, NGOs, donors, and communities is important.

6.5 Priority Financing Mechanisms (2025–2035)

A suite of complementary financing mechanisms is proposed, combining traditional and innovative instruments.

6.5.1 Increased Government Allocation to PA Management

Government funding is essential for the core functions of Protected Area management.

Actions:

1. Advocate an annual increase of at least **10–20%** in Protected Area budgets.
2. Ensure predictable multi-year allocations tied to management plans.
3. Establish dedicated budget lines for:
    - Ranger salaries
    - Patrol operations
    - Infrastructure maintenance
    - Monitoring and evaluation
4. Introduce performance-based budget support for Protected Area agencies.

6.5.2 Ecotourism and Recreation Revenue

The Gambia's natural assets—especially coastal areas, national parks, and riverside reserves—hold high ecotourism potential.

Actions:

1. Revise and harmonize **park entry fees** to reflect management costs and competitiveness.
2. Establish **ecotourism concessions and partnerships** with private operators.
3. Develop **community-based tourism enterprises** (guiding, crafts, homestays).
4. Improve tourism infrastructure (trails, interpretation signs, visitor centers).
5. Introduce **conservation fees** integrated with hotel bookings or park activities.

6.5.3 Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Schemes

Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) is a powerful tool for incentivizing sustainable practices.

Priority PES Areas:

- **Mangrove protection** (blue carbon & fisheries services)
- **Freshwater wetlands** (water purification & bird habitat)
- **Forest parks** (carbon & watershed protection)
- **Agroforestry systems** (soil fertility & climate resilience)

Actions:

1. Develop national PES guidelines and legal frameworks.
2. Establish pilot PES schemes in mangrove and riparian systems.
3. Create community-managed PES funds for reinvestment in local priorities.
4. Integrate PES with OECM recognition and co-management agreements.

6.5.4 Climate Finance and Carbon Markets

The Gambia has significant untapped opportunities in **blue carbon, REDD+, mangrove restoration, and nature-based adaptation**.

Actions:

1. Develop a National Nature-Based Climate Finance Strategy.
2. Identify carbon-rich ecosystems for project development, including mangroves, forests, and seagrass.
3. Partner with accredited carbon developers (public and private).
4. Establish community benefit-sharing mechanisms for carbon revenue.
5. Develop monitoring systems for carbon stocks, biomass, and emissions reductions.

Potential Carbon Funding Sources:

- Voluntary carbon markets
- GEF and GCF
- Adaptation Fund
- Bilateral climate finance
- Blue carbon partnerships

6.5.5 Conservation Trust Funds, Endowments and a Fully Operational Biodiversity Trust Fund

A conservation trust fund can ensure sustainable long-term financing.

Actions:

1. Establish a **National Protected Area Trust Fund (NPATF)** with multisectoral governance.
2. Develop investment policies ensuring stable and ethical returns.
3. Secure seed capital from government, donors, and climate finance institutions.
4. Use the fund to:
    - Pay for ranger operations
    - Support community conservation
    - Co-finance restoration
    - Maintain infrastructure
5. Ensure transparent audits and financial reporting.

6.5.6 Biodiversity Offsets and Environmental Levies

Development activities can support biodiversity conservation through well-designed offset systems.

Actions:

1. Establish national regulations for biodiversity offsets, ensuring ecological equivalence and measurable outcomes.
2. Develop environmental levies or green fees for:
    - Large infrastructure projects
    - Coastal developments
    - Extractive industries (e.g., sand mining)

3. Direct levy revenues to the National Protected Area Trust Fund.

6.5.7 Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

PPPs can support ecotourism, restoration, research, and conservation enterprise.

Actions:

1. Identify flagship PA sites for PPP concessions.
2. Develop transparent concession guidelines and revenue-sharing frameworks.
3. Engage corporate partners in sponsorships for conservation zones.
4. Encourage private investment in eco-lodges, mangrove restoration, and biodiversity monitoring.

6.5.8 Community Enterprise and Social Economy Development

Local economic development is essential for long-term conservation.

Priority Enterprises:

- Beekeeping and honey production
- Oyster and clam cultivation
- Eco-friendly crafts
- Sustainable fishing
- Community ecotourism
- Native plant nurseries
- Carbon monitoring and restoration crews

Actions:

1. Provide training, microfinance, and market linkages for community enterprises.
2. Integrate enterprises with co-management agreements.
3. Develop conservation-linked value chains for women and youth.

6.6 Strengthening Financial Management

A sustainable system requires strong financial governance.

Actions:

1. Develop PA site-level financial plans aligned with management plans.
2. Introduce transparent accounting and annual financial reporting.
3. Train PA staff in budgeting, procurement, and revenue management.
4. Establish audit systems for government-managed and co-managed Protected Areas.

5. Develop a national financial tracking system for PA revenues and expenditures.

6.7 Financing Needs Assessment (2025–2035)

A comprehensive cost analysis indicates that sustainable management of the national Protected Area system over the 2025–2035 period will require funding increases in:

- Staffing and ranger operations
- Ecological monitoring and research
- Infrastructure (boats, vehicles, posts, equipment)
- Community co-management support
- Restoration (mangroves, forests, wetlands)
- Climate adaptation projects
- Tourism infrastructure
- Capacity building

Estimated annual financial needs will likely exceed current funding by a factor of **2–3**, highlighting the urgency of diversified financing mechanisms.

6.8 Expected Outcomes (By 2035)

Implementing this financing strategy will result in:

- A fully operational National Protected Area Trust Fund
- Increased government and donor financing
- Diversified revenue streams (tourism, PES, carbon, PPPs)
- Strong community benefits and sustainable livelihoods
- Reduced dependence on short-term donor projects
- Long-term, predictable funding for Protected Area operations
- Improved management effectiveness across all Protected Areas
- Greater climate resilience and reduced vulnerability

6.9 Conclusion

A sustainable financing system is fundamental to achieving the vision of an effective, inclusive, resilient, and well-managed protected area network. This chapter provides practical and innovative financial solutions that will improve the ability of The Gambia's protected areas to deliver biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, socioeconomic benefits, and national development goals.The next chapter presents the stakeholder engagement and communication strategy essential for supporting and enabling these financial and management reforms.

CHAPTER 7: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (2025–2035)

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

7.1 Introduction

The success of The Gambia's Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) depends on inclusive, participatory, and well-coordinated stakeholder engagement. Protected areas are not only ecological assets but also social, economic, and cultural landscapes. Effective engagement fosters ownership, equitable benefit sharing, compliance with conservation regulations, and long-term sustainability.

This chapter outlines a strategic approach to stakeholder engagement and communication, aligned with PoWPA Element 2 (Governance, Participation, Equity) and NBSAP 2025–2035 objectives. It emphasizes inclusive participation of government, communities, civil society, private sector, research institutions, and donors.

7.2 Vision and Objectives

Vision

A participatory, transparent, and coordinated protected area system in which all stakeholders are informed, engaged, and actively contributing to biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and climate resilience.

Objectives

1. Ensure inclusive participation of all stakeholders in PA planning, management, and decision-making.
2. Build public awareness and understanding of the values and benefits of protected areas.
3. Strengthen community ownership and support for co-management and OECMs.
4. Facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships for biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and climate adaptation.
5. Promote effective communication of conservation successes, challenges, and opportunities.
6. Support compliance and enforcement through awareness, education, and stakeholder buy-in.
7. National target 1.1: Protect and effectively manage 35% of The Gambia's terrestrial and marine ecosystems through a mix of protected areas and OECMs by 2035.
8. National target 2.1: restore and increase Gambian mangrove cover by 10% (area) from the 2025 baseline by 2035, prioritizing natural regeneration and community-based planting.
9. National target 2.2: Reduce disturbance at key turtle nesting sites so that documented nesting success increases by 40% by 2035 (relative to baseline).

7.3 Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders of the PASAP are

7.3.1 Government Agencies

- Department of Parks & Wildlife Management (DPWM)
- Forestry Department
- Fisheries Department
- Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources
- National Environment Agency
- Department of Community Development
- Local Government Authorities
- National Climate Change Secretariat

7.3.2 Communities

- Rural villages adjacent to Protected Areas
- Women and youth groups
- Community forest and fisheries committees
- Indigenous and traditional authorities

7.3.3 Private Sector

- Ecotourism operators
- Sustainable fisheries companies
- Agriculture and forestry enterprises
- Corporate sponsors (CSR partnerships)
- Private protected areas

7.3.4 Civil Society and and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Environmental and conservation NGOs
- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Faith-based organizations
- International NGOs supporting biodiversity, climate, and livelihoods
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

7.3.5 Academia and Research Institutions

- Universities, colleges, research centers, Tertiary and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers
- Citizen science initiatives

7.3.6 Donors and International Partners

- The Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund
- Bilateral aid agencies
- Multilateral conservation programs (the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Environment Program, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature,

Wetlands International, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Birdlife International)

7.4 Strategic Priorities for Stakeholder Engagement

7.4.1 Inclusive Participation in PA Planning and Management

- Conduct participatory mapping and planning with communities for new and existing Protected Areas.
- Ensure Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in all Protected Area decisions.
- Integrate community feedback into management plans, zoning, and restoration projects.
- Establish site-level Protected Area Management Committees with equal representation of women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- National target 1:2 Achieve 50% Protected Area management effectiveness of 10 important Protected Areas by 2035.

7.4.2 Capacity Building and Training

- Provide training for communities, Protected Area staff, and local authorities on:
    - Biodiversity conservation
    - Co-management practices
    - Sustainable livelihoods
    - Climate adaptation
    - Communication and advocacy
- Strengthen technical capacities of NGOs, research institutions, and government agencies in monitoring, enforcement, and engagement.

7.4.3 Public Awareness and Education

- Develop a **National Protected Area Awareness Campaign**, including:
    - Radio, television, social media, and print media outreach
    - PA signage and interpretive materials
    - Environmental education programs in schools
- Promote understanding of ecosystem services, conservation benefits, and sustainable resource use.

7.4.4 Communication and Information Sharing

- Establish **Protected Area communication platforms** for data sharing, reporting, and public engagement.
- Publish annual **Protected Area performance and biodiversity status reports**.
- Facilitate regular **multi-stakeholder workshops and dialogues**.
- Share lessons learned, research findings, and success stories to encourage replication.

7.4.5 Partnership Development

- Build strong partnerships between government, communities, private sector, NGOs, and donors.
- Develop co-financing and joint implementation mechanisms for conservation projects.
- Promote corporate social responsibility programs that align with Protected Area objectives.
- Strengthen regional collaboration through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), West African Biodiversity and Climate Change (WA BiCC) program, and transboundary initiatives.

7.4.6 Conflict Prevention and Resolution

- Establish mechanisms for resolving disputes over land, resources, and Protected Area boundaries.
- Engage neutral facilitators for conflicts between communities, government, and private operators.
- Integrate grievance redress mechanisms into co-management agreements.

7.5 Key Tools and Approaches

1. Participatory Mapping and GIS Tools – for identifying priorities, OECMs, and corridors.
2. Community Workshops and Dialogue Sessions – ensuring FPIC and equitable participation.
3. PA Information Centers and Visitor Facilities – for education and outreach.
4. Digital Communication Platforms – including websites, social media, and mobile apps.
5. Education Materials and Curricula – for schools, communities, and stakeholders.
6. Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Committees – to guide policy and planning.
7. Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms – surveys, community scorecards, and online reporting.

7.6 Expected Outcomes (By 2035)

- Inclusive, equitable, and transparent Protected Area governance systems.
- Increased community ownership and support for Protected Areas.
- Strengthened partnerships between government, NGOs, private sector, and communities.
- Enhanced public awareness and engagement in biodiversity conservation.
- Reduced conflicts over Protected Area boundaries, resources, and management decisions.
- Improved implementation of co-management, OECMs, and restoration initiatives.

7.7 Conclusion

Stakeholder engagement and communication are foundational to the success of The Gambia's PASAP. By ensuring inclusive participation, knowledge sharing, capacity building, and transparent decision-making, this strategy will strengthen conservation outcomes, enhance

community livelihoods, and promote sustainable, long-term stewardship of protected and conserved areas.

CHAPTER 8: RISK ASSESSMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK (2025–2035)

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

8.1 Introduction

Effective implementation of The Gambia's PASAP requires a robust risk management approach, clear operational frameworks, and a strong monitoring and evaluation (M and E) system. Protected areas face complex ecological, social, and financial risks, and without systematic mitigation, the strategy's objectives—biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, community empowerment, and economic benefits—may not be achieved.

This chapter outlines:

1. Key risks and mitigation strategies
2. Implementation mechanisms
3. Roles and responsibilities
4. Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management framework

8.2 Risk Assessment

A comprehensive risk assessment identifies factors that could undermine the effectiveness of the PASAP and proposes mitigation measures.

Risk Category	Potential Risks	Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Financial	Insufficient or delayed funding; over-reliance on donors	Reduced Protected Area management effectiveness; inability to implement expansion, restoration, or co-management	Diversify financing (government, PES, carbon finance, tourism, trust fund); multi-year financial planning; create NPATF
Governance and Policy	Weak enforcement, unclear mandates, political changes	Poor compliance, illegal resource use, inconsistent policy implementation	Strengthen legal frameworks; clear institutional mandates; multi-stakeholder governance bodies; periodic policy review
Ecological and Climate	Habitat loss, invasive species, natural disasters, sea-level rise	Biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, reduced Protected Area resilience	Adaptive Protected Area design; climate-smart conservation; habitat restoration; monitoring; early warning systems
Social and Community	Conflict over land/resources; low community buy-in; inequitable benefit sharing	Non-compliance, sabotage, Protected Area abandonment	FPIC processes; equitable benefit-sharing; participatory management; capacity building; grievance redress mechanisms

Risk Category	Potential Risks	Impacts	Mitigation Measures
Operational	Limited technical capacity; insufficient staffing; weak infrastructure	Reduced law enforcement, monitoring, and restoration effectiveness	Strengthen human resources; training programs; modernize equipment; infrastructure investments
Market and Economic	Tourism downturn; carbon market volatility	Reduced revenue for Protected Area management	Diversify revenue streams; contingency reserves; PPPs; market-linked PES schemes
Institutional Coordination	Fragmented responsibilities across agencies	Overlaps, inefficiency, gaps in management	Establish Protected Area Steering Committee; inter-agency coordination frameworks; joint planning sessions

8.3 Implementation Framework

The PASAP implementation framework integrates governance, finance, stakeholder engagement, and ecological priorities.

8.3.1 Governance Structure

- National Steering Committee for Protected Areas: High-level coordination, policy guidance, and oversight
- Protected Area Management Units: Operational management of national parks, reserves, and co-managed areas
- Community Protected Area Committees / OECM Councils: Local-level governance and co-management
- Interagency Technical Working Groups (TWGs): Specific functions (e.g., marine Protected Areas, restoration, biodiversity monitoring, climate adaptation)

8.3.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Actor	Key Responsibilities
Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM)	Core PA management, biodiversity monitoring, enforcement, coordination
Forestry Department	Forest reserves, restoration, fire management, carbon projects
Fisheries Department	Marine/coastal Protected Areas, fisheries management, enforcement
Local Governments & Traditional Authorities	Land allocation, community engagement, dispute resolution

Actor	Key Responsibilities
Communities / CBOs	Co-management, OECM management, sustainable livelihood activities
Private Sector	Ecotourism, PPPs, CSR support, technical expertise
NGOs and Research Institutions	Technical support, capacity building, research, awareness campaigns
Donors and International Partners	Funding, technical assistance, knowledge exchange

8.3.3 Phased Implementation Approach

1. **Phase 1 (2025–2027)**
    - Institutional capacity building
    - Priority site designation and expansion
    - OECM recognition and mapping
    - Financing system establishment (trust fund, PES pilots)
    - Initial community engagement and awareness campaigns
2. **Phase 2 (2028–2031)**
    - Full Protected Area expansion and ecological corridor establishment
    - Scaling up co-management and community enterprises
    - Infrastructure development for tourism, monitoring, and enforcement
    - Climate-smart conservation projects
    - Early results monitoring and adaptive management
3. **Phase 3 (2032–2035)**
    - Consolidation of Protected Area network
    - Long-term sustainable financing fully operational
    - Comprehensive biodiversity and ecosystem monitoring
    - Regional integration and transboundary collaboration
    - Policy refinement and lessons learned for the next NBSAP cycle

8.4 Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) Framework

A robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E) framework ensures PASAP implementation is **evidence-based, adaptive, and transparent**.

8.4.1 Objectives of Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E)

1. Track progress toward Protected Area targets, ecological outcomes, and GBF alignment.
2. Identify implementation bottlenecks and risks.
3. Inform adaptive management decisions.
4. Enhance accountability and transparency to stakeholders and donors.

8.4.2 Key Indicators

Category	Indicator Examples
Biodiversity	Number of species of conservation concern; Percentage of ecosystems represented in Protected Areas; habitat connectivity indices
Ecological Health	Forest cover; mangrove area; wetland extent; coral/ seagrass health
PA Management Effectiveness	Management effectiveness score (METT); ranger coverage; law enforcement incidents; patrol frequency
Community Engagement	Number of co-management agreements; community income from conservation-linked enterprises; FPIC compliance
Financing	Annual Protected Area budgets; diversification of revenue sources; trust fund performance; PES/ carbon revenue generated
Climate Resilience	Ecosystem restoration area; mangrove carbon stock; flood/drought mitigation metrics
Governance and Coordination	Functional Steering Committee; inter-agency TWG meetings; stakeholder satisfaction

8.4.3 Data Collection & Reporting

- **Annual Protected Area Reports**: Operational, financial, ecological, and social performance
- **Periodic Biodiversity Assessments**: Every 3–5 years
- **Remote Sensing and GIS Tools**: Forest, wetland, and coastline monitoring
- **Community Surveys and Participatory Monitoring**: Social and livelihood indicators
- **Adaptive Feedback Loop**: M and E findings inform management adjustments

8.5 Risk Management in Monitoring and Evaluation

- Conduct annual risk audits for ecological, financial, and social threats.
- Integrate contingency planning for extreme weather, disease outbreaks, or funding shortfalls.
- Use M and E results to **reprioritize interventions** and resources based on emerging challenges.
- Build capacity for **real-time monitoring**, reporting, and data-driven decision-making.

8.6 Expected Outcomes by 2035

- Fully operational, effectively managed, and ecologically representative Protected Area system
- Strong governance structures and interagency coordination
- Predictable, sustainable financing for Protected Areas
- Informed adaptive management through systematic M and E
- Reduced ecological, social, and operational risks
- Resilient, connected ecosystems supporting biodiversity, livelihoods, and climate adaptation
- Informed national reporting aligned with NBSAP 2025–2035 and GBF Targets

8.7 Conclusion

The Risk Assessment, Implementation, and M and E Framework provide a clear roadmap for operationalizing The Gambia's PASAP. By identifying potential threats, defining roles and responsibilities, implementing phased actions, and monitoring progress with adaptive management, The Gambia can ensure the sustainability, resilience, and effectiveness of its protected and conserved areas over the 2025–2035 horizon.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD (2025–2035)

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

9.1 Summary of Key Achievements and Strategic Directions

The Gambia's Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035 provides a comprehensive, evidence-based, and forward-looking roadmap for conserving biodiversity, enhancing ecosystem services, and promoting sustainable development. It builds on national priorities articulated in the NBSAP 2025–2035, aligning with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), particularly the 30x30 target, ecosystem restoration goals, and equitable benefit-sharing commitments.

Key strategic directions include:

1. **Protected Area Expansion and Transboundary Connectivity**
    - Expansion of terrestrial, marine, and coastal Protected Areas
    - Recognition and integration of OECMs
    - Establishment of ecological corridors and connectivity zones
2. **Sustainable Financing**
    - Diversification of funding sources (government, PES, carbon finance, ecotourism, trust fund)
    - Long-term, predictable financing to ensure effective management
3. **Stakeholder Engagement and Communication**
    - Inclusive participation of communities, government agencies, NGOs, and private sector
    - FPIC-based planning and co-management
    - Public awareness and education for sustainable resource use
4. **Risk Management and Adaptive Implementation**
    - Identification and mitigation of ecological, social, financial, and operational risks
    - Robust monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management framework
5. **Integration with Climate and Development Goals**
    - Climate-smart conservation strategies
    - Ecosystem-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction
    - Sustainable livelihoods and green economy opportunities

9.2 Strategic Benefits

Implementing the PASAP will provide multiple benefits at national, community, and ecosystem levels:

- **Ecological Benefits**:
    - Protection of underrepresented ecosystems
    - Conservation of key species and migratory pathways
    - Enhanced climate resilience of terrestrial and coastal ecosystems
- **Social and Community Benefits**:
    - Increased community ownership of Protected Areas

  - Equitable access to conservation-linked livelihoods
  - Strengthened local governance and social cohesion
- **Economic Benefits**:
  - Development of ecotourism, sustainable fisheries, and green enterprises
  - Access to carbon markets and PES schemes
  - Improved investment climate for private sector partnerships
- **Policy and Governance Benefits**:
  - Strengthened legal, institutional, and policy frameworks
  - Coordinated, multi-stakeholder management
  - National reporting aligned with NBSAP and GBF targets

9.3 Implementation Priorities for the Way Forward

To achieve the 2025–2035 vision, the following priorities are critical:

1. **Strengthen Institutional Capacity**
   - Build technical, financial, and operational capabilities of Protected Area agencies, local authorities, and communities.
2. **Secure Long-Term Financing**
   - Operationalize the National Protected Area Trust Fund, expand PES and carbon finance, and increase government budget allocations.
3. **Enhance Community Engagement and Co-Management**
   - Prioritize FPIC processes, equitable benefit-sharing, and gender-inclusive participation.
4. **Expand and Consolidate the Protected Area Network**
   - Protect priority terrestrial, marine, and coastal ecosystems while ensuring connectivity.
5. **Integrate Climate-Smart and Adaptive Approaches**
   - Embed climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction in Protected Area management.
6. **Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting**
   - Develop robust ecological, social, and financial indicators to guide adaptive management.
7. **Promote Partnerships and Regional Collaboration**
   - Foster public-private partnerships, NGO engagement, and transboundary cooperation within the region.

9.4 Commitment and Call to Action

The Gambia's PASAP represents a shared national commitment to biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable development. Its success requires:

- Government leadership and multi-sectoral coordination
- Active community participation and equitable benefit-sharing
- Private sector engagement in sustainable ventures
- Civil society and academic support for research, monitoring, and advocacy

- Donor and international partnerships to provide technical and financial support

By working collaboratively, The Gambia can ensure that its protected and conserved areas thrive, its ecosystems remain resilient, and its people benefit from sustainable, nature-based opportunities.

9.5 Conclusion

The PASAP 2025–2035 provides a clear, strategic, and actionable framework for The Gambia's conservation agenda over the next decade. It aligns national priorities with global commitments, balances ecological, social, and economic goals, and positions The Gambia as a regional leader in protected area management. Implementing this strategy will secure the country's natural heritage, enhance climate resilience, and empower communities to participate actively in shaping a sustainable future.

Completion Note
This concludes the main narrative draft of the **Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035**. The full draft spans:

- Context and rationale
- Policy alignment
- Strategic objectives
- Expansion and connectivity plan
- Sustainable financing
- Stakeholder engagement and communication
- Risk management, implementation, and M and E
- Conclusion and way forward

ANNEX 1: PRIORITY PROTECTED AREA SITES AND OECMs

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

This annex provides a **comprehensive list and description of priority protected areas (PAs) and Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)** in The Gambia, aligned with national biodiversity targets, NBSAP 2025–2035, and GBF commitments, particularly Target 3 (30% coverage) and Target 2 (ecosystem representation).

A. Criteria for Selection of Priority Sites

Priority Protected Area sites and OECMs were identified based on:

1. **Biodiversity importance**
   - Presence of endemic, threatened, or migratory species
   - Key habitats and ecosystems (forest, mangroves, wetlands, savanna, marine)
2. **Ecological connectivity**
   - Potential to serve as ecological corridors
   - Landscape-scale connectivity with other Protected Areas and OECMs
3. **Socioeconomic and cultural significance**
   - Community dependence on resources
   - Cultural heritage and traditional use areas
4. **Vulnerability and threats**
   - Habitat degradation, overexploitation, climate impacts
5. **Feasibility of management**
   - Governance arrangements (government, community, private)
   - Financial and technical feasibility

B. Protected Areas (Government-Managed and Co-Managed)

PA Name	Type	Ecosystem	Area (ha)	Key Features / Biodiversity	Management Status
Abuko Nature Reserve	Nature Reserve	Forest / Savanna	134	Endemic primates, reptiles, bird species	Government-managed; high visitor infrastructure
Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve	Wetland Reserve Ramsar Site	Wetland / Mangrove	29,650	Migratory birds, fish nursery, mangroves	Co-managed with communities; international recognition
Tanbi Wetland Complex	National Park Ramsar Site	Mangrove / Coastal Wetland	6,034	Shorebirds, blue carbon stock	Government-managed; adjacent to urban areas
Kiang West National Park	National Park	Savanna / Forest	29,051	Threatened mammals, forest-savanna mosaic	Government-managed; buffer zone with local communities

PA Name	Type	Ecosystem	Area (ha)	Key Features / Biodiversity	Management Status
River Gambia National Park	National Park	Riverine Forest	589	Chimpanzees, hippos, riverine biodiversity	Government-managed; eco-tourism hub
Niumi National Park	National Park Ramsar Site	Coastal / Mangrove	7,758	Migratory birds, marine turtles	Co-managed; tourism and fisheries interface
Niumi Biosphere Reserve OECM	Biosphere Reserve Co-Managed	PA/riverine/ agricultre/ forest landscape and cultural	196,500	Cultural heritage, artisanal fisheries, farmlands, settlement/rangelands/forest/ wetlands	Co-managed; Formal conservation agreements
Bintang Bolong Wetlands OECM	Co-managed	Forest / Mangrove	10,000	Timber and non-timber forest products, biodiversity corridor, wetlands, mangrove	Community and private sector co-management
Tanji Bird Reserve	Bird Reserve Co-Managed	Coastal Wetland	612	Shorebirds, nesting seabirds	Community-managed; ecotourism income

Notes:

- Areas include terrestrial, freshwater, and coastal/marine ecosystems.
- Management status indicates the governing authority (government, co-managed, community-managed).
- All sites contribute to ecological representation, connectivity, and socio-economic benefits.

C. Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs)

Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) are areas not formally designated as protected areas but effectively managed to achieve biodiversity conservation outcomes, often by communities, private landholders, or sectoral institutions. The following in addition to Niumi Biosphere Reserve are being negotiated as OECMs.

OECM Name / Area	Type	Ecosystem	Area (ha)	Key Features / Biodiversity	Management / Governance
Mangrove Buffer Zones in Kunkujang	Community / Sectoral	Mangrove	500	Fisheries, blue carbon, coastal protection	Community-based management

OECM Name / Area	Type	Ecosystem	Area (ha)	Key Features / Biodiversity	Management / Governance
Foni Forest Community Concessions	Community	Forest / Savanna	1,800	Endangered primates, timber and NTFP	Co-management with Forestry Dept.
Gambian Rice Irrigation Wetlands	Agricultural / Community	Wetland / Agroecosystem	2,300	Waterbirds, fish nursery	Managed by farmers with sustainable practices
Gunjur Marine Managed Area	Community / Private	Marine / Coral and Seagrass	750	Fisheries, sea turtles	Community-managed; fisheries regulations
Wassu Stone Circle Landscape	Cultural / Community	Savannah / Cultural	350	Cultural heritage, low-impact use	Community stewardship with tourism focus
Bakau Riverine Forest Patches	Private	Riverine / Forest	200	Bird habitat, riparian corridor	Private landowner conservation agreements

Key Points on OECMs:

- OECMs complement formal Protected Areas and contribute to the **30% conservation target**.
- Governance varies: community-based, private stewardship, or sectoral management.
- Encourage formal recognition and integration into the national PA network.

D. Priority Action Recommendations for Sites and OECMs

1. **Legal Recognition and Integration**
   - Assess OECMs for potential formal recognition or co-management agreements.
   - Strengthen PA legal frameworks to accommodate community-managed areas.
2. **Ecological Connectivity**
   - Develop corridors linking Protected Areas and OECMs to enhance species movement.
   - Prioritize restoration of degraded patches between sites.
3. **Community Engagement**
   - Strengthen FPIC processes for all OECMs and co-managed Protected Areas.
   - Promote equitable benefit-sharing through ecotourism and PES schemes.
4. **Monitoring and Research**
   - Implement biodiversity monitoring programs across Protected Areas and OECMs.
   - Collect data on species, ecosystem health, and socio-economic benefits.
5. **Sustainable Financing**
   - Include OECMs in PES, carbon finance, and eco-tourism revenue mechanisms.
   - Develop funding mechanisms for community stewardship and management.

E. Mapping and Spatial Planning

- Priority Protected Areas and OECMs should be **mapped using GIS**, indicating:
  - Ecosystem types
  - Connectivity corridors
  - Threat levels and restoration priorities
- Maps will support **zoning, land-use planning, and climate adaptation strategies**.

F. Contribution to National Targets

- Together, **priority Protected Areas and OECMs cover over 30% of national territory**, contributing to GBF Target 3.
- Ensure representation of **all major ecosystems** (forest, savanna, wetland, mangrove, marine).
- Provide **social, cultural, and economic co-benefits**, enhancing sustainability.

This Annex forms the **basis for prioritizing management, funding, and expansion decisions** under the PASAP 2025–2035.

ANNEX 2: FINANCING MECHANISMS and COST ESTIMATES

Protected Area Strategy andAction Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

This annex provides an overview of **financing strategies, potential revenue sources, and cost estimates** for implementing the PASAP, including protected areas (PAs) and OECMs. It aligns with the **NBSAP 2025–2035**, GBF financial targets, and sustainable financing principles.

A. Overview of Financing Needs

Effective management of The Gambia's Protected Areas and OECMs requires funding for:

1. **Core Protected Area Management**
   - Staffing, ranger patrols, law enforcement
   - Infrastructure (visitor centers, roads, boundary demarcation)
   - Equipment and operational costs
2. **Biodiversity Monitoring and Research**
   - Surveys of flora and fauna
   - Ecosystem health assessments
   - GIS and remote sensing tools
3. **Community Engagement and Livelihoods**
   - FPIC processes, co-management agreements
   - Livelihood programs (ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, fisheries)
   - Capacity building and training
4. **Restoration & Climate Resilience**
   - Mangrove restoration, afforestation, habitat rehabilitation
   - Climate-smart adaptation measures
5. **Awareness, Education & Communication**
   - Outreach campaigns, school programs
   - Protected Area signage, interpretation, and media campaigns
6. **Governance & Institutional Strengthening**
   - Policy development, legal support
   - Interagency coordination
   - Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation

B. Estimated Cost of PASAP Implementation (2025–2035)

Component	Estimated Cost (USD)	Notes
Protected Area Management and Enforcement	35,000,000	Staffing, patrols, infrastructure, equipment
Biodiversity Monitoring and Research	10,000,000	Surveys, GIS, remote sensing, species monitoring
Community Engagement and Livelihoods	12,000,000	Co-management, FPIC, alternative livelihoods

Component	Estimated Cost (USD)	Notes
Ecosystem Restoration and Climate Resilience	8,000,000	Mangrove restoration, reforestation, adaptation
Awareness, Education and Communication	5,000,000	National campaigns, school programs, media
Governance and Institutional Strengthening	5,000,000	Policy, coordination, legal support
Total Estimated Cost (10 years)	**75,000,000**	Approximate and indicative

Notes:

- Costs are indicative, to be refined with detailed feasibility and site-specific assessments.
- Includes terrestrial, freshwater, coastal, and marine Protected Areas and OECMs.
- Costs assume a phased approach with inflation adjustments over 10 years.

C. Potential Financing Mechanisms

To ensure sustainable funding, a **diversified financing strategy** is recommended:

1. Government Budget Allocation

- Central and local government budgets for Protected Areas and biodiversity programs
- Integration into national development and climate budgets

2. National Protected Area Trust Fund (NPATF)

- Endowment fund providing predictable long-term financing
- Contributions from government, donors, private sector, and NGOs
- Interest and investment returns fund ongoing Protected Area management

3. Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)

- Mangrove carbon credits (blue carbon)
- Watershed protection schemes for hydropower, agriculture, and fisheries
- Biodiversity offsets for infrastructure projects

4. Ecotourism Revenue

- Park entry fees, guided tours, eco-lodges, visitor services
- Community-managed ecotourism enterprises
- Revenue-sharing agreements with local communities

5. Private Sector and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- Partnerships with mining, agriculture, fisheries, and tourism companies
- Funding of conservation, restoration, and community development programs

6. International Donor Support

- Multilateral donors: GEF, GCF, UNDP, UNEP
- Bilateral aid: EU, USAID, AFD, Germany, etc.
- Conservation NGOs providing technical and financial assistance

7. Innovative Financing

- Green bonds and climate finance instruments
- Impact investment in sustainable livelihoods linked to Protected Areas
- Public-private partnerships for infrastructure and service provision

D. Financial Sustainability Measures

1. **Diversification of Funding Sources**
    - Avoid dependence on a single donor or revenue stream
    - Blend government, private sector, and community contributions
2. **Revenue Retention and Reinvestment**
    - Retain a portion of tourism and PES revenues for local reinvestment
    - Allocate funds to maintenance, restoration, and community benefits
3. **Financial Transparency and Accountability**
    - Annual financial audits for all PA funds
    - Public reporting of revenue, expenditure, and conservation outcomes
4. **Capacity Building in Financial Management**
    - Train Protected Area staff, community committees, and NGOs in budgeting, accounting, and resource mobilization
5. **Contingency Planning**
    - Establish reserve funds for emergencies (floods, disease outbreaks, funding shortfalls)

E. Cost Allocation by PA and OECM Type

PA / OECM Type	Estimated 10-year Cost (USD)	Comments
National Parks (e.g., Kiang West,)	25,000,000	Large terrestrial Protected Areas with infrastructure needs
Wetlands and Mangroves (e.g., Bao Bolong, Tanbi)	15,000,000	Restoration, monitoring, community engagement
Marine and Coastal Areas (e.g., Niumi, Gunjur)	10,000,000	Fisheries management, ecotourism, blue carbon projects
Biosphere/ Community-managed OECMs	10,000,000	Co-management, alternative livelihoods, FPIC

PA / OECM Type	Estimated 10-year Cost (USD)	Comments
Awareness and Governance Programs	15,000,000	National campaigns, M and E, policy, and capacity building

F. Key Recommendations

1. Establish and operationalize the NPATF as the cornerstone of Protected Area financing.
2. Integrate PES, carbon finance, and ecotourism revenues into sustainable Protected Area budgets.
3. Leverage donor funding for start-up investments, restoration, and capacity building.
4. Promote community participation in revenue generation and benefit-sharing.
5. Regularly review cost estimates and financing strategies to ensure adaptability and efficiency.

This annex provides a clear roadmap for mobilizing, allocating, and sustaining financial resources necessary to implement The Gambia's PASAP 2025–2035 effectively, complementing the priorities outlined in Annex 1 for Protected Areas and OECMs.

ANNEX 3: MONITORING and EVALUATION INDICATORS AND DATA SOURCES

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

This annex provides a detailed framework for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, aligned with The Gambia's NBSAP 2025–2035, PoWPA, and GBF targets. It specifies indicators, data sources, frequency, and responsible institutions, enabling adaptive management and evidence-based decision-making.

A. Objectives of Monitoring and Evaluation (M and E)

1. **Track progress** toward achieving PASAP strategic objectives and GBF targets.
2. **Measure ecological, social, and financial outcomes** of Protected Areas and OECMs.
3. **Inform adaptive management**, ensuring timely responses to threats and challenges.
4. **Enhance transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement**.

B. M and E Framework Structure

The framework is structured around five key dimensions:

1. Ecological / Biodiversity Indicators
2. Management Effectiveness Indicators
3. Socioeconomic / Community Indicators
4. Financial Indicators
5. Governance / Institutional Indicators

C. Indicators, Data Sources, and Reporting Frequency

Dimension	Indicator	Data Source / Method	Frequency	Responsible Institution
Ecological / Biodiversity	Number of species of conservation concern (IUCN Red List)	Field surveys, camera traps, biodiversity databases	Annual / 3-year surveys	DPWM, Universities, Research centers NGOs
	% of ecosystems represented in Protected Areas	GIS mapping, remote sensing	Every 3 years	DPWM, GIS Unit
	Habitat connectivity index	Landscape analysis using GIS	Every 3 years	DPWM, Forestry Dept.
	Forest cover / mangrove extent	Satellite imagery, drone mapping	Annual	Forestry Dept., DPWM
	Wetland and coral health	Field surveys, water quality monitoring	Annual	Fisheries Dept., DPWM
Management Effectiveness	Management Effectiveness	METT assessments, ranger reports	Biennial	DPWM, Protected Area Managers

Dimension	Indicator	Data Source / Method	Frequency	Responsible Institution
	Tracking Tool (METT) score			
	Ranger patrol coverage / law enforcement incidents	Patrol logs, incident reports	Quarterly	Protected Area Managers
	Infrastructure functionality (visitor centers, fences)	Site inspections	Annual	Protected Area Managers, Local Authorities
Socioeconomic / Community	Number of co-management agreements signed	Legal / administrative records	Annual	DPWM, Community Councils
	Community income from PA-linked enterprises	Surveys, financial reports	Annual	DPWM, NGOs, CBOs
	% of community participation in decision-making	Surveys, meeting attendance logs	Annual	Community Councils, NGOs
	FPIC compliance for new Protected Areas or projects	Meeting records, consent documentation	As needed	DPWM, NGOs, CBOs
Financial	Annual PA budgets executed vs. planned	Government and donor financial reports	Annual	DPWM Finance Unit
	Revenue from PES, Carbon credits, ecotourism	Financial statements,PES monitoring	Annual	DPWM, NPATF
	Diversification of funding sources	Financial reports	Annual	DPWM, Ministry of Finance
Governance / Institutional	Number of inter-agency coordination meetings held	Meeting minutes, reports	Quarterly	Protected Area Steering Committee
	Stakeholder satisfaction with Protected Area governance	Surveys, focus groups	Every 2 years	DPWM, NGOs, CSOs
	Policy and legal framework updates implemented	Government gazettes, official reports	Annual	Ministry of Environment, DPWM

D. Data Collection and Management

1. **Primary Data Sources**
    - Field surveys (flora, fauna, environmental data, habitat quality)
    - Community questionnaires and interviews
    - Ranger patrol and law enforcement logs
    - Infrastructure inspection reports
2. **Secondary Data Sources**
    - Satellite imagery and GIS layers
    - Research studies from universities and NGOs
    - National statistics and census data
    - Donor and project reports
3. **Data Management**
    - Centralized Protected Area M and E database managed by DPWM
    - Digital tools (GIS, mobile apps) for real-time reporting
    - Periodic data validation and verification workshops

E. Reporting Mechanisms

- Quarterly Reports: Operational and law enforcement updates for internal management.
- Annual Reports: Biodiversity status, community engagement, financial performance, progress toward GBF targets.
- Biennial METT Assessments: Evaluate management effectiveness across all PAs.
- Three-year Ecosystem Assessments: Habitat condition, connectivity, and restoration outcomes.
- Public Reports & Communication: Annual public-facing report for transparency and stakeholder awareness.

F. Adaptive Management Loop

1. Monitoring: Collect data on ecological, environmental, social, financial, and governance indicators.
2. Evaluation: Compare results against targets and thresholds.
3. Decision-Making: Identify management gaps, threats, and opportunities.
4. Action: Adjust management plans, community programs, or policy measures.
5. Feedback: Share lessons learned with stakeholders and incorporate into future planning.

G. Key Recommendations

1. Develop standardized M and E protocols for all Protected Areas and OECMs to ensure data consistency.
2. Build capacity in data collection and analysis for Protected Area staff, communities, and NGOs.
3. Integrate remote sensing and citizen science to enhance coverage and reduce costs.
4. Align national indicators with GBF global indicators for reporting obligations.
5. Review and update the M and E framework every 3–5 years based on lessons learned.

This annex provides the technical backbone for PASAP implementation, ensuring measurable, transparent, and adaptive management of The Gambia's protected and conserved areas.

ANNEX 4: STAKEHOLDER MATRIX and ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Protected Area Strategy and Action Plan (PASAP) 2025–2035

This annex provides a **detailed stakeholder mapping and engagement plan**, outlining roles, responsibilities, and mechanisms for effective collaboration in implementing The Gambia's PASAP. It ensures inclusivity, transparency, and active participation across government, communities, private sector, and civil society.

A. Objectives of Stakeholder Engagement

1. Enhance multi-sectoral collaboration for Protected Area management and conservation.
2. Ensure equitable participation of communities in decision-making and benefit-sharing.
3. Strengthen policy, governance, and coordination mechanisms across institutions.
4. Foster partnerships with NGOs, private sector, research institutions, and international donors.
5. Promote awareness, education, and public support for biodiversity conservation.

B. Stakeholder Matrix

Stakeholder Group	Role / Responsibility	Engagement Mechanism	Frequency / Timing
Government Agencies			
Department of Parks & Wildlife Management (DPWM)	Lead Protected Area management, monitoring, enforcement, policy implementation	Steering committee, technical working groups (TWGs), operational meetings	Quarterly / Annual
Forestry Department	Forest reserve management, restoration, fire control, carbon projects	TWGs, joint site visits, planning workshops	Bi-annual / As needed
Fisheries Department	Marine/coastal Protected Areas, fisheries management	TWGs, community consultation	Quarterly
Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources	Policy guidance, legal framework, NBSAP alignment	Steering committee, reporting	Annual
Local Government Authorities	Land allocation, zoning, community mobilization	Local councils, site meetings	Monthly / Quarterly
Ministry of Finance	Budget allocation, oversight, financial reporting	Finance committee, annual budget meetings	Annual
Communities andTraditional Authorities			

Stakeholder Group	Role / Responsibility	Engagement Mechanism	Frequency / Timing
Village Development Committees (VDCs)	Co-management, community monitoring, livelihood programs	Participatory planning, FPIC processes, workshops	Quarterly / As needed
Traditional Leaders / Elders	Land tenure decisions, conflict resolution, cultural heritage protection	Consultation meetings, advisory roles	Bi-annual / As needed
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)	Manage OECMs, support ecotourism, monitor biodiversity	Site-level committees, reporting, training	Monthly / Quarterly
Private Sector			
Tourism Operators and Lodges	Ecotourism services, revenue-sharing, sustainable tourism	Partnership agreements, joint planning	Annual / As needed
Agricultural / Fisheries Companies	Sustainable resource use, PES participation	Stakeholder forums, corporate engagement	Bi-annual
Conservation-focused Private Foundations	Funding, technical support	Partnership agreements, reporting	Annual / As needed
Civil Society and NGOs			
Environmental NGOs	Technical support, advocacy, capacity building, research	TWGs, joint projects, workshops	Quarterly/As needed
Community Advocacy Groups	FPIC, benefit-sharing monitoring, conflict resolution	Site meetings, reporting	Quarterly/As needed
Academic and Research Institutions	Biodiversity research, monitoring, GIS, training	Research collaborations, field studies, capacity building	As needed
Donors and International Partners	Funding, technical assistance, knowledge exchange	Partnership agreements, reporting, joint planning	Annual / As needed
Media and Public	Awareness raising, advocacy, communication	Media campaigns, school programs, social media	Continuous / Annual campaigns

C. Engagement Methods and Tools

1. Steering Committees – High-level coordination and oversight.
2. Technical Working Groups (TWGs) – Sector-specific planning and problem-solving.
3. Community Consultations and FPIC Processes – Ensuring community consent and involvement.

4. Workshops and Capacity Building – Skills development for Protected Area staff, communities, and partners.
5. Public Awareness Campaigns – Media, school programs, social media outreach.
6. Participatory Monitoring and Citizen Science – Community engagement in biodiversity and ecosystem monitoring.
7. Partnership Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) – Formalize roles, responsibilities, and benefit-sharing.

D. Stakeholder Engagement Principles

- Inclusivity: Engage all relevant stakeholders, including marginalized groups, women, and youth.
- Transparency: Clear communication of objectives, decisions, and resource use.
- Equity: Fair distribution of benefits, responsibilities, and decision-making power.
- Accountability: Regular reporting and grievance mechanisms for all stakeholders.
- Adaptability: Adjust engagement strategies based on lessons learned and evolving contexts.

E. Engagement Timeline and Frequency

Activity / Mechanism	Stakeholders	Frequency / Timing
National Protected Area Steering Committee meetings	Government, donors, NGOs	Annual
Technical Working Group sessions	Government agencies, NGOs, academic institutions	Quarterly
Community consultation meetings	Local communities, CBOs, traditional authorities	Quarterly / As needed
FPIC processes for new Protected Areas or projects	Communities, government	As needed
Capacity-building workshops	Protected Area staff, communities, NGOs	Bi-annual, As needed
Public awareness campaigns	Media, schools, general public	Continuous / Annual campaigns
Partnership review and reporting	Private sector, NGOs, donors	Annual
Participatory monitoring / citizen science	Communities, CBOs, academic partners	Quarterly

F. Key Recommendations

1. Formalize multi-stakeholder coordination through legal and institutional frameworks.
2. Strengthen capacity of communities, Protected Area staff, and private partners in co-management and monitoring.
3. Establish clear communication channels between national, regional, and local stakeholders.

4. Implement feedback and grievance mechanisms to address conflicts and concerns promptly.
5. Promote gender-sensitive and youth-inclusive engagement across all levels.
6. Integrate stakeholder inputs into annual and multi-year Protected Area management planning cycles.

This annex ensures that all key actors are clearly identified, their roles defined, and engagement systematically planned, providing the foundation for successful, participatory, and sustainable implementation of The Gambia's PASAP 2025–2035.

Annex 5. Theory of Change for PASAP 2025–2035

Goal (Long-Term Impact):
By 2035, The Gambia has a resilient, ecologically representative, and socially inclusive network of protected and conserved areas that sustains biodiversity, ecosystem services, and community well-being.

1. Impact Pathways

Impact	Rationale / Link to PASAP
Improved biodiversity conservation	Increased Protected Area coverage, effective management, ecosystem restoration
Enhanced ecosystem services	Healthy forests, wetlands, and mangroves provide water regulation, fisheries productivity, and carbon sequestration
Climate resilience	Restored ecosystems buffer communities against flooding, sea-level rise, and drought
Sustainable livelihoods and social inclusion	Communities benefit from ecotourism, PES schemes, and sustainable resource use
Strong governance and sustainable financing	Transparent, well-funded management ensures long-term Protected Area effectiveness

2. Outcomes (Medium-Term, 5–10 Years)

1. **Protected Area Coverage and Connectivity**
    - Key ecosystems represented in Protected Areas and OECMs
    - Ecological corridors established between priority sites
2. **Improved PA Management Effectiveness**
    - Enhanced staffing, infrastructure, monitoring systems
    - Law enforcement and threat mitigation in place
3. **Community Engagement and Benefit-Sharing**
    - Co-management agreements implemented
    - FPIC processes fully operational
    - Community income from Protected Area-linked enterprises increased
4. **Ecosystem Restoration and Climate Adaptation**
    - Degraded forests, wetlands, and mangroves restored
    - Climate-smart management practices adopted
5. **Financial Sustainability Secured**
    - Trust fund operational, diversified revenue streams established
    - PES, carbon finance, and ecotourism integrated into Protected Area budgets
6. **Governance, Policy, and Institutional Strengthening**
    - Policy frameworks updated and aligned with GBF targets
    - Multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms functional
    - Transparent reporting and adaptive management systems in place

3. Outputs (Short-Term, 1–5 Years)

Output	Activities / Interventions
Expansion of Protected Area network	Identify priority sites; gazette new Protected Areas; formalize OECMs
Capacity building	Train PA staff, community rangers, and co-management committees
Biodiversity monitoring systems established	Develop M and E indicators, GIS mapping, field surveys, citizen science programs
Community livelihood initiatives	Implement ecotourism, PES, agroforestry, and fisheries programs
Restoration programs launched	Mangrove replanting, afforestation, wetland rehabilitation
Sustainable financing mechanisms operational	Establish NPATF, mobilize government and donor funding, implement PES schemes
Policy and legal frameworks strengthened	Update Protected Area legislation, integrate GBF targets, establish enforcement protocols
Awareness and education campaigns	Conduct media outreach, school programs, and stakeholder workshops

4. Assumptions

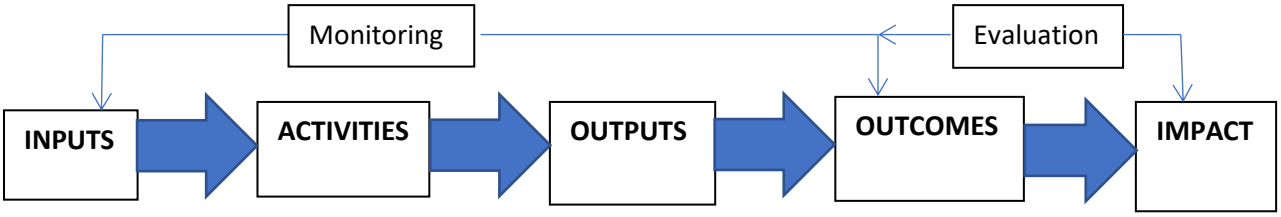
- Political stability and continued government commitment to biodiversity conservation.
- Community willingness to participate in co-management and benefit-sharing schemes.
- Adequate funding from government, donors, and private sector for Protected Area implementation.
- Climate impacts can be mitigated through restoration and adaptation measures.
- Collaboration among multiple stakeholders (government, NGOs, private sector, communities) is functional.

5. Risks and Mitigation Measures

Risk	Mitigation
Insufficient funding	Diversify revenue streams, leverage PES, carbon finance, and donor support
Community conflicts over land or resource use	Strengthen FPIC processes, conflict resolution mechanisms, and equitable benefit-sharing
Climate-related disasters	Implement climate-smart restoration and ecosystem-based adaptation
Weak governance or institutional capacity	Build capacity, clarify roles, and establish monitoring and accountability systems
Poaching, illegal logging, or overfishing	Enhance law enforcement, ranger patrols, and community surveillance

6. Visual Representation (Logic Flow)

A visual representation of the theory of change is shown below:



- **Inputs:** Funding, human resources, legal frameworks, technical support, community engagement
- **Activities:** Protected Area expansion, restoration programs, capacity building, livelihood support, policy updates
- **Outputs:** New Protected Areas and OECMs gazetted, trained personnel, biodiversity monitoring systems, restored habitats, sustainable financing operational
- **Outcomes:** Improved Protected Area management, ecosystem connectivity, community livelihoods enhanced, financial sustainability achieved, strengthened governance
- **Impact:** Biodiverse, resilient, and inclusive network of protected and conserved areas that secures The Gambia's natural heritage and ecosystem services for current and future generations

This **Theory of Change** provides the backbone for **planning, monitoring, and evaluation**, clearly linking **actions to desired impacts**, and can be directly integrated into the PASAP narrative or M and E framework.