REVISED

GENDER AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2026-2035)

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND WILDLIFE

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of discrimination Against women
CEPA	Communication, education and Public Awareness
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GENDER EQALITY SEAL	A global certification program on gender Equality
GBOS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFC	International Finance Cooperation
LIFE-AR	Least Developed Countries Initiative for Adaptation & Resilience
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MOBSE	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
OECM	Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures
PA	Protected Area
PES	Payment for Ecoservice Systems
RAMSAR	International Treaty on Conservation and sustainable wise use of wetlands
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UTG	University of The Gambia

Executive summary

The strategy aligns with The Gambia's RF-NDP (2023–2027) and global frameworks (SDGs, CBD, CEDAW) to integrate **gender equality into biodiversity conservation and climate resilience efforts**.

Although women play a crucial role in agriculture, seed management, fisheries, and natural resource conservation, they face **systemic inequalities**, including limited land rights, poor access to finance and technology, underrepresentation in leadership, and cultural barriers rooted in patriarchy. These challenges weaken both gender equity and effective biodiversity management.

The strategy recognizes that **achieving gender equality is essential for sustainable biodiversity conservation**. It aims to:

- Mainstream gender into biodiversity policies and institutions
- Strengthen women's participation in decision-making
- Ensure equitable access to biodiversity-based livelihoods
- Improve gender-disaggregated data and monitoring
- Promote awareness and behavioral change

Key components include:

1. Policy and institutional mainstreaming
2. Capacity building and leadership training
3. Community engagement
4. Livelihoods and benefit-sharing
5. Monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge management
6. Communication, education, and public awareness

Implementation is coordinated through MECCNAR, DPWM, NEA, Forestry Department, local governments, NGOs, and international partners, supported by national laws (Biodiversity Act, NBSAP, GEAP) and global conventions (CBD, CITES, Ramsar, Nagoya Protocol).

Overall Goal:
To build a gender-responsive biodiversity governance system that ensures equitable participation, sustainable livelihoods, and effective conservation outcomes in The Gambia.

Action Plan

Strategic Area	Key Actions	Timeline	Lead Institutions	Partners
Policy & Institutional Mainstreaming	Integrate gender in NBSAP, PAs, wildlife, and OECM policies; establish focal points	2025–2035	NEA, MECCN	MoWD, UN Women, NGOs

Strategic Area	Key Actions	Timeline	Lead Institutions	Partners
Capacity Building & Training	Train staff, community leaders, and women/youth on gender-responsive biodiversity management	2025–2030	DPWM, NEA, Forestry, Fisheries	CSOs, UTG, NGOs
Community Engagement & Participation	Establish inclusive committees; ensure gender representation in co-management	2025–2035	NGOs, Local Gov't, NEA	NGOs, CBOs
Livelihoods & Benefit-Sharing	Women/youth access to biodiversity-linked livelihoods; gender-sensitive PES and eco-tourism	2026–2035	MoA, NEA	NGOs, Private sector
Monitoring & Evaluation	Gender-disaggregated indicators; audits; data collection; NBIS integration	2025–2035	NEA, Local Gov't	UTG, NGOs
Awareness, Education & CEPA	Gender & biodiversity campaigns; school programs; male engagement	2025–2035	MoBSE, NEA	Media, NGOs

Capacity & Training Needs

Gender mainstreaming in biodiversity policy and planning.

Community facilitation and leadership training for women and youth.

Data collection and analysis for gender-disaggregated monitoring.

Communication and advocacy skills for gender awareness campaigns.

Social & Environmental Safeguards

Ensure FPIC in all community biodiversity programs.

Address cultural and social barriers that limit women's participation.

Monitor and mitigate unintended negative impacts on vulnerable groups.

Apply adaptive management for equitable resource use.

Indicative Budget Considerations (USD, 10 years)

Category	Estimated Cost (10 yrs)	% of Total
Policy & Institutional Mainstreaming	$2,000,000	20%
Capacity Building & Training	$2,500,000	25%
Community Engagement & Participation	$2,000,000	20%
Livelihoods & Benefit-Sharing	$2,000,000	20%

Category	Estimated Cost (10 yrs)	% of Total
Monitoring & Evaluation	$1,000,000	10%
Awareness, Education & CEPA	$500,000	5%
Total	**$10,000,000**	100%

Monitoring & Evaluation Indicators

% of women, youth, and marginalized groups in community committees and PA/OECM governance.

% of biodiversity-linked livelihoods benefiting women and youth.

Number of gender-sensitive programs implemented and monitored.

Gender-disaggregated data availability in NBIS and reports.

Awareness and behavioral change indicators in communities and schools.

Expected Outcomes by 2035

Gender equity mainstreamed in all biodiversity policies and programs.

Increased participation of women and youth in decision-making.

Equitable access to biodiversity benefits and sustainable livelihoods.

Improved gender-disaggregated data for adaptive management.

Enhanced awareness of gender and biodiversity linkages across sectors.

GENDER AND BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY (2026-2035)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Geography

The Gambia is located midway on the bulge of the West Africa coast and stretches over 400 kilometers inland from west to east on either side of the River Gambia, varying in width from about 50 km near the mouth of the river to about 24km upstream. The country is bound to the north, south and east by the Republic of Senegal, and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean.

The Gambia is the smallest country on mainland Africa with a total land area of 10,689 square kilometers. It is surrounded by Senegal on all sides except the west; where it has an opening to the Atlantic Ocean. The River Gambia, which runs the entire length of the country from the Futa Jallon highlands in the Republic of Guinea to the Atlantic Ocean, divides the country's land area of 10,689 sq km almost equally into two halves – the South Bank and the North Bank.

The Gambian climate is typically Sahelian with a long dry season from November to May and a short rainy season between June and October. Distribution of rainfall tends to be irregular, and The Gambia had experienced perennial droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. The estuary basin of The River Gambia is virtually a tidal inlet with salt water intrusion ranging from 180km upstream in the rainy season to 250km in the dry season. Irrigable land areas are limited and therefore agriculture, which is the backbone of the Gambian economy, is mostly rain fed. As a result, agricultural activities are subjected to wide seasonal fluctuations and production levels are vulnerable to variations in rainfall.

1.2 DESTLE Analysis

1.2.1 Demographic Environment

According to the 2024 Population and Housing preliminary report, the population of The Gambia stood at 2.42 million of which 1.24million (51 percent) were females and 1.18 million (49 percent) were males and growing at an annual rate of 2.5 percent per annum and a population density of 227 persons per sq kilometer making it the fourth most densely populated country on mainland Africa, surpassed only by Rwanda, Burundi and Nigeria. As a result of the high rural-urban migration, over 50 per cent of the population lives in the western part of the country (GBoS, 2016); this constitutes the urban sprawl of Banjul, Kanifing Municipality and Brikama town.

More than 70 per cent of the population is aged under 30 years. Females account for 50.8 per cent of the total population. Overall, life expectancy at birth is estimated at 63.4 years; males 60.8 years and females 65.9 years (GBoS, 2016). Between 2013 and 2019-20, the under-5 mortality rate increased from 54 to 56 deaths per 1,000 live births. Similarly, the infant mortality rate rose from 34 to 42 deaths per 1,000 live births, and the neonatal mortality rate increased from 22 to 29 deaths per 1,000 live births. However, child mortality decreased from 20 to 15 deaths per 1,000 live births over the same period (GBoS and ICF, 2020).

The Government has made significant efforts to increase enrolment numbers at all levels of education, even in the face of rapid population growth. However, in comparison to the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average, there has been limited progress in key access indicators across all levels of education between 2010 and 2015, except for gender parity, which has been achieved in pre-school through secondary education. Although girls are advantaged in terms of enrollment in lower basic and secondary education levels, boys are more likely to complete their studies compared to girls except at the lower secondary level. Inequality in access to education and out-of-school children pose significant challenges (World Bank, 2017). Nationally, only 47.2 per cent of women aged 15-49 years are literate compared to 66.8 per cent of men (aged 15-49 years), with significant regional disparities. In the Kuntaur LGA where literacy rates are lowest, only 16.4 per cent of women are literate compared to 41.5 per cent of men (GBoS and ICF 2020). Women constitute over half of the voting population, yet make up only 21 per cent of the workforce.

1.2.2 Economic Environment

The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.5 in 2021 and a ranking of 174 out of 191 countries and also ranked 121 out of 146 countries (Global Economic Forum, 2023) Poverty is widespread and is on the increase, particularly in rural communities. The main drivers of growth are services, contributing 58 percent to 61 percent of the GDP from 2013 to 2017 respectively; followed by the Agriculture Sector, which is the main source of livelihood for most of the population[1] contributing 24 to 27 percent to GDP within the same period; but predominantly subsistence with rice being the main staple food and groundnuts being the main cash crop. The tourism sector has contributed approximately 20 percent of GDP in 2016 and has been the largest foreign exchange earner. However, over the years remittances and international aid have played an important role in sustaining the economy. The main features of the economy are its small size and narrow market; and is little diversified relying mainly on agriculture, tourism, re-export trade. The country has a small export base, with groundnuts, cashew and fish as the main export commodities

However, GDP growth is projected to average 5.5% between 2023-2025, (World Bank) driven by increased activity in tourism and construction. Agriculture is expected to remain volatile during the period- given its reliance on rain-fed crop production. However, inflation is expected to remain high in 2023 before declining to an average of 7.3% between 2024-2025, reflecting global uncertainty and high commodity prices with the protracted war on Ukraine which started in February 2022. As a result, poverty (based on the international poverty line) is expected to increase in 2023 and 2024. before declining in 2025.

1.2.3 Socio- Cultural Environment

The Gambia is multi-ethnic, multi-racial society with deep-rooted socio-cultural values and norms exhibiting a high degree of ethnic and religious tolerance. Even though there exists a certain degree of diversity in cultural beliefs and practices among ethnic groups, similar overarching traditions contribute to strong social cohesion. This has significant bearing on informal and community-based child and social protection, which is a main source of support for poor and vulnerable

populations. Majority of communities are made-up of patriarchal societies, comprising several clans with family ties that sustain the existing social and economic safety-nets for households, at the same time covering up for matters of domestic violence that take place, thereby justifying female subordination.

According to the MICS 2018, 75.70% of girls have gone through Female Genital Mutilation /Cutting and 33.4% of boys and girls are married between the ages 15 - 18. They cherish extended family systems, but the traditional family structures and values are no longer the same as in the past as people struggle to improve their earnings by diversifying income sources to change their way of life. The Gambia has made significant progress towards child and social development in the last decade, becoming one of the top four African countries progressing toward the MDGs related to hunger, primary schooling, and child immunization. Despite these achievements, the country's demographic, economic and social indicators remain disturbing.

1.2.4 Legal Context

The Gambia's constitution of 1997 provides for participatory democracy, separation of powers, judicial independence and fundamental human rights. The country has a unicameral legislature with the National Assembly (Parliament) consisting of 58 members for a five-year term. The Gambia has a tripartite legal system consisting of customary law (unwritten), Shariah law, and common law. The recognition of customary law and Shariah law as part of the Laws of The Gambia is derived from section 7 of the 1997 Constitution. Customary law and Shariah law are applied in a variety of cases including cases of marriage, divorce, and inheritance, which directly affect the rights of women and girls in The Gambia.

1.2.5 Environmental Situation

The Gambia is one of the country's most prone to climate change due to its low-lying topography, high dependence on subsistence rain-fed agriculture, inadequate drainage and storm water management system coupled with a rapidly expanding un-regulated urban expansion. This has increased the vulnerability of the country to hazards such as flash floods and windstorms which continues to cause loss of life and property in various parts of the country.

The situation is further aggravated by the unequally higher proportion of the population, more than 50 per cent, live in the western part of the country (GBoS, 2016). According to McGranahan, Balk et al. 2007, cited in Jaiteh and Sarr, 2011, the Gambia is ranked among the top ten countries in the world with the highest share of population living within the lower elevation coastal zone (LECZ). Windstorms, floods, rising sea level and coastal erosion and drought have been identified as climate change challenges for the Gambia (Jaiteh and Sarr, 2011). However, a number of initiatives have been taken to mitigate against the impact of climate change through the promulgation of policies, strategies and regulations on climate change and disaster risk reduction.

1.3 Development Context

1.3.1 National Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP) 2023-2027

The Gambia's RF-NDP **2023-2027** places significant emphasis on biodiversity conservation, primarily under the pillar of **Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience**. The

government considers environmental protection a "matter of national survival" and integrates green recovery strategies throughout the plan. The Plan underscores the following in the domain of biodiversity conservation:

Policy and Legal Reforms: The plan is complemented by specific policy reforms such as the new National Forest Policy (2023-2032) and a reformed Forest Act, which provide stronger institutional and legal frameworks for ecosystem protection.

Protection of Ecosystems and Wildlife: Forestry, parks, and wildlife management are central priorities. The Government has strengthened the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management and focuses on managing and protecting existing nature reserves and parks, although the need for comprehensive management plans for all protected areas is recognized.

Combating Deforestation and Illegal Activities: Specific actions include a total ban on timber exports, revoking illegal felling permits, and disrupting the cross-border trafficking of rosewood, all aimed at protecting forest biodiversity.

Community Involvement and Alternative Livelihoods: The plan promotes community-driven programs and involves local communities, women, youth and differently-abled in resource management and conservation efforts. This includes initiatives like mangrove regeneration and providing alternative livelihood equipment (e.g., for beekeeping and fishing) to reduce pressure on natural resources.

Alignment with Global Frameworks: The RF-NDP aligns with international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union Agenda 2063, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) goals, including ecosystem-based adaptation and sustainable land management.

Integrated Management: The plan emphasizes an integrated and collaborative approach to sustainable forest and natural resource management, involving various government sectors, civil society, the private sector, and development partners.

1.3.2 Sustainable Development Goals on Biodiversity (SDGs)

SDG 15: Life on Land, aiming to protect, restore, and promote terrestrial ecosystems, combat desertification, halt land degradation, and stop biodiversity loss, with key targets on habitat protection, species conservation, and sustainable forest management.

However, biodiversity also strongly links to **Life Below Water** and supports other goals like poverty (SDG 1), hunger (SDG 2), clean water (SDG 6), and sustainable economies (SDG 8) by providing essential resources and ecosystem services.

1.4 Situational Analysis of Gender and Biodiversity

Socio-cultural beliefs and practices, like patriarchy continue to hinder the full acceptance of women and their participation in leadership positions. Cultural phenomena have created the stereotype impression that men are superior and women are inferior and a socialization process that has also led men and women to perceive men as leaders and women as supporters. These

perceptions are alleged to put women in the private sphere as wives, mothers and daughters and men in the public domain of decision-making, as well as the economic and political arena.

Records show that Gambian women constitute 56% of the electorates and are less than 15% represented in Cabinet and less than 10% in National Assembly in Cabinet out of the 21 Cabinet Members, only 3 are women. This shows The Gambia not attaining the 30 % target of the CEDAW on women representation at the level of cabinet. Socio-cultural beliefs and practices, like patriarchy continue to hinder the full acceptance of women and their participation in leadership positions. Cultural phenomena have created the stereotype 'impression that men are superior and women are inferior' and a 'socialization process that has also led men and women to perceive men as leaders and women as supporters.' These perceptions are alleged to "put women in the private sphere as wives, mothers and daughters and men in the public domain of decision-making", as well as the economic and political arena. Another menace is Gender Based Violence which continues to hamper the growth, health and development of women and children in The Gambia. The major forms of violence perpetuated to women are domestic and sexual violence, child marriage, forced marriage, and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

However, Government made significant advances in Gender and Women Empowerment in education and training of Women and girls in the fields of Vocational Skills, Science and technology but significant challenges remain. Under the new National Development Plan, government prioritized investments to develop the country's human capital through ensuring quality health and education, and making basic social services accessible and affordable to all and improving social and child protection systems for the most vulnerable. This includes (I) enhancing access to early childhood education, (ii) improving quality learning, with special emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Health, Agriculture and special needs at the basic, post-secondary/tertiary and higher education levels, promote TVET and other skills enhancing initiatives to match the job market; and (iii) take measures to enhance access to non-formal education in order to build a more skilled and productive work force. In The Gambia, gender significantly intersects with biodiversity, with women holding crucial knowledge for resource management such as rice farming, horticulture, mangroves and oysters ecosystems among others and yet facing barriers like limited land rights and assets. Government continues to promulgate policies to address gender equality which has been recognize as key to climate resilience and development, promoting women's empowerment in sectors from agriculture to marine conservation through projects that support sustainable livelihoods and challenge norms, albeit poverty and cultural factors that continue to perpetuate inequality still persist.

With regard to Ex-situ conservation , The Gambia's involvement in this venture is nascent compared to in-situ efforts, and centers on the Abuko Nature Reserve's animal orphanage and the Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Project (CRP) in River Gambia National Park, both starting in the 1970s/80s, supported by the Department of Parks & Wildlife Management (DPWM) to safeguard threatened species outside their natural habitats, with later legislation (2003 Biodiversity Act) formalizing these off-site conservation needs alongside broader biodiversity goals.

However, Ex-situ conservation decision-making is characterized by a significant gender divide between traditional labor roles and formal institutional leadership. Men dominate high-level institutional and community leadership positions. At present almost all the villages in The Gambia

are led by male Alkalolu who are District Authorities and play a critical role in land and resource allocation decisions.

Notwithstanding, women are critical in the management of biodiversity at the household level, especially in managing seeds, crop varieties, and medicinal plants. However, this informal decision-making is often driven by socioeconomic necessity rather than institutional authority. They often lack ownership rights to land, which limits their ability to invest in long-term ex-situ projects like agroforestry or seed banks. In public administration, while initiatives like the Gender Equality Seal (launched late 2025) aim to reform these structures, men still occupy most senior decision-making positions in Government.

Conversely, women's deep involvement in gardens and seed selection gives them critical knowledge of plant diversity, making them vital for plant genetic resource conservation. In essence, while traditional structures sideline women, targeted interventions such as the ROOTS Project are bridging gaps, recognizing their essential role in managing plant diversity for effective conservation in country.

To address gender inequalities in Biodiversity conservation, a number of Policies and Strategies are being promoted such as the Green Recovery NDP (2023- 2027) which integrate gender equality as a core component for achieving climate resilience and national goals and the National Gender Policy 2025-2034). Projects are also supporting women's economic activities such as oyster farming, beekeeping, solar tricycles to empower them economically while promoting biodiversity, challenging norms and fostering collaboration, mainstreaming gender into sectoral policies, and using initiatives like the UNDP Gender Equality Seal to promote inclusive governance, recognizing women as key to conservation and sustainable development. In addition, under the LIFE-AR initiative, (2025) a specialized Working Group now provides technical advice to the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources to ensure gender-responsive decision-making in climate and biodiversity programs. Projects such as ROOTS utilize the Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology to facilitate joint household decision-making, moving away from unilateral control by male heads of families. In essence, while traditional structures sideline women, targeted interventions are bridging gaps, recognizing their essential role in managing plant diversity for effective conservation in country.

1.5 Guiding Principles

Ensure women and girls have full, equitable, and meaningful participation in all levels of biodiversity planning, policy-making, and implementation.

Treat gender equality and women's empowerment as central to achieving biodiversity goals, not just as a side effect.

Acknowledge women as vital stewards, custodians of traditional knowledge, and agents of change in conservation, moving beyond vulnerability narratives.

Guarantee women's equal rights to access, own, and control biodiversity resources and share equitably in the benefits derived from them.

Apply human rights principles to ensure fairness, non-discrimination, and dignity for all genders in biodiversity efforts.

Design inclusive processes that consider diverse women (across class, age, ethnicity) and actively engage them with capacity building and support.

Maximize links between gender equality and conservation, and align with the broader 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Use scientific, local, and traditional knowledge, building a strong evidence base on gender-biodiversity linkages to inform decisions.

1.6 Problem Statement

The core problem in The Gambia's gender and biodiversity is the underlying systemic inequality that sidelines women in environmental decisions despite their crucial roles in managing resources, leading to ineffective biodiversity conservation and climate action, marked by poor infrastructure (roads, transport), inadequate access to inputs (drugs for livestock), and insufficient integration of women's specific needs (e.g., in fisheries, farming) into national policies and programs, hindering both gender equality and sustainable development. Key aspects of the problem statement include:

- **Gendered Division of Labor and Resource Access**: While women in The Gambia constitute over 70% of the agricultural workforce and are significantly involved in agricultural activities such as managing seeds, foraging, food processing, and near-shore fishing, they face limited access to and control over key productive resources like land, finance, and technology. Land ownership in particular remains a challenge, often governed by socio-cultural norms that disadvantage women.
- **Inadequate participation in Decision-Making**: Women are largely underrepresented in decision-making bodies at local and national levels concerning natural resource management and governance. This lack of inclusion in platforms for resolving land and resource disputes exacerbates their vulnerability, particularly in rural areas.
- **Disproportionate Impact of Environmental Crises**: Due to their high dependence on biodiversity for food and income (e.g., from farming and fishing), women are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation (such as coastal erosion and erratic rainfall). These crises increase their labor burden and threaten household food security.
- **Inadequate access to Information and Economic Opportunities**: Women have limited access to the latest information, knowledge, training, and off-farm income sources compared to men.
- **Institutional and Cultural Challenges**: Despite existing legal frameworks and national gender policies, deeply embedded cultural beliefs, norms, and social structures reinforce gender disparities, making it difficult to fully implement and enforce gender equality measures in practice.

1.7 THEORY OF CHANGE – GENDER AND BIODIVERSITY

The theory of change for gender and biodiversity in The Gambia is based on the premise that achieving gender equality is a precondition for sustainable development and effective biodiversity conservation. The theory postulates as follows:

IF the different roles , knowledge and practices of women, and men in managing and conserving natural resources are acknowledged, **IF** systemic inequalities such as informal discriminatory practices , norms and power imbalances that limit that women's access to resources, land tenure and decision making are addressed, **IF** capacity of local stakeholders are built to integrate gender-responsive approaches into local planning and climate change adaptation, **IF** there is improved governance of natural resources management, **IF** there are sustainable livelihoods opportunities that link gender equality and women's economic empowerment to climate-smart value chains and sustainable agriculture and IF there is an effective gender-responsive planning including implementing, and evaluating policies and programs such as the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and the National Gender Policy 2025-2034) so that they benefit all members of the community and do not worsen existing inequalities. **THEN**, The Gambia can achieve a robust, equitable, and sustainable Biodiversity conservation and development.

1.8 Process in developing the Gender and Biodiversity Strategy

The methodology used in developing the Strategy involved Desk Research, Community Engagement and selected interviews. A comprehensive review of the literature on gender as well as biodiversity conservation was undertaken. The research looked into the country's biodiversity conservation efforts identifying strategies, policies and other initiatives aimed at ensuring an equitable access and sharing of the benefits of the country's biodiversity resources.

Consultations were also made with stakeholders particularly the beneficiary communities of natural resources across the country to gather information on their perspectives on gender and biodiversity.

1.9 Vision, Goal, and Objectives

Vision: Gender-equitable participation and benefits in biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and climate resilience in The Gambia.

Goal: Strengthen gender-responsive policies, programs, and institutions to ensure equitable participation, access, and benefits in biodiversity management.

Objectives

To mainstream gender and social inclusion into all NBSAP policies, strategies, and programs.

To empower women, youth, and marginalized groups in decision-making and governance of biodiversity resources.

To ensure equitable access to biodiversity-linked livelihoods and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

To build capacity for gender-sensitive planning, monitoring, and reporting.

To generate and use gender-disaggregated data for informed decision-making.

To promote awareness and behavioral change for gender equity in biodiversity management

Chapter 2: Components, Strategic Objectives and Strategies

2.1 Component A: Policy and Institutional Mainstreaming

Policy and institutional mainstreaming are a sin qua non and critical for integrating biodiversity concerns into all sectors of national development, moving beyond silo environmental Ministry approach to a whole -of Government approach. This ensures that economic and social development activities do not inadvertently cause biodiversity loss and helps align national goals with international commitments.

Strategic Objective (1): To mainstream gender and social inclusion into all NBSAP policies, strategies, and programs.

Strategies

- Integrate gender and social inclusion in all biodiversity policies, PA/OECM management plans, wildlife programs, and climate adaptation strategies.
- Establish gender focal points within NEA, Forestry, Fisheries, and Local Governments.
- Ensure compliance with national gender policy, GBF, and international conventions.

2.2 Component B: Capacity Building & Training

Capacity building is an imperative in addressing gender and biodiversity in The Gambia because it accords the opportunity and empowers women to participate meaningfully in decision-making, leverages their traditional knowledge in natural resource management, and ensures that conservation efforts are equitable, effective, and sustainable.

Strategies Objectives (2): To empower women, youth, and marginalized groups in decision-making and governance of biodiversity resources.

Strategies

- Train Government staff, local authorities, NGOs, and community leaders on gender-responsive biodiversity management**.**
- Empower women and youth as biodiversity monitors, eco-entrepreneurs, and decision-makers.
- Promote leadership training for women in PA/OECM governance and wildlife management

2.3 Component C: Community Engagement & Participation

Engaging communities and ensuring their full participation in biodiversity conservation is highly critical because it ensure that policies and interventions related to gender and biodiversity are locally relevant, effective, and sustainable. This approach incorporates the unique knowledge and

roles of both women and men, which ultimately leads to better conservation outcomes and promotes social equity particularly women's decision making.

Strategic Objective (3): To ensure equitable access to biodiversity-linked livelihoods and benefit-sharing mechanisms**.**

Strategies

- Ensure women and marginalized groups have equal access to biodiversity-linked livelihoods (beekeeping, agroforestry, fisheries, eco-tourism).
- Implement gender-sensitive PES schemes and micro-finance programs.
- Monitor and report on equitable benefit distribution

2.4 Component D: Livelihoods and Benefit-Sharing

Sustainable livelihoods and benefit-sharing are crucial because they provide a practical and equitable mechanism to address existing gender inequalities, improve community well-being, and ensure the long-term success of biodiversity conservation efforts.

Strategic Objective (4): To build capacity for gender-sensitive planning, monitoring, and reporting**.**

Strategies

- Ensure women and marginalized groups have **equal access** to biodiversity-linked livelihoods (beekeeping, agroforestry, fisheries, eco-tourism).
- Implement **gender-sensitive PES schemes and micro-finance programs**.
- Monitor and report on **equitable benefit distribution**.

2.5 Component E: Monitoring, Evaluation & Knowledge Management

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Knowledge Management are crucial for ensuring gender equality in biodiversity efforts by tracking progress, revealing disparities empowering women through data, adapting strategies, and ensuring inclusive governance for sustainable resource use, aligning with national policies and global commitments like the CBD.

Strategic objective (5): To generate and use gender-disaggregated data for informed decision-making

Strategies

- Collect **gender-disaggregated data** on participation, benefits, and impacts.
- Integrate gender indicators into NBSAP monitoring frameworks.
- Conduct regular gender audits of programs and policies.

- Share best practices and lessons learned nationally and regionally.

2.6 Component F: Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA)

Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) is an imperative of significant value for biodiversity conservation as it bridges science and local reality, building understanding, changing attitudes, and mobilizing action for sustainable resource use by informing communities about biodiversity's value, fostering shared responsibility, and creating skills for environmental stewardship, crucial for implementing National Biodiversity Strategies (NBSAPs). It also empowers communities to support policies and act sustainably, moving from awareness to active participation in protecting country's rich natural heritage.

Strategic Objective (6): To promote awareness and behavioral change for gender equity in biodiversity management.

Strategies

- Conduct campaigns on gender equity, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods.
- Integrate gender and biodiversity modules in schools, vocational training, and adult education.
- Promote male engagement and social dialogue to support women's participation.

Chapter 3: Institutional Framework

The institutional framework for biodiversity in The Gambia is a multi-layered system involving governmental bodies, a comprehensive policy and legal framework, and community-level participation.

3.1 Key Institutions

Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources (MECCNAR): This is the principal ministry responsible for the sustainable management of the environment and natural resources in The Gambia. It provides overall policy and program oversight at the national level.

Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM): Vested with the primary responsibility to develop, manage, and conserve The Gambia's biological resources within protected areas, the DPWM manages seven national parks and nature reserves. It also serves as the national focal point for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other related international conventions (Ramsar, CITES, Bonn Convention).

Department of Forestry (FD): This department is responsible for the management and conservation of forest resources, including forest parks and community forests, under the Forest Policy (2023-2032) and the Forestry legislations including Forestry Act, 2018).

National Environment Agency (NEA): Established to assist the government in improving economic performance and quality of human life sustainably, it coordinates and implements the Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP).

Local Government Authorities and Community Structures: The framework emphasizes decentralization, involving governors, area councils, chiefs, village heads, and community forest committees in local-level management and enforcement, particularly through traditional courts.

Other Related Departments: The Ministry of Fisheries and Water Resources, along with other sectors, also contributes to biodiversity conservation within the broader Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Policy framework.

3.2 Policy and Legal Framework.

The Policy and Legal Framework guiding the implementation of the Gender and Biodiversity Strategy is detailed as follows:

The Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP): This Plan provides broad policy objectives for sustainable environmental management.

Biodiversity and Wildlife Act (2002/2003): The Act prohibits the sale of wildlife products and the keeping of wild animals in captivity outside designated areas, and outlines the mandate of the PWM.

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP): Provides a national framework for the sustainable management of The Gambia's biological resources and aims to mainstream biodiversity issues into all sectors.

Supplementary Agriculture and Natural Resource (ANR) Policy (2017–2026): Aligns the management of various natural resource sectors (forestry, fisheries, livestock, parks and wildlife).

3.3 Management and Coordination

Cross-sectoral Coordination: The system aims for collaboration across various government agencies, civil society, and development partners to ensure integrated environmental management.

Projects and Funding: Initiatives like the Gambia Biodiversity Management and Institutional Strengthening Project (BMISP) and partnerships with international bodies like the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the FAO help fund and implement conservation efforts.

Private Sector and NGO Involvement: There is an increasing emphasis on public-private partnerships, such as the involvement of the Eagle Heights Conservation Centre (a UK

3.4 Community and Stakeholder Involvement

The framework emphasizes decentralized management and stakeholder engagement, which includes the following:

Community Forest Committees: These groups are responsible for the administration and monitoring of community forests, playing a vital role at the local level in the management of the forestry ecosystem.

Local Government Authorities and Traditional Courts: These bodies are involved in enforcing regulations and handling cases such as illegal logging and bush fires.

Public-Private Partnerships: The government encourages private sector involvement in managing protected areas, as seen with the Abuko Nature Reserve project.

3.5 Conventions and Protocols on Biodiversity

The Gambia is a party to key global biodiversity agreements which include the following Conventions and Protocols:

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): First and foremost, The Gambia ratified this fundamental treaty, committing to its three goals: conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components, and fair sharing of benefits from genetic resources.

Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety: This protocol, under the CBD, governs the safe handling, transport, and use of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern biotechnology.

Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS): This Protocol, operationalizes the benefit-sharing principle of the CBD.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES): This Convention regulates international trade in wild animals and plants.

Convention on Migratory Species (CMS): The Convention protects migratory species and their habitats.

Ramsar Convention: The Convention focuses on the conservation and wise use of wetlands and

African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers Convention): A regional agreement for biodiversity conservation in Africa. This Treaty by African nations is designed to protect shared wildlife, soil, water, and plants, promoting sustainable use for present and future generations, establishing protected areas like national parks, controlling hunting/fishing, and integrating environment into development. The Treaty was later updated by the 2003 Maputo Convention for modern challenges.

3.6 Coordination

3.5.1 COORDINATION STRUCTURES

The coordination mechanism of the Gender and Strategy which is a multi-layered system is done through the following:

Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources (MECCNAR)

This is the lead institution responsible for overall coordination, policy development, and the implementation of programs related to environment and natural resource management in The Gambia. It has established a Centralized Project Management Unit (CPMU) to enhance effective policy implementation and project coherence across different departments and partners.

Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM

This department is the primary agency mandated with the day-to-day management and conservation of The Gambia's protected areas and wild fauna and flora. It is the national focal point for several international conventions like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and CITES, which necessitates working with various partners.

National Environment Agency (NEA)

Established by the National Environment Management Act (NEMA) of 1994, the NEA is the lead Agency for general environment policy formulation and the coordination of all environment-related activities, ensuring sustainable development across sectors.

Department of Forestry (DoF)**:** The DoF manages forest resources and collaborates with the DPWM in areas of overlapping interest, such as protected areas located within forests or involving community forestry management schemes.

3.5.2 Coordination Mechanisms

The coordination mechanism is underpinned by the following structures among others:

Inter-Ministerial and Inter-Agency Collaboration**:** Due to the cross-cutting nature of environmental issues, MECCNAR facilitates partnerships with other government Ministries and their line departments (e.g., Department of Agriculture, Department of Water Resources) to integrate biodiversity concerns into broader national planning and decision-making.

Legal and Policy Frameworks**:** The **Biodiversity and Wildlife Act (2003)** and the **National Environment Management Act (1994)** provide the legal basis for these agencies to operate and coordinate their efforts. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and the Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP) also serve as guiding documents that emphasize integrated approaches.

Community and Stakeholder Involvement**:** The management approach has shifted towards more participatory models. The DPWM involves local communities through the formation of Site Management Committees (SMCs) and the promotion of community-based conservation and ecotourism to ensure local buy-in and benefits, a departure from traditional restrictive management.

Partnerships and Project-Based Coordination**:** The government works with civil society organizations, NGOs, and international development partners (e.g., UNDP, FAO, EU, World Bank) on specific projects, which often require close collaboration among the different departments. Examples include the Gambia Protected Areas

3.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Gender and Biodiversity Strategy is an aspect of the biodiversity programme which will be monitored and evaluated through a cross-sectoral, collaborative framework coordinated by the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM) and involving various government agencies, NGOs, and local communities. The mechanisms involve a blend of institutional oversight, national reporting, and specific project-level monitoring using established indicators.

3.6.1 Institutional Roles in Monitoring of the Gender and Biodiversity Strategy

It should be noted that overall responsibility for environmental and natural resources policy implementation lies with the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources (MECCNAR), supported by its line agencies. However, the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPW) will serve as the national focal point for Gender and Biodiversity Strategy as it does for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and several other related international conventions (Ramsar, Bonn, CITES). The DPWM leads the national process for preparing reports and coordinating biodiversity management efforts. Other institutions will include

National Environment Agency (NEA): Works with MECCNAR on implementing environmental quality programs, including compliance monitoring and enforcement of environmental laws.

Inter-sectoral Expert Group & Steering Committee: These groups, comprising representatives from various sectors (forestry, fisheries, water resources, agriculture, NGOs, community associations), provide technical guidance, review findings from studies, and validate documents such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and national reports.

3.6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Processes

The M&E process for the Strategy will involve the following key mechanisms:

National Reporting: DPWM and its partner institutions regularly prepare and submits national reports to the CBD Secretariat and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). These reports are a primary mechanism for evaluating progress toward national and global biodiversity targets.

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP): The NBSAP is the core strategic document and includes specific, measurable targets (e.g., area of land protected, reduction of pollution levels). The implementation progress of these targets forms the basis of evaluation, though documentation suggests that indicators for some targets still need development.

Project-level M&E: Individual projects, such as the "Ba Nafaa" project focused on marine biodiversity, are required to have explicit biodiversity objectives and monitor associated indicators for conservation. These plans often involve establishing baselines, defining clear goals, and using robust methods for data collection.

Data Collection and Statistics: Efforts are in place to improve the collection and integration of environmental statistics using frameworks such as the Framework for Development of Environmental Statistics (FDES) 2013, to provide evidence-based inputs for management and planning.

Community and Stakeholder Participation: M&E involves a highly consultative and participatory process, including input from fishing communities, farmer platforms, and beekeeping associations. This ensures local knowledge is incorporated into the process.

Adaptive Management**:** The results from monitoring are used to apply corrective actions and adapt management strategies when objectives are not being met.

ANNEX ONE: IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENT

Phased Implementation (2025–2035)

Phase	Years	Focus Areas
Phase 1: Foundations	2025–2027	Integrate gender in policies and planning; establish focal points; initial training; baseline gender assessments; launch awareness campaigns.
Phase 2: Scaling Up	2028–2031	Strengthen community committees; implement gender-responsive livelihoods; mainstream gender in PA/OECM and wildlife programs; collect gender-disaggregated data.
Phase 3: Consolidation & Sustainability	2032–2035	Institutionalize gender mainstreaming; ensure equitable benefit-sharing; adaptive management; final evaluation and reporting; scale best practices nationally.

Action Plan

Strategic Area	Key Actions	Timeline	Lead Institutions	Partners
Policy & Institutional Mainstreaming	Integrate gender in NBSAP, PAs, wildlife, and OECM policies; establish focal points	2025–2035	NEA, MECCN	MoWD, UN Women, NGOs
Capacity Building & Training	Train staff, community leaders, and women/youth on gender-responsive biodiversity management	2025–2030	DPWM, NEA, Forestry, Fisheries	CSOs, UTG, NGOs
Community Engagement & Participation	Establish inclusive committees; ensure gender representation in co-management	2025–2035	NGOs, Local Gov't, NEA	NGOs, CBOs
Livelihoods & Benefit-Sharing	Women/youth access to biodiversity-linked livelihoods; gender-sensitive PES and eco-tourism	2026–2035	MoA, NEA	NGOs, Private sector
Monitoring & Evaluation	Gender-disaggregated indicators; audits; data collection; NBIS integration	2025–2035	NEA, Local Gov't	UTG, NGOs
Awareness, Education & CEPA	Gender & biodiversity campaigns; school programs; male engagement	2025–2035	MoBSE, NEA	Media, NGOs

Capacity & Training Needs

Gender mainstreaming in biodiversity policy and planning.

Community facilitation and leadership training for women and youth.

Data collection and analysis for gender-disaggregated monitoring.

Communication and advocacy skills for gender awareness campaigns.

Social & Environmental Safeguards

Ensure FPIC in all community biodiversity programs.

Address cultural and social barriers that limit women's participation.

Monitor and mitigate unintended negative impacts on vulnerable groups.

Apply adaptive management for equitable resource use.

Indicative Budget Considerations (USD, 10 years)

Category	Estimated Cost (10 yrs)	% of Total
Policy & Institutional Mainstreaming	$2,000,000	20%
Capacity Building & Training	$2,500,000	25%
Community Engagement & Participation	$2,000,000	20%
Livelihoods & Benefit-Sharing	$2,000,000	20%
Monitoring & Evaluation	$1,000,000	10%
Awareness, Education & CEPA	$500,000	5%
Total	**$10,000,000**	100%

Monitoring & Evaluation Indicators

% of women, youth, and marginalized groups in community committees and PA/OECM governance.

% of biodiversity-linked livelihoods benefiting women and youth.

Number of gender-sensitive programs implemented and monitored.

Gender-disaggregated data availability in NBIS and reports.

Awareness and behavioral change indicators in communities and schools.

Expected Outcomes by 2035

Gender equity mainstreamed in all biodiversity policies and programs.

Increased participation of women and youth in decision-making.

Equitable access to biodiversity benefits and sustainable livelihoods.

Improved gender-disaggregated data for adaptive management.

Enhanced awareness of gender and biodiversity linkages across sectors.

This **Gender and Biodiversity Strategy** ensures that **equity, empowerment, and inclusivity** are integrated into all biodiversity actions under The Gambia NBSAP 2025–2035.

Year Phased Costed Budget for Gender and Biodiversity

Category	Key Activities	Phase 1 (2025–2027)	Phase 2 (2028–2031)	Phase 3 (2032–2035)	Total (USD)	% of Total
1. Policy & Institutional Mainstreaming	Integrate gender in NBSAP, PA/OECM, wildlife policies; establish gender focal points; sectoral integration	$600,000	$700,000	$700,000	$2,000,000	20%
2. Capacity Building & Training	Training for government staff, community leaders, women, youth on gender-responsive biodiversity management	$700,000	$900,000	$900,000	$2,500,000	25%
3. Community Engagement & Participation	Inclusive community committees; gender-balanced decision-making; participatory planning	$600,000	$700,000	$700,000	$2,000,000	20%
4. Livelihoods & Benefit-Sharing	Gender-sensitive PES schemes, eco-tourism, agroforestry, beekeeping, fisheries, micro-finance programs	$600,000	$700,000	$700,000	$2,000,000	20%
5. Monitoring & Evaluation	Gender-disaggregated data collection; audits; reporting to NBIS and NBSAP	$250,000	$400,000	$350,000	$1,000,000	10%
6. Awareness, Education & CEPA	Gender & biodiversity campaigns; school programs; male engagement initiatives	$150,000	$175,000	$175,000	$500,000	5%

Category	Key Activities	Phase 1 (2025–2027)	Phase 2 (2028–2031)	Phase 3 (2032–2035)	Total (USD)	% of Total
Total		**$2,900,000**	**$3,575,000**	**$3,525,000**	**$10,000,000**	100%

Phase-Wise Notes

Phase 1: Foundations (2025–2027) – $2.9M

Integrate gender in policies and planning; establish focal points.

Baseline gender assessments in biInitial capacity building and training for government staff and community leaders.

Launch awareness campaigns targeting schools and communities.

Phase 2: Scaling Up (2028–2031) – $3.575M

Strengthen community participation with inclusive committees.

Implement gender-sensitive livelihoods and PES programs.

Expand training and mentoring programs for women, youth, and local leaders.

Collect gender-disaggregated data for monitoring and reporting.

Phase 3: Consolidation & Sustainability (2032–2035) – $3.525M

Institutionalize gender mainstreaming across biodiversity sectors.

Consolidate livelihood programs and ensure equitable benefit-sharing.

Integrate adaptive management based on M&E data.

Scale CEPA programs and document lessons learned for national and regional replication.

Indicative Unit Costs / Examples

Training workshops: $5,000–$10,000 per workshop.

Community committee establishment: $3,000–$5,000 per committee.

Gender-sensitive livelihoods support: $5,000–$20,000 per community/year.

CEPA campaigns (media, schools, community events): $50,000–$75,000 per phase.

Policy integration and focal point establishment: $50,000–$100,000 per agency.

Expected Outcomes by 2035

Gender equity mainstreamed across all biodiversity policies and programs.

Women, youth, and marginalized groups effectively participating in decision-making.

Equitable access to biodiversity-linked livelihoods and PES schemes.

Gender-disaggregated data systematically collected, reported, and used for planning.

Increased awareness and behavioral change for gender equity in biodiversity management.

ANNEX TWO: REFRENCES

The Gambia's CBD Strategy and Action Plan (2015-1029)

2024 Population and Housing Census

Demographic and Health Survey, 2019/20

NDP (2023-2027)

National Gender Policy (2025-2034)

UN and World Bank Reports

Integrated Household survey, 2015

Gambia Labour Force Survey, 2025

Gambia Climate Change Policy (2016-2025)