

**RAMSAR NATIONAL REPORT THE GAMBIA
1998**

Contracting Party: The Gambia

Designated Ramsar Administrative Authority:

Full Name of Institution:

Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM),
Department of State for the Presidency, Fisheries and Natural Resources

Name and Title of the Head of the Institution:

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The following report follows the format submitted by the Ramsar Bureau for the presentation of the National Report. Where there is no information for a particular sector of the format, the numbering continues in accordance with the Ramsar format, while the numbering for the particular sector is followed by the abbreviation N/A (not applicable).

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective I

- 1.1** The Gambia has held discussions with the IUCN West African representative and the Wetlands International sub-regional office on the potential for developing cooperation on cross-border management and development of two transfrontier wetland sites, namely Bao Bolon Wetland Reserve (Ramsar Site) and Niuni National Park (proposed Ramsar site and continuous with the Delta du Saloum National park in Senegal).

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 2

- 2.1 To-date a National Wetland Policy has not been developed but this issue is due to be taken up with the inauguration of a National Wetland Committee which is currently being established.

The main features of the policy will focus on the wise use of wetland sites with adequate measures put in place to ensure that the ecological integrity of the wetland is not compromised unnecessarily and the potential impacts of any developments are thoroughly assessed under existing EIA legislation. The policy will also aim to ensure that full appraisal is made of the national wetland resource base with the objective of conserving in an intact state sufficient sites to endure the combined functions of Gambian wetlands are maintained in terms of waterfowl, fisheries, etc.

The wetland policy will be incorporated into the National environment action plan, National biodiversity action plan and coastal zone management strategy, as well as being integrated into the national agricultural, fisheries, forestry and wildlife policies.

2.2 N/A

2.3 N/A

2.4 N/A

- 2.5 To date no review of legislation and practices which impact on wetlands has been conducted within The Gambia.

- 2.6 The Gambia has undertaken a Coastal Zone Profile and Strategy Study which has the aims of ensuring the conservation of the coastal strip on the basis of an integrated approach. Within this CZM exercise, sites of high ecological value have been identified which include a number of wetlands, and proposals for management strategies put forward. One of the proposed Ramsar sites within The Gambia (Tanbi Wetland Complex) falls within the CZM study area, and there are an additional two wetlands (Tanji Bird Reserve and Allahein River) which may be considered for designation in the future.

At the provincial level, management plans are due to be drawn up for the Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve (existing Ramsar site), Niimi National Park (Proposed Ramsar Site) and the Tanbi Wetland Complex (Proposed Ramsar Site) with financial support from the Ramsar Bureau under the small grant fund (SGF).

- 2.7 The Gambia produced an ecological assessment of three wetland sites: Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve (existing Ramsar Site), Niimi National Park (proposed Ramsar site) and the Tanbi Wetland Complex (proposed Ramsar Site), with financial support from the Ramsar Bureau under the small grant fund (SGF) in 1997. The document examines the botanical, zoological (including ornithological), fisheries and socio-economic aspects of the three-wetland sites. It also presents conclusions and recommendations for intermediary management strategies for the sites while awaiting full designation as

Ramsar sites and the elaboration of full management plans. This document has already been submitted (in triplicate) to the Ramsar Bureau.

- 2.8 Specific measures to prevent or remedy pollution in Ramsar Sites have not been taken in The Gambia to-date, though an integrated pollution control programme has been adopted at the national level which addresses the issue of pollution in a complete context. Facilities to handle pollution loads from urban and industrial sources are currently inadequate but are being monitored and strategies to minimise negative impact are being investigated.
- 2.9 The incorporation of economic valuation techniques into natural resource planning and assessment has not proceeded far within The Gambia, though this approach is being promoted through EIA legislation and also by the DPWM with relation to developments within wetland areas and other sites of high ecological values. There remains considerable hurdles to this approach in terms of quantifying the value of a particular resource.
- 2.10 EIA is required for certain developments at present within the Gambia, though it is currently limited, as the legislation has only been enacted recently and the process is still under going elaboration and testing.
- 2.11 Wetland restoration and / or rehabilitation is currently not a priority in the Gambia, as there remain many wetlands in a near or total intact state.
- 2.12 While some efforts have been made in the encouragement of local communities in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, most of these are focused on the protected areas under DPWM. There is considerable need for promoting this active participation and it is envisaged that the wetland committee will play a significant role in this regard. The elaboration of management plans for the three Ramsar sites within The Gambia will be conducted with the involvement of all stakeholders, with special emphasis on the active participation of communities.
- 2.13 To-date no actions have been taken to encourage the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 3

- 3.1 There is currently no government-run programme for education and public awareness focusing on or including wetlands.
- 3.2 Ditto.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 4

- 4.1 A national wetlands committee is currently being established under the auspices of the Agriculture and National Resource Working Group, which will have as its primary

objectives:

Increasing cooperation between various institutes impacting on wetland conservation and wise use.

Promoting the wise use of wetlands on a national basis.

Addressing issues impacting on Ramsar sites within The Gambia.

Including wetland conservation considerations in land use planning.

Determining and evaluating the functions of wetlands in The Gambia.

The committee will be composed of the following members:

Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (chair)

National Environmental Agency

Department of Forestry

Department of Fisheries

Department of Physical Planning

Geological Unit

Department of State for Tourism

Gambia Police Force

Kanifing Municipal Council

Banjul City Council

Tango [an umbrella organization for NGOs]

The *modus operandi* of the committee has not yet been elaborated.

- 4.2
- a) No review has been undertaken to date to identify the training needs of institutions or individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands
 - b) No
 - c) A member of the DPWM staff is currently attending the international course on wetland management at Lelystad, the Netherlands (14th May to 24th June 1998) with support from Wetlands International. The course will be followed by a wetland management symposium "Dealing With Nature in Deltas" from June 25th to July 5th supported by Wetlands Advisory and Training Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Holland.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 5

- 5.1
- There is currently only one designated Ramsar site within The Gambia though a further two sites have been assessed for potential designation and are currently being proposed to cabinet for approval. All three sites have been approved for support under the Ramsar Bureau SGF for management plan elaboration which is due to commence before the end of 1998.

5.2 N/A

5.3 All three sites are currently undergoing slight modifications to their ecological character through activities such as rice and horticultural cultivation, and in the case of the Tanbi Wetland Complex, both urban and industrial development. To date these alterations have been slight and it is intended to have management plans elaborated and strategies implemented in the near future to prevent further negative modifications to the ecological character of various sites.

5.4 N/A

5.5 N/A

Ramsar Strategic Plan- General Objective 6

6.1 No national inventory has been conducted specifically on the wetlands of The Gambia, though data gathering on various sites has been on going under both an inventory of sites of high ecological value, and an assessment of important bird areas (IBAs) with support from BirdLife International. Both these inventories were undertaken by the DPWM and are kept at the DPWM headquarters.

It is envisaged that the wetlands committee will undertake the compilation of a comprehensive inventory and establish a priority listing for sites to be protected under the auspices of Ramsar sites and also within the framework of the protected area network under the DPWM.

6.2 See 6.1 above.

6.3 A total of 81,276 ha of uncultivated swamps and 33,344 ha of cultivated swamps are estimated to exist within The Gambia (equating to 11% of the total land area) and an additional 66,688 ha of mangrove swamps (6.4%) occur in the lower river. There are no current data on the rate of loss or conversion to other activities, though there is currently a programme being implemented to bring an additional 20,000 ha of wetland under rice cultivation over the next two decades.

The term wetland has not been concisely defined but includes both seasonal and perennial wetland areas while excluding mangrove (see breakdown above).

6.4 The Gambia has just undertaken a first major waterfowl census with support from Wetlands International and is currently compiling a report which will identify sites which meet the 1% criterion for waterbird populations.

6.5 The Government of The Gambia is currently listing two additional sites for designation (Niuni National Park and Tanbi Wetland complex). The proposal for designating Tanbi

as a Ramsar site is currently with the cabinet (see also 2.7).

- 6.6 The Bao Bolong wetland reserve is a transfrontier site with the national park du Delta du Saloum in Senegal.
- 6.7 A meeting is due to be held later in June 1998 with the Senegalese National Parks authorities to develop collaboration between the two countries in terms of transfrontier protected areas and associated management. The initial focus will be on Niomi National Park and Delta du Saloum National park where a joint Ramsar site and Biosphere reserve are to be investigated.

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 7

- 7.1 As elaborated under 6.7 above, a meeting is scheduled for June 1998 to address the issue of transfrontier wetlands and cooperation. There have also been tentative discussions at the Ramsar subregional meeting (Dakar, May 1997) on the issue of approaching The Gambia River Basin management under such a forum. A Gambia River Basin Study (OMVG) project was established in the 1970s to look at this issue and the project still maintains an office in Dakar. Such an approach to management on a catchment basis would require strong guidance and coordination to establish a suitable framework, a role which the Ramsar Bureau will be able to undertake.
- 7.2 No.
- 7.3 The DPWM is the focal point within the Gambia for the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Migratory Species, and thus there is close harmony in their implementation. The Conventions on Climate Change and Combating Desertification are under sister natural resource departments and the agricultural and natural resources working groups ensure that there is regular dialogue and cooperation between these respective responsible personnel.
- 7.4 The Gambia has undertaken migratory waterfowl counts over the 1997/1998 winter period as part of a coordinated activity by Wetlands International, which assist in identifying sites of international importance which will be prioritized for appropriate management.
- 7.5 Support for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention has come from the Ramsar Bureau, Wetlands International, BirdLife International and the Wetlands Advisory and Training Center of the Dutch Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Holland.
- 7.6 No budgetary allocation is currently made by the Government of The Gambia to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the country.
- 7.7 No

7.8 No

Ramsar Strategic Plan - General Objective 8

8.1 No

8.2 The Government of the Gambia will pay its financial contribution to the Ramsar Convention in the last quarter of the current calendar year (1998).

Final Comments:

10.1 General comments on the implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan.

10.2 Observations concerning the functioning of, relations with and services provided by:

a) The Ramsar Standing Committee

b) The Ramsar Scientific and technical review panel

c) The Ramsar Bureau

d) The Ramsar NGO partners

10.3 Any other general observations and / or recommendations for the future.