

PROTECTED AREAS

Currently there are 22 wildlife Protected Areas, occupying a total area of 76,064 hectares, approximately 6.4% of Gambia's total surface area. Only 0.16% of the terrestrial and inland water is protected while 7.4% of the marine and coastal areas are under formal protection with the goal being set to increase this area to 10%.

Eight of these Protected Areas are reserves and national parks while 14 are community based conservation areas under the mandate of the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM). There are 66 forest reserves covering a total of 34,029 hectares managed by the Department of Forestry.

Thirty four forest parks totaling 22,239 hectares or 65% were designated as protected forest. Several local community forests also exist covering 18,000 hectares. However, most of these state and community forest reserves are exploited for firewood, timber and uncontrolled grazing though in principle meant to serve as biological pools to meet both local urban needs without compromising its environmental functions. Thus, they are not categorized as Protected Areas but few others such as bijilo, Pirang, Kungkilling and Dobo are undoubtedly managed for conservation.

In-situ conservation measures in The Gambia have mainly included the establishment and management of protected areas (PAs). The Biodiversity/Wildlife Act, 2003 provides for the establishment of national parks and nature reserves. A total of twenty-two (22) protected areas have been established. Even if national parks and reserves can be well protected and managed, in-situ conservation outside national parks and reserves have no protection, staff nor budgets. Conservation areas represent only 6.4% of the nation's land surface. Where reserves become habitat islands and can lose some of their original species. Many wetland areas of high conservation value sustain high human use and therefore, require conservation action other than protected area status.

Table 1: Protected Areas of the Gambia

NAME OF PROTECTED AREA	DATE ESTABLISHED	TOTAL AREA (ha)	REMARK
Abuko Nature Reserve	1968	134	The first Protected area in the Gambia
Kiang West National Park	1987	19,051	This includes the Extension

Niumi National Park	1986	7,758	First transboundary RAMSAR Site in Africa (Niumi- Delta)
Boa Bolong Wetland Reserve	1993	22,000	Was designated a RAMSAR site in 1996
Tanji Bird Reserve	1993	612	
Tanbi Wetland National Park		6034	Declare a RAMSAR site December 2002
River Gambia National Park	1978	589	managed as a project
Jokadou National Park	In process of designation	15028	Proposed
Bolong Fenyo Community Wildlife Reserve	2007	320	The first community owned reserve
Bamako Community Conservation Area	In process	1032 ha	Process framework virtually completed
Barrow Kunda Community Conservation Area	In process	359 ha	Process framework virtually completed
Badari Community Conservation Area	In process	2ha	Process framework virtually completed
Demba Kunda Community Conservation Area	In process	7ha	Process framework virtually completed
Kass Wolof Community Conservation Area	In process	24ha	Process framework virtually completed
Chamen Community Conservation Area	In process	32has	Process framework virtually completed
Faraba Bantang Community Conservation Area	In process	502 ha	Process framework virtually completed
Pakau Njogu Community Conservation Area	In process	59ha	Process framework virtually completed
Kassagne Community Conservation Area	In process	132ha	Process framework virtually completed
Kanuma Community Conservation Area	In process	47ha	Process framework virtually completed

Tintiba and Dumbuto Community Conservation Area	In process	172.3ha	Process framework virtually completed
Berefet Community conservation Area	In process	984.9 ha	Process framework virtually completed
Bintang Community Conservation Area	In process	1184.9ha	Process framework virtually completed

For the effectiveness of in-situ conservation inside PAs, a trans-boundary RAMSAR site was established between Niimi National Park and Delta du Saloum National park in Senegal, a Biosphere Reserve (131,000 ha) is in the process of being established which will be upgraded to a transboundary biosphere complex with Delta du Saloum Biosphere Reserve. This will promote peace, knowledge sharing, and livelihood improvement among others. The Department is undergoing a restructuring process to reduce the problems and causes of the heavily centralised system currently existing.

A significant portion of in-situ conservation in The Gambia takes place outside protected area system. Several natural forests, wild lands, wetlands, riverine, coastal and marine ecosystems, rangelands and agricultural landscapes support significant biological diversity. Most of these areas are located on public land and are subjected to various types of land use. There is no effective law enforcement that covers the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in these areas, although the Biodiversity/Wildlife Act 2003 is currently under review, which has catered for community and private ownership of Protected Areas.

Some of the existing conservation programmes outside protected areas are tree planting, community resource policing and Buffer Zone Management which are currently implemented only around Abuko Nature Reserve and Kiang West National Park. The Department intends to enrich the buffer zones with tree planting and remedial measures. There are no significant private initiatives yet, in establishing private conservation areas.

As a party to the CBD we are obliged to ensure increase in Protected Area coverage and in reference to the conservation of every gene, species and ecosystem in the Gambia. Beside the Abuko Nature Reserve Orphanage and the Chimpanzee Project at the River Gambia National Park which are ex-situ conservation areas under DPWM jurisdiction. There are many areas that exist under protection but they do not possess the legal status such as the Kafaya Sanctuary, Reptile Farm, Makasutu Cultural Forest, Brufut Woods, Marakisa, and Kartong Quarry among others.

Approximately 90% of the country's territory is not protected; these areas represent different ecosystem types ranging from coastal, marine, terrestrial and inland waters. However, most of these areas occupied by endangered wild fauna and flora includes, endangered and threatened species such as Hippopotamus, The West African Manatee, Sitatunga, Dolphins, Marine Turtles, and Migratory Water Birds etc. on the side of flora are mahogany, pterocarpus, chrysobalanus spp, schoenoplectus spp etc. These areas that are not protected are faced with many challenges such as deforestation, logging, siltation, erosion, decline in wild animal population, human-wildlife conflict etc. due to rapid human population increase.

There is a proposal for the creation of two new marine protected areas, namely Kartong Allahein River Marine protected area (3000ha) and Labour Canyon Marine protected area (15,000ha), this will help increase protection of ecosystem services and biodiversity across 18,000ha.

In recent years, there has been serious conservation efforts, particularly in community protected areas, series of planting has taken place ranging from mangrove to indigenous tree species that are seriously declining in population, training of volunteers, development of individual species action plan, bye-laws, management plans and eco-tourism plans for some community protected areas, couple with awareness campaign on the importance and the need to conserved our environment. Also there has been series of surveys and inventory done to enhance informed decision by management.

By increasing the area of coverage and improve the governance and management strategies, it will ensure that SDG 11; Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, SDG 14; Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development and SDG 15; Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss are met.

And in the long term it will ensure that SDG 6: Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all is realised.

Are at least 17% of terrestrial and inland water areas conserved (overall, by ecoregion, by habitat type)? If not, what percentage is protected? Are their plans and resources to achieve the remainder of the target?

Unfortunately it is only 0.16% of terrestrial and inland water areas that are conserved but there are plans to significantly increase the area of coverage

- **What percentage of these areas is protected through legally binding means?**

The whole 0.16% is conserve with legally binding means

- **Is at least 10% of coastal and marine PAs conserved (overall, by ecoregion, by habitat type)? If not, what percentage is protected? Are their plans and resources to achieve the remainder of the target?**

There has been a significant gain in this area, 6.4% of coastal and marine areas are under formal protection.

- **Are the locations of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine PAs mapped?**

They are well mapped and demarcated

- **Do these figures include areas effectively conserved by indigenous peoples and communities?**

Yes it includes the areas managed by indigenous peoples and communities.

- **To what extent is the country's PA footprint ecologically representative?**

To some extent but there is need to increase the area under protection for the terrestrial and inland water areas.

- **To what extent are the country's PAs effectively and equitably managed?**

They are effectively managed to some degree but there is room for improvement, there is need for capacity building of staff, increase manpower and restock some of the areas and get the PAs adequate funding so as to increase and ensure effectiveness.

- **What important areas for biodiversity and ecosystem services are not currently protected?**

In the deep water but proposal exist to establish marine protected area in these areas

- **What important areas are underrepresented?**

Terrestrial and inland water areas

- **How has the PAs management effectiveness improved?**

Through donor funding to ensure that key activities continue to run such as monitoring and surveys, restoration as well as capacity building of staff to increase performance.