MAVA
FONDATION POUR LA NATURE

FINAL EVALUATION
WA2 - WATER AND COASTAL WETLANDS 2017-2022

25.10.22

1. INTRODUCTION

West Africa has a vast number of coastal wetlands, some of which are of vital importance for global biodiversity, as well as for local and national economies. Through the Wetlands and Coastal Waterbirds Action Plan (PAZHOC), we focused on the conservation of areas that are home to large numbers of Palearctic and Afrotropical waterbirds along the East Atlantic Flyway. Despite their significance, these wetlands are vulnerable to the negative impacts of socio-economic activities and often lack the financial and human resources for effective and sustainable management. Together with our partners in the Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania, the Bijagós Archipelago in Guinea-Bissau, the Senegal River Delta between Mauritania and Senegal, and the Saloum Delta in Senegal, we worked to reconcile land and natural resource use with coastal wetland conservation, and to reduce bird mortality and disturbance caused by human activities.

OBJECTIVES:

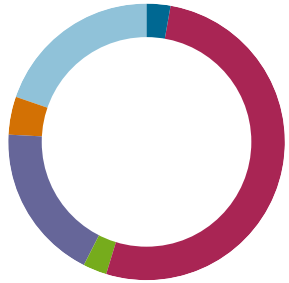
- strengthen the partnership around wetlands and coastal birds as well as the synergy between the outcome action plans (OAPs) at national and regional levels;
- conduct targeted research in key sites, disseminate the results, and translate them into management measures;
- strengthen the technical capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and other actors involved in monitoring, advocacy, and fundraising;
- inform and educate local communities, decision-makers, and the public about the importance of coastal wetlands and waterbirds (CWAB) and engage them in conservation;
- integrate the conservation of CWABs into national policies and strategies, and regional and international conventions;
- secure international recognition of priority sites, and set up consultation frameworks and operational management tools.

BUDGET ENGAGED

€ 6,500,000

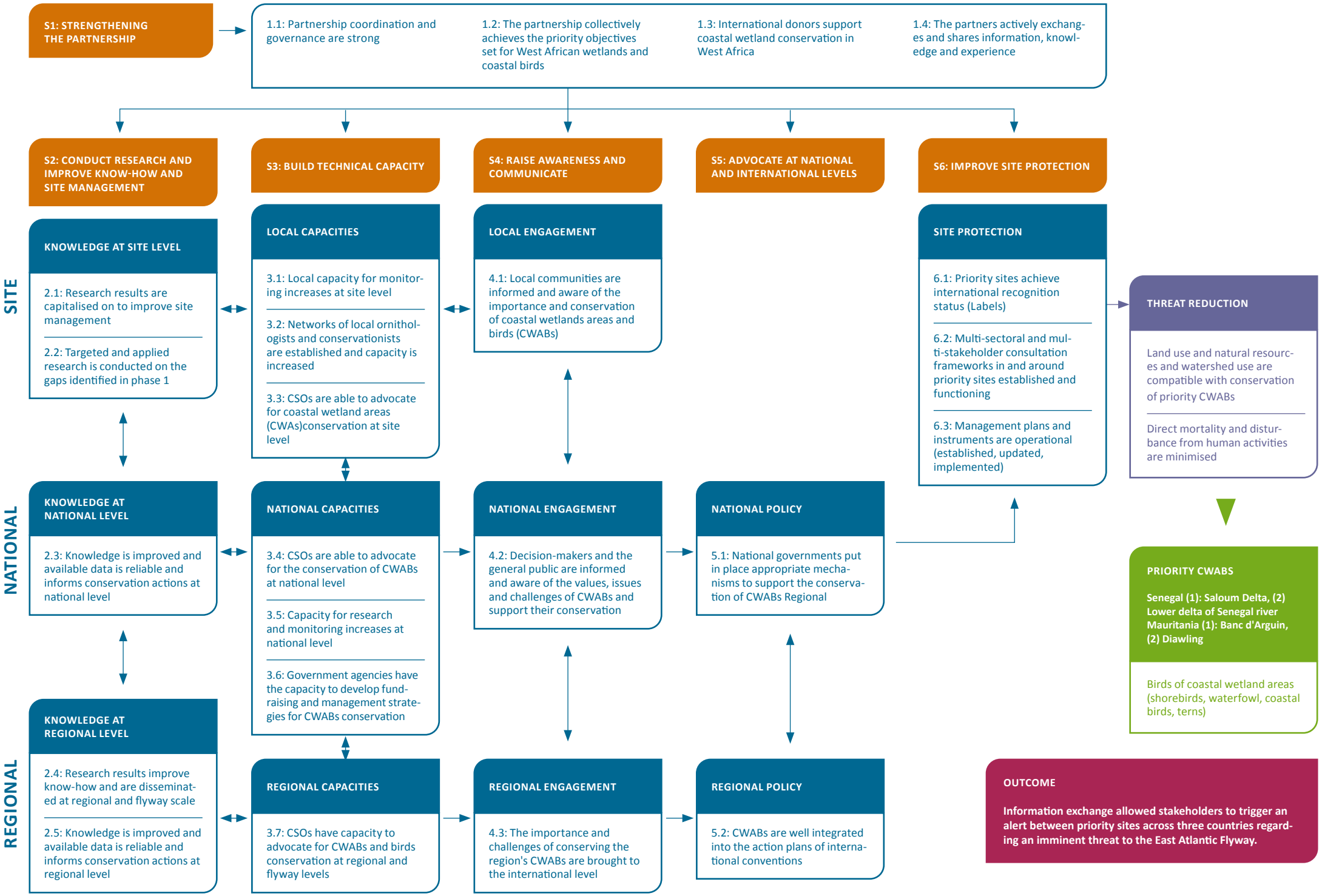
BUDGET PER STRATEGY

- Fortify regional and national partnerships 2%
- Foster research for more effective management 37%
- Strengthen stakeholder capacity 2%
- Raise awareness and communicate 13%
- Advocate for wetlands conservation 3%
- Strengthen key site protection 14%



THE PARTNERSHIP

BirdLife International Africa; Direction des Aires Marines Communautaires Protégées - Sénégal; NCD; Nature Mauritanie; ODZH; ONG Palmeirinha; Parc National du Diawling; university of groningen; universidade de aveiro; Ciências ULisboa; DPN; NIOZ Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research; PRCM; IBAP; Wetlands International


S1: STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP
1.1: Partnership coordination and governance are strong
1.2: The partnership collectively achieves the priority objectives set for West African wetlands and coastal birds
1.3: International donors support coastal wetland conservation in West Africa
1.4: The partners actively exchanges and shares information, knowledge and experience
S2: CONDUCT RESEARCH AND IMPROVE KNOW-HOW AND SITE MANAGEMENT
S3: BUILD TECHNICAL CAPACITY
S4: RAISE AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATE
S5: ADVOCATE AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS
S6: IMPROVE SITE PROTECTION
SITE
NATIONAL
REGIONAL
KNOWLEDGE AT SITE LEVEL
2.1: Research results are capitalised on to improve site management
2.2: Targeted and applied research is conducted on the gaps identified in phase 1
LOCAL CAPACITIES
3.1: Local capacity for monitoring increases at site level
3.2: Networks of local ornithologists and conservationists are established and capacity is increased
3.3: CSOs are able to advocate for coastal wetland areas (CWAs)conservation at site level
LOCAL ENGAGEMENT
4.1: Local communities are informed and aware of the importance and conservation of coastal wetlands areas and birds (CWABs)
SITE PROTECTION
6.1: Priority sites achieve international recognition status (Labels)
6.2: Multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks in and around priority sites established and functioning
6.3: Management plans and instruments are operational (established, updated, implemented)
THREAT REDUCTION
Land use and natural resources and watershed use are compatible with conservation of priority CWABs
Direct mortality and disturbance from human activities are minimised
KNOWLEDGE AT NATIONAL LEVEL
2.3: Knowledge is improved and available data is reliable and informs conservation actions at national level
NATIONAL CAPACITIES
3.4: CSOs are able to advocate for the conservation of CWABs at national level
3.5: Capacity for research and monitoring increases at national level
3.6: Government agencies have the capacity to develop fund-raising and management strategies for CWABs conservation
NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT
4.2: Decision-makers and the general public are informed and aware of the values, issues and challenges of CWABs and support their conservation
NATIONAL POLICY
5.1: National governments put in place appropriate mechanisms to support the conservation of CWABs Regional
PRIORITY CWABS
Senegal (1): Saloum Delta, (2) Lower delta of Senegal river
Mauritania (1): Banc d'Arguin, (2) Diawling
Birds of coastal wetland areas (shorebirds, waterfowl, coastal birds, terns)
KNOWLEDGE AT REGIONAL LEVEL
2.4: Research results improve know-how and are disseminated at regional and flyway scale
2.5: Knowledge is improved and available data is reliable and informs conservation actions at regional level
REGIONAL CAPACITIES
3.7: CSOs have capacity to advocate for CWABs and birds conservation at regional and flyway levels
REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT
4.3: The importance and challenges of conserving the region's CWABs are brought to the international level
REGIONAL POLICY
5.2: CWABs are well integrated into the action plans of international conventions
OUTCOME
Information exchange allowed stakeholders to trigger an alert between priority sites across three countries regarding an imminent threat to the East Atlantic Flyway.

2. PROGRESS AND ACTIVITIES

The implementation of action plan strategies – based on an innovative, participatory, and integrated approach at different levels, enabled significant, measurable progress towards our goals.

For example, research, coupled with the use of new technologies such as drones and tracking devices provided ecosystem-wide information on bird movements, habitat loss, population dynamics, and flyway connectivity. Having this information made it possible to study interactions between birds and other components of the ecosystem. It also highlighted the importance of coupling new technologies with classic tracking models for more precise results.

The action plan also formalised a dynamic framework that supported stakeholder partnerships focused on specific themes, and improved information exchange and cooperation along the East Atlantic Flyway.

STRATEGY 1: STRENGTHEN NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

To support closer collaboration, we developed a resilient partner network between conservation sites and local and regional organisations and institutions. Our activities included:

- organising coordination and steering committee meetings for stakeholders.
- mobilising funds through fundraising strategies and a donors' round table;
- facilitating information, knowledge, and experience-sharing via partner exchanges and site management groups;
- developing and promoting phase 3 of the Action Plan.

STRATEGY 2: CONDUCT RESEARCH AND IMPROVE SITE MANAGEMENT

We conducted and disseminated scientific research at national, regional, and flyway levels to guide decision-making and improve site management. Our activities included:

- producing and disseminating scientific reports across action plan sites;
- filling knowledge gaps by finalising research projects and publishing reports initiated under the action plan;
- developing management and monitoring plans based on scientific research;
- establishing conventions for sustainable partnerships, research, and monitoring along the flyway.

STRATEGY 3: BUILD TECHNICAL CAPACITY

We undertook stakeholder capacity building at site and national level, and promoted networking between ornithologists, conservationists, Biosphere Reserves, and World Heritage sites along the flyway. Our activities included:

- organising advocacy and monitoring training sessions, then creating networks of ornithologists and conservationists;
- organising fundraising training sessions on financing mechanisms, fund management, and creating cost-effective projects;
- developing communication and advocacy tools and specialised training modules for national universities.

STRATEGY 4: RAISE AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATE

We informed and educated local communities, decision-makers, and the public about the values of CWABs, the challenges they face, and their importance to national and international conservation efforts. Our activities included:

- celebrating World Wetlands Day and distributing awareness-raising materials;
- producing a documentary film illustrating the importance of coastal wetlands and waterbirds and the challenges they face;
- creating exhibitions at international events such as the Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) and relevant multilateral environmental agreements.

STRATEGY 5: ADVOCATE AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

We sought to convince governments to support the conservation of CWABs by establishing appropriate mechanisms and including their conservation in national budgets and in action plans of international conventions.
Our activities included:

- advocating for the inclusion of coastal wetlands and waterbirds conservation activities in national action plans;
- organising national workshops to identify alternative ways of financing wetland and coastal waterbird conservation;
- advocating with the private sector and technical and financial stakeholders for the integration of environmental standards in development projects;
- arguing for the inclusion of wetlands and coastal waterbird conservation in the Abidjan Convention regulations;
- initiating the WACOWET network (Ramsar Regional Initiative uniting the 13 West African countries that have ratified the Ramsar Convention).

STRATEGY 6: IMPROVE SITE PROTECTION

We developed multi-sector and multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks and functional management instruments for priority sites, and secured formal recognition of their status as internationally important sites.
Our activities included:

- establishing governance frameworks and management instruments and strengthening monitoring systems for priority sites;
- developing platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogue;
- identifying, evaluating, and enhancing ecosystem services provided by priority sites and establishing sustainable income-generating initiatives;
- creating a technical database for site classification, and facilitating applications for international certifications.

KEY LESSONS

Implementing the action plan has offered us a wealth of insights.

1. working in partnership has fuelled collaboration and improved problem-solving effectiveness and efficiency.
2. involving CSOs was key in fostering ownership, mobilisation, and sustainability of conservation activities.
3. synergies between partners supported the development of joint projects and programmes.
4. improving understanding, and encouraging participation in designating research priorities, has increased acceptance of research actions and results.
5. involving national research institutions and universities is key to capacity building, technology-sharing, and co-tutoring between research partners.
6. stakeholder funding capacity is essential for the sustainability of conservation.
7. adaptive measures put in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have facilitated implementation on-site activities.

3. RESULTS AND IMPACTS

Our action plan has generated a wealth of scientific information. This has helped raise understanding of the dynamics of coastal waterbird populations and the importance of protecting priority sites in the East Atlantic Flyway.

Our use of new technologies has benefitted research, data collection, and our understanding of the ecological connectivity between different sites. Additionally, it has contributed to capacity building of park agents, eco-guards, and volunteers.

Advocacy and communications have increased awareness and understanding amongst decision-makers, who increasingly support conservation and protected site status, including for the Technopole[1] in Senegal, the Baie de l'Etoile[2] in Mauritania, and the Bijagós Archipelago[3] in Guinea-Bissau. Communications have also led to greater community involvement in conservation (Migratory Birds and People network, MBP[4]).

Partnership-building has resulted in a community of united, complementary, and proactive stakeholders where information and experiences are exchanged through a variety of media, including newsletters, community radio, and cinema debates.

Awareness-raising has led to greater community involvement, for example, from schools, civil society organisations and other users, in conservation through the MBP network.

Despite these positive steps, challenges remain. The results of scientific research need to be more effectively translated into conservation action, and funding mechanisms developed by governments to support conservation are still insufficient to meet needs.

1 The Great Niaye of Pikine and Dependencies Urban Nature Reserve, decree n°219-748 of 29/03/19.
2 Protected area classification in progress.
3 UNESCO World Heritage listing process in progress.
4 Migratory Birds for People: a network of wetland centres along the East Atlantic Flyway for communication, education, and public awareness.

CASE STUDY 1: NEW TECHNOLOGIES MAKE WETLANDS CONSERVATION MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT

The complexity of site management nowadays (habitats, species, areas, staff, etc.) requires the use of new technologies to improve data collection and management systems. These tools included drones for mapping and counting bird species, camera traps for monitoring the behaviour of nesting birds and nocturnal animals, and beacons for tracking bird movement between feeding and nesting areas.

This use of new technologies facilitated research in hard-to-access areas, provided real-time monitoring, and ecological mapping, and helped highlight connectivity between sites on the East Atlantic Flyway.

Sub-regional training on the application of new technologies (drones) in the ecological monitoring and surveillance system of heritage sites classified as Biosphere Reserve / source: PNOD, 23 Mars 2021

CASE STUDY 2: AVIAN FLU, AND HOW PARTNERSHIPS HELP COUNTERACT CROSS-BORDER THREATS

The very nature of cross-border threats means that strong partnerships, cohesion, and coordination are key to handling crises. The PAZHOC framework proved this point perfectly when put to the test by an outbreak of avian influenza in the lower Senegal River Delta.

Information exchange allowed stakeholders to trigger an alert between priority sites across three countries (Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Mauritania) regarding an imminent threat to the East Atlantic Flyway. Partnerships facilitated collaboration between state structures and technical and financial partners to rapidly identify the highly pathogenic H5N1 virus and mobilise resources, limiting the consequences of this devastating disease.

Mobilization of the Diawling National Park (DNP) team and its partners for the collection of dead or sick white pelican chicks (Pelecanus onocrotalus) in the Aftout (Dakhlit Ityour) located in the north of the Park (source: DNP, February 07, 2021)

KEY IMPACTS

Our action plan united stakeholders across the East Atlantic Flyway on a grand scale. At the same time, it also had a beneficial effect on a more local scale, improving technical capacities and commitment levels for conservation in local communities, civil society organisations, site managers, and policy makers. Key outcomes included the following.

1. data monitoring, processing and analysis are more efficient and effective (time-saving, reduced margin of error, etc.);
2. students, communities, CSOs, and decision-makers are more engaged in conservation, resulting in more monitoring and surveillance initiatives (Involvement of 150 eco-guides and park agents from Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Mauritania in field monitoring activities in 2020);
3. stakeholders on the East Atlantic Flyway are more aware of the challenges they face, which facilitates the mobilisation of resources and partnerships (solidarity and financial support during the avian flu epidemic, joint organisation of activities between partners, etc.);
4. some key wetlands sites have improved protection status (for instance: the classification of the Dakar Technopole as a wetland thanks to partners' advocacy efforts on different occasions such as the celebration of World Wetlands Day);
5. stakeholders have more expertise, autonomy, and capacity to implement conservation actions (training and capacity-building activities for stakeholders are organised at site and national levels).

4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

Our action plan has created a framework for dynamic and functional partnerships, encouraging wetland and coastal waterbird conservation at local, national, and regional levels. CSOs, communities, and site managers have better technical skills, allowing them to take the lead on wetland conservation measures such as monitoring, advocacy, and fundraising. And the scientific information, data, and publications we have produced, will provide a solid foundation for promoting sustainability, guiding decision-making, and delivering conservation in the future.

A few major challenges remain: increase funding in national budgets for the conservation efforts of wetland and coastal waterbirds ; more effective conversion of research results into conservation action, and better national and regional centralisation of data and expertise.

Going forward, consolidating partnerships will be an important element of the next phase of PAZHOC. We will extend the scope of work, engaging the private sector, and increasing the participation of national research institutions and local communities. We will also take into account growing threats such as climate change, resilience, invasive species, zoonosis, and extractive industries.

> *“Wetlands, treasures of biodiversity, especially for coastal waterbirds, contribute to the well-being of people and communities. Their preservation is a duty and an obligation.”*
>
> Sidina Ebaye, Banc d’Arguin National Park (PNBA), Mauritania

> *“Migratory birds connect people, countries, and the world.”*
>
> Aissa Regalla de Barros, Instituto da Biodiversidade e das Áreas Protegidas (IBAP), Guinea-Bissau

Legend?