



WETLANDS INTERNATIONAL AFRICA
WEST COAST AND GULF OF GUINEA

# **SUMMARY**

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## **WORD FROM THE MANAGEMENT**



## Dear partners, colleagues and friends of conservation,

The year 2024 has been rich in initiatives and fruitful collaborations for Wetlands International Africa. Together, we have worked with determination for the preservation and restoration of wetlands across the continent, thus strengthening the resilience of the ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Over a year of intense activity, marked by both successes and challenges, the opening in May 2024 of a new operational base in Ziguinchor, Senegal, represents a major step forward. This strategic location has strengthened our ability to effectively manage flagship projects such as Mangrove Capital Africa (MCA) and Rooted Resilience, thus accelerating our efforts for the preservation and restoration of mangroves in Casamance.

Overall, this annual report clearly illustrates the extent of our impact in preserving wetlands and the ecosystems that depend on them. These achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment of our teams, the support of our institutional and financial partners, and the active collaboration of local communities.

As we look towards 2025, we remain committed to intensifying our efforts, focusing on innovation, strengthening local capacities, and mobilizing resources to amplify our impact. We sincerely thank you for your unwavering support and valuable collaboration, and we look forward to continuing this crucial mission for nature and humanity together.

In 2024, three prominent members of our Board of Directors are completing their second term and are leaving the Board in accordance with the organization's statutes: Ms. Valérie Traroré (President), Mr. Djibril Fall (Secretary General), and Prof. Alioune Kane, a member of the Board. These three seasoned experts have supported the Association since its inception at the Constituent General Assembly held in 2018. They have contributed to rooting it in the landscape of conservation organizations and strengthening the quality of its interventions and governance. As they leave the Board, I want to pay them a strong tribute and thank them for their invaluable contribution to our influence.



Chairman of the
Board of Directors

#### Dear audience,

It is with great satisfaction that I present to you this 2024 annual report of Wetlands International Africa West Coast and Gulf of Guinea (WIACO), which testifies to the concerted commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of Wetlands in West Africa.

The Board of Directors is a key player in the strategic direction and governance of Wetlands International Africa. Composed of committed members from diverse backgrounds: conservation and finance experts, representatives of public and private institutions, development actors, and the executive management, we ensure that WIACO's actions are consistent with its mission and values.

Thanks to the involvement of all our teams, technical and financial partners, and above all the local communities, ambitious projects have been carried out, ranging from mangrove restoration to community resilience. Their commitment and support are the cornerstone of our success.

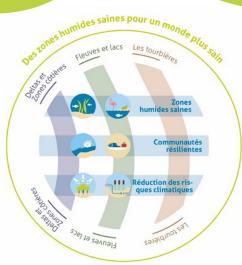
As my term as Chairman of the Board of Directors comes to an end, I feel a deep emotion mixed with gratitude. Serving this institution, carrying its vision, and supporting its development has been a great honor and privilege. I leave this responsibility with the confidence that WIACO will continue its journey with Enthusiasm, inspiration, and integrity to its ideals.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



Our strategic framework defines our areas of action in relation to three key ecosystems: deltas and coastal zones, rivers and lakes, and peatlands...

In these three areas of intervention, we are looking for three impacts: **healthy** wetlands, resilient communities and reduced climate risks.





The strategic framework also defines our **theory of change**. This theory of change is based on three elements: **inspiring**, **mobilising** and **scaling up**.

**INSPIRE**: The aim is to create the conditions for action to protect wetlands;

**MOBILISE**: the aim is to make it possible for other players to take action and to create the conditions for scaling up solutions:

**UPSCALE**: The aim is to facilitate the adoption of large-scale solutions by stakeholders and society, to ensure a broad impact over time and across the sub-region.

During 2024, Wetlands International Africa West Coast and Gulf of Guinea focused on the strategic axis that aims to preserve and restore mangroves, seagrass beds and other adjacent ecosystems as an integral part of resilient and productive coastal landscapes.

## A RESTORING MANGROVE ECOSYSTEMS

This year, we Intensified our efforts to restore mangroves by mobilising local communities through several projects in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal: To plant or not to plant (TPNTP), Community Resilience Project (PRC), Support for Community Resilience in the Saloum Delta (ARC-DS), Only One Support, Community Support Project (PSC), Rooted Resilience and Mangrove Capital Africa (MCA).

#### Results achieved:

Guinea-Bissau: 482 ha of mangroves restored by Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) in the Cantanhez and Cacheu areas, and 383.42 ha restored indirectly thanks to the mobilisation of local players who have benefited from our support and training.

Senegal: 148.85 ha restored in 7 protected areas in the Saloum Delta.

In Casamance, 183 ha restored in 8 protected areas and 528.99 ha restored indirectly through the mobilisation of trained local stakeholders.

In total, 2,675 community members were involved in the activities, ensuring sustainable and participative restoration.



## **B** CONSERVATION OF MANGROVE ECOSYSTEMS

As a result of innovative initiatives and close collaboration with local stakeholders, we have been able to raise mangrove protection to an unprecedented level through monitoring, community management and international recognition of the ecosystems.

# KEY RESULTS

# 188000 Protected hectares

#### **GUINEA-BISSAU:**

- 88,000 ha of mangroves under increased surveillance in the Parque Natural dos Tarrafes do Rio Cacheu (PNTC).
- Replication of the Mata de Uco community forest model to 5 new villages covering 8,027 ha as part of the Wetlands for Resilience (W4R) initiative.
- Dossier finalised for the application of the Jeta-Pecixe-Cacheu landscape (447,772 ha) as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

# 8027

**802 /** Hectares integrated via the community forest model at Mata de Uco

#### **CASAMANCE AND SALOUM DELTA:**

- 100,000 ha of mangroves protected thanks to increased surveillance of protected areas.
- Support for the creation of the Sokone Marine Protected Area 21,426 ha.
- Development of ecotourism at the Gandoul MPA with the acquisition of a motorboat (40 CV) and equipment for conservation and tourism, as part of the PAPBio C1-Mangroves project.





## **C** BIODIVERSITY MONITORING

#### Monitor biodiversity to better protect it!

Biodiversity monitoring enables us to assess the impact of our actions on mangrove ecosystems. This year, we have created a database of key and relevant species and we have monitored several of them.

Sea turtles: Several nests were monitored in the Saloum Delta National Park (PNDS) and the Joal Marine Protected Area, resulting in the hatching of 1,030 turtles (green and loggerhead);



Sea turtle eggs followed until hatching

Pisces: 2581 individuals recorded in 4 MPAs (PNDS, Sangomar, Gandoule, Bamboung);



Fish observed in **4 Protected Areas** 

Water birds: 196264 individuals observed in the 6 MPAs:



Waterbirds recorded in 6 Protected Areas

**Oysters and arches:** Monitoring carried out in 3 MPAs for oysters and 6 for arches, making it possible to count a total of 2033 individuals;



**Oysters recorded in 3** Protected Areas

African manatee: monitoring carried out in the PNDS and the Sangomar AMP.

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## **MISSION IN ACTION**



## **D** ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education is an essential lever for raising awareness and getting young people involved in preserving ecosystems.

In the Canthanez area of Guinea-Bissau, it was introduced in 13 schools with the creation of 8 Mangrove Environment Clubs (MEC) was brought together 160 pupils. To support this initiative, 29 teachers and 2 inspectors were trained in knowledge of the mangrove environment, the importance and role of mangroves in the economy, their degradation and management factors, and related cultural aspects.

In Senegal, significant efforts have been redeployed in collaboration with the Education Inspectorates. In the regions of Fatick and Ziguinchor, 180 supervisors have been empowered, with a view to creating and financing 110 clubs, enabling 4,400 pupils to be enrolled in the environmental education program.

To complement these actions, 'mangrove classes' outside the traditional school framework were organised with the funding support of the ARC-DS and Only One projects. These included a field school and a holiday camp bringing together children from the MEC and their supervisors, as well as local and administrative authorities.





## **AÏDA SENE**

#### **PUPIL IN CM2 / MANGROVE ENVIRONMENT CLUB**

« Taking part in this summer camp was an incredible experience for me! Before coming, I knew very little about the importance of wetlands. But thanks to the activities and discussions with the experts, I've learnt just how essential these ecosystems are for water, biodiversity and even our well-being."

"What I liked most was the excursion to the mangrove. We discovered some fascinating species and understood why it's so important to protect them. I also met other young people who are passionate about nature.

- This camp really opened my eyes and made me want to get more involved in protecting the environment. Thank you to Wetlands International Africa for this unforgettable experience! »



#### IMPROVED PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND REGULATORY TOOLS

#### Strengthen strategies and management for mangrove conservation

Strengthening strategic and regulatory frameworks appears to be an essential lever for sustainable and effective management of mangrove ecosystems. Significant progress was made this year, particularly in Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.

In Senegal, in the Saloum delta, the Mbam Conservation Master Plan and the Priority Conservation Landscape Management Plan were drawn up to guide conservation efforts.

Also in Guinea-Bissau, significant progress has been made with the drafting of a law dedicated to the protection of mangroves and the implementation of a national strategy for their conservation and restoration.

At the same time, the revision of the Cantanhez Management Plan has made it possible to incorporate exemplary ecological restoration practices over an area of 105,767 hectares, thereby strengthening the resilience of this fragile ecosystem.

In addition, the national chapter of the Global Mangrove Alliance was set up, strengthening the PLANTA platform to mobilise funding for the implementation of a shared vision and action plan.

As part of a drive to revitalise the platforms dedicated to preserving mangroves in all the areas in which we operate, an exchange visit was organised to Guinea-Bissau. Part of the PAPBio C1-Mangroves project, the meeting brought together representatives from the Saloum delta, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau.

#### **F** MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE

#### **1 SAVINGS AND LOANS**

Setting up and supporting the Savings and Loans Groups for Mangrove Conservation (GECCOM) are part of a process of financial empowerment for communities, with a particular focus on women. We introduce them to key entrepreneurial skills that help themeffectively mannage their capital, thereby promoting economic inclusion while strengthening local commitment to preserving mangrove ecosystems.

In Casamance, with support from the MCA project, 30 new GECCOMs have been set up and equipped. In addition 30 village agents were given specific training for the proper operation of the group.

In Guinea-Bissau, 45 GECCOMs were supported and monitored in order to strengthen their structure and economic viability, as part of the TPNTP project implementation.

In the Saloum Delta, With the support of the ARC-DS and PRC projects, 50 village agents from existing groups were trained and, 52 new GEC- COMs were established and equiped.

At the same time, the inventory of these groups has been updated in order to structure these initiatives as cooperatives, thereby strengthening their organisation and ensuring the sustainability of local economic activities.



#### 2 INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES

Our community livelihood initiatives have helped to improve agricultural productivity, strengthened the processing of local products and promoted the empowerment of groups, particularly those made up of women.

#### **Rice Cultivation**

- With support from the TPNTP project, dykes and drai- nage systems for 2,717 hectares of rice fields in the Cantanhez and Cacheu areas of Guinea Bissau, were improved, benefiting 994 households.
- In the Saloum delta, 15 hectares of new rice-cultivation land was rehabilitated and 35.5 hectares improved (covering the Ndiaye-Ndiaye, Ndour-Ndour, Bambougar Mas- samba and Mbissel valleys), benefi- ting 195 households.



#### Sustainable market gardening

- Three (03) market gardens with solar pumping systems were installed in the villages of Cafal Nalu, Cabudu Qartel and Tafore (215 beneficia- ries, including 202 women and 13 men).
- Support for 19 women to set up market garden plots near their homes.
- With the support of the PSC project in Saloum, a market garden in Djirnda was established and supply of agricultural equipment for the Niowdaan economic interest group (30 members).



#### **Processing unit**

- With the support from the TPNTP project in Guinea Bissau, we supplied 4 rice husking ma- chines to the villages of Campiane, Cassibetche, Canifaque and Cacanda (202 be- neficiaries).
- Construction of a palm oil processing unit for the PALMIERE federation, benefiting 450 people.
- Acquisition of motorbikes for the same group and the PEGATESSO association (74 beneficiaries), to make it easier for them to transport goods.
- In Senegal, we constructed two fish and non-timber forest product (NTFP) processing units at Diogane for COGER (30 members, including 6 women processors) and at Bambougar Elhadji for the Rogga Fakha group (71 members, including 68 women), with support from the ARC-DS and PRC projects.
- We Refurbished and equipped a processing unit in Bassoul for the GIE Black women union (123 members, including 120 women), with support from the Only One project.
- We Installed two (02) bio-digesters for the Matyr group in Palmarin (34 women proces- sors) and COGER in Diogane, with training in the use and maintenance of biogas.



#### **Beekeeping**

- 15 beekeepers from the village of Djedem in Guinea-Bissau supported in improving their practices and developing a reference model
- Training and supply of beekeeping kits to 96 village agents from 23 active groups in Saloum and Casamance, with support from the ARC-DS, PRC, Rooted Resilience and MCA projects.

Hundreds of modern beehives were made from scratch by the participants during these training sessions, aimed at empowering beekeepers in terms of both technical production methods and beekeeping carpentry.



#### Solar salt farming

 Training and supply of materials/equipment to 3 grassroots community organisations. in Casamance (Groupement Ansoumana Mané, Groupement Kambéne 2 and Groupement Diamancka), comprising 40 members, under the MCA project.





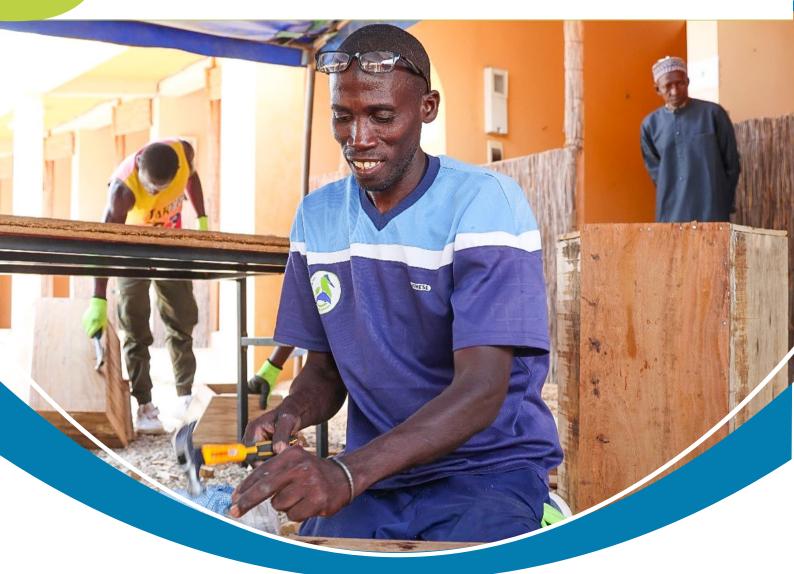
Partners supported



Hectares of land rehabilitated or developed



Members of households affected



## FODÉ NDONG, Beekeeper

## Member of the GIE des Eco-grades of the Saloum Delta National Park

« Nothing beats practice. It's an opinion that's well shared, and one that I've personally experienced through this training course in modern beekeeping, initiated by Wetlands International Africa. As a beekeeper, my daily challenge is to have access to production equipment, maintain it and renew it. However, I lacked the mastery of certain techniques, particularly hive construction, to optimise my production and improve the quality of the honey.

When Wetlands International organised this training course, I saw an opportunity to diversify my knowledge and upgrade my beekeeping production unit. To this end, I received around twenty fully equipped hives, beekeeping outfits, smokers, safety boots and a pharmacy box, among other beekeeping equipment. »

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## **MISSION IN ACTION**



## **G** CAPACITY BUILDING

Through various training courses and technical support, a number of stakeholders were equipped with the tools and skills needed to improve environmental monitoring, mangrove conservation and the analysis of biodiversity data.

#### TRAINING IN MAPPING AND DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

- In Guinea Bissau and the Saloum delta, 32 agents from national parks, community organisations and local collaborators were trained in the use of ARC-GIS, SURVEY 123, FIELD MAP and GOOGLE EARTH tools for ecosystem monitoring and management, with the support of the TPNTP, MCA and PAPBio-Cl Mangroves initiatives.
- With the support of the ARC-DS and PRC projects in the Saloum delta, 12 agents from various MPAs in the Saloum delta benefited specialist training in biodiversity data collection techniques, thereby strengthening their ecological monitoring capabilities in the field.

#### TRAINING IN MANGROVE MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION

- 103 conservators, agents and presidents of management committees in the Saloum delta and Casamance were trained in the principles and techniques of Community-Based Ecological Mangrove Restoration, an innovative approach aimed at restoring mangroves in a participatory manner with local communities.
- 68 stakeholders received in-depth training in the use of the Global Mangrove Watch Platform, an
  essential tool for monitoring and assessing mangrove ecosystems at local and regional level,
  providing remote sensing data and monitoring tools.

#### A ON NATURE: HEALTHY WETLANDS

- Restored and protected mangroves: Enhanced restoration and monitoring efforts have revitalised thousands of hectares of mangroves, improving biodiversity and the regeneration of natural ecosystems.
- Increased resilience of wetlands: The implementation of sustainable management practices, combined with the mobilization of local communities, has encouraged better adaptation of ecosystems to environmental and anthropogenic pressures.
- A preserved habitat for wildlife: wetlands restoration has increased the value of degraded natural habitats for iconic species (fish, crustaceans, migratory birds), which are essential for mainatining ecological balance and the livelihoods of local communities.



**Enhanced biodiversity** 

Restoration of natural habitats encouraging the return of many species (fish, crustacians, migratory birds.)



Improved water quality

Wetlands filter out pollutants and reduce salinisation of agricultural land.



More than 3300 hectares of mangroves restored by 2023 and 2024, providing essential ecosystem services.



The roots of mangroves limit erosion and reduce the impact of storms and waves.

## **B** ON POPULATIONS: RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

By restoring and conserving mangroves and strengthening livelihoods, local communities are better prepared to face environmental and economic challenges. Improved farming practices, diversification of income sources and access to appropriate infrastructure all help to strengthen their resilience in the face of climate change and socio-economic crises.



#### 1 IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY

Support for more than 3,000 rice and market-garden farming households in 2023 and 2024 to grow suitable, productive crops.

#### 3 STRENGTHENED LOCAL CAPABILITIES

More than 200 stakeholders were trained this year in the sustainable management and restoration of mangroves, and in the use of monitoring and planning tools.

#### **2** DIVERSIFIED MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE

In 2023 and 2024, 4,293 partners benefited directly from support for income-generating activities: beekeeping, processing of non-timber fish and forest products, salt farming, etc.

#### **4** SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

More than 3,000 women empowered through Community Savings and Loans Groups, in 2024.





### Clémencia Ndène

# President GIE/ GECCOM Matyr de Palmarin/Member GECCOM Moundor

« The adventure began in 2018! Between Wetlands International and GIE Matyr. Indeed, I can safely say that the Matyr Group, as it is today, remains a success story for Wetlands International Africa, through this formidable tool that is the Groupement d'Epargne et de Crédit pour la Conservation de la Mangrove (GECCOM). I remember that the savings culture was totally foreign to us. We were almost exclusively involved in collecting and selling seafood, oysters and arches, following an invasive and destructive approach to mangroves. Thanks to the resources of savings and credit, we are now able to trade in everyday products (food, cosmetics, etc.), market gardening and the processing of fish and non-wood forest products.

Finally, GECCOM enables us to finance our children's education. That's why we time the end of our savings and loan cycle to coincide with the start of the school year (September-October). On a personal level, the leadership I have acquired in managing GECCOM and GIE has enabled me to join circles of conservation players such as the Local Artisanal Fishing Council (CLPA) in Palmarin and to lead the network of women processors in the commune. »

## **C** ON THE CLIMATE: REDUCED CLIMATE RISKS

By restoring land, developing energy alternatives and promoting sustainable agricultural practices, our actions contribute directly to mitigating climate change and reducing environmental risks. By rehabilitating saline lands and consolidating mangrove ecosystems, we are improving their carbon storage capacity and strengthening the resilience of communities in the face of climatic hazards.



# 1 RESTORATION AND CONSOLIDATION OF SALT LAND

This year, **50.5 hectares** have been reclaimed and put into active use, improving agricultural productivity and highlighting the vulnerability to salinisation.

#### **3** SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ALTERNATIVES

Solutions to reduce emissions and dependence on firewood (energy shops, use of solar energy and bio-energy in IGAs).

#### 2 REDUCING CLIMATE IMPACT

Restored mangroves stabilise coastlines and mitigate the effects of storms and erosion;

Mangroves capture and store CO<sub>2</sub>, helping to combat global warming; Mangroves maintain the hydrological balance and reduce the salinisation of agricultural land.





#### **BABACAR DIOUF**

#### Village chief Bambougar Masamba

« Living off the land is now possible. The land in the Bambougar Massamba rice-growing valley stopped feeding our community several decades ago. It's wasteland, unsuitable for any form of cultivation. We were losing the use of it because of the inexorable advance of salinisation. Hope has returned with the deployment of the saline land recovery system set up by Wetlands International Africa as part of the Saloum Delta Community Resilience Support Project; hope indeed, but also concrete results that are more than satisfactory.

For the 2023 season alone, 3 hectares of land were reclaimed, with an estimated yield of 6 tons per hectare. Today, in December 2024, our granaries are still filled with rice from the previous harvest, and we continue to rely on it. For the 2024 season, we expect good yields from the 2 hectares of rice planted. All of this will help strengthen our resilience by reinforcing our food security. »

# D Geographic Information System (SIG), Monitoring & Evaluation, and Communication

The integration of **Geographic Information System (SIG)** technologies and the strengthening of **monitoring & evaluation** (M&E) have improved project management and the communication of results. These advancements ensure better traceability of interventions and facilitate impact assessment at different scales.

#### Optimization of data collection and analysis

Dynamic mapping of activities through the design of dashboards, story maps, and interactive maps, enhancing understanding and supporting decision-making.

#### Capacity building and data accessibility

Training provided to partners and field teams on **Survey123** and **Global Mangrove Watch** to enhance ecosystem monitoring.

#### Improvement of project monitoring and evaluation

Development of an enhanced **monitoring and evaluation system**, including **performance indicators**, data collection methodologies, and consolidated analyses to better measure the impact of interventions on ecosystems and mangrove-dependent communities.







# **KEY DATES**



## 15 January



International Waterbird Census



World Wetlands Day



International Women's Day



World Water Day

22 March



Participation in the PRCM Forum in Guinea-Bissau



World Migratory Bird Day



Opening of the Operations Base in Ziguinchor



World Environment Day



**Mangroves Day** 



Fatick & Ziguinchor Summer Camp



World Migratory Bird Day



**WIACO Annual Retreat** 



# **TECHNICAL AND FINANCIALS PARTNERS**





















#### **OUR PROJECTS**

Project Titles	Execution Date	Financial Partners
Mangrove Capital Africa	2017- 2027	DoB Ecology
Community Resilience Project in the Saloum Delta (PRC-DS)	2021- 2025	Woodside-Petrosen
Support for Community Resilience in the Saloum Delta(ARC-DS)	2023 - 2025	Swiss Philanthropy Foundation
Only One Support	2022 - 2026	Only One
Rooted Resilience	2024 - 2026	Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation
To Plant or Not To Plant (TPNTP)	2023 - 2025	Greenchoice
Wetlands for Resilience (W4R)	2024 - 2026	SIDA
Program PAPBIO	2019 - 2024	European Union
Community Support Project	2023 - 2024	Subsea 7

## **TEAM**









Mamadou Sileye NIANG

Program Coordinator

















Alioune SALL Administrative and Financial Manager



Mohamed Hafie Turay

Accounting Assistant



Yaye Binta DIAGNE
Monitoring and Evaluation
Assistant



**Samba SARR** Accounting Assistant



## **TEAM**





















Joceline EMBALO

**Administrative and Financial** 

**Assistant** 

Ousmane SANE

Driver

Officer

Alhaji Malikie SIAKA

Project Manager

**Community Development** 







## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**



## Dear partners, colleagues, and friends

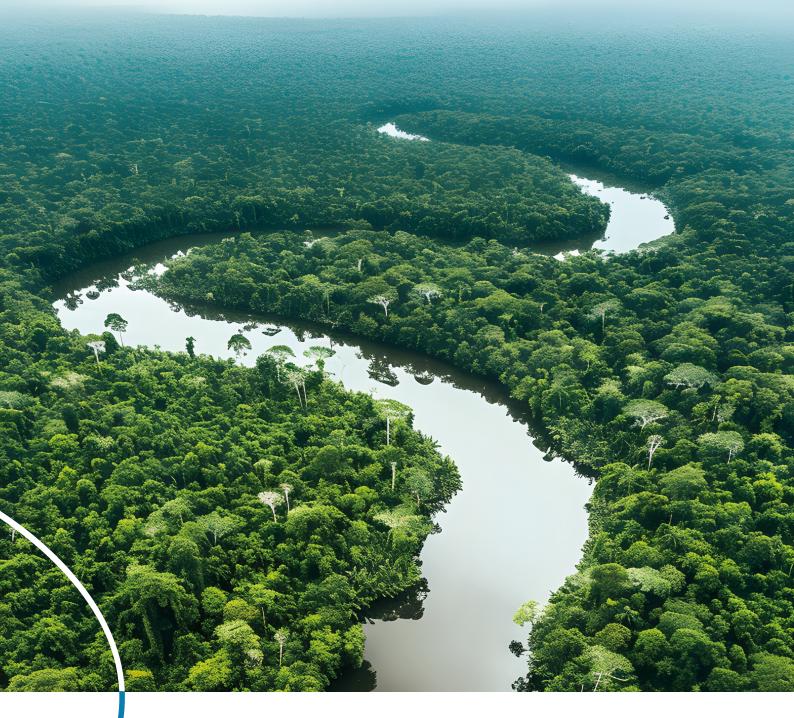
« On behalf of Wetlands International West Africa Coastal and Guinea Gulf, we express our deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to our achievements over the past year. Thanks to your commitment, support, and collaboration, we have been able to continue our mission of conserving and restoring wetlands in Africa.

We thank our institutional partners and donors for their trust and unwavering support. Your commitment enables us to take concrete action, influence policies, and strengthen the capacities of local communities.

We also thank all stakeholders — authorities, civil society organizations, scientists, and engaged citizens — who share our vision and work with us towards a future where wetlands are protected and valued.

Finally, we salute the remarkable work of our team, whose professionalism, determination, and passion are the driving forces behind our success. Every completed project is the result of your dedication.

Let us continue together to build a sustainable future for wetlands and the communities that depend on them. »



To inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands for people and nature.







Zone B, Rue 111, Immeuble Capucine 1er Étage Suite B1 Dakar- SÉNÉGAL



