

## The role of wetlands in EU Programming plans in Africa

The main purpose of this operational briefing is to highlight the role of wetlands in EU programming plans in Africa, with a specific focus on integrating wetlands into the Annual Action Plans for 2023 in the countries where Wetlands International operates: Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda.

### Background

The current EU long-term budget cycle or Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) covers the period 2021-2027. As part of the MFF, the “Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe” is the budget line that focuses on the EU’s external relations, including humanitarian and development aid. It has an overall allocation of EUR 79.5 billion for 2021-2027 and is split into four main components: regional, thematic, rapid response, and emerging challenges and priorities. In the geographical component, the sub-Saharan region has received the largest allocation, EUR 29.18bn.

This policy brief takes into consideration the priorities set up in the EU Sub-Saharan Africa Multi-Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2021-2027 as well as Wetlands International’s Strategic Intent for 2020-2030 and its regional Strategic Intents for 2020-2030 for Africa, The Sahel, Eastern Africa (2017-2025) and Western Africa.

Wetlands International Africa’s vision is that *“African communities derive their livelihoods sustainably from healthy wetlands in a peaceful social climate by 2030”*. Its strategic objective is to ensure that governments, decentralized institutions, civil society organizations and communities have the knowledge and tools to take necessary actions to maintain the natural resources of wetlands, so that livelihoods, biodiversity and economy can adapt to a changing environment.<sup>1</sup>

### Importance of wetlands

Wetlands are ecosystems which occur wherever land and water meet, including rivers, lakes, swamp forest mires (wit tropical forest), bogs, marshes, deltas, floodplains, flooded forests, mangroves, saltmarshes, coral reefs, and rice-fields. They represent a high value to people and nature. Indeed, the values of both coastal and inland wetland ecosystems to society and the economy are the highest of any ecosystem type. They are integral resources for people and society, providing food, water, medicine and fuel, among others. Additionally, they are also vital in maintaining ecological processes. They control our water security, one of the key natural resource challenges that humanity is facing.<sup>2,3</sup>

In Africa, wetlands perform these socio-economic and ecological functions. They have also shaped African civilizations. Indeed, all of the most significant and largest African kingdoms and empires have been organized around wetlands, providing the natural resources that allowed the development of activities such as agriculture, livestock breeding and fishing.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Wetlands International (2021) Africa Regional Strategy 2020-2030.

2 Wetlands International (2020) Scaling up the power of wetlands – Wetlands International Strategic Intent, 2020-2030.

3 Wetlands International. Eastern Africa Strategic Intent 2017 – 2027.

4 Wetlands International (2021) Africa Regional Strategy 2020-2030.

Many wetlands in the African hydrological systems are sites of international importance for waterfowl under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Additionally, they are hotspots for biodiversity whose protection is provided for under international agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA).<sup>5</sup>

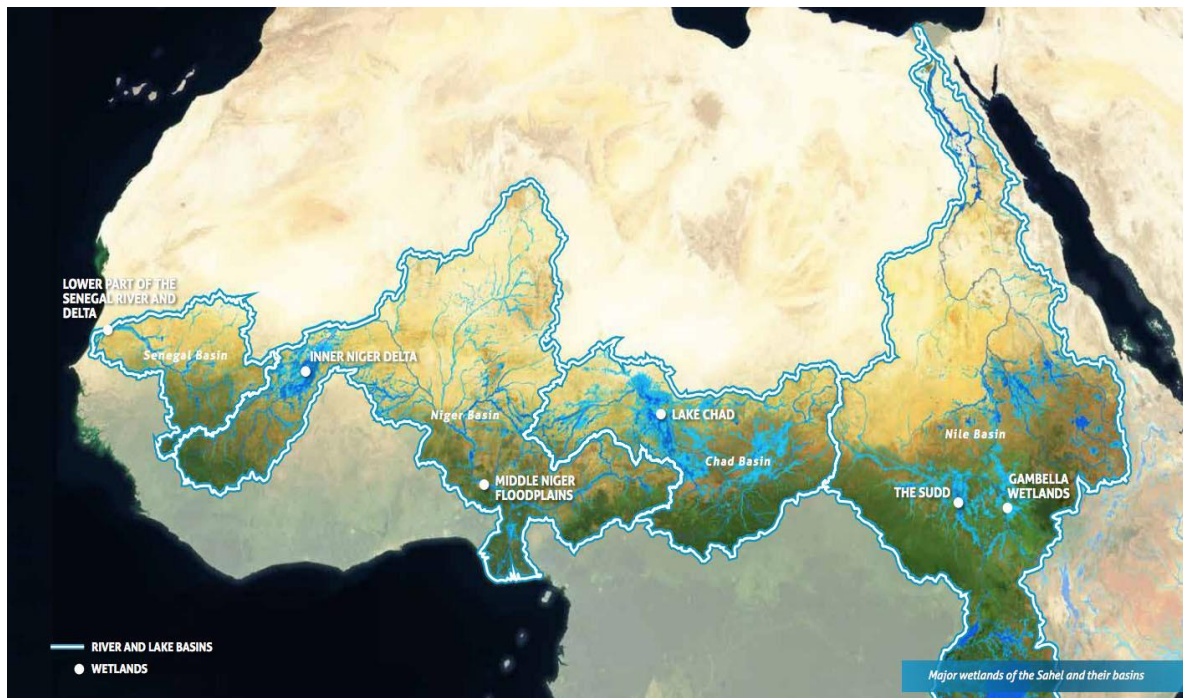


Fig 1. Major wetlands of the Sahel and their basins.

The Sahel sub-region is home to large rivers basins such as the Niger, Senegal and Volta, as well as the most important lake ecosystems, such as Lake Chad, Lake Victoria, Walado Debo and Faguibine. Together with perennial ponds and temporary ecosystems, they constitute a source of life for many communities.<sup>6</sup> Fig. 1 indicates how the area could look if all of these water systems were to be flooded at the same time.

In Eastern Africa specifically, wetlands are distributed extensively, including the Great Rift Valley and Nile River basin. They provide many functions, products, refuge for fauna and other attributes. They provide a source of livelihood for millions of East Africans.<sup>7</sup>

5 Wetlands International (2021) Africa Regional Strategy 2020-2030.

6 Wetlands International (2020) Sahel Regional Strategy 2020-2030.

7 Wetlands International. Eastern Africa Strategic Intent 2017 – 2027.



Fig 2. Major coastland wetland landscapes in Africa.

## How wetlands are contributing and can continue contributing to EU programming strategic objectives

Wetlands International has set up several networks of practices and knowledge sharing, of which three operate in Africa. These relate to:

- Coasts and Deltas
- Rivers and Lakes
- Peatlands <sup>8</sup>

Major continental initiatives have been put in place, thanks to exchange networks, to serve as a framework for the development of programmes and projects likely to translate into reality in the 2020-2030 strategic intention at the African level. These are:

- Blue Lifeline Initiative in a Secure Sahel (BLISS)
- Mangroves Capital Africa (Mangroves Capital Africa)
- African peatlands
- Waterbirds Flyways <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Wetlands International (2021) Africa Regional Strategy 2020-2030.

<sup>9</sup> Wetlands International (2021) Africa Regional Strategy 2020-2030.

Considering the Wetlands International Africa strategic priorities for 2020-2030, they contribute and can contribute to several EU MIP priority areas, as can be observed in the tables below for: Deltas and Coasts, and Rivers and Lakes.

### Coasts and Deltas – Healthy wetlands habitats

Wetlands International’s priorities related to wetland management plans, policies and protocols, as well as a focus on multi-stakeholder platforms can contribute to achieving EU programming priorities in the “Green Transition” area. However, additionally, the other areas’ priorities can be supported, for example, by contributing to education and skills, and supporting migration plans.

EU SSA MIP 2020-2027 Priority areas	Human Development		Governance, Peace & Security, Culture		Green Transition				Sustainable Growth and Decent Jobs	Migration and Forced Displacement			
	Health	Education and Skills	Peace and Security	Culture	Climate Mitigation and Resilience	Sustainable Energy	Sustainable Agri-food Systems	Biodiversity and Environment	Water and Oceans	Economic Integration, Trade	Sustainable finance	Migration	Forced Displacement
Healthy wetlands habitats	Develop and communicate knowledge on the status and trends of mangroves and associated habitats												
	Build capacity at all levels on the values, status and trends of coastal wetlands												
	Develop management plans for key wetlands (including urban wetlands)												
	Develop and implement policies and protocols for coastal wetlands conservation and wise use												
	Support the establishment and / or strengthening of multi-stakeholder forums												
	Connect with external delta platforms												
Develop masterplans for development of deltas													

Table 1. Wetlands International Africa strategic priorities for “Coasts and Deltas – Healthy wetland habitats” and their contribution to EU Programming MIP priority areas (relevant contributing areas are marked in dark green)

### Coasts and Deltas – Resilient communities and reduced climate risks

Wetlands International’s priorities in building knowledge and the scientific evidence base can contribute to several EU priorities, such as: culture, biodiversity & environment, sustainable finance and migration. Whereas, by supporting sustainable production for agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, sustainable finance and agri-food systems area is developed. The EU’s peace and security priorities can be accomplished by promoting the inclusion of marginalized groups and women in decision-making processes as well as implementation.

EU SSA MIP 2020-2027 Priority areas		Human Development	Governance, Peace & Security, Culture	Green Transition					Sustainable Growth and Decent Jobs	Migration and Forced Displacement	
Resilient communities	Create knowledge and build an evidence base on ecosystem dependent livelihoods	Health  Education and Skills	Peace and Security								
	Support sustainable production of wetland commodities produced in wetland areas through value chain enhancement (artisanal fisheries, honey)										
	Support models for sustainable agriculture (rice) and aquaculture production										
	Promote the inclusion of marginalized groups and women in national and sub-national decision-making processes and implementation										
	Promote the sustainable development of ports and other coastal infrastructure										
Reduced climate risks											

Table 2. Wetlands International Africa strategic priorities for “Coasts and Deltas – Resilient communities and reduced climate risks” and their contribution to EU Programming MIP priority areas (relevant contributing areas are marked in dark green)

## Rivers and Lakes

Wetlands International’s priority of engaging in international and regional landscape management initiatives can contribute to the Green Transition priority, but also to health and migration. On the other hand, Education and Peace & Security can be supported via the inclusion of marginalized groups, as well as strengthening the capacities of relevant organizations.

EU SSA MIP 2020-2027 Priority areas		Human Development		Governance, Peace & Security, Culture		Green Transition				Sustainable Growth and Decent Jobs		Migration and Forced Displacement		
WI Africa strategic priorities, Rivers and Lakes	Inspiring stakeholders by developing and communicating knowledge on the state and trends of wetlands (including livelihoods)	Health	Education and Skills	Peace and Security	Culture	Climate Mitigation and Resilience	Sustainable Energy	Sustainable Agri-food Systems	Biodiversity and Environment	Water and Oceans	Economic Integration, Trade	Sustainable finance	Migration	Forced Displacement
	Mobilizing by promoting inclusion of marginalized groups and women; strengthening the capacities of government agencies, CSOs and local communities and supporting the translation of evidence into knowledge and lessons learned													
	Scaling up by engaging in international and regional initiatives and frameworks in landscape management													

Table 3. Wetlands International Africa Rivers and Lakes strategic priorities and their contribution to EU Programming MIP priority areas (relevant contributing areas are marked in dark green)



## Peatlands

Wetlands International's priority of scaling up the restoration and conservation of peatlands in the Nile Basin landscape would contribute to the EU priority on Green Transition specifically regarding climate mitigation and resilience, biodiversity and environment as well as sustainable growth. This priority focuses on ensuring intact peatlands remain and drained peatlands are restored as a contribution to conservation, climate mitigation and adaptation and sustainable development by facilitating knowledge development and exchange, as well as advancing capacity building in policy and practice.

## Examples of successful initiatives

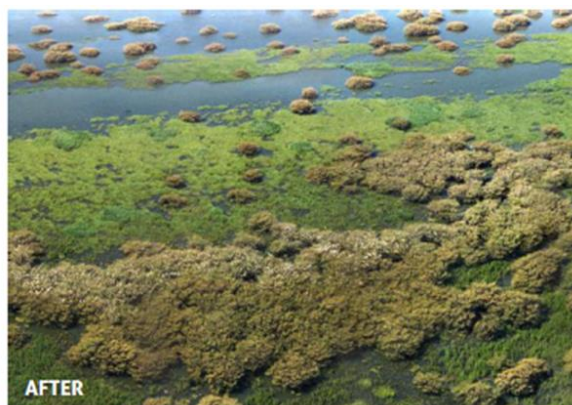
Wetlands International Africa has been contributing to conserve and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity for future generations in Africa since 1998. In order to highlight these contributions, these are some examples of successful initiatives:

### Safeguarding Sahelian wetlands for food security

This project has enabled local farming communities gain access to technologies and resources, building knowledge on hydro-ecological functioning of landscapes. It has also established an ecological buffer zone along the Lake Ziway to reduce negative impacts from crop production. This enables sustainable food production in Lac Wegnia and the Sourou Basin in Mali, and around Lake Ziway in Ethiopia. It has also helped to overcome issues with access to technologies, knowledge, credit and markets.<sup>10</sup>



Restoration of flood forest in Mali's Inner Niger Delta – called "local banks" due to the value of their products



Restored flood forest in Mali's Inner Niger Delta

### Senegal Saloum Delta – Mangroves management

This project has mobilized community groups in the Saloum Delta, in Senegal, to develop management plans for their mangroves. Investment in new livelihood activities has been provided. Additionally, savings groups and access to microfinance have been established in collaboration with business schools.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wetlands International (2022) White paper: We need wetlands: the urgent case for global wetland targets.

<sup>11</sup> Wetlands International (2020) Scaling up the power of wetlands – Wetlands International Strategic Intent, 2020-2030.

## Partners for Resilience programme – Horn of Africa

This programme has highlighted the major role that healthy ecosystems play in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, improving livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. The resilience of communities was increased by providing solutions for human conflicts and natural disasters. Practical ecosystem management and restoration approaches were implemented, including: restoration of degraded ecosystems, sustainable agricultural practices and improved water and natural resources management.<sup>12</sup>

## Recommendations

We expect the African countries' Annual Action Plans for 2023 to focus more on wetlands and freshwater ecosystems. In particular,

A) **For Eastern Africa**, the EU should incorporate the following recommendations and identified landscapes in the upcoming actions plans:

- Invest in sustainably managed landscapes that support livelihoods and healthy habitats for biodiversity; additionally, support the blue lifelines for the people that depend on them, and strengthen public and community institutions working towards improved natural resources use.

**Landscape: Horn of Africa Rivers (Ewaso-Ng'iro North Landscape, Fafan catchment, larger Juba and Shabelle catchment).**

Suggested actions: SaWeL phase 2 programme 2023-2026 in Mali + West-Africa regional (SaWeL-1 runs till Jun '23): Improving Food Security and Nutrition in the Sahel through the Conservation of Wetlands through Ecological and Sustainable Agricultural Water Management (SaWeL). Upscaling Community Resilience through Eco-DRR (Ethiopia) – Phase 2: engage and empower community members for ecosystem restoration/protection, water spreading weirs sustainable management, train communities to prepare for local DRR plans preparation.

- Support projects that utilize, restore and conserve ecosystems and biodiversity through an integrated landscape management approach.

**Landscape: Upper Nile Rivers and Wetlands (Albertine, Upper Nile and Kyoga Water Management Zones, Kinaite Water Catchment, Bar-Akobo-Sobat Catchment, Blue Nile, Sudd Wetlands, Lake Victoria and associated wetlands).**

Suggested actions: ZSBiB program 2019-2024: restoring the balance of water in the basin by interventions on Water Allocation Planning, water efficient/climate smart agriculture, and Sustainable Watershed Interventions to reduce erosion.

- Ensure the wise use of wetlands and water resources to sustain economic growth, improve livelihoods, a healthy environment, and biodiversity and climate resilience. Additionally, turn water crises into opportunities for peacebuilding via knowledge building, mobilising action and dialogues.

**Landscape: Rift Valley Lakes and Wetlands (Ziway Shalla Basin, Lake Albertine Rift Ecoregion, Ewaso Nyiro South Landscape - Kajiado, Lake Natron, Omo-Turkana basin).**

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<sup>12</sup> Wetlands International. Eastern Africa Strategic Intent 2017 – 2027.

Suggested action: Strengthen landscape and community resilience through landscape restoration with a priority on exclosures of communal land and Soil Water Conservation structures on agricultural land (e.g. Fanya Juu); agroecological practices (including water efficient practices) with intensive agriculture around Lake Ziway; buffer zoning of lake embankments; and continuation & strengthening of multistakeholder platforms

- Support the sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems.

**Landscape: Eastern Africa Mangrove ecoregion (Rufiji - Tanzania, Tana/Lamu - Kenya, Mozambique, Madagascar ecoregion), Coastal forest (Mnazi Bay).**

- Support community-based conservation and restoration to improve community resilience, and reduce and use change of peatlands for RCR.

**Landscape: Kogera basin, Blue Nile, Lake Victoria basin, Sudd.**

Suggested actions: EA peatland programme: Building knowledge about peatlands, capacity building and for policy makers in order to improve governance and to include peatlands in climate mitigation and adaptation plans. The programme will start in Uganda with plans to expand to other neighbouring countries. Peatland community-based project: Engage and empower community members around peatlands' contribution to climate mitigation and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, but also incorporate communities in climate adaptation and wetland resources protection. The programme will start in Uganda with plans to expand to other neighbouring countries.

- B) **For The Sahel**, the EU should incorporate the following recommendations in the upcoming actions plans:

- Promote the increased participation of civil society and other stakeholders in the process of reducing violent conflicts related to water sharing and management.

**Landscape: Inner Niger Delta (Ji ni lakana).**

Suggested action: IKI Niger Basin programme 2022-2026, WISO activities in Sankarani Basin (Mali-Guinee-Ivory Coast), Transboundary Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) work with climate change adaptation focus, in collaboration with Niger Basin Authority (NBA). Improve implementation of transboundary IWRM measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation in the Niger basin; management of groundwater resources, regional dialogues.

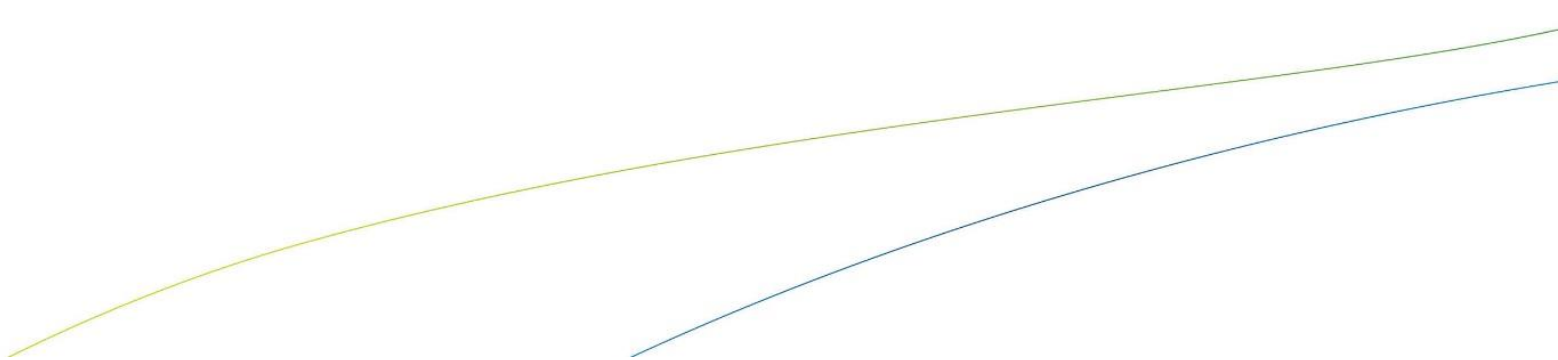
- Support the implementation of IWRM in the Sahel countries to safeguard wetlands.

**Landscape: Western Sahel.**

Suggested action: SaWeL phase 2 programme 2023-2026 in Mali + West-Africa regional (SaWeL-1 runs till Jun '23): Improving Food Security and Nutrition in the Sahel through the Conservation of Wetlands through Ecological and Sustainable Agricultural Water Management (SaWeL). Water Peace & Security – phase 2 programme.

- Improve the status of migratory wetland fauna in Sahelian countries.

**Landscape: wetlands of the Sahel.**







### **Wetlands International Europe**

*Safeguarding and restoring wetlands for people and nature*

Wetlands International Europe is the single network organisation in Europe bringing together NGOs whose shared mission is to inspire and mobilise society to safeguard and restore wetlands.

