

Developing a climate-resilient economy in The Gambia through ecosystem-based adaptation strategies

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Degraded farmlands in Buduck, Central River Region, The Gambia. Photo: ICRAF

A new report explains the situation The Gambia faces with the climate crisis and what can be done.

The Gambia is ranked among the countries experiencing high exposure and vulnerability to the effects of the climate crisis, characterized by changing precipitation and temperature patterns that affect production and economic systems.

A recent [baseline study report](#) by World Agroforestry (ICRAF) established that the key economic sectors — agriculture and tourism — are among the most affected and vulnerable.

Addressing this looming danger requires an urgent coordinated effort by the Government and others to address the underlying vulnerabilities. The [Large-scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation](#) project was borne out of the urgency to take action nationwide.

Supported by the Green Climate Fund and implemented by the Government of the Gambia with assistance from the United Nations Environment Programme, the project aims to develop a climate-resilient, natural resources-based economy through interventions that boost ecosystem restoration. Its targets include restoring 7000 hectares of degraded forests and protected areas and 3000 hectares of agricultural lands, with 11,550 and 46,200 direct and indirect beneficiaries, respectively.

The project is structured into three interconnected components that are all geared toward ensuring the resilience of communities and ecosystems. Those are 1) development of large scale ecosystem-based adaptation options to suit different landscapes, such as community forests, protected areas and agricultural lands; 2) establishment of sustainable natural resource-based businesses for financial generation. Some of the proposed enterprises include bee-keeping, fruit and food processing, firewood businesses, tree nurseries, ecotourism, rhun palm (*Borassus aethiopum*) handicrafts and vegetable production; and 3) policy support, institutional strengthening and knowledge generation.

For each component, key performance indicators were developed for ease of monitoring and evaluation. ICRAF, together with the project management unit, was tasked to develop the baseline for the project besides also diagnosing the assumptions made during the development phase in 2016.



Women harvesting baobab fruits. The project aims to develop such interventions to viable nature-based enterprises. Photo: ICRAF

Bottom–up approach

There was need to ensure the project was implemented in an environment that actually reflected the realities on the ground. As such, for each for the key performance indicators, a baseline value was used as a reference to guide performance. To capture this information, data was gathered from group and individual interviews through household surveys, focus groups, interviews with farmers, public meetings, participatory rural appraisals and workshops, complemented by extensive literature research and development of spatial maps by ICRAF. Following the review and compiling of this information, the study results [were published](#).

The report, beyond serving as the baseline refence for the project’s key performance indicators, has also helped us to understand the current realities of the biophysical conditions and the social contexts within which this project is to be implemented. As a result of the findings from the study, a number of the targets were revisited with the communities who are to implement them.

‘The report is in-depth reference material even beyond the project’s implementation activities because it reveals numerous practical issues that are useful for academic purposes,’ said Peter Minang, ICRAF principal scientist.

Malanding Jaiteh, the project manager, noted that the report was among the key contributions of the project to addressing ecosystem management in the Gambia. It can also be very used as reference material for developing other projects that promote ecosystem restoration and resilience.

In consideration of the climate crisis, Bubu Jallow, the project’s chief technical adviser, said that, ‘Activities proposed under the project are crucial in reversing the adverse effects of climate change and building both communities and ecosystems’ resiliency.’

Daniel Pouakouyou, the United Nations Environment Programme’s task manager for the project added that the baseline report unveiled facts that helped refine the project’s activities to deliver outcomes more effectively and efficiently.

Read the report

Duguma LA, Borona P, Minang PA, Nzyoka J, Bah A, Gilruth P, Makui P, Carsan S, Kindt R, Foundjem D, Baldeh F, Ahmad M, Wanjara J, Mwangi SK. 2020. [*Diagnostic and a baseline study for implementing ecosystem-based adaptation in rural landscapes of The Gambia*](#). Nairobi, Kenya: World Agroforestry (ICRAF).

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