



Banc d'Arguin National Park, Mauritania © Nathalie Cadot

SUMMARY

MAVA STRATEGY 2016-2022

WEST AFRICA PROGRAMME

ABOUT MAVA

Founded by Dr Luc Hoffmann in 1994, MAVA is a Swiss-based philanthropic foundation with a focus on biodiversity conservation. Running three region-based programmes in Switzerland, the Mediterranean and West Africa, and a fourth focused on Sustainable Economy, we work through partnerships with international, national and local NGOs, research institutions and universities, and occasionally with government bodies or individuals.

VISION

Biodiversity in our focal regions has improved, we have catalysed a shift towards an economy that ensures human prosperity and a healthy planet, and the conservation community is strong, autonomous and resilient.

MISSION

We conserve biodiversity for the benefit of people and nature by funding, mobilising and strengthening our partners and the conservation community.

PRIORITIES

We work to provide a sustainable future for people and nature, focusing on freshwater and coastal ecosystems, and cultural landscapes.

Working in collaboration with partners, we take an integrated approach, working across sectors, catalysing joint action, strengthening organisations, and engaging tomorrow's conservation leaders.

Our aim is to embed consideration of the value of biodiversity and ecosystems into all levels of decision-making.

TRANSITION

MAVA is in transition and our last year of making grants will be 2022, as was planned by our founder many years ago. The family will continue their philanthropic activities individually in their respective main areas of interest.

This has significant implications for the future of our funding relationships with all our partners. All MAVA funding will cease after 2022.

Fortunately, we are in a position to plan for this transition well in advance and, with a new strategic plan in place, we have identified clear goals and will work on fewer priorities for greater impact.

Between now and 2022, we will strengthen our focus on these key priorities, build on our past achievements, and adopt a more holistic approach to meeting societal needs through working for people and nature.

We are excited to continue contributing to important conservation successes with our remaining years of grant-making. This strategy outlines our plans for maximum impact in the West Africa Programme by 2022, and creating dynamics that will ensure the sustainability of our results past that date.

MAVA WEST AFRICA PROGRAMME

The MAVA West Africa programme focuses on the coastal zone of seven countries (Cabo Verde, Mauritania, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone) which share ecological processes and natural resources, as well as several socio-cultural and political processes.

In 2015, the MAVA Foundation and the Fondation internationale du banc d'Arguin (FIBA) joined forces and merged, integrating FIBA's presence in the field with MAVA's financial scope, strengthening each organisation's credibility and enhancing longstanding partnerships in the region.

Our new strategy builds on this positioning and seeks to consolidate our achievements, take account of past learnings, and ensure that biological and sustainability criteria remain at the core of our approach.

Our new goals and outcomes mix an objective scientific approach to biodiversity conservation with practicality and pragmatism and our desire to leave a strong legacy in the region. We have agreed them through a rigorous process of threat analysis, target setting and theory of change selection.

WEST AFRICA CONTEXT

Coastal West Africa experiences one of the four major permanent ocean upwellings on Earth and accounts for some of the most important estuarine areas for migratory shorebirds along the East Atlantic Flyway. It represents a very important wintering and/or breeding area for a number of species of seabirds, sea turtles and marine mammals and is rich in marine resources and livelihoods.

Fisheries, agriculture, forestry and breeding are regionally the most important economic activities. Tourism is also a significant source of income, especially in Senegal, The Gambia and Cabo Verde, and extractive industries are increasingly significant, particularly in Mauritania, Senegal and Guinea. All these activities drive development but also generate environmental impact.

Industrial fisheries contribute in many cases to the disruption of marine ecosystems by degrading highly productive marine habitats and generating massive bycatch of protected and endangered species with no commercial value. Most fish stocks are overexploited and small-scale fisheries use increasingly harmful fishing techniques, compromising future livelihoods. Mining activities, and oil and gas industries, developed mainly by foreign companies, are on the rise, but very often, they still lack adequate standards and regulation. And in some places, mass tourism impacts local cultures and generates considerable environmental disturbance, accelerating coastal erosion and the impact of climate change.

Persistent poverty and inequality, together with poor educational systems and political instability and/or poor governance affect long-term progress yet the region shows enormous potential for improved livelihoods and greater prosperity if natural resources are responsibly managed.

In part thanks to the Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine conservation in Western Africa (PRCM) established with MAVA support, civil society in the region today is dynamic and the West African Network of Marine Protected Areas (RAMPAO) has been established.

Despite progress, new challenges continue to emerge and innovative approaches and partnerships remain essential in securing a sustainable future for people and nature in West Africa.

OVERVIEW & RATIONALE

We will tackle six major interlinked threats to biodiversity (human disturbance, oil pollution, infrastructure, lack of knowledge, bycatch, overfishing) in support of the conservation of six priority species and habitats (sea turtles, coastal wetlands, seabirds, mangroves, seagrass and small pelagic fish).

These priorities have been selected on the basis of numerous criteria including feasibility, regional and global significance, overall contribution to ecosystem balance and livelihoods, and our past involvement.

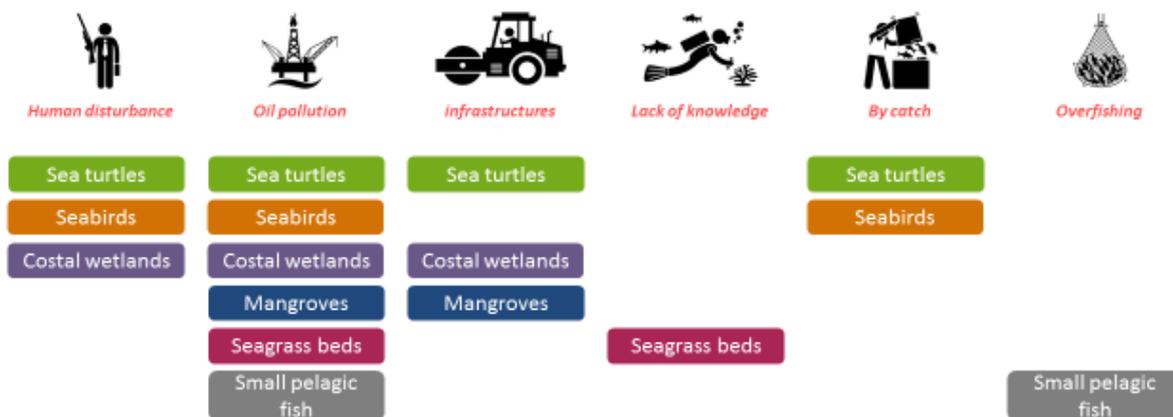
Sea turtles, seabirds and coastal wetland birds are all global conservation priorities and strongly linked to critical wetland sites in the region such as the PNBA/Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania, the lower delta of river Senegal, the delta of Saloum river in Senegal, the Bijagós archipelago in Guinea-Bissau, and the Cabo Verde islands.

Mangroves and seagrass beds are key habitats that support sustainable livelihoods and help mitigate climate change and coastal erosion. They also supply fisheries and are critical to birds, manatees, and a vast number of other prey and predators vital to keep ecosystems healthy and functional.

Small pelagic fish are crucial to the whole marine ecosystem, providing food for other fish, seabirds, wetland birds, marine mammals, turtles and people.

All these species and habitats face shared threats such as oil pollution and infrastructure development, and their conservation can help shape some of the most important economic activities in the region such as fisheries, coastal development, and off-shore oil and gas exploration.

The wise use of natural resources is the only way to ensure sustainable livelihoods, and we believe that communities should be more involved in the management of their land.



Summary of how threat reduction will impact our priority biological targets.

TARGETS & THREATS

1. Sea Turtles

Coastal West Africa is globally important for two species of sea turtle, the loggerhead turtle and the green turtle. The region has some of the most important nesting beaches for these two species worldwide, with an estimated 4,000+ loggerheads and 7,000-29,000 green turtles coming ashore to lay eggs every year.

Sea turtles are mostly threatened in the region by illegal harvesting and bycatch. Poaching of eggs and laying females at nesting beaches still occurs in some of the breeding sites. Heavy mortality at sea, caused by drift nets and long-liners used by artisanal and industrial fleets, is a significant problem. Disturbance of laying females and habitat degradation are also key threats.

Conservation of priority nesting sites (Parque Nacional de Orango and Parque Nacional Marinho de João Vieira-Poilão in Guinea-Bissau, Maio and Boavista islands in Cabo Verde) is required as well as bycatch reduction.

MAVA will focus on securing nesting habitats and reducing turtle bycatch (outcome) to establish stable nesting populations in the region (goal), and contribute to the stable long-term conservation status of turtles globally (long-term vision).

2. Coastal Wetlands

West Africa's coastal wetlands support livelihoods and outstanding biodiversity: seagrass beds, mangroves, molluscs, fish, sea turtles, marine mammals and an exceptional community of wetland birds, both afro-tropical species that breed and are resident in the region, and Palearctic species which migrate to winter in the area in extremely large numbers (up to ten million). Several globally threatened or Near Threatened (NT) wetland bird species occur in the region, and the main sites, holding the greatest numbers of migrant waterbirds and the most important breeding colonies of pelicans, cormorants, egrets, herons, spoonbills, flamingos, terns and gulls are Gulf d'Arguin (Mauritania), the archipelago of Bijagós (Guinea-Bissau), the Delta of Saloum (Senegal), and the lower delta of river Senegal (Senegal-Mauritania).

Coastal wetlands are affected by illegal and/or unsustainable harvesting (mangroves, fisheries, poaching), habitat degradation (due to climate change, urbanisation, construction, fishing and agriculture), disturbance (affecting breeding bird colonies and turtle nesting) and pollution (from fishing fleets, commercial navigation, offshore oil exploration and continental effluents).

MAVA will focus on halting unsustainable harvesting and disturbance of breeding sites (birds and turtles) and mitigate the impact of oil the industry and construction to maintain the current number of breeding colonies (goal), and ensure the sustainability of coastal wetlands and fully functional ecosystems (long-term vision).

3. Seabirds

Coastal West Africa's ocean upwelling creates exceptional foraging for migratory species from Europe such as Scopoli's shearwater and Northern Gannets and for seabirds breeding locally, including several endemic species such as the Cabo Verde shearwater, Near Threatened and decreasing, the Cabo Verde petrel, Near Threatened, and the Cabo Verde little shearwater.

Seabirds in the region are significantly threatened by illegal harvesting of eggs and incubating adults in breeding colonies, predation of eggs and young by invasive mammal species, and mortality at sea as a result of bycatch and oil pollution.

MAVA will focus on reducing illegal harvesting and disturbance in the most important seabird colonies (outcome) to ensure an increase in at least one threatened sea bird species (goal), and contribute to larger, healthier and more viable populations of seabirds in the region (long term vision).

4. Mangroves

West African mangroves play a pivotal role in maintaining functional coastal ecosystems, contributing to the existence of a very rich marine fauna in the region. Mangroves also provide breeding habitat for a large number of birds and fish, including some of the most important commercial species in the region, and are a critical habitat for priority fish, seabirds, and coastal wetland birds. Mangrove habitats are also inextricably linked to nearby tidal estuaries and their protection supports the conservation of valuable tidal flats and species.

Cutting for wood, replacement by rice fields and infrastructure development are the main threats facing mangroves in West Africa. On a regional scale, coastal infrastructure development (urbanisation, road and port building) disrupts ecological processes.

MAVA will focus on reducing mangrove habitat degradation and the impact of new infrastructure development (outcome) to ensure stable mangrove habitats and sustainable use in the region (goal), and support biodiversity and local communities, and provide important ecological services (long-term vision).

5. Seagrass Beds

Although they receive little attention in most West African countries, seagrass beds are one of the most productive and important ecosystems on the planet, improving water quality, stabilising sediment, cycling nutrients, protecting coastlines, and capturing a huge amount of atmospheric carbon.

Seagrass beds are an essential part of the marine ecosystem providing canopy cover that shelters small invertebrate organisms and juvenile fish, including commercial species, and acting as key foraging areas for sea turtles, seabirds and coastal wetland birds. Many species of algae, bacteria and plankton also grow directly on the living and dead leaves.

Research is underway in Mauritania (Banc d'Arguin) but relatively little is known about this important habitat in West Africa making it difficult to identify key threats. Given their importance elsewhere, it is important to map and evaluate the conservation status of seagrass beds in the region.

MAVA will focus on halting human impacts (pollution, disruptive fishing and anchorage) in key MPAs with seagrass beds and will support mapping and threat identification in the region (outcome and goal), and protect biodiversity and secure ecosystem services provided by seagrass beds (long-term vision).

6. Small Pelagic Fish

Fish is not only an extremely important part of the regional diet in West Africa but is consumed all over the world, with industrial fleets from developed nations exploiting the region's fisheries. Small pelagic fish such as sardines, sardinella, anchovies and mackerel, in part dependent on healthy seagrass and mangroves, are particularly important, supporting seabirds and some species of turtle and coastal wetland birds, as well as local livelihoods and artisanal and industrial fisheries.

Small pelagic fish face three principal threats: food web degradation (through the selective removal of some key fish species and/or climate change); habitat degradation (through pollution and/or destruction); and overexploitation (through legal overfishing and illegal fishing).

MAVA will focus on the management and protection of key areas for small pelagic fish and the reduction of fishing effort by industrial distant water fleets (outcome) to support stock rebuilding towards maximum sustainable yields (goal), and secure their place in rich functioning marine ecosystems and thriving fisheries (long-term vision).

OUTCOMES

- 1. By 2022, disturbance and illegal harvesting in the four most important nesting sites for green and loggerhead sea turtles (PNO, PNMJVP, Maio, Boavista) are eradicated**

Targets – sea turtles

This outcome will be achieved through the minimisation and eradication of the illegal collection of eggs and poaching of sea turtles in the four priority nesting sites – the Orango and João Vieira-Poilão national parks in the Bijagós (Guinea-Bissau), and the islands of Maio and Boavista (Cabo Verde). Activities will include a mix of enhanced enforcement, new legislative approaches (including ban of illegal meat trade), land use planning, raised awareness in local communities, better MPA management, training and finance, legal protection of some key nesting sites, and bycatch research and mitigation. Successful approaches will then be replicated and scaled through RAMP AO and the PRCM.

- 2. By 2022, disturbance of breeding and wintering shorebirds is halted in priority coastal wetlands (Golfe d’Arguin, Bas delta du fleuve Senegal, Saloum, Bijagós).**

Targets – coastal wetlands

The region’s largest colonies of shorebirds are located inside coastal wetlands not always under protection. Activities aimed at stopping illegal harvesting and disturbance of breeding colonies will include enhanced law enforcement, strictly controlled access to sensitive sites, improved MPA management and finance, staff training and public awareness. Monitoring of important wintering areas and applied research will also be crucial in evaluating ecosystem health and bird population trends. Successful approaches will then be replicated and scaled through RAMP AO and the PRCM.

- 3. By 2022, illegal harvesting and disturbance are eradicated in at least 80% of all seabird breeding colonies located in MPAs.**

Targets – seabirds

Activities to achieve this outcome will include improved management and funding of MPAs in Cabo Verde with seabird breeding colonies, together with staff training, and enhanced enforcement and legal protection. Where appropriate, the eradication of invasive mammalian predators will also be a priority, as well as research on breeding colonies and bycatch mitigation, together with public awareness.

- 4. By 2022, pollution risk management in offshore oil and gas activities is improved in at least four countries.**

Targets – sea turtles, coastal wetlands, seabirds, mangroves, seagrass beds and small pelagic fish

The oil industry has been developing significantly in the region and a major oil spill in one of the critical sites for coastal wetlands, seabirds or marine turtles could deal a significant blow to the region’s biodiversity. Establishing effective risk prevention for pollution from local oil exploration is a feasible outcome and also something of growing interest to governments and the Abidjan Convention.

Minimum standards need to be adopted and risk mitigation plans for sensitive areas (coastal wetlands, mangroves and seagrass beds) adopted. Activities will include improved MPA management, private sector engagement on best practice, advocacy, and civil society and administrative capacity building.

5. By 2022, infrastructure development on turtles nesting beaches, mangroves, seagrass beds and coastal wetlands critical sites is regulated and sustainable.

Targets – sea turtles, mangroves, coastal wetlands, seagrass beds

Infrastructure development is a major threat. New roads, ports, dams and urban condominiums can cause habitat destruction both directly (e.g., through loss of tidal flats, seagrass beds or mangroves) and indirectly (e.g., through changing sedimentation and water levels). Proper Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is needed, and key sites need to be mapped and taken into account in management plans and in coastal and land planning. Activities to achieve this outcome will include better MPA management plans, zoning proposals, engagement with the private sector on best practices and self-regulation, advocacy on EIA/SEA legislation, capacity building, and potential legal action.

6. By 2022, improved knowledge and experience from pilot sites lead to conservation actions for seagrass beds at regional level.

Target – seagrass beds

Seagrass beds make up critical coastal habitats the world over but in West Africa, research and understanding about this habitat is almost entirely limited to the national park of Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania. Here its productivity and significance for a number of fisheries is well understood and its conservation is integrated in the overall management plan for the park. Replicating this approach at the regional level will be important. Activities to achieve this outcome will include habitat research and mapping, conservation and economic evaluation, capacity building, development of legal frameworks and MPA management plans, and public and institutional awareness.

7. By 2022, bycatch of seabirds and sea turtles in specific fisheries (TBC) is reduced by 80% in comparison to 2016 levels.

Targets – sea turtles, sea birds

Reduction in sea turtle and sea bird mortality due to bycatch appears to be dependent on the prevention of the use of artisanal drift nets in the vicinity of key nesting beaches (sea turtles) and foraging areas (sea turtles and sea birds) in the region. Adoption of innovative bycatch mitigation measures and fishing techniques by EU and Chinese vessels operating in industrial fisheries is also key. In addition, new national legislation needs to be developed and should inform fishing agreements with the EU and China. A reduction in bycatch of 80% is ambitious but realistic. Activities to achieve this outcome will include better bycatch data, sustainable artisanal fisheries management, advocacy around national legislation, fisheries agreements and the EU Common Fisheries Policy, and market engagement.

8. By 2022, the impact of foreign Distant Water Fleets on small pelagic fish stocks is reduced through a decrease in fishing effort, including joint ventures.

Target – small pelagic fish

Reducing the number and capacity of foreign fishing vessels operating in West African waters under bilateral fishing agreements is likely to be easier to achieve than limiting artisanal and domestic fishing

activity. Sustainable fishing quotas for target species, as well as more transparent and accountable licensing and quota systems need to be established. Activities to achieve this outcome will include advocacy for national fishing legislation, more transparent fishery agreements and quota systems, on board observers, and fish stock research.

9. By 2022, key in-shore and other sensitive areas for small pelagic fish and mullets are protected and effectively managed.

Targets – small pelagic fish

Overfishing by industrial fisheries is not the only cause of the decline in small pelagic fish stocks. Illegal fishing and unsustainable local artisanal fisheries compound the problem. Fishing restrictions and regulation are needed for stock recovery, and these are best delivered within MPAs and through the establishment of no take zones and controlled fishing. Activities to achieve this outcome will include improved MPA management plans and fishing regulations, enforcement resource and capacity, and fish stock research.

IMPLICATIONS

Our 2016-2022 strategy is more focused than our previous strategy. This has significant implications for our overall portfolio of projects and for the future of our funding relationships with all our partners. Support for some of our current partners and activities will be phased out.

Some of our existing species work, for example, including that on Mediterranean monk seals, sharks, sawfish, benthos, manatee, lesser kestrel, chimpanzee, hippopotamus and parrots, falls outside our new priorities.

In addition, we will focus on a very limited number of priority sites. Other sites will only be considered for funding if there is a fit with our strategy (e.g., through regional dynamics or results magnification) and will no longer be eligible for site-specific support.

Some approaches (e.g., environmental education) will not be central to achieving our outcomes and will be phased out and/or redeveloped (e.g., into site-specific education or professional and higher education training).

During 2016, we will discuss challenges and opportunities with each of partner individually to identify an appropriate way forward and orchestrate as smooth a transition as possible when MAVA funding ends. Some partners whose work is critical to achieving our outcomes may be eligible for organisational development.

Focusing our efforts and concentrating our resources will result in a new way of working, with a greater emphasis on funding broader clusters of projects delivered by communities of partners working together.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our new strategy will be operationalised through specific action plans for each outcome. These will be developed with the involvement of key actors and partners through a series of workshops designed to identify opportunities for longer-term collaboration between partners.

Planning for outcomes 1-3 will occur in Q3 and Q4 2016, followed by outcomes 4, 5 and 9 provisionally in Q4 2016 and Q1 2017. Outcomes 6 and 7 offer opportunities for integration with our Mediterranean programme and will require more preparation. Outcome 8 is also complex and will align with our Sustainable Economy programme's activity on fisheries. Planning timeframes for these outcomes will be confirmed in Q3 2016.