CAFF AMBI Programme of Work 2015-2017: African Eurasian Flyway
Draft 24 November 2014

Summary/rationale

The AMBI African-Eurasian Programme of Work seeks to deliver on three of the agreed AMBI priorities especially for five of the agreed AMBI priority species:

A. Securing intertidal non-breeding habitat for red knot and bar-tailed godwit etc in the Bijagos Archipelago, Guinea Bissau
B. Preventing illegal or unsustainable harvest of lesser white-fronted goose in Central Asia, Greece and elsewhere as needed
C. Securing breeding habitat for black-tailed godwit and dunlin etc in Iceland.

All of the priority species are, in effect, acting as flagships for a broader suite of species.

The Programme of Work aims to contribute to achieving these three conservation priorities through, respectively, the following three priority actions, all of which are undertaken also in the framework of the UN African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement to which most relevant range states are Party. Furthermore, two of the priority actions have links to the programmes of work in the East Asian Australasian (EAAF) and Americas Flyways, thus reinforcing the circumpolar, interflyway nature of the issues:

A. Supporting Guinea Bissau to secure intertidal habitat conservation through achieving World Heritage Status for the Bijagos Archipelago, in conjunction with the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (with links to the Yellow Sea of the Republic of Korea which is also considering World Heritage Status, and to the Americas in relation mangrove restoration);
B. Helping to end killing of lesser white-fronted geese (including linking African-Eurasian efforts with those of China and others in the EAAF which host the bulk of the global population).
C. Working with the Icelandic authorities and stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of their lowland land use policies in relation to their breeding waterbird populations.

All of the priority activities have been selected because it would seem that AMBI can potentially significantly add value to existing initiatives through engagement of Arctic Council member and permanent observer countries including through diplomatic interventions, channelling funds (eg from development aid or Arctic budgets that might not otherwise be available for flyway conservation) and through capacity building, exchange of information and experience.

As AMBI has limited capacity as yet, it has been essential to select priority actions that are synergistic with those envisaged by existing or planned intergovernmental processes in the African-Eurasian Flyway, especially the UN African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (to which most range states are party) and also the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (of Germany, Netherlands and Denmark), World Heritage and Ramsar Conventions.

Arctic Council countries of the African-Eurasian Flyway
Member: Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Russia
Permanent observer: Germany, Netherlands, UK, France, Poland, Italy and Spain

Deadlines:
21 November 2014 – submit next draft of work plan to CAFF Secretariat
5 December 2014 – discussion of draft plan to AMBI workshop, Trondheim
6 January 2014 – latest finalised plan can be submitted to CAFF Board
10-12 Feb – CAFF Board approval/input to work plan
16 Feb – Circulate for Senior Arctic Official approval
3-5 March – Senior Arctic Official approve/input to work plan
23-26 April 2015 –Arctic Ministerial meeting approve AMBI plans
African-Eurasian AMBI Subcommittee participants:
Norway: Morten Ekker (chair) (Marthe Margrethe Haugan, Øystein Størkersen)
BirdLife: Nicola Crockford (coordinator)
Russia: Evgeny Syroechkovskiy
AEWA: Sergey Dereliev (Technical Officer), (Nina Mikander, Lesser White-fronted Goose Officer; Evelyn Moloko, African Initiative Officer)
Wetlands International: Taej Mundkur
International Wader Study Group: Jim Wilson

African-Eurasian AMBI priority actions teams

A. Securing habitat of Red Knot, Bar-tailed Godwit and other Arctic waders in the Bijagós Archipelego of Guinea-Bissau (second most important wintering site for these species)
   - Convenor: Nicola Crockford.
   - Gerold Lüerßen (Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS)/Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative WSFI)
   - Barend van Gemerden (VBN, BirdLife in NL)
   - Geoffroy Citegetse (BirdLife Africa, Ghana)
   - Joaozinho Sá (Guinea-Bissau: NGO Organização para Defesa e o Desenvolvimento das Zonas Húmidas na Guiné-Bissau (ODZH)/Bureau de la Planification Cotiere (Government Bureau of Coastal Planning) (GPC)/Wetlands International
   - José Alves, University of Aveiro (Portugal)
   - Jutta Leyrer, Parc National Banc d’Arguin
   - Tim Dodman.

Other consultees: Gerard Boere (WSFI), Hans Meltofte, Sten Asberk (DOF), Antonio Araujo (Fondation International du Banc d’Arguin-FIBA)
Bethunde ? (Chief Warden, Orango National Park)
Meio Dia (Bijagos Biosphere Reserve coordinator)
miguel_lecoq@yahoo.com (formerly NOÉ Conservation at Orango National Park, Bijagos, currently MONTE working with IBAP).

B. Preventing unsustainable harvest of Lesser White-fronted Goose
   - Convenor: Morten Ekker
   - Nina Mikander
   - Evgeny Syroechkovskiy
   - Manolia Vougioukalou (HOS, BirdLife in Greece)

C. Ensuring Icelandic afforestation policy, and other significant land use changes, do not harm Black-tailed Godwit, Dunlin and associated breeding waterbird populations
   - Convenor: Nicola Crockford.
   - Jim Wilson (Norway)
   - Sergey Dereliev (AEWA)
   - Ivana d’Alessandro (Bern Convention)
   - ? Sigurður Á. Práinsson/ ?Trausti Baldursson (Iceland)
   - José Alves, University of Aveiro (Portugal).
A. AMBI Priority action:
Securing intertidal non-breeding habitat of Arctic waders in Bijagós Archipelago, Guinea-Bissau

A1 Site selection

i) The importance of the site
The Bijagós Archipelago in Guinea-Bissau is the second most important African site for migratory waders that breed in the Arctic. Each year an estimated 1.5 million waders, among them a decreasing population of 60,000 red knots (15% of the Afro-Siberian subspecies, *Calidris canutus canutus*) and stable population of 100,000 bar-tailed godwits (14% of the Afro-Siberian subspecies *Limosa lapponica taymyrensis*) winter in the Bijagós. (At the 11th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Migratory Species, Quito, November 2014, Red Knot was listed as a Concerted Action species and bar-tailed godwit as a Cooperative Action species).

Of the 10,000 km² land area of the archipelago, 1,600 km² are intertidal habitats (sand banks and mudflats) and 350 km² are mangrove habitats on which these birds depend.

The area is also important for the people of Guinea-Bissau and especially the 33,000 inhabitants dominated by the Bijagó ethnic group. Local communities rely for their livelihood on the natural resources that the Bijagós provides, especially fishing, shellfish collecting, firewood and salt. Close to the Bijagós, prospecting is taking place for extractable oil and gas reserves.

The area merits strong protection from damage from unsustainable landuse and economic development, including specific threats such as illegal fishing, cutting of mangroves at fishing camps, conversion to rice fields of flood plain habitats and coastal erosion due to seallevel rise. It also needs to be well managed to maximise the benefits from its natural qualities and to counter any unavoidable negative impacts.

The Arquipélago dos Bijagós is a designated:
- UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (Boloma-Bijagós), since 1996
- Ramsar Site (Archipel Bolama-Bijagós), since January 2014
- BirdLife Important Bird and Biodiversity area (IBA)
- WWF Ecoregion.

However, although there are two National Parks within the area (The Ilhas de Oranго National Park (1,582 km²) and the João Vieira-Poilão Marine National Park (495 km²)), and a Community Marine Protected Area (Ilhas Formosa), much of the area receives little or no active management or protection.

In June 2013, the World Heritage Committee deferred the examination of the nomination by the government of Guinea-Bissau of the Bijagós to the World Heritage List to allow the government to undertake certain preparations (see Appendix I below).

ii) The opportunity for AMBI to contribute to conservation of the site
There was consensus among all experts consulted that AMBI’s contribution to intertidal habitat conservation in the African-Eurasian Flyway should focus on:

a) the East Atlantic Flyway, as this links all the European Arctic Council Member and Permanent Observer countries

b) a key site outside Europe (where intertidal habitats are relatively well conserved), i.e in Africa
The Bijagós, Guinea-Bissau. (While the Banc d’Arguin, Mauritania is the only more important African site for Arctic shorebirds, AMBI can add more value to conservation efforts in the the Bijagós at this time).

The recent (2012-2013) assessment of the site in relation to its deferred nomination as a natural World Heritage Site, offers a timely opportunity for AMBI to support Guinea-Bissau, and specifically its Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas, in addressing the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) with a view to resubmission of the nomination. This process is regarded as an important driver for ensuring the conservation status of the site is maintained and enhanced. The WHC Recommendations provide the framework from which AMBI has selected specific actions which it proposes to contribute to the conservation of this site.

The added value which AMBI can potentially contribute, including through the Arctic Council member and permanent observer countries, in liaison with the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement and the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, includes diplomatic interventions, channelling funds (eg from development aid or Arctic budgets that might not otherwise be available for conservation of West African wetlands), and through capacity building, exchange of information and experience.

There are previous links between the Bijagos and the following Arctic Council countries:

- **Denmark**: project in the 1990s, and in the early 2000s, Denmark led support, under the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat, to the Bijagós with outputs including the Bijagós Monitoring Strategy, the IBA directory, awareness booklets and the establishment of NGO ODZH.
- **Sweden**: used to be an important donor to Guinea-Bissau in the agriculture sector.
- **Norway** has and still is funding projects in Guinea-Bissau, including two currently which may have links to the Bijagós:
  1) Extension of the Economic Zone of Guinea-Bissau (to ensure that they have a say in the oil/gas resources close to the Bijagós)
  2) Capacity building for extractive industries.
- **Netherlands**: - provided past small grants for various projects
  - WIWO (Foundation Working Group International Wader And Waterfowl Research) expeditions in the 1990s.
- **Spain**: has supported a project in Parc National Orango of CBD-Habitat to control the conflict between hippos and rice farmers in which hippos destroy rice fields so pushing the farmers to convert wetland habitat into new rice fields; a plan to save the crops was developed.

(There is no current funding from Finland)

In line with the agreed modus operandi of AMBI, actions in this first phase are focussed on those that will quickly make a real difference on the ground for AMBI priority species (rather than, in the short term, research, monitoring, field guides etc). The project concept integrates modules at international, site and local level.
A2  Actions

All proposed actions contribute to implementation of selected recommendations from World Heritage Committee Decision: 37 COM 8B.17 (see Appendix 1 on page 12 below).

All proposed actions are in line with the AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2012-2017 Target 1.2: A comprehensive and coherent flyway network of protected and managed sites, and other adequately managed sites, of international and national importance for waterbirds is established and maintained, while taking into account the existing networks and climate change

i)  International: sharing experience on World Heritage nomination

In line with AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2012-2017 Subtarget 1.2.2: All Contracting Parties have provided protection status or other designation to the sites within the network

Background
Guinea-Bissau’s nomination of the Bijagós Archipelago as a World Heritage Site has recently been deferred pending specified action by the State Party. After listing of the Dutch-German Wadden Sea as UNESCO World Heritage site in 2009, following an application from all three Wadden Sea countries including Denmark, the whole Wadden Sea was approved as a World Heritage site in June 2014. The only other intertidal World Heritage Site in the world is the Parc National du Banc d’Arguin.

Objective
In the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Wadden Sea and the Banc d’Arguin, the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS) and the Parc National du Banc d’Arguin (PNBA) are to mentor the Guinea-Bissau Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP) in coordinating the steps that need to be taken before resubmission of the Bijagós World Heritage nomination.

Main activities
This support to Guinea-Bissau for WH resubmission is to be included in the two year action plan under the CWSS/PNBA MoU action plan for the years 2014-2016, which will be submitted to the Wadden Sea Board for approval on 28-29 January 2015. It is already mentioned in the official declaration. (Guinea-Bissau and the Wadden Sea countries have previously signed a Memorandum of Intent at the Wadden Sea Conference in 1997. A project on research, monitoring and surveys implemented by Wetlands International was launched in 2000).

This will include help with redefining boundaries (see Rec b below)

A key element of this work will be to support the development of capacity within Guinea Bissau, especially, to maximise the long term benefit of such an investment, the relevant technical institutions and civil society, to implement the recommendations of the WHC. Any workshops, training, documents etc should be in Portuguese, so Portuguese-speaking partners need to be engaged.

Timescale, budget, management and coordination

Project period: 2015-2017

Budget: 

Project organisation: 

Coordination:
**ii) International: strengthen international recognition of the site**

In line with WHC recommendation 3 on strengthening the international recognition of the Ramsar site.

**Background**

In January 2014, Archipel Bolama-Bijagós was designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. It was recommended that Guinea Bissau moves forward to designate the entire Biosphere Reserve as a Ramsar site, to strengthen national and international recognition, protection and management. IBAP has already developed a programme to promote Bijagós Archipelagos at national and international level. Internationally, photographic and film presentations of the biodiversity and cultural importance of Bijagós have been made at international conferences.

**Objective**

Support the implementation of the IBAP programme to promote Bijagós Archipelagos at national and international level, especially to highlight the value of the site for migratory waders, including in other countries which share the birds that use the Bijagós, ensuring that messages are efficiently and effectively targeted at key audiences who may support conservation of the site and its arctic waterbirds.

**Main activities**

1. Produce an exhibition on the Bijagós for display at international events, especially those targeted at Arctic Council countries, via WSFI.
2. Encourage production of documentaries on the Bijagós and its biodiversity richness, including its role for migratory arctic birds.
3. Support the production of publications and articles on the Bijagós.
4. Organise exchange visits between the Bijagós and the Wadden Sea (and possibly also the Yellow Sea of Korea which may be proposed for World Heritage and Ramsar status, including in the framework of an MOU with CWSS), and with PNBA, via WSFI and the UNESCO MOU between PNBA and CWSS.
5. Consider developing international ecotourism (perhaps focussed on countries that share the same waterbirds).
6. Support IBAP submission to extend the the Ramsar Convention designation to the entire Biosphere Reserve.
7. Support the holding of a WSFI conference in March 2015 in Nouakchott, PNBA, featuring the Bijagós, in the framework of the MOU between CWSS and PNBA, and ideally jointly with AEWA, AMBI and perhaps the Abidjan Convention, involving also additional East Atlantic flyway countries eg Norway, UK and France. This could also provide the oppportunity to:
   - launch this AMBI African-Eurasian Plan of Action
   - get together relevant international expertise to support Guinea Bissau with their World Heritage reapplication
   - further integrate efforts of WSFI, AEWA and the Abidjan Convention
   - enable African countries to formulate what they need to support intertidal habitat conservation (possibly through facilitating some kind of analysis of gaps and opportunities).

**Timescale, budget, management and coordination**

Project period: 2015-2018

Budget:

Project organisation: Coordination:
iii) National/local: protecting the site from damaging developments

In line with WHC recommendations:

2h Ensure that new shipping routes are not be established through the nominated site;

2i Ensure that oil exploration and exploitation operations do not take place within the nominated property and that operations outside of the site do not have any significant impact on the nominated site; and

In line with AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2012-2017 Target 1.3: Environmental Impact Assessment & Strategic Environmental Assessments are used to reduce the impact of new developments on waterbird species and populations

Background

The Bijagós is threatened by ongoing mining and other developments planned near the area. For example, a bauxite mine project in the east of the country includes the construction of a port in the Rio Grande de Buba and offshore petroleum exploration is occurring about 100 km to the northwest of Bijagós. Large mineral and oil ships will need to use channels within the Biosphere Reserve, posing a high risk of pollution.

Companies from at least Sweden, Norway, US and Ivory Coast are investing in oil and gas exploration phase and an Ivorian company is leading the environmental impact assessment.

Objective

a) Support the authorities, NGOs and others to ensure that the national and local planning systems are sufficient to prevent damage from shipping and industrial developments

b) Engage with investors in the oil and gas exploration which come from Arctic Council countries to seek avoidance of damage to the Bijagós.

Main activities

1. To work with the authorities, NGOs and others, including the International Maritime Organisation, to ensure that the national and local planning systems are sufficient to prevent damage to the site from shipping or extractive industries either in or adjacent to the site.

2. To ensure national and local planning systems are applied sufficiently, with adequate EIAs and SEAs, to prevent damage to the site from shipping or extractive industries either in or adjacent to the site.

3. To undertake an analysis of potential impacts of industrial developments to migratory waders and their habitats.

4. To develop guidelines specific to waders that future EIAs / SEAs should take into account.

5. To seek engagement of Arctic Council countries which host investors in the Guinea Bissau oil and gas exploration to help seek avoidance of damage to the Bijagós.
Timescale, budget, management and coordination

Project period: 2015-2017

Budget: € 200,000

Project organisation:

Coordination: IBAP

iv) Site level: support for the development of site management committee and management plan, including to ensure the needs of Arctic shorebirds is fully taken into account

In line with WHC recommendations:

2d Ensure that an overall management plan/system is established for the nominated site with appropriate institutional and financial means and measures in place, including an overall coordination body for the whole property;

2e Ensure that this management plan/system includes a clear and agreed strategy for sustainable tourism, including appropriate policies, programmes and tourism infrastructure that does not degrade the integrity of the property and its OUV;

2f Update, detail and strengthen management plans for the existing legally protected areas included within the property in a way that is compatible with the overall management plan/system of the property;

In line with AEWA Plan of Action for Africa 2012-2017 Subtarget 1.2.3: All CPs have put in place site management plans that cater for the needs of waterbird conservation, and implement them for the key network sites

Background

Objectives
Support national and local authorities in Guinea-Bissau in development of an whole site integrated management plan and robust institutional framework to ensure its implementation, sufficient to maintain the Outstanding Universal Values and Integrity of the Bijagós, including fully taking account of the needs of Arctic shorebirds.

Main activities
Through diplomatic support, potential accessing of funds and sharing of experience, support the development of a whole site management plan and robust, sustainable institutional framework to ensure its implementation, both in general and specifically through developing modules for the management plan focussed on the identification, protection and management of key areas within the archipelago for Arctic-breeding waders.

- Support and co-organise a national workshop in the Bijagós with key stakeholders to identify key areas within the archipelago for migratory waders, the threats to these areas and the current and required management actions, for example in December 2015 adjacent to the regular international waterbird counts.

- Develop a working strategy for managing key wader areas within the archipelago as a component of the overall site management plan
- Support annual January waterbird counts of selected high priority sectors of the Bijagós and full surveys of the whole area every five years, especially through capacity building of local counters, for example through exchange of experience with CWSS.
- Develop adaptation and resilience action plans for communities and protected areas in Bijagós, in the face of sea level rise and resource extraction in line with the new three-year, MAVA-funded project on "Development of a Sustainable Livelihood Action Plan for West African Coastal Protected Areas in the Context of Climate Change" of Réseau régional d'aires marines protégées en Afrique de l'Ouest (RAMPAO), Regional Partnership for the Conservation of Coastal and Marine in West Africa (PRCM) and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP-WCMC). Although Guinea-Bissau is not included in this project, the Bijagós especially the National Park of Orango is a member of the RAMPAO network, and IBAP and GPC are national Partners of RAMPAO.

Project period: 2015-2017
Budget: €100,000
Project organisation:
Coordination: BirdLife BirdLife-WCMC-IBAP
University of Aveiro on identification, monitoring and management planning for shorebirds.

v) Local: mangrove restoration and provision of sustainable wardening

In line with WHC recommendation 2g 'restore degraded areas'

Background
Prior to the installation of the protected areas, fishermen, at their semi-permanent camps, had long made intensive use of the mangroves throughout the Bijagós, cutting them on a large scale as fuel for drying fish and for the production of salt. After creation of the protected areas, the fishing camps were addressed through a lengthy awareness campaign, and development of appropriate legal frameworks, resulted in all fishing camps being abandoned in 2006. Fishermen are still allowed to fish in the area, but may not spend the night or cut mangroves.

Moreover, the clearing of forest for agriculture, especially rice fields, contributes to the degradation of the habitat.

In many parts of the Bijagós the coverage area of mangroves is reducing, with 13% of mangrove area lost in Orango National Park from 1978 to 2007 (IBAP 2008).

State wardens have been installed to survey the areas, and although their number is too low for proper control of such a large and important site, no fishing camps currently exist in the National Park but have instead shifted to others islands within the Biosphere Reserve.

Mangroves function as reproduction sites for fish, roosting sites for birds, a buffer against coastal erosion (an increasing cause of habitat degradation in the Bijagós due to climate change) and storms and by ‘catching’ sediments they can improve the stability and productivity of the intertidal mudflats on which many arctic waders rely.
Mangroves have previously been successfully restored by the West African Mangrove Initiative of Wetlands International and the Coastal Planning Office of Guinea Bissau.

Addressing the main causes of degradation, mangrove exploitation by fishermen and shifting agriculture, can be expected to contribute to the conservation of the Bijagós by benefitting shorebirds, livelihoods and resilience to climate change, and as a means to engage local communities and nationally raise awareness of the value of the ecosystem, helping to build momentum for conservation action.

This action is in line with the October 2014 Convention on Biological Diversity Decision UNEP/CBD/COP/12/L.15 on Ecosystem Conservation and Restoration:

6. Emphasizing the critical importance of coastal wetlands for biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, in particular for migratory bird species, sustainable livelihoods, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, invites Parties to give due attention to the conservation and restoration of coastal wetlands, and, in this context, welcomes the work of the Ramsar Convention and initiatives that support the conservation and restoration of coastal wetlands, including options to build a “Caring for Coasts” Initiative, as part of a global movement to restore coastal wetlands.

**Objective**

1. To support the enforcement of mangrove protection through the continuation and expansion of the wardening patrols, through a Partnership between Park staff, police and local community representatives, including fishermen, to prevent further mangrove loss.

2. Following a feasibility/sustainability analysis, including a critical review of the reasons for the slow recovery of the mangroves, begin restoration of mangroves, in areas where they have been lost, through planting, involving local communities, including fishermen, in three to five representative sites in the Parc National Orango (Bijagós Archipel), totalling 3000 hectares:
   a) for the benefit of Arctic breeding shorebirds and the ecosystem in general, including to increase resilience to climate change
   b) to demonstrate the need, feasibility and added value of restored mangroves to local communities, government, and donors
   c) to contribute to development of capacity and an infrastructural modus operandi for the working of a Site management team.

**Main activities**

1. **Mangrove restoration**
   - Undertake an initial feasibility/sustainability analysis to determine the likelihood of long term success of mangrove planting and to ensure the best methodology is deployed.
   - Identification of demonstration/pilot sites and design appropriate planting programmes; aim is to plant approximate 3000 mangrove plants per ha mangroves in two planting seasons in three to five representative sites covering approximately 3000-5000 ha.
   - Training of local communities in mangrove planting techniques
   - Collection of propagules in sites with well-developed mangrove forest
   - Planting of propagules (during rainy season, August 15 – September 30);

2. **Community development**
   - Design and implement small-scale programme to raise awareness in pilot sites
- Identification of development needs of local communities
- Identification and implementation of ‘contre partie’ activities (to reduce the pressure to cut mangroves, support ecologically sustainable local community projects for alternative means of salt production (eg using solar energy) and fish smoking (using ovens that use less wood), and involve local communities in mangrove planting, including to raise awareness of mangroves for sustainable fisheries).

3. Impact monitoring
- Design monitoring scheme for mangroves, birds and fish
- Design monitoring scheme for socio-economic aspects
- Training of local communities and government wardens in monitoring techniques
- Implement monitoring schemes, including base line survey
- Systematically collect images and stories to document evolution of mangrove restoration

4. Surveillance
- Support the wardening staff, in close liaison with the police, to reinforce surveillance to prevent mangrove cutting as well as illegal fishing and rice field expansion
- Develop the surveillance programme to involve local communities, including fishermen, sharing experience with PNBA.

5. Prepare scaling-up
- Develop an action plan for mangrove protection and restoration in the Bijagòs on a much larger scale, building on experience from present pilots and other projects
- Develop communication materials for stakeholders for the next phase, including local communities, politicians, government agencies and donors (materials to show need for and added value of mangrove restoration from different perspectives and plans for future)
- Raise awareness with key stakeholders for next phase, especially politicians, government agencies and donors

**Timescale, budget, management and coordination**

Project period: January 2015- January 2017 (24 months).

Budget: € 100,000, options for co-funding in kind through government agencies, IBAP (Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas Bijagòs) and GPC (Bureau Coastal Planning)

Project organisation:
Coordination: NGO ODZH supported by BirdLife in collaboration with Orango National Park Authority and the Bijagòs Biosphere Management Team.
Implementation: IBAP and GPC with exchange of experience with PNBA on surveillance
Project location: PN Orango because of its relative proximity to the capital and the presence of supportive government structures (IBAP coordinator and wardens in L’Archipel Bijagós). Local communities have engaged previously in conservation activities and therefore it is expected that the project can quickly start.
APPENDIX I:


2. Defers the examination of the nomination of the Bijagós Archipelago – Motom Moranghajogo, Guinea-Bissau, to the World Heritage List to allow the State Party to:
   a) Strengthen the legal protection status of the property to ensure that all areas nominated have adequate legal and/or customary protection;
   b) Consider modification of the boundaries of areas to be nominated within the overall biosphere reserve to conform to integrity requirements and exclude heavily modified areas that do not contain attributes that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. These areas, including the towns of Bolama and Bubaque, could be included in a buffer zone for the property as defined in paragraph 103 of the Operational Guidelines;
   c) Deepen the comparative analysis so as to ascertain whether the property might be considered to have the potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value for cultural criteria;
   d) Ensure that an overall management plan/system is established for the nominated site with appropriate institutional and financial means and measures in place, including an overall coordination body for the whole property;
   e) Ensure that this management plan/system includes a clear and agreed strategy for sustainable tourism, including appropriate policies, programmes and tourism infrastructure that does not degrade the integrity of the property and its OUV;
   f) Update, detail and strengthen management plans for the existing legally protected areas included within the property in a way that is compatible with the overall management plan/system of the property;
   g) Establish effective protection and management measures and activities that minimize the effects of the non-native species, including those considered as invasive, and restore degraded areas where appropriate;
   h) Ensure that new shipping routes are not be established through the nominated site;
   i) Ensure that oil exploration and exploitation operations do not take place within the nominated property and that operations outside of the site do not have any significant impact on the nominated site; and
   j) Ensure that human and financial resources are sufficient to maintain the integrity of the property and the long-term preservation of its Outstanding Universal Value; in particular raise sufficient financial resources for the trust fund project (the “Fondation Bioguinée”), and take all measures to ensure that an adequate proportion of this fund is earmarked for the proposed site;

3. Recommends that the State Party move forward plans to designate either the National Parks, or possibly the entire Biosphere Reserve, as a Ramsar site, to strengthen national and local protection and management and international recognition;

4. Commends the State Party and its partner organisations for its committed and innovative work in participatory community management in this important protected area;

5. Considers that the evaluation of any revised nomination would need to include an expert mission to the site;

6. Encourages the State Party, under the principles of the Upstream Process, with the assistance of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, to seek advice on the potential of the site to satisfy cultural criteria and on reframing the nomination for natural criteria to address the concerns above.
B. AMBI Priority action: Preventing illegal killing of the Lesser White-fronted Goose

a) Species selection

i) The importance of the species

The Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) is a key flagship species for migratory arctic waterbirds which face, as a predominant threat, severe hunting pressure on migration to and from their breeding and molting grounds in the Arctic. It is globally threatened, being recognized as Vulnerable by IUCN and is the rarest goose species in Europe, and is one of the highest priority Arctic breeding species under AEWA. The estimate of the global mid-winter population is 28,000 to 33,000 individuals. Although legally protected throughout most of its range, accidental and illegal killing are considered to be the main threats to the species.

Lesser White-fronted Geese currently breed discontinuously in the sub-arctic zone from northern Fennoscandia to eastern Siberia and occur regularly in 23 range states - of which Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden are members of the Arctic Council and Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and China are Arctic Council permanent observer countries.

The global population of the species has declined rapidly since the middle of the 20th century. Although the most dramatic decline appears to have levelled off, there are still fears that the species may go extinct following the fragmentation of its range and the continued threat posed by illegal killing and habitat loss. This is demonstrated most acutely in the case of the small Fennoscandian sub-population breeding in Norway and Finland, which is currently estimated at only 25-35 breeding pairs.

ii) The opportunity for AMBI to contribute to conservation of the species

The ongoing implementation of conservation activities for the Lesser White-fronted Goose as prioritized by the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group (LWfG IWG) for the inter-sessional period 2013-2015, as well as the current revision of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose (LWfG ISSAP), offer a perfect opportunity for AMBI to support international conservation efforts for the species. From the many objectives and activities identified in the LWfG ISSAP, Working Group members ranked activities related to diminishing the threat from illegal killing as the essential implementation priority for this inter-sessional period.

AMBI can potentially contribute, including through the Arctic Council member and permanent observer countries in liaison with the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group (LWfG IWG), through diplomatic interventions, channeling funds (e.g. from development aid or Arctic budgets that might not otherwise be available for species conservation), and through capacity building, exchange of information and experience.

There are previous links between Lesser White-fronted Goose conservation and the following Arctic Council countries:

Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden are represented in the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group at governmental and/or expert level.

Norway continues to provide yearly funding for the post of the Lesser White-fronted Goose Coordinator situated at the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat as well as for various international conservation projects implemented within the framework of the LWfG ISSAP. In addition, Norway provides funding to LWG projects in Russia via bilateral funding frameworks.

Finland has also provided yearly funding both for the LWG Coordinator post as well as for conservation projects implemented within the framework of the LWG ISSAP.

In line with the agreed modus operandi of AMBI, actions in this first phase are focused on those that will quickly make a real difference on the ground for AMBI priority species.
b) Actions

i) Reducing Lesser White-fronted Goose mortality rates caused by illegal killing

Background

Although legally protected throughout most of its range, mortality due to illegal killing is considered to be the main threat to the Lesser White-fronted Goose, as highlighted in the LWIG ISSAP and reconfirmed by the LWIG IWG in 2012. Not only illegal and accidental killing, but also disturbance caused by hunting, at key staging and wintering sites along the flyway is thought to be one of the main drivers of the decline of the global population of the species.

Unsustainable harvest practices in Central Asia in particular, continue to have a serious impact on the many migratory waterbird populations in the region. Current hunting practices are not only considered to be one of the main threats to the survival of globally threatened species listed under AEWA such as the Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) and Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*), but are also having a negative impact on many arctic breeding waterbird populations open for hunting such as the Taiga Bean Goose (*Anser f. fabalis*).

The long term constructive engagement of authorities dealing with hunting as well as the hunting communities in the region is therefore a key challenge and is considered essential for the future of sustainable use and conservation of migratory waterbirds in the region.

Tackling unsustainable harvest is in itself a challenge, but with regard to the Lesser White-fronted Goose the challenges are manifold. One key challenge for the protection of the species remains that many of the key sites – especially in the staging and wintering areas – are still unknown. Without this knowledge, the implementation of urgent conservation activities – such as the sufficient protection of sites, awareness-raising etc. - is virtually impossible.

Objective

To reduce the negative impact of illegal killing and hunting on the Lesser White-fronted Goose at key sites throughout the flyways as well as the unsustainable harvest of migratory waterbirds in Central Asia in the long term.

Main activities

1. Identification of key sites for implementation of conservation activities related to hunting (*i.e. modify timing of goose hunting to avoid LWIG migration, establish no-hunting zones etc.)*:
   - Satellite-tracking of Lesser White-fronted Geese from the Russian tundra;
   - Monitoring mission to Azerbaijan and Iran in February 2015 to check potential sites based on previous and new satellite information;
   - Selection of five to six demonstration sites across the flyway, where hunting pressure has been determined to be particularly high;
   - Development and implementation of management plans for these sites.

2. Launching of initiative for sustainable hunting in Central Asia:
   - Establish partnership for the initiative;
   - Agree on geographical range and scope and further develop concept;
   - Gather information and put together overview on ongoing/former activities (such as the Strategy for Promoting Sustainable Waterbird Harvesting Practices in Western/Central Asia developed under the CMS Siberian Crane MoU);
   - Fundraise for activities;
   - Engage AEWA Focal Points/Contact Points as well as other relevant government contacts in selected range states and request government contacts from hunting and agricultural authorities and establish contacts with other stakeholders in the region (mainly national and regional governments, hunting organizations etc.);
   - Organize first stakeholder meeting on the sustainable hunting of migratory waterbirds in 2015 in the region to kick-start the process;
- Gather and disseminate available guidance on the sustainable harvest of waterbirds.

3. Reducing the threat to Lesser White-fronted Geese at the Evros Delta in Greece, by extending the non-hunting zone and protected area:
- Prepare a comprehensive report, using existing LWIG distribution data, as well as data regarding the impact and distribution of hunting, in order to highlight the necessity for Kalavos area to become a hunting-free area and propose a legal framework for the above suggestion (September 2014);
- Explore opportunities for extension of the non-hunting zone within the framework of the ongoing legal procedure opened by the Evros Delta Management Authority to change the legislation that protects the Evros Delta National Park (change from a Common Ministerial Decree to a Presidential Decree);
- Submit the recommendation to the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (HOS, BirdLife in Greece, will lead on this, in collaboration with Forest Research Institute – Hellenic Agricultural Organisation “Demeter” (FRI HAOD) (end of 2014);
- Request international support from the EU LIFE+ LWIG Project Partners and other international organizations and stakeholders (early 2015).

Management and coordination

*Project period:* July 2014 – June 2016 (2 years); in March 2015 (Senior Arctic Officials meeting) results regarding the identification of key sites as well as demonstration sites will be presented.

*Budget:* 120,000€, some funding already available via voluntary contributions made to AEWA, also some options for co-funding in kind through government agencies and other stakeholders.

*Project organization:*

Coordination: UNEP/AEWA Secretariat

*Project location:*
Main focus will be in Central Asian countries within the African-Eurasian flyway (Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) as well as Iran and Greece.

*Possible AMBI/CAFF input:*

- Provide diplomatic support as well as advice with regard to the designation of demonstration sites and support for project implementation;
- Provide assistance and guidance with regard to the development of management plans for the selected demonstration sites;
- Provide additional funding for the implementation of the site projects (60,000€ seed-funding for 5-6 sites) as well as for the Central Asian Sustainable Hunting Initiative (40,000€ still needed);
- Assist with awareness-raising on the need for international coordination of hunting on a sustainable use basis in Central Asia and on the need for stepped-up conservation efforts for the Lesser White-fronted Goose in order to reach a wider target audience;
- Become a partner in the initiative for Sustainable Hunting in Central Asia, providing for example information on changes in the arctic potentially affecting arctic migratory waterbirds;
- Provide diplomatic support as well as advice to the Greek authorities on extending the non-hunting zone at the Evros Delta.
ii) Expanding international Lesser White-fronted Goose conservation efforts to include the Eastern main sub-population

Background:

At the second meeting of the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group in November 2012, range states agreed that the scope of the current AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose should be revised and expanded to cover all Lesser White-fronted Goose sub-populations. In practice this means including the so-called Eastern main sub-population which breeds in the Eastern Russian arctic and migrates to wintering areas in China. This sub-population is currently the largest one, estimated at 20,000 individuals.

Although the threat from illegal killing does not appear to be as severe along this flyway, there have been reports of illegal harvest using poisons (such as Alpha-Chloralose), but much is still unknown. Considering in particular the diminished status of the other sub-populations, having a comprehensive international conservation framework for the entire species is a matter of urgency.

A revised action framework will have to be developed to include the international conservation efforts for the Eastern main sub-population. This will be added to the revised ISSAP. From this action framework a first list of priority activities to be implemented in the short term will be extracted and fundraised for. First AMBI discussions with Chinese experts took place in the margins of a workshop on the Yellow Sea organized by the Beijing Forestry University and funded, under AMBI, by the Norwegian Embassy in Beijing in September 2014. Building on these contacts, the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat will attempt to meet with relevant Chinese officials in November 2014 in connection with the meeting of the IUCN Goose Specialist Group Meeting in Beijing and the meetings of the bilateral migratory bird agreements featuring discussions on illegal bird killing in China. The revised ISSAP is expected to be adopted at the 6th Meeting of the AEWA Parties in November 2015.

Objectives:

To make contact with and encourage the Chinese government to support the expansion of the International Single Species Action Plan to include the Eastern main population. Identify first possible conservation activities for the Eastern main sub-population of the Lesser White-fronted Goose in China and Russia.

Main activities:

1. Expanding the current AEWA ISSAP to include the Eastern main sub-population:
   - Contact Chinese State Forestry Administration and arrange face-to-face meeting with AEWA Secretariat in November 2014;
   - Prepare draft texts/maps on the Eastern main sub-population to be included in the ISSAP;
   - Prepare and execute official consultation process with range states, stakeholders and AEWA/CMS governing bodies;
   - Prepare final version for adoption at AEWA MOP in November 2015.

2. Feature the Lesser White-fronted Goose in illegal bird killing workshop in China in November 2014:
   - Present the Lesser White-fronted Goose as a flagship species regarding conservation efforts to mitigate illegal killing at the workshop;
   - Present overview of ongoing activities under AEWA as well as efforts to include the Eastern main sub-population in the revised International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose.

3. Identify first priority activities for the Eastern main sub-population for short term implementation
   - Consultations with Russian and Chinese government officials, national experts and stakeholders as well as representatives from the international conservation community (as part of the ISSAP process described above) to develop an action framework;
- Undertake a priority ranking of the action framework activities, identifying between 1 and 3 projects for immediate implementation;
- Produce awareness-raising materials in Chinese (based on existing poster and field guide);
- Fundraise for prioritized activities/projects in need of new funding and commence implementation should sufficient funding be available.

**Management and coordination:**

**Project period:** July 2014 – November 2015; in March 2015 (Senior Arctic Officials meeting) results regarding the meetings with Chinese government officials as well as a first list of prioritized activities will be presented.

**Budget:** 45.000€ seed-funding to kick-start prioritized projects in Russia and China – preferably to be announced at the IUCN Goose Specialist Meeting

**Project organization:**

Coordination: UNEP/AEWA Secretariat
Implementation: UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, Chinese State Forestry Administration, All Russia Research Institute of Nature Conservation of Russian Ministry of Natural Resources [to be elaborated]

**Project location:** Russia and China

**Possible AMBI/CAFF input:**

- Assist the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat to establish contact and to set up meeting with key officials at the Chinese State Forestry Administration;
- Provide diplomatic support in promoting the conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose as a flagship species for migratory waterbirds within the Russian and Chinese governments;
- Provide 45.000€ as seed-funding to kick-start implementation of prioritized activities for the Eastern main sub-population.
C. Securing breeding habitat of waders in Iceland through ensuring national afforestation, and other land use policy and practice is sustainable

a) Issue selection

Under AEWA, the highest priority arctic breeding wader is the Black-tailed Godwit. The species was listed as globally Near Threatened by IUCN largely due to the decline of the nominate population that has its breeding stronghold in the Netherlands. By contrast the population of the smaller islandica subspecies has been increasing. However, one of the main potential threats that it faces is the policy of the Icelandic Government to subsidise the afforestation, not least with non-native trees, of at least 5% of the Icelandic lowlands. While other breeding shorebird species, such as dunlin, may be more vulnerable to such developments, the godwit is a useful flagship for the issue.

The afforestation may so far not have had significant impacts on Arctic breeding migrants. With sound planning, it may well be possible to accommodate the planting targets without causing undue adverse effects to Iceland’s outstandingly important breeding waterbird populations (it is second only to Russia in its significance as a supplier of waterbirds to the Africa-Eurasia flyway).

This afforestation should be considered in the context of the other main threats to Iceland’s lowland breeding waterbirds, namely

1. Conversion of wetlands and other (semi) natural habitat to agriculture eg for hay, cereal crops etc
2. Natural regrowth of native tree species due to climate change and the declining sheep population
3. Building of holiday cottages and associated infrastructure

b) Actions

Background

In 2002, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention on European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, on the basis of a compliance mission to Iceland, adopted Recommendation 96 (2002), urging the Government of Iceland to undertake seven specific actions, including impact assessment, habitat protection and strategic planning to ensure that the afforestation policy was not harmful to its waterbird populations. These recommendations have largely not been followed and in 2013 there were indications of a reintensification of implementation of the afforestation policy.

In the light of the developments in 2013, the issue was raised again at the Bern Standing Committee in December 2013. The Committee agreed to review the issue at their meeting in December 2014, in the context of following up on the 2002 Recommendation for the first time since 2008. Their discussion will focus on a paper by BirdLife Iceland and response from the Government of Iceland.

Also in 2013, the AEWA Standing Committee decided to request an invitation from Iceland to undertake an Implementation Review Process (IRP), a procedure under AEWA Resolution 4.6 established to assist Contracting Parties with issues of concern, through entitling the AEWA Standing Committee to address incidents of adverse or potential adverse effects on migratory waterbirds or on their sites and habitats as a result of human activities.

In July 2014, the Government of Iceland welcomed the request of the AEWA Standing Committee to undertake an Implementation Review Process mission to Iceland. This will assess the situation on the
ground and recommend solutions including exchange of experience with other AEWA/Bern/CAFF parties who have had to address similar situations.

**Objective**

To ensure that Icelandic afforestation policy and practice does not put at risk Iceland’s internationally important migratory waterbird populations, and that the other key threats to Iceland’s lowland breeding waterbird populations are addressed.

**Main activities**

1. **CAFF/AMBI to undertake a collaborative mission, hosted by the Icelandic Ministry of Environment**, hopefully in spring 2014, with AEWA, Bern Convention and perhaps the Ramsar Convention. Terms of reference appended. Arctic Council member country, Norway, and permanent observer country, UK, having pertinent experience, to be represented on the mission. AMBI to contribute to raising the necessary funds for the mission (20,000+ euros, including for international consultant, rapporteur, experts and other international stakeholders).

2. **AMBI to consider supporting Iceland to implement the recommendations of the above mission, for example in relation to strategic planning, impact assessment, habitat protection and awareness raising.** This might include:
   a. the mapping of key waterbird breeding areas to assist planning of afforestation and guidance for farmers:
   b. consideration of how to avoid damaging agricultural conversion
   c. advice on management of ‘natural succession’, for example through information exchange with Norway.
   d. consideration of how to ensure planning regulations prevent damaging cumulative impacts from holiday cottage development and associated roads and other infrastructure.
   e. support for raising public awareness in Iceland of the international importance of breeding waterbird populations.

**Management and coordination**


*Budget:* 20,000+€, some funding already available from AEWA Trust Fund.

*Project organization:* Coordination: UNEP/AEWA Secretariat Implementation: Bern Convention, CAFF, BirdLife Iceland, University of Iceland, RSPB, Norway, UK.

*Project location:* Icelandic lowlands.

**Possible AMBI/CAFF input:**

- Provide diplomatic support as well as advice, through exchange of experience with other CAFF countries, to the Ministry of Environment in ensuring that Icelandic afforestation and other land use policy and practice of relevance to breeding waterbird populations is in line with Iceland’s obligations under Multilateral Environmental Agreements and the Arctic Council
- Access funding for the AEWA-led mission in 2015 (20,000+€)
- Assist with awareness-raising regarding:
  a) the importance of Iceland’s migratory waterbird populations both within Iceland and in the countries with which it shares its birds, along the flyway; and
  b) the importance of ensuring afforestation and other land use policies and practice are not detrimental to migratory waterbird population.