



DEMAND AND DESTINATION ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM SITES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY

IN DEPTH DESTINATION ASSESSMENT

Final

REPORT

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Abbreviations and acronyms

| | | | |
|----------------|---|---------------|--|
| ABCA | Association of African Central Banks | MoTC | Ministry of Tourism and Culture |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations | MTCA | Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts |
| BWA | Bird Watcher Association, The Gambia | NBR | North Bank Region |
| CBA | Cost Benefit Analysis | NCAC | National Centre for Arts and Culture |
| CBT | Community Based Tourism | NEA | National Environment Agency |
| CCA | Community Conservation Area | NGO | Non Government Organization |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer | NNE | Ninki Nanka Encounters Foundation |
| CFAO | Compagnie Française d'Afrique Occidentale | NNT | Ninki Nanka Trail |
| CRP | Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Project | NRM | National Referral Mechanism |
| CRR | Central River Region | NTGA | National Tourism Guide Association of The Gambia |
| DBA | Denton Bridge Association | OTG | Official Tourist Guide |
| DPWM | Department of Parks and Wildlife Management | OTGA | Official Tourist Guide Association |
| DSC | Digital Selective Calling | PIU | Project Implementation Unit |
| EbA | Large Scale Ecosystem-based Adaptation Project | PPCP | Public-private-community Partnership |
| ECPAT | Every Child Protected Against Trafficking | PPP | Public-Private Partnership |
| FAO | Food & Agriculture Organization | PRO | Public Relations Officer |
| FTE | Full Time Equivalent | QS | Quantity Surveyor |
| GCGSRS | Gambia Coastguard and Sea Rescue Service | SECTT | Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism |
| GIEPA | Gambia Investment and Export Promotions Authority | SGBV | Sex and gender-based violence |
| GPS | Global Positioning System | SMME | Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises |
| GSTC | Global Sustainable Tourism Council | SOS | SOS Children's Villages |
| GTB | Gambia Tourism Board | TDA | Tourism Development Area |
| GTTI | Gambia Technical Training Institute | TDRGP | Tourism Diversification and Resilience in The Gambia Project |
| ICCA | Indigenous Community Conservation Area | TTAG | Tourism and Travel Association of The Gambia |
| ICOMOS | International Council on Monuments and Sites | UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| IFC | International Finance Organisation | URR | Upper River Region |
| ITB | International Tourism Exchange Berlin | USAID | US Agency for International Development |
| ITC | International Trade Organization | USET | University of Science Engineering and Technology |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature | USP | Unique Selling Proposition |
| JJB | Janjanbureh | VDC | Village Development Committee |
| JV | Joint Venture | WCR | West Coast Region |
| KMC | Kanifing Municipality Council | WDC | Ward Development Committee |
| KPI | Key Performance Indicator | WHS | World Heritage Site |
| KWNP | Kiang West National Park | WOW | Wings Over Wetlands |
| LRR | Lower River Region | WR | Wetland Reserve |
| MCC | Millennium Challenge Corporation | YEP | Youth Empowerment Project |
| MECCNAR | Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources | | |

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1. Introduction

The World Bank is supporting the Government of The Gambia through the Tourism Diversification and Resilience in The Gambia Project (TDRGP). This initiative aims to strengthen the country's tourism sector by diversifying its offerings, enhancing its resilience, and promoting sustainable practices across the industry. It seeks to achieve these outcomes through a series of interventions, including the development of new tourism destinations, the enhancement of existing attractions, and the strengthening of institutional capacities for tourism management.

The Gambia's tourism sector has traditionally shown a strong reliance on sun and beach tourism, with a large majority of visitors coming from Northern Europe. The sector contributes significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product – more than 20% before the COVID-19 pandemic – and is an important source of employment though principally in a relatively confined area on the coast near Banjul, often referred to as the TDA or Tourism Development Area.

There is a pressing need to diversify the country's tourism offerings to reduce the sector's vulnerability to external shocks and to attract a broader range of visitors than is currently the case. There is also a strong political desire to spread the economic and employment benefits associated with tourism much more widely across the country, and especially to rural areas upriver. The Gambia's rich cultural heritage, its diverse natural attractions and a tradition of warm hospitality provide a solid foundation for this diversification.

Within this context, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture's Project Implementation Unit (PIU) commissioned a consultancy contract for the **Demand and Destination Site Evaluation & Assessment of Potential Tourism Sites** throughout the country as a crucial component of the TDRGP. The assignment has required the consultants to evaluate and prioritize a long list of more than 60 potential tourism sites across The Gambia, develop proposals for the planning, development, and upgrading of a short list of 10 sites and provide an implementation framework for these proposals. This document represents the third and final output of that consultancy study, and provides the details of what investment is proposed where, to broaden and strengthen the country's tourism offer to domestic, regional and international tourists.

Following an exhaustive schedule of field visits during the spring of 2024, as well as a programme of desk research and consultations with nearly 200 representatives of the country's tourism, cultural and natural heritage sectors as well as community members, the team secured the necessary information needed to propose a short list of 10 locations for the consideration of the client team at the Ministry of Tourism's Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and its partners in this initiative.

After a period of consultation with key stakeholders, some slight changes were made to the short list to provide a more balanced suite of investment opportunities. This report presents, in outline, the proposed portfolio of project proposals for 10 locations across the whole of The Gambia, along with a summary of the likely tourism, economic and social benefits and guidelines on how the projects should be implemented.

A companion report to this document provides much more detail on each of the 10 project proposals including conceptual drawings, site plans, details of estimated capital costs, potential economic and social benefits and proposed delivery mechanisms. Those proposals have been drawn up to provide the information needed by the PIU and the Ministry of Tourism & Culture (MoTC) to prepare an individual investment prospectus for each opportunity, that can be shared with potential partners. Further suggestions for promoting the outcomes of this assignment to all interested stakeholders are presented towards the end of the document.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 summarises the process used to arrive at the shortlist of 10 locations, and then describes in outline the concept for each project. The section also comments on their alignment with other national initiatives as well as indicating how they will collectively and individually support steps to attract a broader and higher-spending market to The Gambia;
- Section 3 presents an overview of the anticipated impact on the overall flow of tourism at each location, a summary of financial costs of implementation of these projects both individually and collectively, and an outline assessment of the potential economic benefits of the projects as well as supporting evidence to help the MoTC and other stakeholders measure the contribution of the different projects towards specific KPIs they are being asked to address;
- Section 4 presents the outcomes of the rapid social and environmental screening exercises carried out at the 10 locations in order to establish what needs to change in the broader environment in order for the projects to succeed and to contribute towards the development of a more sustainable tourism product across The Gambia. This section also contains a summary of some overarching barriers that need to be addressed if the full benefits of the investment and project proposals are to be realised over time. Where appropriate, suggested solutions are also discussed;
- Concluding the main body of the report (Section 5) is a brief reminder of the main proposals and of their combined potential to stimulate a major uplift in the performance of the Gambian tourism sector in the coming decade; a suggested prioritisation and phasing of investment opportunities, and finally our recommendations on how the PIU and partners might proceed with seeking and securing public sector, private sector and community support for the proposals;
- Appended are details of the field mission undertaken in June 2024 as core team members sought to familiarise themselves with the range of opportunities in each location, along with further information about the additional consultation undertaken concurrently with those site visits.

2. Summary of Short Listed Opportunities

2.1 OVERVIEW OF SELECTION PROCESS – GETTING FROM LONG LIST TO SHORT LIST

After a full appraisal of the relative merits of 64 different locations across The Gambia, a draft shortlist of 10 sites and clusters meriting priority attention was submitted in April 2024 by the consultancy team to the PIU. Our initial recommendations were based on a thorough programme of field assessments followed by a transparent and systematic scoring process that evaluated each site against a range of 19 measures previously agreed with the client team. At a half-day workshop held in mid-May at the Sir Dawda Jawara International Conference Centre and attended by senior Government officials, PIU and World Bank staff, representatives of key stakeholder organisations from the public and private sector, and members of the consultancy team, there was broad agreement with the recommendations presented on the proposed shortlist.

Following a well-thought through discussion about the opportunities to spread nature and wildlife tourism more widely across the country, a decision was reached to slightly amend the short list. The decision was to replace Fort Bullen and its associated museum as a stand-alone location with Niumi National Park, including Jinack Island. This decision was made principally because of the opportunities it creates to develop a strong ecotourism/ nature tourism product in the North Bank Region, a move that could not only spread the benefits of tourism more widely across the country but which also offers the opportunity to develop twin-centre itineraries for nature tourists in partnership with neighbouring Senegal.

Since Fort Bullen is already included within the Kunta Kinteh Island and Associated Sites World Heritage Site (WHS) inscription (which also includes Albreda and Juffureh), a request was made to the consultants to include the Fort and its museum within the Albreda/ Juffureh cluster of sites. This request was accepted by the consultancy team and is reflected in the development proposals worked up for that particular cluster of locations (see Section 2.3).

2.2 DEFINITIVE LIST OF PROPOSED INVESTMENT LOCATIONS

Table 1 presents a list of the selected locations grouped into the original thematic bands identified by the PIU and partners in the original project terms of reference, and also notes their geographical location. As part of the creative planning process, some of the locations have been combined into clusters of development opportunity that collectively will help to support the future development of tourism across the whole of The Gambia.

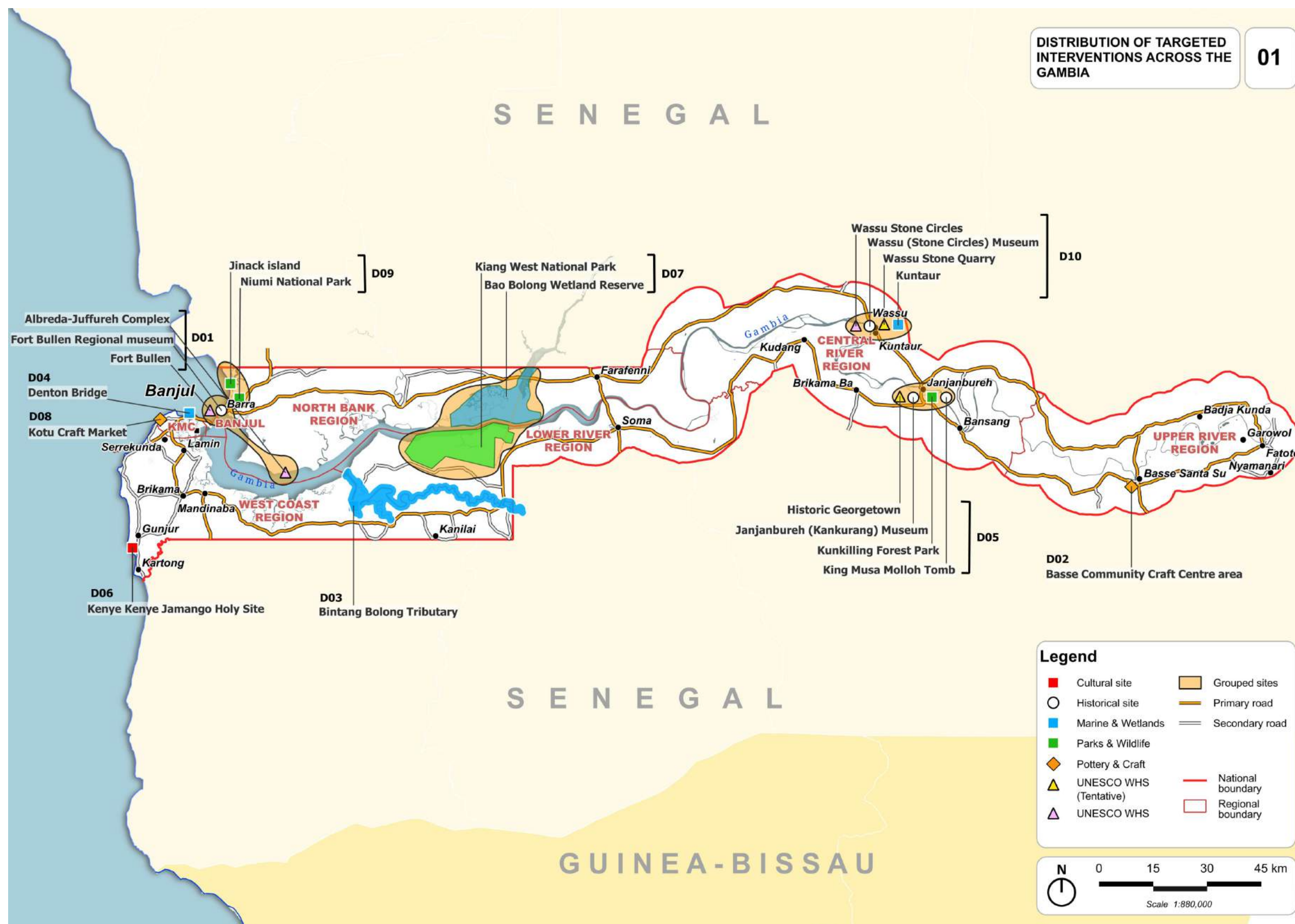
It is clear from Map 1 that there is a wide geographical spread of locations across the country and that the distribution of selected sites will support the development of multi-themed itineraries suited to the interests of several different target markets, both international and domestic. This of course is a major strategic objective as it will help The Gambia to diversify its tourism product beyond the current emphasis on sun, sea and sand.

Table 1 – Distribution of final short list of sites by thematic band and region

| Thematic Band | Site | Region |
|--|---|-----------|
| 1. UNESCO WHS (including sites on the Tentative List) | Albreda & Juffureh, including Fort Bullen | NBR |
| | Wassu Stone Circles and the Quarry | CRR |
| | Historic Georgetown | CRR |
| 2. Sites of Historical Significance | Fort Bullen Regional Museum | NBR |
| | Kankurang Museum, Janjanbureh | CRR |
| | King Musa Molloh Tomb | CRR |
| | Wassu Stone Circles Museum | CRR |
| 3. Sites of Cultural Significance | Kenye Kenye Jamango Holy Site | WCR |
| 4: Parks & Wildlife | Kiang West National Park | LRR |
| | Kunkilling Forest Park | CRR |
| | Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | NBR |
| 5. Water Sports, River, Tributaries & Wetlands | Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | NBR |
| | Bintang Bolong Tributary | LRR & WCR |
| | Denton Bridge | KMC |
| 6. Pottery & Craft Markets | Allunhari pottery site | URR |
| | Basse Men's Weaving Site | URR |
| | Kotu Craft Market | KMC |



Figure 1 – Consultancy team and the PIU Project Director on site at Kiang West National Park (Photo dated 12th June 2024)



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2.3 OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

2.3.1 Introduction

Following confirmation of the final shortlist, and in order to inform the preparation of the detailed development proposals summarised below, a second intensive fieldwork mission was held with all key members of the consultancy team spending time at each location, generally in the company of key site and community representatives. A further programme of consultations was also held to fill in gaps in our information and knowledge database. Appendix 1 contains detail of the field mission held in June 2024 and Appendix 2 lists all those consulted during that mission.

Below we summarise the main development concepts for each of the 10 shortlisted locations. Full details are provided in the Part B report which accompanies this document. As can be seen from the proposals, a broad range of interventions is proposed including: providing additional tourist accommodation where there is an evident market gap in provision; upgrading the quality and content of existing cultural and natural heritage attractions to enhance the visitor experience and extend the length of stay; enhancing physical access at strategically important locations to facilitate greater engagement with these places and finally, empowering host communities to take more responsibility for planning, delivering and managing tourism initiatives in their area.

The ten sites and the overall concept for development at each location are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – Investment locations and overarching concept or theme for each place

| Location | Concept/ Theme |
|---|--|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | Reshaping Heritage Tourism at Gambia's First WHS |
| Basse | Traditions of Basse (handicrafts initiative) |
| Bintang Bolong | Bringing the river closer |
| Denton Bridge | Developing the river gateway |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | Crossroads of cultures |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | Welcoming the spiritual traveller |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | Celebrating Gambia's Biodiversity |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | Reimagining Gambia's craft sector |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | Supporting conservation through tourism |
| Wassu Stone Circles | Celebrating 1,000 years of culture |

As demonstrated in Map 2, there are essentially four types of project proposed:

- those that are based largely around **cultural heritage**, whether this is an archaeological site such as at Wassu, more recent built heritage properties such as at Fort Bullen or in Janjanbureh, or places associated with traditional handicrafts such as the projects at Basse and Kotu;
- those that are based around enhancing provision for **nature tourism and eco-tourism**, such as the projects at Bintang Bolong, Kiang West and Bao Bolong, and Niumi;
- one intervention based around supporting the **spiritual tourism and pilgrimage market**, at Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque at Gunjur;
- one project designed to improve **access to the river** for multiple users, at Denton Bridge.

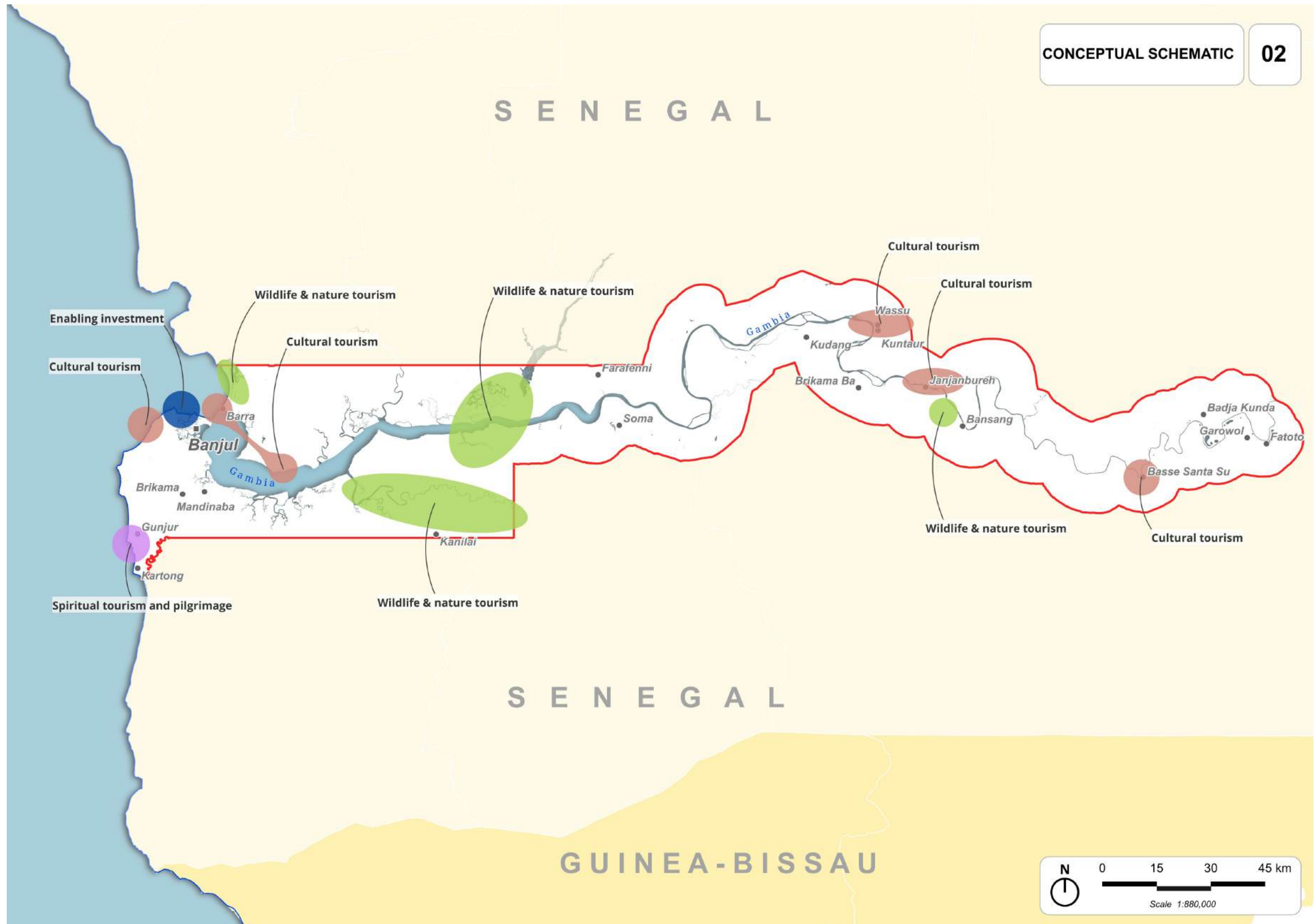
From a marketing perspective it is possible to identify a clustering of opportunities that should support the development of specialist itineraries for target markets such as wildlife tourists; cultural tourists and adventure/ activity tourists. Moreover, the development of a number of community-based tourism initiatives and the enhancement of existing ecotourism provision through additional investment provides opportunities for GTB and tour operators alike to develop campaigns that celebrate these specific and distinct aspects of Gambia's tourism product.

In broad terms, such clusters are:

- **cultural and heritage tourism** (both tangible and intangible) in North Bank Region based around the Kunta Kinteh Island and Associated Sites World Heritage Site (including Albreda, Juffureh and Fort Bullen);
- **cultural and heritage tourism** (both tangible and intangible) in Central River Region and Upper Region, starting at Wassu and flowing through Janjanbureh up to Basse;
- **wildlife, nature and eco-tourism** in the central part of the country in a broad swathe of land from Bintang Bolong up to Kiang West National Park and Bao Bolong, incorporating parts of West Coast Region, Lower River Region, Central River Region and North Bank Region;
- **spiritual tourism and pilgrimage** on the coast at Gunjur in West Coast Region.

This categorisation does not exclude other experiences, so for instance the River Gambia National Park and particularly Baboon Island offer outstanding wildlife viewing opportunities on the river upstream of Wassu and Kuntaur, and would naturally be included in itineraries for tourists passing through that area even if the primary focus of their tour was cultural heritage. Similarly, the wildlife tourism opportunities at Niimi National Park could be promoted on their own or combined in a package with the nearby cultural tourism provision at Fort Bullen, for example.

At the time of writing (late August 2024), specialist marketing consultants have been commissioned by the PIU to prepare a study entitled “Development and Implementation of a Tourism Marketing Strategy for Destination Gambia”. We would not presume to pre-judge their recommendations on topics such as destination-specific branding for The Gambia or sub-regional branding initiatives, and therefore present these initial proposals on possible approaches to promoting different parts of the country to specific niche markets as opportunities for further investigation and discussion with GTB and industry partners.



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2.3.2 Albreda & Juffureh and Associated Sites: Reshaping Heritage Tourism at Gambia's First World Heritage Site

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

The four locations currently associated with Kunta Kinteh Island World Heritage Site (the island with its standing remains, the twin villages of Albreda and Juffureh and Fort Bullen) have seen considerable interest from international tourists from a range of backgrounds since the 1970s, especially following the publication of Alex Haley's book 'Roots'. However, despite ongoing investment in a range of facilities and community initiatives, the destination is 'tired' and requires considerable upgrading. Moreover, the current emphasis on the story of slavery as a key component in the heritage narrative overpowers other potential messages including the importance of diaspora and return, contemporary village culture, and even climate change (the island in particular is threatened by erosion from both river currents and tidal flows).



Figure 1: The 'Portuguese Chapel' in Albreda. One of the sites that requires consolidation and better interpretation in order to enhance the visitor experience across the World Heritage Site (Photo dated 16th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

There is a requirement for significant environmental improvements at Kunta Kinteh Island and on the shoreline of the mainland. The jetties at the island and at Juffureh are to be replaced under a separate TDRGP project associated with new infrastructure works for protection of the island. Though the main reception point for visitors to the destination will remain the JAYS centre in Albreda, there is a need to significantly enhance the visitor experience across the area. Proposals include enhanced interpretation provision (including themed, signposted trails and a revitalised museum with temporary exhibition space); and provision of appropriate facilities for community members to supply services to visitors (e.g. a responsibly-managed homestay accommodation network, catering, retail, craft demonstrations, guiding services). The destination's appeal will be further enhanced by the revival of the Roots homecoming festival which will afford visitors the opportunity to engage with the enhanced facilities across this part of the World Heritage Site.

At nearby Fort Bullen, which is part of the same WHS inscription, enhancements to interpretation and museum displays, revitalisation of the former government rest house and a creative approach to landscape improvements around the fort structure, including the provision of an events space in front of the fort, will enhance its appeal to visitors keen to learn more about that aspect of the country's history.

TARGET MARKETS

It is anticipated that these enhancements to the product and experiences across the destination will attract new audiences to the Kunta Kinteh and Associated Sites World Heritage Site. In particular, Gambia's many regular '3S' (sun, sea and sand) tourists who have made day trips to Albreda in the past will be encouraged to return and enjoy the revitalised destination. Revitalising the Roots Festival will help develop the diaspora market as well as domestic tourists.

The developments at Fort Bullen will also allow the site become a prime attraction to cater for tourists stepping off the ferry from Banjul, whether on a day trip to Barra or passing through on the way to Niumi and other destinations on the North Bank, as well for those tourists staying overnight in the GTB's new ecolodge development just 100 metres from the fort entrance. The establishment of a programme of events using the space in front of the fort will help attract domestic visitors in particular.

2.3.3 Basse: Traditions of Basse

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Basse and the surrounding communities such as Allunhari are host to a range of craft workers including potters, weavers and gold and silver smiths, many of whom find it hard to access the main tourist markets because of the town's relatively remote location compared to the main Senegambia hub. Yet the town lies at a major transport intersection with good road access along both sides of the river, and is around one day's journey by boat from the growing tourism destination of Janjanbureh.



Figure 2 : The 'Traditions' building in Basse, potential home for a new craft centre and cafe (Photo dated 15th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

Rehabilitation of the former 'Traditions' building on the riverbanks, combined with the creation of an adjacent outdoor performance and events space and workspaces for craft workers, will create a focal point for practitioners of a range of crafts and cultural groups. A capacity-building programme based at the facility will support producers and vendors as they develop higher quality and more diverse products based on their traditional craft skills.

Workspaces, a retail and exhibition area and a first floor cafe overlooking the river will provide an ideal attraction for tourists passing through the town as well as those staying in nearby locations such as the EbA lodge at Kossemar. The cafe and craft retail function should also appeal to local residents, particularly those looking for bolts of the locally produced woven fabric.

TARGET MARKETS

The building's location close to the dry season market and adjacent to a landing stage make it an ideal location to develop a new tourism attraction for the town, strengthening its profile as a destination for the more adventurous traveller. It should also encourage more tour operators to develop packages that take their clients further upriver than the traditional stopping point of Janjanbureh.

The town's appeal as a destination could be further enhanced by additional investment in, for example, cycling and hiking trails, youth camps and a regular river cruise programme though all of these opportunities must be private sector-led and do not form part of the formal proposals presented here.

2.3.4 Bintang Bolong: Bringing the River Closer

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Bintang Bolong is located within easy reach of the main tourism area on the coast, and offers an ideal opportunity to introduce tourists to life on the river in its broadest sense, including both the communities who make their living from the river and on its banks, as well as the flora and fauna that depend on it. Existing lodge operators have already established a nascent set of excursions into local villages to experience aspects of rural life and parts of the Bolong are already used for boat-based bird watching excursions.



Figure 3 : Boats adjacent to the oyster mounds at Bintang Bolong, a visit to which could be a new experience offered to tourists wishing to learn more about life on and around the Bolong. (Photo dated 11th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

A suite of investments has been identified that will cater for both overnight tourists and day trippers, including new jetties and landing stages, new private-sector lodge accommodation on the

shores of the Bolong and at Kalagi, enhanced catering provision at key locations and designated locations where tourists and host communities can enjoy their first engagement with one another. In Bintang village in particular, links will be made with the FAO-funded PROREFISH project which seeks to upskill women engaged in fish and shellfish processing and distribution.

Better provision of wildlife viewing opportunities will help attract novice and casual birdwatchers, whilst supply chain initiatives, particularly with local food producers, will help to ensure the additional yields from tourism are retained as far as possible within the local economy. Capacity building work within local communities will help to identify new experiences that can be packaged and sold to day visitors as well as to guests staying in the area's lodges and camps.

TARGET MARKETS

The proposed developments will be targeted principally at general tourists seeking a 'gentle' introduction to the wildlife of the river and to the lifestyles of the communities living along the Bolong. Both overnight tourists and day visitors will benefit from a range of packages that can be developed by the private sector to take advantage of the various infrastructure improvements and enhanced provision of visitor facilities. Domestic tourism will also be stimulated. Tourist groups in transit along the South Bank Road will also be encouraged to use some of the facilities close to the main road.

2.3.5 Denton Bridge: Developing the River Gateway

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Denton Bridge already functions as the *de facto* gateway onto the river for many visitors. However, the access road off the main Banjul – Serrekunda Highway is unsurfaced and in poor condition; the site itself lacks access to basic utility networks such as power, water and sewerage; the site layout is not amenable to creating a safe pedestrian environment; most of the structures serving boat owners, repair services and tourist functions (catering, shelter) are jerry-built and in poor condition, and the jetties for accessing boats are generally in a poor state of repair creating legitimate Health and Safety concerns. Moreover, because the site is at sea level, it is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and therefore there is a need to protect as much of the mangrove ecosystem as possible. Finally, the current sand dredging happening on the seaward side of the bridge is compromising navigational conditions in Oyster Creek.



Figure 4 : View towards Denton Bridge, highlighting some of the challenges present including abandoned boats that compromise navigation as well detract from the aesthetics, poor quality jetties (bottom left) and the vulnerability of the shoreline to rising sea levels (Photo dated 19th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

Installing better road access, connecting the site to mains networks, stabilising the shoreline and raising up the ground level by up to a metre, to accommodate any future rise in sea levels, will create a better enabling environment for business. Environmental improvements (including removing hulls of abandoned boats) and investing in better quality buildings and jetties across the site will enable more boats (and potentially larger boats) to load/offload passengers at the same time as well as create an attractive environment where tourists may wish to stay longer before or after their cruise. Enhanced provision for tourists will include a visitor reception area and small interpretive centre introducing the heritage of mangrove ecosystems, restaurants and bars, a walkway through the mangroves, a viewing platform and picnic areas.

TARGET MARKETS

Potential new audiences include not only leisure day trippers from Kombo and Banjul (international and domestic visitors) but also cruise passengers disembarking at Banjul and wanting a half or whole day excursion on the river; water sports enthusiasts who partake in activities such as fishing, kayaking and paddle-boarding, and those embarking on multi-day trips upriver.

2.3.6 Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh and surroundings: Crossroads of Cultures

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Janjanbureh has functioned as a meeting point for different cultures ever since the town was founded as a colonial outpost in 1823. More recently it has become celebrated for its association with the Kankurang tradition. Sadly, the central area of the town is showing major signs of neglect and many of the former colonial buildings that were integral to plans for putting ‘*Historic Georgetown*’ on the UNESCO World Heritage List are now in a poor state of repair (indeed, one such building, the historically significant ‘Wooden House, which was built by freed slaves, has collapsed completely and only the foundations remain).



Figure 5 : Looking towards the ferry boarding area over land that could be used to create a vibrant and attractive public space for tourists and residents alike, and that would provide a better setting for the remaining historic buildings associated with colonial ‘Georgetown’ (Photo dated 14th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

Proposals are for a major urban regeneration initiative in the heart of the town that creates a new public space as well as an upgraded museum, visitor information, accommodation and hospitality

facilities. A re-imagining of the existing Kankurang museum facility and the neighbouring festival site will ensure the long term viability of the important annual festival and will create better storage and changing provision for festival performers. It will also enhance the potential of the festival grounds to host other large events. Further afield, conservation works to the colonial cemetery and creation of a trail to it from the town will encourage visitors to explore more of the town.

Delivering the ongoing preservation and presentation of colonial-era and other important heritage assets across the town will require considerable revenue funding, and it is proposed that NCAC, GTB and partners explore opportunities for introducing a 'tourism tax' to generate funds for conservation works.

Supporting the work in the town itself will be the creation of a new high quality accommodation lodge upriver at Kunkilling Forest Park where there will be a range of nature-based activities including hiking, wildlife viewing etc; conservation works to the nearby Musa Mollah tomb and the creation of forest trails. These additional interventions will provide further activities suited to tourists staying several days in and around the town. This is one location where substantial community consultation will be required to ensure developments proceed with full local support, not least because part of the land proposed for redevelopment is currently in private hands.

TARGET MARKETS

It is anticipated that the proposed developments will cater for a broad range of markets include cultural, nature and activity tourists on a general tour of the country, as Janjanbureh has the chance to become a major node for exploring the eastern part of the country. The key objective is to encourage such tourists to extend their length of stay in the town and surrounding area whether they are travelling on organised packages or independently. Domestic and regional tourists will be catered for by the enhanced provision related to the Kankurang tradition and associated festival.

2.3.7 Kenya Kenya Jamango Mosque: Welcoming the Spiritual Traveller

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

The Kenya Kenya Jamango mosque occupies a special place in the heritage of the Tijani Sufi sect of Islam, and is particularly popular with pilgrims from neighbouring Senegal. Built on top of three rocks where Shaykh Umar Futi'u Taal spent time in spiritual retreat, the mosque occupies a prominent location overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Political changes in The Gambia in 2017 meant that the secular buildings on the site, designed to accommodate visitors, were never completed. Landscaping around the site remains deficient, and the site may be at risk from rising sea levels.



Figure 6 : The seaward side of the mosque, illustrating the proximity to the shoreline and the associated risk to the structure allied to future sea level changes (Photo dated 19th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

In order to support the growth of religious tourism in The Gambia, especially from West African neighbours, it is proposed to develop a suite of lodges for independent travellers in the dunes to the north of the site, and to construct a 40 room hotel (probably to 3 star standard) that can accommodate groups of pilgrims. All tourist accommodation on site will operate according to Muslim-friendly tourism principles (e.g. only halal foods served; no alcohol on site; provision of prayer mats in all rooms), and a capacity-building programme for local hospitality businesses promoting Muslim-friendly tourism will ensure all pilgrims and visitors to the site receive an appropriate experience.

Landscaping the small dell between these two locations will create an attractive semi-natural landscape for contemplation and installing a more formal garden in front of the mosque, to traditional Islamic design, will enhance the overall aesthetic appeal of the building. Enhancing visitor facilities in the mosque or at the entrance point for non-Muslim cultural tourists who could have the mosque as a stop off on a cultural itinerary is also important, as is the provision of a more formal promenade (which could form part of sea defences for the site) and addressing the need to renovate the mosque building itself (basic painting, electrics & toilets). A small museum or interpretive centre displaying some of Shaykh Umar Futi'u Taal's scriptures and talking about his contribution to Islam in West Africa will further enhance the appeal of the site, to both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors. The concrete extension to the mosque for the Koranic school negatively impacts the overall impression of the mosque and alternative provision could be created elsewhere, allowing for the removal of this intrusive structure.

TARGET MARKETS

There are three main markets anticipated for this site: pilgrims and spiritual travellers (either in groups or travelling independently) with a religious motivation who wish to stay for some days; individuals wishing to visit just for a day and with religious motivations; and finally non-Muslim visitors keen to learn more about this aspect of the region's religious traditions.

2.3.8 Kiang West National Park and Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve: Celebrating Gambia's Biodiversity

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Kiang West National Park and nearby Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve present an ideal opportunity to strengthen the country's profile as a destination for wildlife and nature tourism and ecological research. Both locations have seen investment in the past, though funds have not been sufficient to maintain the infrastructure to the standards needed to attract high-spending tourists. The success of the private sector lodge at nearby Tendaba demonstrates that there is considerable demand from international tourists wishing to view the area's rich wildlife and stunning habitats. The strategic location of the National Park and Wetland Reserve thus provide a gold opportunity on which to build a high quality nature tourism product catering for a range of market segments.

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

Reimagining the current Park HQ as a focal point for mid-range visitor accommodation as well as for education and learning activities (including provision of a laboratory and a botanical garden), from primary school age up to post-doctoral applied research, will provide a focal point for future marketing of the country to a broad range of nature tourists from the SAVE sector (Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Educational). Particular emphasis will be placed on attracting scientific researchers to the park from international universities and research centres to support some of the important conservation initiatives taking place there, including work with the Red Colobus Monkey (genus *Ptilocolobus*), African Clawless Otter (*Aonyx capensis*) and the Sitatunga or Marshbuck (*Tragelaphus spekii*).

Investing in higher quality lodges and semi-permanent camp sites elsewhere in the park and also on the North Bank, at Bao Bolong, as well as much enhanced provision of access roads, trails, viewing platforms, a canopy trail and landing stages, will encourage greater use of the area by visitors interested in both terrestrial and marine biology. Provision of new waterholes for wildlife (existing and introduced), plus a network of fire hydrants and stores of fire-fighting equipment, are important operational investments to ensure the survival of both habitat and wildlife. Existing proposals for hot air ballooning and the provision of solar-powered boats for wildlife watching, if these are delivered by external partners, will also enhance the visitor experience. The plan to extend the boundary of Kiang West to include several new villages brings with it additional opportunity to involve new communities in delivering and managing aspects of the destination's nature tourism product, but also brings major challenges in terms of protecting the boundary of the parks which could mean some significant investment in boundary fences at some point in the future.



Figure 7 : The existing National Park headquarters at Kiang West, which has the potential to be developed as an important centre for nature tourism and scientific research, acting as a focal point for visiting researchers and academics as well as ecotourists and educational groups (Photo dated 12th June 2024)

TARGET MARKETS

As indicated above, this project is designed particularly to cater for the so-called SAVE sector (Scientific, Academic, Volunteer and Educational). The revitalised Park HQ will function as the focal point for accommodating the needs of this market, attracting both international and domestic visitors, whilst additional high quality lodges elsewhere in the Park will be targeted at high-yield international markets. Tourist groups in transit along the South Bank Road will also be encouraged to use facilities such as the canopy walk, and to spend time at one of the viewing areas.

2.3.9 Kotu Beach Craft Market: Reimagining Gambia's Craft Sector

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Most of the craft markets within the TDA are showing their age and the facilities fail to present an attractive retail destination to many visitors. At the same time there has been little innovation in the craft sector for many years, which is a particular problem when trying to sell to the Gambia's many repeat visitors. The GTB has a remit to support and develop the Gambian craft sector and this represents a major opportunity for a pilot project to stimulate real change across the sector.



Figure 8 : Kotu craft market at the end of the season – a tired product requiring reinvention so that it offers a better experience to visitors, and more commercial opportunities for SMMEs in the craft and hospitality sectors (Photo dated 11th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

It is proposed to replace the current structure at Kotu with an open air beach bazaar alongside an attractive new craft innovation centre built using sustainable construction techniques. The new buildings will contain provision for craft producers, creative SMMEs and retailers as well as food stalls provision. Significantly, these local entrepreneurs will be provided with technical support and opportunities to learn from best practice elsewhere to experiment with new designs, materials and ways of selling. It is also crucial to note that the open air beach bazaar space is intended to provide market access to other craft markets on a rotation basis. The surrounding infrastructure (including beach vendors and tourist taxi site) and environment on both beach and land sides will be enhanced through sensitive upgrading, with the intention of creating a destination that will attract international tourists and domestic visitors well into the evening.

TARGET MARKETS

This development will not just cater for tourists staying locally in Kotu's many resorts, but will also provide training facilities for craft workers and retailers from across the country so that they can be inspired to innovate themselves and take their learning back to other craft markets across the TDA and beyond.

2.3.10 Niumi National Park and Jinack Island: Supporting Conservation through Tourism

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Niumi National Park on the North Bank was recently designated as an internationally recognised Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO because it is the location of some of West Africa's last pristine mangrove forests. Moreover, it is one of the few places in West Africa where it is possible to see the manatee or sea cow (*Trichechus senegalensis*), a shy and iconic aquatic mammal. It also has some important breeding and feeding grounds for a wide range of bird species, as well as a small but highly important population of Senegal bush babies (*Galago senegalensis*). It is thus a potentially very important site for forest activities such as hiking, wildlife viewing and bird watching as well as a potential component of multi-destination packages linking nature tourism in the North Bank with wildlife tourism opportunities in neighbouring Senegal.



Figure 9 : Approaching Jinack Kajateh Village, a gateway onto the island for those approaching by boat (Photo dated 18th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

Creation of a National Park Gateway and Information Centre at Kunuma Village and a formal landing stage at Mbankam for creek access, as well as investment in new hiking trails and viewing platforms.

Investment proposals to accommodate a larger (though manageable) volume of tourism include supporting the development of the new lodge in Bakindik village and the establishment of new tourist accommodation provision on the seashore. By enhancing the infrastructure for access to remoter parts of the park including a number of trails, landing stages and viewing platforms, and by providing better wildlife and birdlife viewing opportunities, visitors will be encouraged to directly support conservation activities in the park.

TARGET MARKETS

The proposed investments will increase accessibility and local awareness of the Park within a range of target markets, including educational groups and day visitors from the TDA, whilst the active promotion of community-based tourism services by that same information centre will help to strengthen the local visitor economy. New lodge accommodation will also attract more adventurous travellers seeking a quieter stay in a protected area. Transit tourists passing through to and from Senegal will also be encouraged to spend time in Niumi.

2.3.11 Wassu Stone Circles: Celebrating 1,000 Years of Culture

KEY ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

Wassu Stone Circles occupies a strategically important position on the main North Bank Road, lying close enough to Janjanbureh to be a day-trip destination from there as well as functioning as a stop-off point for travellers moving along the river. The existing facilities are ‘tired’ and need considerable upgrading, and the buffer zone is not sufficiently well demarcated to help protect this internationally significant archaeological site. The nearby quarry site from which stones were extracted to create the monument is not currently formally protected and would benefit from inclusion within a revised World Heritage Site inscription.



Figure 10 : Wassu Stone Circles will benefit from better physical protection, the quarry site from better legal protection and visitors to this important World Heritage property will enjoy enhanced interpretation and associated visitor services (Photo dated 13th June 2024)

PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS

It is strongly recommended that NCAC proceeds as soon as possible with its proposals to extend the site's World Heritage Site status to include the nearby quarry, as this will increase the level of legal protection for the site. Allied to this administrative task will be investment in increasing the level of physical protection for the stones themselves, the quarry and for the surrounding buffer zone.

An expansion and refurbishment of the site museum and provision of additional facilities for re-tailing and catering will extend the length of stay for most market segments, leading to greater business for local traders, and possibly also increased demand for overnight accommodation (to be provided in the village). Facilitating greater community use of the buffer zone for irrigated, properly planned and managed agricultural production will ensure Wassu residents feel a sense of ownership of the whole site.

Finally, installation of a safe, accessible landing stage in nearby Kuntaur will create greater links with river traffic, and will permit Wassu to be marketed more closely with nearby Baboon Island and the River Gambia National Park.

TARGET MARKETS

Key target markets will include cultural tourists travelling on a multi-day itinerary on the river or along the North Bank; education groups, nature tourists staying in lodges at the River Gambia National Park and seeking an alternative experience; and finally general interest tourists staying in and around Janjanbureh who can travel out to Wassu for a day trip.

2.3.12 Summary

Collectively, these 10 project opportunities represent a coherent suite of proposals that, once implemented, will strengthen the destination's product offer to a number of target markets already singled out for specific action in the new National Tourism Policy and Strategy for The Gambia.

The particular ideas presented for each location are based on the consultant team's understanding of destination development in a wide range of situations facing diverse challenges and opportunities. Of course the proposals as presented here are at the early conceptual stage, and more detail is

available for each location in the companion report. It should also be noted that over time, circumstances may require some amendments to the ideas presented here, but it is the firm view of the consultants that they present a solid foundation on which to help build a new future for Gambian tourism.

2.4 DEVELOPING CLUSTERS OF ATTRACTIONS AROUND THESE GROWTH POLES

One of the aspirations of the PIU and other stakeholders for this project is to stimulate tourism activity not just at the 10 selected locations but in the surrounding areas, through some form of clustering of interventions. As previously mentioned in Section 2.3.1, more detailed proposals for branding and targeted marketing activities are currently being addressed by consultants working for the PIU on a project entitled “*Development and Implementation of a Tourism Marketing Strategy for Destination Gambia*”, and it is anticipated that the proposals presented in outline here, and explored in more detail in the companion report, will provide considerable support for proposals relating to cultural, wildlife, activity and other niche market development. Table 3 presents some initial proposals for clustering that can be further worked up with appropriate partners, including site managers, tour operators and the GTB, in their efforts to broaden the appeal of different parts of the country to different market segments.

Table 3 – Opportunities for clustering tourism around the selected project locations

| Location | Potential clustering with other nearby locations to support local destination development and branding |
|---|---|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | <p>Kunta Kinteh Island, Albreda and Juffureh represent a cluster of destinations in their own right, particularly when one considers the associated remains at nearby San Domingo and the forthcoming community-led museum project in Juffureh. This cluster will appeal to the diaspora and ‘Roots’ markets as well as to cultural and heritage tourists, and those with a more general interest in The Gambia.</p> <p>Fort Bullen offers scope to act as a focal point for general interest tourism north of the river and could be combined with a visit to Niomi National Park and/ or Jinack Island as either a long single day excursion for people staying in the TDA, or as an overnight/ short break trip.</p> <p>Fort Bullen can also function as a starting or end point for a trip to Albreda & Juffureh for cultural and heritage tourists, with the journey between the two locations being by road and offering a counterpoint to the conventional boat ride from Banjul to Albreda.</p> |
| Basse | <p>At almost the extreme easterly end of the country, Basse will be the turn-around point for most tourists on a general cultural and natural heritage tour of the country. Nearby attractions such as Sabi Forest Park and the remains of Sutokoba Ancient Trading Town, though both of modest interest in their own right at present, could nonetheless be packaged into a suite of excursions for visitors staying in the town and its surroundings, and seeking a more unusual tourism experience.</p> |
| Bintang Bolong | <p>This location is proposed as a destination in its own right, attracting a mixture of day visitors and overnight tourists to different parts of the Bolong. It is not anticipated at this stage that it is combined with any other location, but rather than attention is paid to raising the whole area’s profile as a location for getting to learn about life on the river.</p> |
| Denton Bridge | <p>The principal function of Denton Bridge is to act as a gateway onto the river for a broad range of markets. It can however, also function as a focal point for watersports that are appropriate in the creek setting (e.g. fishing, kayaking, paddle-boarding).</p> |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | <p>This has already effectively been developed as a cluster of locations, focussed on the centre of Janjanbureh but with links to neighbouring attractions that should keep tourists occupied in and around the town for at least two days.</p> |

| Location | Potential clustering with other nearby locations to support local destination development and branding |
|---|--|
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | Though pilgrims and spiritual travellers will focus their attention on the mosque itself, more general cultural tourists on a day trip out from the TDA might be encouraged to visit the nearby Bolongfenyo Community Wildlife Reserve, the commercially-run Gambian Reptiles Farm or the better-known Tanji Bird Reserve and the nearby fishing village, though the latter are further away. |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | This is already a cluster of tourism opportunities for nature and wildlife tourists of all levels of interest. Obvious marketing opportunities exist with existing accommodation businesses on both sides of the river (e.g. Tendaba and Morgan Kunda Camps). |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | Though located close to Fajara craft market, it is firmly proposed that the revitalised craft market and associated facilities at Kotu Beach are promoted as a retail and entertainment destination in their own right and not clustered with a potentially competing facility. |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | As noted above, Niumi could be combined in a cluster with Fort Bullen and Barra for general excursionists. For ecotourists and wildlife tourists, a cross-border package with Fathala Wildlife Reserve and the Parc National du Delta du Saloum in Senegal is possible. |
| Wassu Stone Circles | For general tourism itineraries, linking the Wassu site with the new landing stage at Kuntaur and the potential for boat trips out to Baboon Island/ River Gambia National Park is particularly important. These could be 2 to 3 hour excursions out from Kuntaur and back to the same location OR tourists could join a larger trip boat and travel all the way up to Janjanbureh the same afternoon/ evening. For cultural tourism specialists, the associated site of Kerr Batch Stone Circles could be promoted alongside a trip to Wassu, where the potential to view the Lyre stone offers a USP. Cross-border trips into Senegal to view some of the stone circles there would also be appropriate for a specialist heritage market. |

2.5 ANTICIPATED BENEFITS TO GAMBIAN TOURISM INCLUDING FIT WITH TARGET MARKETS

2.5.1 Targeting niche markets with growth potential

The selection of the 10 locations for investment was determined principally by their potential to accommodate additional growth in visitor numbers in a sustainable fashion, but also to act individually and collectively as attractor factors that will raise awareness of The Gambia as a destination for new markets as well as stimulate interest from existing markets. It is useful to note, for instance, that a survey of more than 2,100 travellers flying out of Banjul undertaken in spring 2024¹ found that:

- 41% engaged in some form of wildlife viewing during their stay;
- 30% had visited at least one cultural attraction;
- 26% reported having been on a river cruise; and
- 19% said they had spent time bird watching.

There is thus already a proven market for cultural and nature-based tourism amongst The Gambia's existing tourists. Reflecting this, one of the rationales for the proposed investments is to tap into this, encouraging visitors currently staying in the main TDA area to venture further afield, and

¹ Acorn Tourism Development Consultants (2024) *International Visitor Survey: Findings and Analysis v1.0. Report to the Tourism Diversification and Resilience in the Gambia Project (TDRGP)*.

for longer periods of time. This will not only take some of the pressure off the key locations in and around Kombo, Senegambia, Brufut and Brikama, but it will also spread the economic benefits of tourism more widely. Such excursions will be developed by local guides, tour operators and DMCs working in partnership with international counterparts and with the various lodging/accommodation providers located across the destination. However, just as significant is the opportunity that these projects bring to support the development, by the private sector and with marketing support from GTB, of new tour packages that will bring to The Gambia a more diverse and, in some cases, specialist markets such as the SAVE travel sector and adventure/ activity tourists. This will take time to establish as it is dependent on relevant projects being delivered on the ground and the eventual presence of a critical mass of new, quality provision that will support the marketing and sale of high-value tour packages.

The location of most of the proposed projects along the river is no coincidence, as it remains the single most important USP for The Gambia compared to all of its West African rival destinations both in terms of its potential as a mode of transport and because of the intangible and tangible heritage associated with it. We foresee the following niche markets being supported by the proposals presented elsewhere in this report:

- packages for dedicated bird watchers for whom there will be enhanced provision from the North Bank up as far as Central River Region in addition to existing facilities further upriver;
- scientific researchers with an academic interest in different aspects of nature conservation and habitat protection (elsewhere referred to as the SAVE sector – scientific, academic, volunteer and educational);
- nature tourists keen to engage with a range of habitats and who wish to support directly some of the conservation initiatives happening throughout The Gambia;
- diaspora and ‘Roots’ tourists, principally from the USA, who are keen to explore their ancestral homelands;
- tourists with a particular interest in cultural heritage – tangible and intangible – and for whom a trip along the river would offer opportunities to explore a range of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial stories as well as the cultural traditions of The Gambia’s different ethnic groups;
- general interest tourists for whom a week-long cruise up the river, stopping off at a range of cultural and natural heritage sites, would provide an add-on to a stay in one of the beach resorts at Senegambia or as a trip in its own right;
- domestic tourists keen to explore more of the country’s natural and cultural heritage, either on a day trip or as part of a short break;
- pilgrims and religious tourists, especially followers of the Tijani Sufi sect of Islam based in nearby Senegal;
- educational groups from all levels including both domestic groups (school children, college and university students) and international visitors (principally from higher educational settings).

In addition to the above, the enhancements at Niumi National Park, Fort Bullen, Kotu Beach Craft Market, Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque, Denton Bridge, Albreda and Juffureh (including Kunta Kinteh Island) all have the potential to stimulate more day visit excursions from tourists already staying around Kombo and Senegambia, as well as from cruise ship passengers docking in Banjul for a day. The table overleaf seeks to summarise the fit between each of the 10 locations and these key markets. How these proposals could translate into potential visitor throughput and occupancy rates at each of the locations is explored in Section 3 of this report, in order to provide a basic foundation for the estimation of economic impacts associated with the interventions.

Table 4 – Anticipated main markets for each of the 10 investment locations

| Location | Keen bird watchers | Scientific researchers/ SAVE | Conservation holidays | Diaspora and 'Roots' tourists | Cultural heritage specialists | River cruise passengers | Pilgrims & religious tourists | Domestic tourists and day visitors | Gambian school groups | Gambian & international university groups | Excursions from TDA and cruise ships |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| Albreda & Juffureh, Fort Bullen | | | | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Basse | | | | | X | X | | X | | | |
| Bintang Bolong | X | | | | | X | | X | | | |
| Denton Bridge | | | | | | X | | X | X | X | X |
| Historic Georgetown | | | | | X | X | | X | X | X | |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | | | | | X | | X | X | | | X |
| Kiang West NP and Bao Bolong | X | X | X | | | X | | | X | X | X |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | | | | | X | | | X | | | X |
| Niumi National Park | X | X | X | | | | | X | X | X | X |
| Wassu Stone Circles | | | | | X | X | | X | X | X | |



Figure 11 : View of jetty and shoreline at Denton Bridge showing the need for upgrading and for coastal protection works (Photo dated 19th June 2024)

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2.5.2 Developing wildlife and nature tourism

During discussions with senior representatives of DPWM we have been made aware of a forthcoming initiative to promote various versions of the ‘Big Five’ of The Gambia in an attempt to encourage visitors to spend longer inside National Parks and other protected areas so that they can ‘tick off’ the iconic and rare species on these checklists. Note that none of these species are endemic to The Gambia, though that does not diminish their attraction to wildlife and nature tourists.

The lists presented in Table 5 were created and provided by DPWM and could be used to advise future destination marketing campaigns based around the country’s wildlife and birdlife, and would appeal in particular to general nature tourists seeking a first immersion into The Gambia’s natural heritage. The terrestrial, primate and bird lists are of particular relevance for stimulating additional tourism interest in Kiang West National Park since almost all can be found there (though leopard and caracal are rarely seen). To tick off all of the aquatic species (and again, Manatee and the African Clawless Otter are hard to see), would require an itinerary that takes in the coast (perhaps including trips from Denton Bridge, a stay in Niimi National Park for manatee viewing and a trip on the river around Janjanbureh where there are plentiful populations of hippopotami). This DPWM initiative is thus one to be considered at a later date as tour operators begin to develop packages based around the ecotourism/ nature-tourism investments proposed in this document.

Table 5 – Proposed Big 5 Lists for The Gambia (Source: DPWM)

| Terrestrial Species | Aquatic species | Birds | Fish | Primates |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Leopard (Panthera pardus) | Hippopotamus (Hippopotamus amphibius) | Spur winged goose (Plectropterus gambensis) | Blacktip Shark (Carcharhinus limbatus) | Chimpanzee (Pan troglodytes) |
| Caracal (Caracal caracal) | West African Manatee (Trichechus senegalensis) | African Fish Eagle (Ichthyophaga vocifer) | Lady fish (Pseudotolithus Typus) | Red Colobus (Piliocolobus badius temminckii) |
| Aardvark (Orycteropus afer) | African Clawless otter (Aonyx capensis) | Bateleur Eagle (Terathopius ecaudatus) | Sole fish (Solea solea) | Red Patas (Erythrocebus patas) |
| Serval (Leptailurus serval) | Leatherback Turtle (Dermochelys coriacea) | African Finfoot (Podica senegalensis) | Shrimps (Parapenaeus longirostris) | Western Baboon (Papio papio) |
| Sitatunga (Tragelaphus spekii) | Slender Snouted Crocodiles (Mecistops cataphractus) | Marabou Stork (Leptoptilos crumenifer) | Barracuda (Sphyraena guachancho) | Green vervet monkey (Chlorocebus sabaeus) |

2.6 ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER RELEVANT INITIATIVES

2.6.1 Introduction

There are a number of ongoing government initiatives occurring across The Gambia with implications for the project proposals presented in Section 2.3, as well as some other more localised projects of which we are aware and which need to be considered when taking our initial project proposals out to wider consultation. These are summarised in Table 6, with the information being provided to assist the PIU in identifying strategic partners to help with the development and delivery of the proposed interventions. Two important initiatives are discussed in more detail below.

2.6.2 MCC Gambia Ecotourism Project

One key initiative that impacts on several of the sites is the MCC Gambia Ecotourism Project, for which we have been provided with a draft final report. We have been advised that the report's contents remain to be validated by the relevant Gambian government department(s) but that the recommendations within are unlikely to change significantly from their current draft status. Two of the key objectives of that project, which also align with the rationale behind our own proposals presented in this report, are to:

- integrate into tourism value chains SMMEs based in settlements along the river, especially those owned by women and youth;
- use the country's natural capital as an enabler of high value tourism.

The draft report presents proposals for four priority locations along the river, and are based around the intention of strengthening The Gambia's profile as a destination for nature-based and cultural tourism. The four locations are:

- Denton Bridge;
- Kiang West and Tendaba;
- Janjanbureh and Kunkilling;
- Baboon Island and the Stone Circles.

The proposals for **Denton Bridge** align with our own assessment of the investment requirements there, focussing on upgrading the shoreline infrastructure and access to and around the site, creating a safer and higher quality environment for boat passengers and ensuring that the surrounding mangrove ecosystem is protected.

Similarly, the proposals for **Kiang West and Tendaba** reflect our own suggestions for developing the site in so far as enhanced access and wildlife viewing opportunities are concerned, though our proposals outlined in Section 2.3.8 and expanded upon in the supporting appendix offer a more ambitious scale of investment in the site than do the MCC proposals, one which targets a broad range of nature and wildlife tourism market segments.

The MCC proposals for **Janjanbureh and Kunkilling** also offer some similarities to ours, in terms of enhancing the facilities for the Kankurang Festival and also providing much better wildlife viewing facilities at Kunkilling. Linking the two sites using the river as the main axis is another concept shared across the MCC and our own proposals. However, our proposals build more on the built heritage associated with the Tentative World Heritage Site listing and thus represent an additional exciting element to the potential tourism experience in this part of Central River Region.

Finally, investing in additional wildlife viewing provision and access points across **Baboon Island/River Gambia National Park** represents an additional investment opportunity that we have not addressed. This reflects our premise that it is the Stone Circles at Wassu in particular that require targeted investment in order to strengthen this part of the country's cultural and heritage tourism product offer. However, it is clear that there is considerable complementarity between the MCC proposals for Baboon Island and our own proposals for Wassu and Kuntaur, and if both initiatives proceed they can only support one another in building up the profile of this part of CRR as a destination for cultural and natural heritage tourism.

In summary, there is a large level of complementarity between the proposals put forward in this report and its supporting documentation, and those proposed by the consultants who prepared the MCC report. It is thus vital that the PIU works closely with the MCC team in the Gambia to ensure that investment in the four areas identified above complement each other, and that there is no duplication of effort.

2.6.3 Youth Empowerment Project and the Ninki Nanka Trail

The Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) is another cross-cutting initiative impacting (potentially) on several of the sites. The YEP addresses the economic root causes of irregular migration by supporting youth employment and entrepreneurship. This 10 million Euro funded project is a partnership between the European Union and the Government of the Gambia and is designed to support youth employment in the tourism and creative industries. This initiative focuses on creating job opportunities, enhancing skills training and fostering entrepreneurship among others. The programme is part of the EU's Annual Action Plan 2023 and addresses the priority: "Green economy for sustainable growth and jobs" of the multi-annual indicative programme for the Gambia (MIP 2021-2027), with actions aiming at increasing the competitiveness, inclusiveness and sustainability of the tourism and creative sectors in The Gambia.

This reflects the broad objectives of the TDRGP which as previously indicated, aims to strengthen the country's tourism sector by diversifying its offerings, enhancing its resilience, and promoting sustainable practices. It is also in line with the project's development objective to enhance the resilience and competitiveness of the tourism sector in The Gambia.

In terms of this specific assignment that is the demand and destination site assessment for key tourism sites across The Gambia, YEP funding will be used to support youth employment opportunities especially in the creative sectors in the craft markets in Kotu and Basse, and relating to the Kankurang festival in Janjanbureh.

It is our understanding that the Ninki Nanka trail, which will be partly funded through YEP as one of the priority projects, will also seek to develop tourism products and experiences at a number of locations which have been identified in this assignment as ripe for development. The following sites will thus be impacted upon by the Ninki Nanka trail under YEP funding:

- Basse;
- Baobolong;
- Bintang Bolong;
- Denton Bridge;
- Janjanbureh and Kunkilling;
- Juffureh/ Albreda;
- Wassu.

In all these sites the training of guides, the development of appropriate community governance structures, the provision of new infrastructure such as solar-powered boats etc.. will be crucial. The following community engagement mechanisms are planned for the Ninki Nanka Trail, and should be considered when developing detailed proposals linked to the relevant locations presented here:

- NNT product development group (for organisational and government multi-stakeholder partnership working required to plan and implement the NNT);
- NNT enterprise network (for grass roots capacity building and communication for SMMEs and community groups included in the NNT itineraries); and
- NNE Foundation non-profit organisation (to co-ordinate and facilitate community and multi-stakeholder engagement and capacity building in the NNT).

2.6.4 Other initiatives

Table 6, below, summarises other relevant initiatives and projects that have some alignment with the proposals presented in this report.

Table 6 – Alignment with other projects and initiatives

| Location | Relevant initiatives to be considered |
|---|---|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | <p>ITC/Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) new EU-funded initiative with focus on building capacity of craft producers and creative industries, partly to be delivered by the Ninki Nanka Encounters Foundation</p> <p>Project being led by Dr Bala Saho of the University of Oklahoma to build a community heritage centre in Juffureh</p> <p>GTB development of an eco-lodge development adjacent to Fort Bullen</p> <p>Plans to construct a new ferry terminal in Barra, between the Fort and the existing ferry terminal</p> |
| Basse | <p>Strong marketing links with the EbA camp at Kossemar will provide a steady flow of tourists once the lodge is operational</p> <p>ITC/Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) new EU-funded initiative with focus on building capacity of craft producers and creative industries, partly to be delivered by the Ninki Nanka Encounters Foundation</p> <p>The ‘Gambia Cotton Trail’ Initiative (https://www.gambiacottontrail.com/)</p> |
| Bintang Bolong | <p>PROREFISH project (FAO funded) looking at installing a new jetty at Bintang which would remove the need to deliver one as part of this project</p> <p>ITC/Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) new EU-funded initiative with focus on building capacity of craft producers and creative industries, partly to be delivered by the Ninki Nanka Encounters Foundation</p> <p>DPWM Big Five campaign is relevant</p> |
| Denton Bridge | <p>The NEA, in partnership with UNDP, is leading on a major initiative to enhance the resilience of vulnerable coastal areas and communities to climate change.</p> <p>In 2022, the Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Millennium Challenge Corporation which includes access to a \$12 million grant to, amongst other things, maximize the economic benefits of the River Gambia for the people. Denton Bridge is listed as a major potential project</p> |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | <p>Proposals by NCAC in 2016 to nominate ‘Historic Georgetown’ for inclusion on the World Heritage List as part of the Kunta Kinteh Island and related sites inscription</p> <p>See previous reference to MCC project looking at maximising the impact of the River Gambia as Janjanbureh and Kunkilling are listed as potential sites</p> <p>GTB development of ecolodge development at Kunkilling</p> |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | <p>NCAC is currently considering nominating the mosque for inclusion on the Islamic World Heritage List, an initiative of ICESCO, based in Rabat, Morocco.</p> <p>See previous reference to NEA/ UNDP Initiative</p> |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | <p>See previous reference to MCC project looking at maximising the impact of the River Gambia, which identifies Kiang West and Tendaba as investment opportunities</p> <p>ITC/Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) new EU-funded initiative with focus on building capacity of craft producers and creative industries, partly to be delivered by the Ninki Nanka Encounters Foundation</p> <p>DPWM proposing to enlarge the park</p> <p>DPWM Big Five campaign is relevant</p> |

| Location | Relevant initiatives to be considered |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | See previous reference to NEA/ UNDP Initiative ITC/Gambia Youth Empowerment new EU-funded initiative with focus on building capacity of craft producers and creative industries |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | See previous reference to NEA/ UNDP Initiative DPWM Big Five campaign is relevant Potential marketing links with Fathala Wildlife Reserve across the border in Senegal |
| Wassu Stone Circles | Proposal by NCAC to extend the boundary of the World Heritage Site to include the quarry a few hundred metres due east of the Stone Circles at Wassu ITC/Gambia Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) new EU-funded initiative with focus on building capacity of craft producers and creative industries, partly to be delivered by the Ninki Nanka Encounters Foundation See previous reference to MCC project looking at maximising the impact of the River Gambia which mentions this site, in conjunction with more investment at Baboon Island New landing stage at Kuntaur links with Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Project activities to facilitate responsible visitor and boat owner behaviours in the National Park |

3. Calculating the Potential Economic and Other Benefits of the Proposals

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Below we present our initial assessments of the likely uplift in visitor numbers at individual locations and use this to generate estimates of the annual revenue that tourism will generate at each site once each project is fully implemented and operational. It should be noted that existing market data, particularly for existing accommodation businesses in and around the target locations, is extremely limited and thus the projections are indicative only, and will require more detailed investigation by potential investors and operators at a later date.

This is followed by an outline Cost:Benefit Analysis (CBA) for each of the interventions, based on the estimated costs prepared by the consultancy team's QS. Again, the same caveat applies, namely that the absence of reliable data in many areas means this is indicative only. Finally we present a summary economic impact statement for the collective suite of investments based on our initial projections of the additional revenue that they will generate across The Gambia.

3.2 PROJECTED UPLIFT IN TOURIST DEMAND ACROSS THE TARGETED LOCATIONS

Both individually and collectively there will be an uplift in tourist activity as each individual project comes on-stream, and as opportunities to attract new audiences and to extend penetration into existing markets are realised. In Table 7 we summarise the potential impacts at each site, though the paucity of good quality data on existing visitor numbers means that these should be considered very much as initial broad estimates rather than as detailed, authoritative projections.

Table 7 – Summary of likely impacts on tourist activity at each location once fully operational

| Location | Current throughput (where known) | Anticipated activity once developed |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | 5,359 visitors to Albreda & Juffureh in 2023 (2,183 with tour operators, 2,668 non-Gambians, 26 Gambian adults and 482 educational visits) + 1,410 visitors to Fort Bullen in 2023 (428 tour operators, 114 non-Gambians, 34 Gambian Adults, 120 Gambian children, 714 educational visits) + | In the early 2000s, up to 15,000 visitors per year came to the villages, mainly tourists from the TDA on one-day river excursions from Denton Bridge or Barra. We suggest that with enhanced river access and better facilities at Albreda, Juffureh and Kunta Kinteh island that within 5 years of completion of the works, a figure of 15,000 visitors per year will be reached (90% tourists and non-Gambians, 10% Gambians including school visits). This is a reflection of the fact that even though overall tourism numbers to the Gambia are growing again, it retains a large repeat tourist market who would be unlikely to visit the enhanced facilities at Albreda and Juffureh more than once. With an enhanced local accommodation stock including a homestay network, we suggest the villages will see around 500 bednights per annum. As far as Fort Bullen is concerned, we estimate a tripling of throughput within 5 years to around 4,200 visitors , assuming the works are carried out to a high level, and assuming the neighbouring lodge is fully operational. Again, a 90:10 split Non-Gambians to Gambians is projected. |

| Location | Current throughput (where known) | Anticipated activity once developed |
|---|---|---|
| Basse | No data | <p>Given that this is almost the easternmost point in the country that most tourists will visit on multi-day excursions, we estimate that within 5 years of operations the site will receive 2,000 tourist visits per annum. These will be associated with participants in cultural tourism packages visiting a number of locations along the river including Wassu, Janjanbureh, Kunkilling and the EbA lodge at Kossemar, as well as Basse itself.</p> <p>In addition, there will also be local interest in the work of the craft producers and in the café. For outline economic impact analysis purposes, we have estimated this to be in the region of 250 visits per week or 13,000 per annum (the population of Basse Sante Su was estimated at around 18,400 according to the 2013 census).</p> |
| Bintang Bolong | <p>18 rooms at Bintang Bolong Lodge*; 41 rooms currently at AbCa Creek Lodge (several more under construction)*. No data available on occupancy rates.</p> <p>20 rooms at Foni Ding Ding Lodge in Bwiam (mainly groups)</p> <p>Kalagi Riverside Camp (8 rooms) currently not operational</p> <p>No other formal tourism accommodation in the area at present.</p> | <p>Assuming an 8 month season, and assuming that another 25 rooms are added at another new lodge somewhere between Bintang and Kalagi, that will provide a capacity of around 120 rooms or 240 bedspaces (57,600 bedspaces over a 240 day season). For planning purposes an estimate of 40% occupancy is used or around 23,000 bednights sold, once the whole development across the whole bolong is operational. Assuming an average length of stay of 2 nights, this equates to around 11,500 visitors to the area. We propose an 85:15 split Non-Gambians to Gambians</p> |
| Denton Bridge | <p>No formal usage data available.</p> <p>21 members of DBA* though some boat owners are not members.</p> <p>Around 10 sport fishing boats, 5 restaurants, 2 boat repair businesses.</p> | <p>We project that within 5 years of the works being completed, around 30,000 people will pass through the facilities to board boats for single or multi-day trips of all types (cruises, fishing trips). Over an 8 month season this is equivalent to around 3,750 per month on average.</p> <p>For planning purposes, it is assumed that 30% of visitors (9,000 per annum) will spend time in one of the hospitality businesses at Denton Bridge after the redevelopment works are complete and the location is established.</p> <p>In terms of boat movements, we estimate around 10 movements per day over 240 days, or 2,400 separate boat movements.</p> |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | <p>3,350 visitors reported to the Kankurang Museum between Jan and May 2023+.</p> <p>No information available on the number of tourists staying in Janjanbureh over the course of a year, or on the total number of tourist bednights. However, our research has established there are currently 114 tourist rooms on offer in and around the town, or around 230 bedspaces.</p> <p>In the 2023/24 season it was reported that 40 people visited Kunkilling but in the past up to 150 tourists would visit per year*.</p> | <p>Assuming 230 bedspaces and a target of 40% utilisation over 240 days (8 months) gives a total of 22,080 bednights. And assuming an average length of stay in the town of 2 nights, that gives an estimate of just over 11,000 tourists per annum visiting the town.</p> |

| Location | Current throughput (where known) | Anticipated activity once developed |
|---|--|---|
| | No information is available for the Musa Mollah Tomb. | |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | No formal data is available. It is suggested that some thousands of worshippers attend the three day annual <i>Gamo</i> *. There is a small but regular flow of worshippers to the mosque on a daily basis. | It is proposed to provide 80 to 100 bedspaces across the hotel and lodges. Assuming 50% occupancy within 5 years, this will equate to between 16,400 and 18,250 bednights per year (or 40 to 50 guests per day). In addition we estimate a further 50 pilgrims/ worshippers per day on average, though their expenditure will be minimal. |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | DPWM records show 1,730 visitors to the Park in the 3 years 2022 – 2024 (117, 824 and 709 respectively). 160 bedspaces reported at Tendaba Camp. No other operational accommodation nearby at present on south bank. On the north bank, Morgan Kinda Lodge has 8 rooms (16 bedspaces) and already has a strong reputation as a base for exploring the wildlife and birdlife of Bao Bolong | Assuming provision of a total of 50 tourist bedspaces in the main camp and satellite camps, and assuming 40% occupancy over a full 12 month season, we estimate a total of 7,300 bednights in DPWM managed camps. Assuming an average length of stay of 3 nights provides a total of around 2,400 individual guests per year for forecasting purposes. In addition, we estimate a total of 1,000 nights per year spent by Gambian students and school children in the bunkhouse at the revitalised HQ complex. Tendaba Camp and Morgan Kunda Lodge will continue to operate as present and will not see their throughput decrease or guests displaced as the new facilities at Kiang West will be targeting a different market. Indeed, they are likely to benefit from the developments at Kiang West and Bao Bolong which, if properly marketed, should help them attract more guests to their own premises. |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | No data available at present on the number of craft market visitors. Currently around 80 to 85 traders at the craft market. There are more than 1,000 hotel rooms in the Kotu and Palma Rina area, or more than 2,000 bedspaces. | For planning purposes we estimate an average daily throughput of 200 tourists per day (equivalent to a 10% penetration rate into the core market staying locally). Over the course of an 8 month season, this equates to around 48,000 individual visits . |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | Only information available is for Jinack Lodge which has 12 double rooms and which reports accommodating between 250 and 300 visitors per season, with an average stay of between 2 to 3 nights (so between 500 and 900 bednights per season)*. This is roughly a 16% occupancy rate assuming an 8 month season. No data is available for Feel Free Lodge nearby. | With stronger marketing and investment in a range of wildlife viewing opportunities, we anticipate an uplift in tourist activity to around 2,000 bednights (1,000 tourists) per season across all three establishments. In addition, we project a further 2,000 day visitors on excursions into the National Park, engaging in wildlife viewing activities organised from the new National Park centre. |
| Wassu Stone Circles | 1,440 visitors in 2023 (1,031 tour operators, 114 non-Gambians, 295 educational visits)+. | Within 5 years of refurbishment and associated investments, and with the development of more themed packages along the river, we anticipate this increasing to around 3,500 visits per annum; 3,000 from non-Gambians and the remainder from Gambians and educational visits |

Sources of information: * Operators/ owners/ managers | + NCAC | o Bradt Guide to The Gambia, 2023

Table 8 below summarises the expected levels of tourist and visitor activity at each location once it is fully established and operational, generally within 5 years of operations commencing. These target figures have been used to help prepare the spreadsheets for the outline Cost: Benefit Analysis (CBA) for each intervention, and for the overall estimate of combined economic impact of the 10 destination-based projects.

Table 8 – Summary of projected annual throughput at each location once fully operational

| Location | Projected number of tourists | Projected number of bednights | Other information for economic forecasting |
|---|--|--|--|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | 15,000 to Albreda, Juffureh & Kunta Kinteh Island 4,200 to Fort Bullen In both cases, we project a 90:10 split of Non-Gambians to Gambians | 500 bednights per annum in homestay network in the two villages. | Assume 14,600 customers per year (40/day average) at the former Government Resthouse adjacent to Fort Bullen Assume 2,000 people visit locally-run events held outside the Fort each year |
| Basse | 2,000 tourist visits | N/A | 13,000 visits from local population per year |
| Bintang Bolong | 11,500 tourist visits Propose an 85:15 split Non-Gambians to Gambians | 23,000 bednights per annum | Assume another 1,000 day visits a year from excursionists from the TDA |
| Denton Bridge | 30,000 people pass through the site | N/A | 2,400 boat movements 9,000 people use on-site hospitality provision |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | 11,040 tourist visits Assume 95:5 split Non-Gambians to Gambians | 22,080 bednights in the town and at Kunkilling | 3,000 visitors to Kankurang Festival |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | 18,250 staying visitors Assume 90:10 split Non-Gambians to Gambians | 18,250 bednights per year | 18,250 daily pilgrim visits |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | 2,400 individual visitors Assume 95:5 split Non-Gambians to Gambians | 7,300 bednights in DPWM managed camps. | 1,000 nights per year spent by Gambian students and school children 1,000 day visits per year from tourists staying at Tendaba and elsewhere |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | 48,000 individual visits | N/A | N/A |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | 1,000 tourist visits | 2,000 bednights | 2,000 day visitors |
| Wassu Stone Circles | 3,500 day visits Assume 85:15 split Non-Gambian to Gambian | 200 bednights in a homestay operation in the village | N/A |

3.3 SUMMARY OF ESTIMATED DELIVERY COSTS

The team's Quantity Surveyor and Consultant Architect have prepared initial cost estimates for each of the 10 projects, using locally sourced data on the costs of different construction materials, actions and interventions and our initial assessments of the tasks involved in delivering each capital programme. Full details are available in each of the separate project briefs, and are summarised in Table 9, below.

It is important to note that these are initial estimates at 2024 prices and although they include a contingency allowance of 20%, will still be relatively crude indicators of the likely final costs. For instance, more detailed development of the plans may result in more modest, and hence cheaper, investment proposals. On the other hand, should construction not commence for several years, the final cost estimates will require inflation to be taken into account (and this is currently running at over 10% per annum in The Gambia).

Nonetheless, with those caveats in mind, the estimates provided below provide a reasonable indication of the scale of investment that will be required to deliver all 10 projects as anticipated, to the standards required to deliver real change across the whole of The Gambia's tourism infrastructure.

Table 9 – Estimated delivery costs, capital works only (2024 prices)

| Location | Estimated delivery costs (US\$) |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | \$6,806,229 |
| Basse | \$1,610,508 |
| Bintang Bolong | \$3,554,006 |
| Denton Bridge | \$9,303,428 |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | \$4,035,048 |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | \$4,060,371 |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | \$11,350,985 |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | \$1,648,986 |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | \$3,596,249 |
| Wassu Stone Circles | \$1,827,956 |
| Total costs, all projects combined | \$47,793,766 |

In addition to the above, there are two revenue items that should be considered as essential to the delivery of these project proposals:

- running capacity-building projects in each community and organisation that will be impacted by the proposals in order that they can fully benefit from the opportunities presented here. These will cover a wide range of areas of concern including conservation and management of cultural heritage sites; forming PPCPs and Joint Ventures; story-telling and interpretation; child protection; health & safety on the river; empowering women and improving the quality of service delivery across the hospitality sector. An initial estimate for a three-year programme of activities is **US\$2,600,000**. Appendix 3 presents an indicative breakdown of what is required here. It is too early to identify a precise allocation across the different projects so a 10% split per project is perhaps as good an initial starting point as any;
- preparing a new management plan for Wassu Stone Circles (and the associated Kerr Batch site plus the locations in neighbouring Senegal) to support the inclusion of the Quarry on the

World Heritage List. An indicative cost for this is between **US\$50,000** and **US\$100,000** depending on how much of the work is out-sourced to international consultants, and how much can be completed to the required standards by NCAC staff and partners.

3.4 OUTLINE COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

For each of the 10 projects we have prepared an outline Cost:Benefit Analysis that illustrates the likely return on investment over a 10 and a 30 year period. The full details of these calculations for each of the 10 destinations are presented in the relevant project brief and are summarised in Table 10, below.

It should be noted that the assumptions used in these calculations are informed by the best information available at the time of writing, and that in the absence of detailed data on the current state of the Gambian tourism industry at a sub-regional and local level it is not possible to indicate with any certainty the likely net impact of these investments. The information is provided here mainly so that the PIU and partners can begin to reflect on where they may wish to prioritise attention as the initial proposals here are taken forward in consultation with other partners.

Table 10 – Summary of Cost-Benefit Analysis for each project over a 10 year and 30 year period

| Location | Cost-benefit Ratio after 10 years | Cost-Benefit Ratio after 30 years |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | 0.44 | 0.72 |
| Basse | 2.88 | 4.83 |
| Bintang Bolong | 9.27 | 16.56 |
| Denton Bridge | 0.23 | 0.37 |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | 8.28 | 14.33 |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | 5.33 | 9.13 |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | 0.97 | 1.68 |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | 4.71 | 7.50 |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | 0.96 | 1.62 |
| Wassu Stone Circles | 0.43 | 0.73 |

It is important to note that in the detailed calculations, both capital costs, and benefits, are shown as present day values in the calculations. This means that the annual revenue generated at the different sites from Year 2 onwards (see initial assumptions in Sections 3.5.2 and 3.5.3) has been discounted by 10% per annum to reflect the current rate of inflation in the Gambian economy.

Conventionally, a CBA Ratio of at least 1.8 after 10 years is required for a public sector organisation to progress with an investment proposal. Under that scenario, then the projects at Basse; Bintang Bolong; Janjanbureh; Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque and Kotu are all solid investments in terms of stimulating significant gains to the local and regional economies.

In the longer term (i.e. 30 years) then the Kiang West/ Bao Bolong and Niumi National Park projects are also attractive. Only the projects based around World Heritage Sites – i.e. Albreda, Juffureh and Fort Bullen on the one hand, and Wassu Stone Circles on the other, and the works at Denton Bridge – fail to meet the required standards based on the information available at present and taking into account the scale of investment proposed. However, in the case of the two World Heritage Sites much of this investment is needed to protect The Gambia's only two UNESCO

cultural WHS, and thus needs to be considered in that light. And at Denton Bridge it is the major costs associated with providing high-quality, safe jetties that has created a significant capital cost requirement that cannot be recouped just from mooring and landing fees. Nonetheless, the logistical importance of providing high quality, sustainable access to the river outweighs the significance of the relatively low rate of return (which of course could be improved, if for instance, more revenue-generating activity was based there to accommodate the operations of The Gambia's coast guard, fishery protection and other official users).

3.5 ECONOMIC IMPACTS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

3.5.1 Introduction

Obviously, major investments of this scale will stimulate significant economic benefit both at the local and national level. When seeking to secure public or donor funding for initiatives such as those proposed here, it is particularly helpful to be able to demonstrate the likely scale of employment impact associated with capital investment and then with the longer-term operations of businesses located at the sites in question. This is especially important in destinations such as The Gambia which traditionally suffer from high levels of un- and under-employment.

We provide two estimates of the employment impacts associated with the proposed interventions:

- employment, mainly in the construction industries, associated with delivering the capital works at each of the 10 locations;
- employment associated with tourist and visitor spending at each of the 10 locations, when all of the proposed works are complete and the sites and facilities are operating at their optimal potential (which for the purposes of this exercise, we have assumed will be 5 years after the works commence).

Again, as with the estimates of employment creation during construction, and our initial calculations for the CBA presented above, the following information is presented for guidance only and requires considerably more detailed investigation once detailed plans have been drawn up and costed for each project, and once appropriate operators have been able to consider the likely revenue and expenditure implications of the proposals.

3.5.2 Impacts of the capital investment programmes

The combined total for all investments is estimated at just under **US\$47.8 million** (see Table 9). It has been difficult to source employment multipliers or cost per job figures for The Gambia, so the following estimates are provisional only and require much further elaboration at the detailed planning and procurement stages for each project. As a rule of thumb, in developing economies such as The Gambia labour costs account for about 20% of the civil works cost of an investment project. Thus the estimated labour costs for these projects combined will be around US\$9 million, or 20% of the total capital costs (see Table 11). In the absence of a specific cost per job ratio for The Gambia, we have been advised by the PIU that one unskilled labourer will earn on average US\$5.00 per day and will work for 350 days per year, and a skilled labourer will earn on average US\$10.00 per hour, and will also work for 350 day per year. Assuming there are four unskilled labourers for every skilled position, the average daily rate for a labourer would be US\$6.00². Thus the cost per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) job at the initial construction phase is estimated at **US\$2,100** per job³.

² $((4 \times \$5) + (1 \times \$10))/5 = \$6$

³ $\$6/\text{day} \times 350 \text{ days} = \$2,100$

Based on the combined capital outlay for all 10 projects of **US\$47.8 million**, this suggests that assuming all projects are delivered as planned, then around **4,550 FTE** jobs will be created, mainly in the construction sector. Of course, these jobs will generally be filled by labourers and craftsmen and craftswomen from the local area, thus the employment benefits of these investments will be spread widely across the whole of The Gambia. The construction employment estimates for each project, and the combined total, are presented below in Table 11.

Table 11 – Estimated construction employment for each project (2024 prices)

| Location | Total Estimated delivery costs (US\$) | 20% of these initial costs | FTE jobs at \$2,100 per job |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | \$6,806,229 | \$1,361,246 | 648 |
| Basse | \$1,610,508 | \$322,102 | 153 |
| Bintang Bolong | \$3,554,006 | \$710,801 | 338 |
| Denton Bridge | \$9,303,428 | \$1,860,686 | 886 |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | \$4,035,048 | \$807,010 | 384 |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | \$4,060,371 | \$812,074 | 387 |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | \$11,350,985 | \$2,270,197 | 1,081 |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | \$1,648,986 | \$329,797 | 257 |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | \$3,596,249 | \$719,250 | 342 |
| Wassu Stone Circles | \$1,827,956 | \$365,591 | 174 |
| Total costs, all projects combined | \$47,793,766 | \$9,558,753 | 4,550 |

3.5.3 Impacts of tourist activity at the 10 locations

Estimating the likely economic impact of tourist activity across the 10 locations similarly requires access to econometric data that is hard to come by. Assumptions made in preparing the projections presented below in Table 12 are based on data drawn from a number of sources and are as follows:

- average spend per night per general (holiday) tourist is estimated at US\$115 (around GM-D7,900), based on data from the recent Acorn Consulting International Market Research Study carried out for the PIU;
- average spend by pilgrims/ spiritual tourists at Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque is estimated slightly lower, at US\$85 per night (the figure for tourists classing the purpose of their trip as ‘other’ in the same Acorn Consulting research study);
- average spend per head by day visitors at different locations is estimated to range from US\$3.00 to US\$20.00, depending on the nature of the destination (e.g. whether there are admission charges) and also the make up of the day visitor market (e.g. worshippers at Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque are likely to have a far lower average spend per head than nature tourists taking a boat trip into the waterways of Niumi National Park);
- the multiplier effect of this direct spending is estimated at a ratio of 2.00. In other words, for every US\$1,000 spent in a local economy, it generates additional household income across the area of another US\$1,000. This is based on a range of multipliers for rural West African eco-

nomies of 1.58 to 2.43 presented in a 2011 USAID publication⁴. In the absence of a specific alternative co-efficient for The Gambia, this is presented as a reasonable estimate;

- revenue projections in the relevant spreadsheets are discounted at 10% per annum from Year 2 onwards to reflect the approximate current rate of inflation in the Gambian economy⁵. So US\$1,000 in Year 1 is worth only \$909 in Year 2; \$826 in Year 2 and so on;
- the cost per FTE job supported by tourism expenditure is estimated at \$1,700, based on an average monthly wage of US\$100 per month (\$1,200 per year) plus a further \$500 for employers' costs (e.g. insurances, pension contributions, clothing).

Full spreadsheets showing the assumptions we have made for each of the 10 project locations are presented in the relevant Appendix in the companion report to this main document.

In short, once all of the projects are completely up and running, collectively they could stimulate around **US\$18,260,000** of activity in the Gambian economy every year (2024 prices) which we have estimated could support around **10,741 FTE** jobs across the country. The four development projects that will support the largest number of jobs are those at Bintang Bolong; Janjanbureh; Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque and Kiang West/Bao Bolong. Thus the benefits of this spending will be felt widely across much of the country – even upriver in Basse we estimate tourism supporting nearly 400 FTE jobs.

Table 12 – Summary of employment impacts of revenue spending at each site in Year 5

| Location | Total estimated revenue associated with tourism activity (including multiplier effect) | Estimated number of FTE jobs supported by this spending in the local area |
|---|--|---|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | \$ 403,000 | 237 |
| Basse | \$ 655,000 | 385 |
| Bintang Bolong | \$ 5,390,000 | 3,171 |
| Denton Bridge | \$ 270,000 | 159 |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | \$ 5,078,400 | 2,987 |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | \$ 3,212,000 | 1,889 |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | \$ 1,676,000 | 986 |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | \$ 960,000 | 565 |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | \$ 500,000 | 294 |
| Wassu Stone Circles | \$ 116,000 | 68 |
| Total, all projects combined | \$ 18,260,400 | 10,741 |

3.5.4 Assisting MoTC in quantifying the environmental impacts of these investments

The consultancy team has been advised that, in order to monitor the impact of the new National Tourism Policy and Strategy in terms of its support for the development of sustainable tourism across The Gambia, the Ministry of Tourism & Culture (MoTC) has been encouraged to identify appropriate Key Performance Indicators (KPI). One set of KPIs should track tangible environ-

⁴ Source: Bromley, D.W. (2011) *Exports, Employment and Incomes in West Africa. West Africa Trade Hub Technical Report #39.*

⁵ See <https://www.cbg.gm/current-inflation-rate> Accessed 11th July 2024

mental benefits whilst others will address tangible social benefits. Indicators for environmental issues agreed by the MoTC include:

- the number of hectares of protected areas under improved conservation (to be monitored by DPWM);
- the number of PPP or PPCP-managed natural and cultural heritage sites (to be monitored by GTB with inputs from MTCA, MECCNAR and DPWM).

The table below indicates where each of the projects presented in this report can make a relevant contribution to this exercise.

Table 13 – Summary of alignment of project proposals with KPIs for tangible environmental benefits

| Location | Number of hectares of protected areas under improved conservation | Number of PPP or PPCP-managed natural and cultural heritage sites |
|---|---|--|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | Kunta Kinteh Island measures 0.35 hectares ⁶ and is subject to some enhanced conservation measures under the proposals presented here. Fort Bullen measures approximately 1,670 square metres and the former resthouse 165 square metres, meaning approximately 0.2 ha of historic structures designated as a World Heritage Site are protected under improved conservation works. | The CFAO building; Portuguese Chapel; San Domingo ruins; Fort Bullen and the former government resthouse at Barra are 5 examples of cultural heritage sites where there will be either a PPP or a PPCP management regime in place that is supported by these proposals. Because Albreda village lies within the boundary of the new Niimi UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the community's activities planting mangroves along the shoreline to stabilise it could be argued to represent another example of a PPCP managed natural site. |
| Basse | n/a | n/a - the original structure is unsafe and will be replaced with a replica building which cannot be truthfully considered to be a heritage building. The new venture could be operated either as a PPCP or as a JV. |
| Bintang Bolong | Bintang CCA covers 1,185 ha ⁷ . Project proposals will generate additional public interest in conservation across the bolong | If one takes into account the whole Bintang Bolong area as one location, then this adds 1 more PPCP managed site to the checklist. |
| Denton Bridge | n/a | The developments at Denton Bridge are not directly associated with protecting the natural environment of the creek, though the adoption of more sustainable practices across the site will make a positive contribution to protecting the marine habitat. |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | Three historic structures that are on the UNESCO Tentative List for World Heritage Site status as part of the Historic Georgetown site, and which are all proposed for additional conservation works are as follows: So-called 'Slavery House': 510 m2; The Wooden (Creole) House: 50 m2; The Colonial Post Office: 260 m2. Total footprint of historic structures protected | Under the proposals put forward here, three historic properties will come under some form of PPP or PPCP: the colonial Post Office; the so-called 'Slavery House', and the Wooden (Creole) House. In addition, the existing arrangements at Musa Molloh Tomb will continue to be supported. |

⁶ Source: NCAC, personal communication

⁷ Source: <https://meccnar.gov.gm/information-protected-areas-gambia> Accessed 12th July 2024

| Location | Number of hectares of protected areas under improved conservation | Number of PPP or PPCP-managed natural and cultural heritage sites |
|---|---|---|
| | thus measures 0.08 ha. Kunkilling Forest Park covers 142 ha ⁸ , and conservation and management activities there will be supported by the tourism proposals put forward for this destination. | |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | n/a | This is a good example of how a PPP can support the protection of an important heritage asset. |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | Kiang West NP covers 23,621 ha and Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve covers 29,650 ha ⁹ . Project proposals provide for increased research activities into habitats and species across both areas, thus strengthening protection and management measures. | Extension of the park area will increase the number of communities involved in assisting with managing the protected areas from 5 to 15. |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | n/a | n/a |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | National Park covers 7,758 ha ¹⁰ . Project proposals will help generate additional funds for conservation. | The project proposals allow for greater involvement by public agencies and private sector operators to provide access to the protected area for researchers and nature tourists, who will rely on the 3 host communities (Bakindik Koto, Jinack Niji and Jinack Kajata) to manage the habitats of the protected area appropriately. |
| Wassu Stone Circles | The areas covered by the World Heritage Site (1.63 ha) ¹¹ and its buffer zone (25.29 ha) can be considered as relevant to this target. | This location can be included here because of the proposals to considerably increase the level of community involvement in managing the buffer zone in particular |

Notes: n/a - not applicable | CCA - Community Conservation Area

3.5.5 Assisting MoTC in quantifying the socio-economic impacts of these investments

To establish the socio-economic impacts and level of success or sustainability (as well as areas for improvement), of the proposed site developments, a series of indicators are needed to measure progress. As seen above in Section 3.5.2 and 3.5.3 it is possible to prepare *ex-ante* estimates of economic and employment impacts using projections of future capital spending and revenue, allied with standard economic multipliers which are generally based on experience elsewhere. Whilst these present a useful foundation on which to assess investment priorities, there is nonetheless a need to ascertain what actually happens on the ground once development occurs.

Any socio-economic indicators will remain just theoretical if a locally appropriate and pragmatic impact monitoring system is not put into place to gather the data needed. In this instance, ideally this system should be managed by MoTC/PIU and designed to make use of existing data collection and management mechanisms in place. It would therefore be helpful for there to be a comprehensive audit of what relevant data already exists, for example via the licensing processes, ac-

⁸ Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kunkilling_Forest_Park Accessed 12th July 2024

⁹ Source: <https://meccnar.gov.gm/information-protected-areas-gambia> Accessed 12th July 2024

¹⁰ Source: <https://meccnar.gov.gm/information-protected-areas-gambia> Accessed 12th July 2024

¹¹ Source: NCAC (2016) *The Stone Circles of Senegambia. Management Plan 2017-2021*

commodation surveys, Gambia's Ministries (e.g. responsible for labour, statistics, social welfare, climate change etc.) and other agencies.

In addition, it is likely that once the proposed interventions are up and running, a detailed visitor and community survey would need to be commissioned to identify important missing information in relation to the impacts of the site developments on host communities in terms of income, community projects and infrastructure, destination identity and community and tourist satisfaction.

This would provide a great opportunity to increase the level of community engagement in the development process at the sites as it could be delivered by an appropriate local organisation in partnership with local community groups, tour guides, and ground tour operators. It would also be a valuable tool for the MoTC/PIU to be transparent and communicate about the impacts of the site developments on host communities.

Note that where possible, data collected should be disaggregated by age and gender to enable a women and youth empowerment lens when considering the impacts.

Table 14 below proposes some key overarching social outcomes linked to some socio economic indicators that might be used at a site-specific level to capture the impacts of the proposed tourism development. These align in general with the objectives of many potential donor agencies, and thus establishing mechanisms at an early stage to capture relevant data will be of value when seeking funding for investment. Most of the issues are explored in more detail in Section 4.

Table 14 – Summary of proposed socio-economic outcomes and indicators

| Social outcome | Social indicators |
|---|--|
| Increase in employment opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Number of new wage employment, self-employment and leadership/management roles for community, women and youth resulting from the implementation of the proposed tourism development at the site – Number of tourism management positions held by age, gender & nationality (i.e. local/international) |
| Increase in economic benefits to local communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sex-disaggregated data on tourism earnings for new jobs created at the site – Number of new registered tourism sector SMMEs by age & gender – Value of community income & infrastructure/project benefits |
| Increase in socio-cultural benefits to local communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Number of women, youth, communities and SMMEs receiving training and new qualifications through capacity building interventions – Community level of satisfaction with the socio-cultural and economic impacts of tourism (or specific development) and nature of tourist-host interaction at selected sites |
| Decrease in negative social, cultural & environmental impacts associated with tourism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increase in child protection and sex tourism awareness and preventative measures in tourist accommodation, bars and restaurants – Number of tourism establishments that are licensed and meeting appropriate quality, health, safety and sustainability standards – Percentage of visitors satisfied with their interaction with local people & tourist experience at the site – Number of signatories to The Code against SECTT & attendees for training on sex tourism/SGBV & child labour. – Number of tourism accommodations at the sites independently certified against a local sustainability standard or GSTC recognised industry standard |

Other, site-specific information that could be collected by local teams on the ground and that would help to explore the environmental benefits of the proposed projects, thus helping to feed into broader national strategies could include:

- area of new mangrove & tree plantings;
- volume of litter collected and properly disposed of;
- area of green space/ public realm created and managed;
- use of renewable energies;
- presence (or absence) of indicator species of flora and fauna.

Again, to assist with future funding applications we have prepared an initial review of how the different sites align with some of the fundamental issues that the World Bank considers important when assessing project suitability. The table below is based on part of the content of the *World Bank's Environmental and Social Screening Checklist* and presents an overview of how each of the proposed 10 interventions addresses these key social issues.

Table 15 – Link between World Bank Environmental & Social Screening Checklist and proposed interventions

| Site | Does the project involve involuntary land acquisition, property loss or loss of sources of income and livelihood? Please provide a brief description. |
|------------------------------------|--|
| D01 Albreda, Juffureh, Fort Bullen | Suggestion that an alternative tenant is found for the former Government Rest House at Fort Bullen, to dislodge some anti-social behaviours. |
| D02 Basse | Co-operation of existing building owner essential for the project to succeed in the preferred location. |
| D03 Bintang Bolong | No |
| D04 Denton Bridge | Some existing businesses (e.g. boat repair) may be relocated elsewhere on the current site. |
| D05 Janjanbureh | Extension to public open space necessitates land acquisition from a private sector owner. This could be achieved through a direct exchange of existing government neighbouring the site. |
| D06 Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | Suggestion that Quranic School could be moved to an alternative location. |
| D07 Kiang West & Bao Bolong | No |
| D08 Kotu Beach Craft Market | Some current traders may be dislodged to alternative locations nearby. |
| D09 Niumi National Park | No |
| D10 Wassu | No |

We explore in more detail some of the main social and environmental issues associated with the proposed developments in the coming section of this report.

4. Social, Environmental and Institutional Considerations

4.1 INTRODUCTION

It is inevitable that some of the proposed investments could create significant upheaval in the relevant host communities unless there is proper consultation from the earliest planning stages. Moreover, the fragile nature of much of The Gambia's natural environment and the importance of its landscape and natural heritage to the tourism sector means that any future investment needs to be made with a full understanding of the potential environmental implications.

In this section, we present the findings of our rapid social and environmental screening activities undertaken during the June fieldwork programme. Detailed are our assessments of the main social and environmental issues that may arise during the detailed planning, construction and operational phases of the proposed interventions at our 10 locations, along with suggested strategies and tools for resolving the most significant of these. We also put on record some other institutional challenges that we have identified during our fieldwork, resolution of which is also important if the full impact of these proposed interventions is to be felt across the country.

4.2 RESULTS OF THE RAPID SOCIAL SCREENING EXERCISE

A rapid social screening was carried out based on an analysis of findings and discussions during the site assessments, stakeholder interviews, and thematic workshops conducted during both fieldwork missions. The purpose was to assess the key socio-economic and cultural impacts associated with the development of the ten locations, and identify potential opportunities/benefits and social issues/risks for host communities. This exercise also included consideration of site-specific target beneficiaries, community engagement mechanisms and opportunities for women and youth empowerment. This section of the report provides a summary of the key findings from the social screening exercise.

4.2.1 Target beneficiaries

The target beneficiaries for the ten sites fall into 6 main categories:

- **women's groups or kafos** set up to support collaboration and production around gardening, cultural activities (e.g. Kanyeleng group supporting barren women), shellfish collection, crafts and catering for events such as tourist group visits, Gamos and cultural festival;
- **youth groups** to support engagement in village-level and tourism-specific activities such as local tour guiding, cultural activities, bird watching and festival organisation;
- **village-level cultural groups** to engage communities in a wide and vibrant range of cultural activities and festivals, for example Janjanbureh's Kankurang Elders Committee and Festival Committee, Wassu Cultural Festival youth group, Fort Bullen Festival Committee, traditional site custodians of Musa Molloh's tomb, and Basse's varied cultural groups based around different ethnic groups and traditional production;
- **tourism SMMEs** (existing/new) located in selected sites, who should benefit from proposed tourism development and market access, for example craft market vendors and producers, Kotu tourism cluster creative industries, tourist boat owners, accommodation, restaurant and bar providers, and proposed homestays network at Juffureh/Albreda. This includes a wide range of longstanding associations based in and around the TDA such as the tourist taxis, offi-

cial tourist guides (OTGs), fruit sellers, juice pressers, beach bars at Kotu beach and the Denton Bridge Boating and Fishing Association;

- **National Park/Forestry Co-Management Committees** engaging communities in the active management and conservation of protected areas. For example, at Kiang West National Park, Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve, Niuni National Park, Bintang Bolong Indigenous Community Conservation Area, and Kunkilling Forest Park;
- **broader destination communities** at the sites, for example Village Development Committees (VDCs), Ward Development Committees (WDCs), Area Councils, spiritual leaders and the Supreme Islamic Council.

4.2.2 Community engagement mechanisms

Rural and urban communities and SMMEs at most of the sites have a range of existing community groups, decision-making structures and associations which provide potential mechanisms and a platform on which to build increased community engagement in tourism. However, in Bintang Bolong and Basse in particular there is a noticeable absence of formalised groups or established community structures with experience of engaging with tourism, principally because the industry is not yet well established in these areas.

These community engagement mechanisms or structures vary in terms of their focus on youth, women, producer groups, elders, religious leaders and different ethnic and cultural groups, and their level of capacity, formalisation and existing experience with the tourism industry. They are also associated with different levels of engagement and empowerment, from facilitating community consultation to full ownership and control of delivering tourism products/services.

From a gender and youth empowerment perspective, some of these traditional groups are women or youth-led but those groups associated with community leadership and decision-making are traditionally dominated by men. The co-management committees in the protected area sites do have women representatives for many of the participating communities, but most still remain dominated by men. It is suggested that with appropriate capacity building and resources, alongside a structured participatory approach to tourism planning and CBT processes, the potential of these traditional and existing structures should be utilised for facilitating maximum local benefits and empowerment of women and youth.

4.2.3 Women empowerment opportunities

The ProBlue Gender Assessment of the Gambian Tourism Sector published in late 2023 documents existing gender disparities and key gendered challenges in tourism (e.g. status of women, gender norms and underlying barriers and constraints) affecting women's participation in the tourism industry. It provides targeted recommendations to be incorporated into the implementation of the TDRGP Project focussing on key issues in women's employment, entrepreneurship and leadership within the tourism sector, alongside examining cross-cutting factors which impact women's economic opportunities and decision-making.

Applying this gender lens or framework to this rapid social screening exercise, the assessment identified numerous potential economic empowerment opportunities for women through employment as a key vehicle for increasing participation and earnings in tourism. There are opportunities for women at the proposed sites to work in tourist accommodation, food and beverage, museums, visitor centres, and providing (cultural) entertainment. The proposed interventions across the 10 sites will enhance opportunities through ecotourism, as well as cultural tourism itineraries and experiences located in rural areas which will make working in tourism more accessible for women in surrounding communities.

In terms of supporting entrepreneurship, the plans at the sites will greatly improve market access and opportunities for supply chain linkages for women and female-led SMMEs to design and sell new/existing crafts (e.g. batik, tie & dye, pottery, beads), beauty products, clothes/fashion, garden produce, shellfish, street food, cultural and creative activities and homestay accommodation to the tourism market.

There is currently limited focus on how in practice the proposed sites might have a positive impact on women's empowerment at a leadership and senior management level. Closer attention needs to be paid to the type of jobs (informal versus formal, high value versus low value), type of businesses and level of leadership and decision-making powers created for women through the development of the sites. Women will need targeted interventions to address the gender gap and build their capacity to increase their representation in more lucrative, managerial positions and uptake and ownership of opportunities for new female-led businesses.

4.2.4 Youth empowerment opportunities

The Gambia Youth and Trade Roadmap for Tourism (2018-2022) provided a plan of action for developing inclusive and sustainable tourism products and services through youth empowerment. Its strategic objectives focus on youth employment through creation of diversified tourism products and services; reinforcing youth skills through vocational training and education; and creating tourism-related opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation.

|  Transport |  Accommodation |  Excursions |  Food & Beverage |  Shopping |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Airlines | Hotels | Excursions and Event Operations | Restaurants | Commercial Retail |
| Cruise Lines | Lodges | Local Guides | Bars | Local Bazaars |
| Car Rental Services | Camping Place | Experiences Offered through Digital Platforms | Cafes | Artisanal Centres |
| Other Transport Services | Peer-to-Peer Accommodation | | Catering | |
| Natural assets in tourist destinations Flora, fauna, environment, historical sites, identity groups    | | | | |

Table 16 – Key Components of Tourism. Source: World Bank and IFC, (2019) *Tourism for Development: Tourism Diagnostic Toolkit*, p 14

In support of this roadmap and its youth empowerment objectives, the social screening identified new tourism-related opportunities for youth and youth groups (e.g. JAYS at Albreda/Juffureh and Just Act at Janjanbureh) at all ten sites. In particular, employment as guides (cultural, birding, tour

leaders), forest rangers and scouts, museum and visitor centre attendants, local ground tour operators, drivers, boatmen, gardeners and building construction workers.

There are also several significant opportunities for youth-led enterprises through the development of services and businesses around improving wildlife viewing (e.g. solar-powered birdwatching boats, experiences at new photo hides and viewing platforms, specialist bird guiding), wildlife conservation and education, cultural and religious events, activities and itineraries, river-based transport and excursions, fashion, tailoring and the creative industries, sale of religious souvenirs, improved market access for youth at Kotu beach cluster (juice pressers, beach bar owners, official tourist guides, and tourist taxis) and production and sale of crafts (e.g. weaving, gold and silver, carvings).

Similarly to women's empowerment, a range of active interventions are required for youth to build their capacity and realise the potential benefits of these opportunities created by the proposed development of the sites. Encouragingly these opportunities cut across the five key economic activities that generate revenues and income in the tourism sector, namely in transport, accommodation, excursions, food & beverage and shopping as outlined in Table 16.

4.2.5 Opportunities/Benefits for communities

In addition to youth and women empowerment, eight other potential opportunities/benefits for communities resulting from the proposed tourism development at the sites have been identified which are summarised below.

I. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND INTERPRETATION

A participatory and sustainable approach to engaging communities in tourism development and interpretation planning in the selected destinations will create opportunities for local empowerment and ensure local ownership of the narrative/stories and identity of these destinations.

II. CAPACITY BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES

Proposed capacity building opportunities for youth, women and communities required for the development of the proposed sites will increase their employability and income earning potential for tourism-related work and business enterprises. Skills development will also result in the improvement of tourism product quality which should in turn further increase profitability.

III. CULTURAL HERITAGE (TANGIBLE & INTANGIBLE) REVIVAL

Many of the selected sites will target cultural tourists who value both tangible and intangible cultural heritage which will generate significant new interest and appreciation in aspects of The Gambia's history and culture. This will generate renewed local pride, interest and financial incentives in reviving these aspects of local culture, saving some from current decline in light of decreasing engagement of the younger generation with certain aspects of their heritage. For example, storytelling, traditional crafts and agricultural practices, and vernacular architecture are in decline.

IV. OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPLY CHAIN LINKAGES

New tourism services and enterprises for the sites can create backward supply chain linkages with the construction industry, fishing, agriculture, and local craft producers; and forward linkages through new partnerships with ground tour operators to deliver new cultural and nature-based experiences and itineraries.

V. SMME/EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME-GENERATION OPPORTUNITIES

Increased income for communities and individuals from new tourism-related employment and SMME opportunities can contribute to improved living conditions, education and resilience.

VI. INCOME FROM LEASE OF COMMUNITY LAND/ASSETS TO PRIVATE SECTOR

PPCP, PPP and other community benefit models applied to the development of new lodges and other tourism infrastructure could require the private sector to pay for the lease of community land and other assets, or formalised commitment to other profit-share agreements as appropriate.

VII. IMPROVED PUBLIC REALM AND WORKING CONDITIONS

A responsible approach to development of the sites will ensure that the proposed tourism makes these destinations both better places to live and better places to visit. Landscaping and greening of sites, improved infrastructure/facilities (e.g. toilets, public seating), restored historical and cultural heritage sites, new jetties and landing stages, new cultural centres, improved roads, solar electricity, improved water supply and a cleaner, rubbish-free environment will be a win:win for communities and visitors. These environmental improvements will also improve working conditions for local people, for example the beach vendors and craft producers at Kotu and Basse and the wide range of SMMEs located at Denton Bridge.

VIII. REDUCED IRREGULAR MIGRATION OF YOUTH

It is hoped that the creation of new tourism-related employment and enterprise opportunities for young people associated with thriving tourism destinations will help address the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in The Gambia.

4.2.6 Social Issues/Risks for communities

Six key potential issues/risks for communities resulting from the proposed tourism development at the sites have been identified which are summarised below.

I. LACK OF FORMALISED/STRUCTURED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS IN TOURISM

Communities that lack a formalised/structured community engagement mechanism to facilitate their engagement in the planning, development and delivery of tourism face several risks/negative impacts. Without effective engagement, communities are likely to miss out on identifying opportunities for local benefit from tourism and may be excluded from determining the public identity and narrative/stories to share with tourists.

II. NEGATIVE CULTURAL CHANGE AND COMMODIFICATION

Without responsible and sensitive management of cultural tourism in partnership with key stakeholders, there is a risk that tourism development can result in negative cultural change such as cultural loss and damage, or the commodification of culture at tourism sites. For example, the commodification of sacred pilgrimage sites at Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque and the Kankurang and other masquerades at Janjanbureh. There can also be culture change resulting from the impact of having large numbers of visitors demonstrating different cultures and behaviours which may be adopted by some local people.

III. NEGATIVE TOURIST-HOST INTERACTION

The nature of tourism proposed at the sites will require close interaction and cross-cultural exchange between local people and regional and international visitors. It cannot be assumed that such encounters will automatically result in positive and mutually beneficial relationships without careful planning and responsible visitor management and product development. Negative interaction such as bumstering hassle, children begging, cross-cultural misunderstandings, and irresponsible behaviour of tourists is a risk at most of the sites.

IV. LIMITED CAPACITY OF TOURISM SMMEs RISKS THEIR EXCLUSION FROM FORMALISATION

The majority of tourism SMMEs operate informally, with limited regulation and face several challenges in relation to quality, standards, capacity and market access. Development of some of the

selected sites such as Denton Bridge, Basse, Janjanbureh and Kotu Craft Market will involve significant formalisation and site improvements which will require SMMEs to meet higher standards and adopt different ways of working in partnership with the private and government sectors. Without comprehensive capacity building interventions there is a risk that some SMMEs could be excluded from the more formalised opportunities.

V. CHILD PROTECTION RISKS AND INCREASE IN SEX TOURISM IN RURAL AREAS

The proposed sites are largely in rural areas where most tourism accommodation, bars and restaurants operate informally. According to the ECPAT (2015) monitoring report for The Gambia, informal venues such as smaller guest houses and private residences located in communities outside of the TDA are increasingly being used by sexual offenders instead of larger hotels within the TDA which are more closely regulated.

However, there has been very limited roll out of child protection and sex tourism measures and training for staff and police services in rural areas. Existing preventative measures and the implementation of legislation related to the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism (SECTT) are generally insufficient.

In this context there is a risk that some of these destinations attract “sex tourists” (including travelers, migrant/transient workers, and ‘voluntourists’) who travel to buy sex from/exploit vulnerable women, girls, boys, often from poor and marginalized communities. This is substantiated by much anecdotal evidence alongside the US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report for The Gambia (2021) which reported offenders from Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, Scandinavia and the UK coming to The Gambia in order to sexually exploit children.¹²

VI. SECURITY AND CORRUPTION RISKS

Tourism communities at a small number of the sites are threatened by the existing security and corruption threat linked to illegal drugs, trafficking, prostitution, irregular migration and illegal fishing. In particular, Denton Bridge and Fort Bullen (located next to Barra Ferry) face a number of challenges on this front which could become bigger issues with the growth of tourism, either in terms of threatening the success of the industry, or by attracting the ‘wrong type’ of tourists to The Gambia.

Table 17 illustrates where these social issues/risks are currently a challenge at the 10 selected locations and Table 18 presents some possible mitigation measures for consideration by the authorities in the various locations.

¹² ECPAT International (2022) *Sexual Exploitation of Boys: The Gambia Report*

Table 17 – Summary of key social issues/risks across the selected locations

| Location | Lack of community engagement mechanism | Negative cultural change & commodification | Negative tourist-host interaction | Limited capacity of tourism SMMEs risks their exclusion | Child protection risks & increase sex tourism | Security & corruption risks |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|--|
| Albreda & Juffureh, Fort Bullen | N/A Existing mechanisms in place e.g. JAYS | Minor risk | Moderate risk at Juffureh/Albreda, in particular children begging and bumstering | Minor risk | Major risk at Fort Bullen Minor risk at Albreda/Juffureh | Security risk at Fort Bullen due to illegal drugs, trafficking and prostitution around Barra ferry site |
| Basse | Minor risk of community exclusion from tourism development and determining site narrative/stories to tell tourists | Minor risk | Minor risk | Minor risk | Minor risk | Minor risk |
| Bintang Bolong | Moderate risk of community exclusion from tourism development and determining site narrative/stories to tell tourists | Minor risk | Minor risk, in particular increase in bumstering of lodge guests by youth in the village and children begging for sweets, footballs etc. | N/A | Minor risk | Minor risk |
| Denton Bridge | N/A Existing mechanisms in place e.g. Denton Bridge Boating & Fishing Association | N/A | Minor risk | Moderate risk of current SMME exclusion in a new, formalised marina if they are not supported with capacity building measures. | Minor risk | Moderate security risk related to drugs, illegal immigration, and trafficking. Major risk of corruption and poor governance in addressing serious concerns around fishing trawlers and sand mining. |
| Historic Georgetown | Moderate risk at Kunkilling due to current lack of community engagement in development of Kunkilling Lodge and interpretation narrative N/A at Janjanbureh as existing mechanisms in place e.g. Just Act Youth Group; Kankurang Festival Committee | Moderate risk of commodification of <i>Kankurang</i> and masquerade culture and <i>Nyankusita</i> and <i>Teenyan Sita</i> sacred sites (baobab trees) | Minor risk | Minor risk | Minor risk | Minor security risk for female staff working at Kunkilling lodge as located significant distance from the village and would involve night shifts |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | Minor risk as tourism-related community engagement mechanism not in place | Moderate risk of commodification of sacred pilgrimages and sites | Moderate risk of insensitive/disrespectful behaviour towards religious tourists at the mosque by non-Muslim tourists who are not well informed and value/use the site differently | N/A | Minor risk | Minor risk of illegal profiteering during <i>Gamos</i> . |
| Kiang West NP and Bao Bolong | N/A Existing mechanisms in place e.g. Kiang West National Park and Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve Co-Management Committees | N/A | Minor risk | Minor risk | Minor risk | Moderate risk of illegal poaching and tree felling |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | N/A Existing mechanisms in place e.g. Kotu Craft Market Association, Gambia Craft Market Federation; tourism cluster SMME associations | Moderate risk of limited capacity, innovation and entrepreneurship in development of new craft and creative products | Moderate risk of bumstering and lack of cross-cultural awareness (of tourists and local people) | Moderate risk of impact on existing beach bars & restaurants if development of new site's food stalls are not designed to be complementary rather than act as competition. | Moderate risk in light of evidence of high rates of SECTT and prostitution in the Tourist Development Area (TDA). | Moderate risk from high level of bumster activity at Kotu |
| Niumi National Park | N/A Existing mechanisms in place e.g. Niumi NP Management Committee | Minor risk at Jinack | Moderate risk of bumstering and lack of cross-cultural awareness (of tourists and local people) | Minor risk | Minor risk of child protection at Jinack Moderate risk of increased sex tourism at Jinack | Moderate security risk and negative destination image through marijuana production |
| Wassu Stone Circles | Minor risk | Minor risk | Moderate risk of children begging for sweets, footballs etc. | N/A | Minor risk | Minor risk |

Table 18 – Social challenges and suggested mitigation measures

| Social challenge | Suggested mitigation measures |
|---|---|
| Lack of formalised/structured community engagement mechanisms | <p>Establish PPP/PPCPs partnerships between tourism stakeholders at the sites to formalise the roles, responsibilities and profit share for those involved requiring the development of new ways of working and measures to address operational, political and capacity issues including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – facilitate communities and tourism SMMEs to introduce tourism-specific structures and clusters– building on existing community or tourism association-based structures – to organise themselves to engage with formalised PPPs for the development of sites; – build capacity/facilitate GTB/MoTC to apply new National PPP Policy for The Gambia and Operational Guidelines to the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships with communities at the 10 sites; – intervention to support tourism SMMEs and communities meet the PPP requirements for formalisation such as meeting quality and licensing standards; transparent accounting; registration of businesses, community groups and associations; and capacity building in light of roles and responsibilities in the partnership; – roll out ITC’s Community-Based Tourism five stage capacity building process that has been successfully piloted in Janjanbureh (Tabanani & Jamali); – pilot and fund development of Joint Venture/PPP/PPCPs partnership models to improve CBT products and community tourism infrastructure (e.g. homestays network, mobile camping, trails, cultural experiences); – pilot formalised homestays network as a vehicle for providing quality and immersive cultural experiences hosted by local communities. |
| Negative cultural change & commodification | <p>A range of practical strategies exist that could be adopted to safeguard local culture at the sites, ensure local agency and agree terms on which it is shared with tourism audiences. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – local ownership of cultural narrative and interpretation content for both tangible and intangible heritage through participatory product development, interpretation and tourism development planning processes; – tourist culture awareness-raising training and development of site-specific pre-departure information/creative digital media on Gambian culture and nature associated with each site; – responsible marketing of experiences on offer at the sites to manage expectations and communicate positive, mutually beneficial interaction between tourists and local people; – capacity building and empowerment of local cultural groups and traditional knowledge holders to safeguard local culture and agree boundaries/codes of conduct; – conduct cultural asset mapping, socio-cultural impact assessment and impact management action plan for each of the 10 sites, including agreement of cultural impact indicators to monitor change. |
| Negative tourist-host interaction | <p>A range of practical strategies exist that could be adopted to help create a conducive environment for tourist-host interaction to take place at the sites. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – provide site communities, guides and site managers with capacity building and training to become teachers and educators on the design and delivery of cultural and nature-based experiences for tourists; – development of responsible codes of conduct for tourists and local people at each site to increase understanding and manage the interaction more responsibly; – actively consider the nature of tourist-host interaction at each stage of the visitor journey and incorporate into experience design with communities, guides, site managers and ground tour operators; – monitor community satisfaction with the nature and impact of tourism at the sites through an annual meeting or survey administered by site managers. |
| Limited capacity of tourism SMMEs risk their exclusion from formalisation | <p>Measures to address major challenges facing SMMEs such as business skills capacity, access to finance, health and safety issues, low product quality, and limited understanding of the tourist market to improve the quality of tourism at the sites and ensure these local businesses are not excluded from formalisation including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – interventions to support tourism SMMEs at the new sites to formalise and form/join structured organisations or associations in the tourism industry; – interventions designed to increase tourism SMMEs capacity to take advantage of new market access opportunities and make backward and forward linkages in the tourism supply chain; – map out linkages between potential SMME opportunities created by development of the new sites and the new EU and World Bank-funded SMME capacity building initiatives; – develop tourism SMME mentorship and training programme for women & youth entrepreneurs to develop new tourism related products/ services. – targeted approach to coaching and mentoring women & youth entrepreneurs for enhanced business development skills, drawing on existing women and youth entrepreneurs’ networks and existing empowerment projects or proposals (for example, the The ProBlue Gender Assessment of the Gambian Tourism Sector (2023), The Gambia Youth and Trade Roadmap for Tourism (2018-2022) and ITC’s Gambia Youth Empowerment Project); – gender and youth empowerment interventions designed to address barriers such as access to transport, finance and assistance with opening bank accounts, market access, confidence building, and support with childcare and family responsibilities. |
| Child protection risks and increase in sex tourism in rural areas | <p>Roll out a range of child protection and sex tourism preventative & responsive measures and training for enforcement agencies, tourism staff and communities to ensure children are protected and the existing laws are enforced in a stringent manner including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – capacity building, training and raising awareness for communities to support them to be vigilant and take preventative/responsive action; – awareness and knowledge amongst law enforcers so that they can play a greater role in preventing and responding to child sex tourism cases; – improvements to legislation related to SECTT as outlined in ECPAT International 2015 and 2022 Gambia Reports; – education system/schools: ensure child protection, child rights issues are integrated in the school curriculum or mainstreamed in the Social and Environment Science subject; – training for medical practitioners to be more sensitive to the needs of victims; – better engagement with tour operators, hotels and the private sector to take more responsibility, for example The Gambia Tourism Board should encourage tour operators and the private sector in The Gambia to use their networks, corporate knowledge, human and financial resources, business structures and leverage power to proactively address child sex tourism and other forms of child sexual exploitation; – tour operator/accommodation provider adopt “The Code”¹³ which is an industry-driven responsible tourism initiative which provides awareness, tools and support to tourism businesses in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. It consists of six criteria which companies should integrate into everyday operations to turn child protection principles into concrete actions that will help protect children; – build effective referral and social welfare responses to child sex tourism. |
| Security and corruption risks | <p>Work in partnership with Gambian police and security services and appropriate international partners to identify and introduce a range of preventative and punitive measures designed to address key risks affecting the tourism sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – identification, resourcing & implementation of a tourism sector safety and security action plan for law enforcement agencies and pilot measures at selected sites; – capacity building of relevant law enforcement agencies re addressing tourism-related risks and pilot measures at selected sites; – security forces at border posts continuously monitor records of offenders, known abusers, and suspected potential offenders; – awareness -raising, training and alternative livelihood opportunities for communities at selected sites to deter increased bumstering and tourist harassment. |

¹³ See link to brochure on *The Code* and details of the six criteria here: *Final-Brochure_Generic_2022 ENG (thecode.org)*

4.3 RESULTS OF THE RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING EXERCISE

4.3.1 Introduction

During the second programme of site visits undertaken during June 2024, a rapid environmental screening exercise was carried out at each location in order to understand better some of the issues impacting on the visitor experience at present, and on the ability of the site to support the proposed interventions designed to attract more, and higher-spending (and thus more demanding) tourists.

Key issues identified were:

- deficient procedures for waste management (water, rubbish, plastic). This of course is not confined to the 10 sites under discussion here but is a much wider problem across the whole of The Gambia, with trash/ rubbish in the public realm negatively affecting the sense of place and in some cases presenting real public health hazards;
- risks to heritage assets from flooding & extreme weather conditions (which could become increasingly significant with climate change and the likelihood of more intense periods of rain-fall);
- risk of bush fires, associated with prolonged dry spells and accidental or deliberate fire-raising as land is prepared for planting prior to the rains;
- beach/ river bank erosion and the risk of rising sea and river levels associated with climate change;
- environmental crimes including illegal logging; poaching, etc.;
- limited technical expertise and/ or lack of investment in planning, construction, conservation and maintenance of built infrastructure.

Table 19 illustrates where these environmental issues are currently a challenge at the 10 selected locations whilst Table 20 presents some over-arching mitigation measures that need to be taken on board by relevant authorities in order to enhance the current visitor experience as well as create situations more conducive to investment in upgrading the existing facilities so that more, higher-spending tourists can be accommodated in the future.

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Table 19 – Summary of key environmental challenges across the selected locations

| Location | Deficient waste management & littering | Flooding risk to heritage assets | Risk of bush fires | Beach/ bank erosion and risk from rising sea levels | Environmental crimes | Lack of expertise & investment in building conservation and management |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|--------------------|---|---|---|
| Albreda & Juffureh, Fort Bullen | Major problem in both locations, especially at Fort Bullen where there are potentially serious health hazards | Minimal concern | N/A | Considerable problem across all component locations | Some illegal logging | Major concern at Fort Bullen and Kunta Kinteh Island |
| Basse | Major problem across the location | Minimal concern | N/A | N/A | N/A | ‘Traditions’ building in poor state of repair but will be replaced with new-build, a replica of the original structure built in the traditional architectural style |
| Bintang Bolong | Minor problem except on river bank and in villages | Minimal concern | Minor problem | Minor problem | N/A | N/A |
| Denton Bridge | Minor problem, principally associated with abandoned boats | Minimal concern | N/A | Potentially significant problem, exacerbated by sand extraction on seaward side of the bridge | Pollution from nearby fish processing plant | N/A |
| Historic Georgetown | Minor problem at present, except at Kankurang Festival Ground and at museum | Minimal concern | N/A | N/A | N/A | Major concern for so-called Slave House, Post Office and the Wooden House, and also Kankurang Museum structures |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | Minor problem | Minimal concern | N/A | Potentially a problem in coming decades | N/A | Original construction seems not to have been completed, and already maintenance problems |
| Kiang West NP and Bao Bolong | Minor problem except in surrounding towns and villages | Minimal concern | Minor problem | Minor problem | Reported problems of illegal logging and poaching | Poor maintenance of existing buildings at the HQ complex |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | Minor problem | Minimal concern | N/A | Potentially a problem in coming decades | N/A | N/A |
| Niumi National Park | Minor problem | Minimal concern | Minor problem | Potentially a problem in coming decades | Reported problems of poaching and illegal agricultural activities | N/A |
| Wassu Stone Circles | Minor problem at the site itself, but a major problem in the village | Minimal concern | Major problem | N/A | N/A | No real concerns at present |



Figure 12 : Fort Bullen interior, showing the need for significant consolidation, safety and conservation measures (Photo dated 18th June 2024)

Table 20 – Environmental challenges and suggested mitigation measures

| Environmental challenge | Suggested mitigation measures |
|--|---|
| Deficient waste management & associated littering | <p>At site level, all employees encouraged (or even required) to conduct daily litter picks within/ around the curtilage. Organic waste to be composted where possible; other waste to be burned, recycled or otherwise properly disposed of according to local conditions.</p> <p>More broadly, there is an urgent need for a national campaign challenging current behaviour regarding littering and waste disposal. Communities should be encouraged/ empowered/ required to implement waste management protocols supported by local government resources and actions.</p> <p>A national programme seeking to monetise certain forms of waste (e.g. metals, paper, plastics, glass) through recycling is also recommended, to reduce the volume of waste that is discarded in the countryside.</p> |
| Flooding risk to heritage assets | <p>Draw up flood management plans for all properties at risk (including evacuation protocols in the event of extreme flooding)</p> <p>Implement suitable monitoring regimes to alert site managers of potential flood events</p> |
| Risk of bush fires | <p>Draw up protocols for burning dry vegetation in the period prior to the start of the rainy season, to minimise risk of uncontrolled fires spreading</p> <p>Preparation of fire management protocols at all heritage sites at risk, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Regular bush clearance initiatives in areas surrounding at-risk monuments and buildings, to remove potentially flammable materials;– Provision of fire fighting equipment (beaters, sand buckets) at key locations |
| Beach/ bank erosion and risk from rising sea levels | <p>Increasing planting of mangroves to stabilise land on the waterline (already happening at Albreda, for instance)</p> <p>Installation of appropriate sea defences at the most sensitive/ fragile/ at risk locations (especially Denton Bridge, Kunta Kinteh Island, and possibly Fort Bullen, Kotu Beach Craft Market and Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque)</p> <p>Where landing stages and jetties are being developed, ensure that these are built to withstand possible long term rises in sea/ river levels of up to 1 metre or more</p> |
| Lack of expertise & investment in building conservation and management | <p>Better resourcing for NCAC so that it can recruit, train and employ skilled craft workers to plan and implement conservation works at historic properties whether in public or private ownership</p> <p>Develop a partnership with University of Science Engineering and Technology (USET – formerly the Gambia Technical Training Institute, GTTI) to upskill labourers with the techniques and understanding necessary to work on historic buildings</p> <p>Ensure that any new build projects at the 10 locations are designed according to sustainable building principles, including the use of locally sourced materials and adapted where needed to suit contemporary needs</p> |



Figure 13 : Entrance to Albreda Village, with proposed site of a new craft vendor facility to the right of the tree in blossom (Photo dated 16^h June 2024)

4.4 CROSS-CUTTING IMPLEMENTATION AND CAPACITY ISSUES

4.4.1 Introduction

In addition to the above issues surrounding the social, natural and physical environments, during the course of this study the consultancy team has identified a number of other important cross-cutting challenges surrounding the broader institutional environment that will affect the capacity of different stakeholders to progress the proposed projects at the 10 selected locations. These are highlighted below.

Without a collaborative and strategic approach by stakeholders to design and develop capacity building interventions to address these issues (as appropriate to each site) then investment in these sites will carry a much greater level of risk. PPCP/PPP or other multi-stakeholder partnerships will be required in most cases to design and fund appropriate interventions or mitigation measures. Building the capacity of stakeholders at the sites in innovative and sustainable ways, including the mitigation measures suggested here, will greatly enhance the destinations, tourism products and visitor experience, as well as add value and increase likelihood of success in the long term.

The PIU is in an excellent position to identify opportunities to collaborate for capacity building interventions across the different proposal sites, and benefit from time, cost and delivery efficiencies. These actions should be designed and implemented in partnership with local and international organisations and institutions with the appropriate expertise, professional networks and local knowledge. Typically effective capacity building, training and behaviour change is a relatively slow process so a detailed assessment and planning of the needs/issues to be addressed at each site should take place at the very start of the implementation process and thus allow for sufficient delivery time-frames

4.4.2 Lack of resourcing for proper site management at protected areas and heritage sites

The first challenge is a lack of funding, capacity and other resources available to those managing cultural and natural heritage sites. This inability to invest in what should be standard site management and conservation actions is materially affecting the current state of some properties, and could be interpreted by some potential funders as demonstrating general dis-interest in the property, jeopardising chances for securing future investment for the site.

The apparent lack of incentive for many staff to be pro-active has been evident on several visits to cultural and natural heritage sites across the Gambia and suggests that there is a need for senior managers in NCAC and the DPWM in particular to review working practices, and encourage employees to be more engaged with the day to day management of the sites where they work. This is a much broader capacity building issue that needs to be addressed in partnership with the relevant Ministries overseeing the work of these agencies.

We understand that NCAC and DPWM are under severe financial pressure but unless additional financial resources are made available to the organisations for general site conservation and management works, there will surely be negative implications for the medium to long term benefits of the interventions proposed in this report for locations. This issue would merit from discussion at the highest levels of Government since it has implications for allocation of the national budget

More broadly, site maintenance and management at the selected ten sites is mostly informal and not structured or resourced properly with agreements in place with supporting service and infrastructure providers. There are significant gaps in training, resources and maintenance programmes which result in the gradual decline in the condition of sites. Beyond the traditional communal responsibility of taking care of one's own compound, there is a popular perception that beyond this is the responsibility of the government or others depending on the site in question.

Consequently, site management, health and safety remain urgent issues for some sites – particularly those on the river – where there are serious gaps in emergency services and the monitoring and enforcement of health and safety standards of jetties and tourism boats.

Sustainability issues at the sites are also not prioritised in this context so poor waste management and unsustainable felling of trees detracts further from the condition of the sites. Suggested mitigation measures include:

- structured and resourced approach to site management and maintenance as part of staffing structure, operational measures and site plan for each of the 10 sites to be developed;
- provide technical expertise and subsidies to incentivise and build capacity of private, public and community stakeholders to work together at the selected sites and adopt more effective and sustainable infrastructure and management systems;
- facilitate site communities to develop and pilot a formalised (supported by legislation) approach to site management, maintenance and health and safety drawing on best practice from other African tourism attractions that can be adapted to Gambian context;
- stakeholder awareness raising campaign to incentivise site maintenance and increase understanding about the importance of keeping the site well maintained, clean, tidy, safe etc.

All of the above issues are reflected by the shortage of up to date management plans for natural and cultural heritage sites, which are a requirement of World Heritage Site status, for example. Such plans normally cover a 5 year period or so, and contain detailed guidelines for the actions needed to:

- protect and conserve the relevant heritage assets (fixed and moveable);
- manage visitor access to, and understanding of, the property (including providing details on educational programmes; events as well as permanent access and interpretation provision);
- mitigate against all external threats – environmental and anthropogenic.

A management plan will also indicate priorities for action, responsibility for implementation (including the roles of external partners and stakeholders), details of indicative costs and potential sources of funding. It is important that the plan is reviewed every 5 years or so to reflect changes in the external environment.

4.4.3 Interpretation, storytelling, experiential design and product development

The Gambia has a wealth of natural and cultural heritage, history and stories to share with visitors but much of this remains hidden and not packaged or presented for tourist audiences. Currently the visitor experiences on offer at the different sites are quite similar, and the significance and unique characteristics of the sites are often not brought to life in a way that adds much value to the visitor.

Whilst some sites such as Juffureh/Albreda and Janjanbureh have greatly improved the quality of their tour guiding in recent years, there is generally limited exposure, capacity and resourcing in taking interpretation and experiential planning to another level, and in applying more innovative and creative approaches and methods to guiding, museum exhibitions, cultural performances, immersive CBT experiences and thematic trail and itinerary development.

There are a number of challenges to addressing this issue and improving the visitor experience in practice such as a decline in the tradition and craft of storytelling in younger generations; lack of in-country specialist expertise in experiential and interpretive planning; insufficient financial resources; need for further baseline research and interpretive planning to inform site specific content and identify how each site fits and differentiates with other sites in The Gambia, the wider Gambia destination brand, and the potential for thematic routes.

Another related issue is that often a participatory approach to interpretation and experiential planning is not adopted. This results in communities losing ownership of the stories and narrative shared with visitors, or there not being an appropriate decision-making process to agree one story for a site or to enable people to communicate different stories/interpretations/voices of the site. Consequently, there are lost opportunities for communities to benefit from telling these stories themselves as part of authentic and consistent visitor experiences. Possible mitigation measures include:

- strategic approach to building capacity in interpretative planning, experiential design and guiding across the 10 sites. This is an opportunity to link the sites to The Gambia destination brand, differentiate sites from each other, enhance tourist experience, deliver sustainability messages and develop thematic and geographical trails and itineraries that link sites and experiences together;
- initiative to support ground tour operators and guides to develop new, responsible experiential thematic trails and itineraries in line with code of conduct and commitment to profit share;
- creative interventions to revive storytelling craft through guide training and experience development at targeted sites and associated itineraries. Whilst it won't be possible to replicate the traditional approach of the past to learning stories, a new approach can be applied focussed on enhancing the tourist experience;
- investment in applied research to capture new interpretation content and identify innovative and interactive interpretation media appropriate to each site, the local context and the different narratives/perspectives that exist for the site. This is particularly important, for instance, for the existing and proposed museum exhibitions at Juffureh/Albreda, Fort Bullen, Wassu and Janjanbureh;
- capacity building with local communities and selected cultural resource peoples to share aspects of their heritage and daily lives through opportunities to interact directly with visitors such as through the homestay experience, stories and Kora playing around the fire in the evening. This could also include the development of a “human library” project in a destination, where visitors pay for some time with a particular local resource person to learn from them directly, rather than just read a book about the place, the people and their culture.

4.4.4 Limited tourist experience of upcountry accommodation, restaurants and bars

Accommodation, restaurants and bars at the current sites are generally functional rather than aesthetically attractive, and tend to be regarded by visitors as “merely somewhere to eat or stay”, rather than as destinations in their own right that add value to the tourism experience that makes the journey up country even more worthwhile.

In comparison to other African destinations such as Ghana and Kenya, the offer in more rural areas in The Gambia typically does not have a distinctive local sense of place, high quality standard or maximise use of the beautiful River Gambia, natural landscape or tangible heritage. For example, the CFAO building at Albreda and the former Government Rest House at Fort Bullen currently house very basic bars, yet these buildings are important tangible heritage assets with fantastic settings along The River Gambia but still completely underutilised in terms of their potential to offer a characterful and high-quality visitor experience.

This is due to several major challenges and capacity issues such as lack of private sector investment, limited interior design expertise, skill gaps in local tradesmen, access issues, local management and hospitality capacity, limited resources and poor understanding of the tourist markets and their requirements. Suggested mitigation measures include:

- interventions to incentivise and support private sector investors with access to interior design and experiential planning expertise and skilled tradesmen to support development of high quality and sustainable accommodation and hospitality experiences up-country;
- training and capacity building of local tradesmen and hospitality staff to develop skills needed to improve quality and experiences on offer;
- awareness-raising activities with local stakeholders at the different sites (communities, private and public sector) on nature of tourism demand for experiences and quality, potential value and benefits of improving tourism experiences on offer, and a sustainable approach to implementation.

4.4.5 Management of tourist-host interaction and relationships

Key target market segments for the nature, wildlife and cultural experiences at the ten sites are highly motivated to have authentic and cross-cultural interactive experiences with local people and nature in The Gambia. It should not be assumed that bringing together local people and tourists for this purpose will automatically result in positive relationships without the careful and design and responsible management of appropriate opportunities and environments for it to take place.

In practice there is often a cross-cultural gap in understanding between tourists (for some markets) and local people, and challenging contextual factors such as poverty, language barriers, time constraints, limited opportunities, inequitable economic relationships and the limited ownership of local people in delivery of tourism products and experiences. Furthermore, there is a need to address irresponsible attitudes and behaviour by some visitors.

However, a range of practical strategies exist that could be adopted to help create a conducive environment for tourist-host interaction to take place at the sites. For example, skilled guiding, interpretation planning, experiential design, cultural awareness-raising, codes of conduct, visitor management and information, sustainable behaviours messaging, responsible marketing and putting local people in the position of teachers and educators (rather than as subjects to be observed). Possible mitigation measures to be introduced are:

- provide site communities, guides and site managers with capacity building and training to become teachers and educators on the design and deliver of cultural and nature-based experiences for tourists;
- development of responsible codes of conduct for tourists and local people at each site to increase understanding and manage the interaction more responsibly;
- actively consider the nature of tourist-host interaction at each stage of the visitor journey and incorporate into experience design with communities, guides, site managers and ground tour operators;
- tourist culture awareness-raising training and development of site-specific pre-departure information/creative digital media on Gambian culture and nature associated with each site;
- responsible marketing of experiences on offer at the sites to manage expectations and communicate positive, mutually beneficial interaction between tourists and local people;
- monitor community satisfaction with the nature and impact of tourism at the sites through an annual meeting or survey administered by site managers.

4.4.6 Capacity for managing community-based tourism

There is increasing demand for community-based tourism (CBT) experiences in The Gambia and some recent support initiatives have made some progress in developing products with local communities (for example at Tabanani, Jamali, Tuman Tenda and Ndemban).

However, there are significant gaps in community capacity at the selected sites in terms of lack of formalised/adequate community-level structures engaged in tourism development; absence of a structured CBT development process to follow; lack of resources and tourism infrastructure; and skills gaps at a local level due to limited tourism industry exposure and training.

Significant capacity building is required to set up appropriate partnership models with communities, government and private sector partners and introduce a more formalised and structured process for developing CBT products at some of the selected sites. Opportunities for resolving these issues include:

- roll out ITC’s Community-Based Tourism five stage capacity building process that has been successfully piloted in Janjanbureh to selected sites;
- pilot and fund development of Joint Venture/PPP/PPCPs partnership models to improve CBT products and community tourism infrastructure (e.g. homestays network, mobile camping, trails, cultural experiences);
- pilot formalised homestays network as a vehicle for providing quality and immersive cultural experiences hosted by local communities.

In terms of homestays, it is important that they are developed sensitively. Ownership and management of the homestay units built in privately owned compounds will need to be negotiated and formalised through partnership agreements. It is recommended, in the case of Albreda and Juf-fureh, that JAYS is charged with running a booking service for homestays, working in partnership with the facility providers on the one hand, and tour operators promoting homestays as part of their product offer on the other hand. Independent travellers will also book through JAYS. The ASEAN guidelines for homestay providers, developed for this emerging sector in South East Asia, could provide a useful starting point for developing similar standards and guidelines for The Gambia. A link to that document can be found here: <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ASEAN-Homestay-Standard.pdf>.

4.4.7 SMME capacity and tourism product quality

SMMEs are the backbone of the tourism industry in rural areas, many of which operate informally. However, they are currently facing several major challenges issues such as business skills capacity, access to finance, health and safety issues, low product quality, and limited understanding of the tourist market. These need to be addressed to improve the quality of tourism at the sites and ensure these local businesses are not excluded from a more formalised approach to tourism development. Opportunities to tackle these challenges include:

- interventions to support tourism SMMEs at the new sites to formalise and form/join structured organisations or associations in the tourism industry;
- interventions designed to increase tourism SMMEs capacity to take advantage of new market access opportunities and make backward and forward linkages in the tourism supply chain;
- map out linkages between potential SMME opportunities created by development of the new sites and the new EU and World Bank-funded SMME capacity building initiatives;
- develop a tourism SMME mentorship and training programme for women and youth entrepreneurs to develop new tourism related products/ services.

4.4.8 Lack of formalised/structured partnerships and “ways of working” between communities, tourism public and private sectors

Currently none of the selected sites have formalised/structured partnerships and “ways of working” set up between communities, tourism public and private sectors to develop tourism strategic-

ally, collaboratively and equitably. However, fortunately, Gambia's Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs has recently introduced the Public Private Partnerships (PPP) Operational Guidelines and the National PPP Policy of The Gambia has now been passed by Cabinet. These provide implementing agencies and the PPP Directorate with a policy and procedural framework and analytical tools enabling them to assess whether the use of different PPP models can deliver net benefits in a specific project, and how these benefits can be effectively achieved.

Achieving these new type of PPP partnerships between tourism stakeholders at the sites create a significant opportunity to formalise the roles, responsibilities and profit share for those involved. Given the importance of developing community-based tourism initiatives across the country, extending this into Public/Private/Community Partnerships (i.e. PPCPs) and also Joint Ventures, between different stakeholder interests, will be vital to the delivery of some of the proposed interventions. In practice this will require the development of new ways of working and likely raise operational, political and capacity issues that need to be addressed with suitable tools including:

- facilitate communities and tourism SMMEs to introduce tourism-specific structures and clusters— building on existing community or tourism association-based structures – to organise themselves to engage with formalised PPPs for the development of sites;
- build capacity/facilitate GTB/MoTC to apply new National PPP Policy for The Gambia and Operational Guidelines to the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships with communities at the 10 sites;
- intervention to support tourism SMMEs and communities meet the PPP requirements for formalisation such as meeting quality and licensing standards; transparent accounting; registration of businesses, community groups and associations; and capacity building in light of roles and responsibilities in the partnership.

4.4.9 Women and youth empowerment

As discussed in Sections 4.2.4 and 4.2.5, the social screening analysis of women and youth empowerment opportunities provided by the 10 sites identified substantial potential for new tourism-related jobs, female-led and youth-led SMMEs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

However, closer attention needs to be paid to the type of jobs (informal versus formal, and high value versus low value), type of businesses and level of leadership and decision-making powers achieved by women and youth. Women and youth will need active support to build their capacity and increase their representation for leadership, lucrative and managerial positions, and take up opportunities for new business ownership. And in the case of protected areas (cultural and natural heritage sites), providing new job opportunities linked to the protection, conservation and promotion of such sites for tourists will increase the host community's understanding of why such sites are being prioritised for investment and that there should be a mutually beneficial outcome for both DPWM and NCAC on the one hand, and the surrounding villages on the other. This requires an important shift in ambition to move beyond focussing on women's role in subsistence of families to a higher level of empowerment.

More in-depth assessment and planning of leadership/political, social and economic empowerment opportunities and the required capacity building interventions for women and youth are needed during the next more detailed stage of site-specific development, building on the following:

- targeted approach to coaching and mentoring women and youth entrepreneurs for enhanced business development skills, drawing on existing women and youth entrepreneurs' networks and existing empowerment projects or proposals (for example, the The ProBlue Gender Assessment of the Gambian Tourism Sector (2023), The Gambia Youth and Trade Roadmap for Tourism (2018-2022) and ITC's Gambia Youth Empowerment Project);

- gender and youth empowerment interventions designed to address barriers such as access to transport, finance and assistance with opening bank accounts, market access, confidence building, and support with childcare and family responsibilities.

4.4.10 Lack of formalised child protection measures against sexual exploitation in travel and tourism

The tourism sector in The Gambia (as in other destinations) carries the risk of increased child sexual exploitation and abuse and of (forced) prostitution of women and children, in particular in emerging rural destinations where there is a high level of poverty and the industry and accommodation is more informal and not closely regulated. According to sources produced by ECPAT International and the Gambia Child Protection Alliance¹⁴, alongside other reports such as the ProBlue Gender Assessment of the Tourism Sector Report (2024), there have been measures to reduce the occurrence and demand for commercial sex acts and sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism by providing anti-trafficking training to hospitality sector employees and posting Tourism Security Unit officers in the Tourism Development Area. This is supported by the development of a legal framework in The Gambia which makes increasing provision related to offences and regulating the tourism industry through the Tourism Offences Act, Children's Act and Trafficking in Person's Act. However, serious gaps remain in relation to the provision of adequate resources needed to achieve effective implementation of investigation, prosecution and rehabilitation services using these laws.

Furthermore, since 2004 the Gambian government has collaborated with ECPAT and other international organizations to organize training sessions for police, immigration, and airport personnel focused on identifying trafficking victims and understanding the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). However, these efforts are affected by a number of challenges in practice and scale, and very few of these preventative measures have taken place within the selected sites which are largely in rural areas.

The present system requires all tourism businesses to register with GTB and acquire an operational license which obligates accommodation providers to sign the Gambian modified ECPAT code of conduct which requires them, amongst other responsibilities, to raise awareness of the issue amongst customers and provide staff training so they can identify undesirable situations. Whilst this represents progress in the TDA, these measures are not monitored or enforced in the rural areas, and particularly in unlicensed premises up-country. Consequently, there is a risk that new and existing accommodation and bars associated with developments at the ten tourism sites could provide a safe haven for offenders if preventative measures not put in place – making children in neighbouring communities vulnerable.

Suitable mitigation measures to be considered include:

- capacity building to support communities in training and raising awareness;
- enforcement agencies ensure children are protected and the existing laws are enforced in a stringent manner. This includes increasing awareness and knowledge amongst law enforcers so that they can play a greater role in preventing and responding to child sex tourism cases. Furthermore, it should also include improvements to legislation related to SECTT as outlined in ECPAT International 2015 and 2022 Gambia Reports;
- education system/schools: ensure child protection, child rights issues are integrated in the school curriculum or mainstreamed in the Social and Environment Science subject;
- communities and parents need to be vigilant on what goes on around them;

¹⁴ ECPAT International (2022) *Global Boys Initiative: The Gambia Report*. Bangkok: ECPAT International and ECPAT International; ECPAT International (2015) (2nd Edition) *Global Monitoring Report for The Gambia: Status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children*. Bangkok: ECPAT International

- medical practitioners need to be sensitive to the needs of victims;
- better engagement with tour operators, hotels and the private sector: Child sex tourism is not only the responsibility of Government, NGOs, communities and families. The Gambia Tourism Board should encourage tour operators and the private sector in The Gambia to use their networks, corporate knowledge, human and financial resources, business structures and leverage power to proactively address child sex tourism and other forms of child sexual exploitation. This could include adoption of “The Code”¹⁵ which is an industry-driven responsible tourism initiative which provides awareness, tools and support to tourism businesses in order to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. The code consists of six criteria which companies should integrate into everyday operations to turn child protection principles into concrete actions that will help protect children;
- the security forces at border posts should continuously be monitoring records of known abusers, and suspected potential offenders;
- build effective referral and social welfare responses to child sex tourism.

4.4.11 Sustainable design and operations at ecolodges

The recent problems associated with the GTB’s pilot project to develop model ecolodges in several locations across The Gambia including Barra, Kunkilling and Sotuma demonstrate the lack of a detailed understanding as to best practice in the design, construction and operation of such facilities. There are some examples where existing lodges do reflect international good practice in certain aspects – the design of the lodges on stilts above the water at Bintang Bolong; the strong community focus of Morgan Kunda Camp near Bao Bolong; and the use of traditional building materials across parts of the AbCa camp at Bintang Bolong, for example. However, these are few and far between and the existing provision in The Gambia rarely meets the standards required across the board (i.e. location; design; service quality; facilities) required by high spending international tourists.

All ecolodges already operating at across the Gambia, or those that are planned under the proposals presented here, should be therefore developed and operated according to the guidelines for ecolodges published by the International Ecotourism Society back in 2002. A copy of the guidelines can be accessed here: <https://gileboom.ir/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/International-Ecolodge-Guidelines.pdf>. Issues covered include appropriate green building techniques, the siting of new construction and associated infrastructure, use of renewable energy, appropriate waste management systems etc.

4.4.12 Public safety provision on the river

Another issue of major concern is the extremely limited provision of emergency and rescue services, especially as it relates to tourist activity on the river. In many cases, this is exacerbated by the almost total absence of health & safety provision on boats used by tourists. For instance, often there are insufficient life-jackets for all passengers on board; many life-jackets are in poor condition and missing retaining straps; trip boats do not have VHS DSC radios or other means of communication that can be used in an emergency other than cell phones and we have often seen boats set out with only one means of propulsion and no alternative should an engine fail. Worryingly, there is an almost total absence of coastguard stations and of manned safety/ search & rescue craft along the river.

If there is to be a significant uplift in levels of tourist activity on the river, addressing these issues will be important to demonstrate to high-end tour operators that measures are in place should there be an incident on the water. Tackling these challenges of course has to be a national under-

¹⁵ See link to brochure on The Code and details of the six criteria here: [Final-Brochure_Generic_2022 ENG \(thecode.org\)](#)

taking led by the Gambian Coast Guard & Sea Rescue Service (GCGSRS), under the leadership and guidance of appropriate government Ministries.

However, there is also a moral obligation for tourist boat operators themselves to upgrade their safety provision onboard, so that potential disasters are averted as far as possible. This could be achieved through a Code of Conduct developed in partnership between GTB and GCGSRS, which is a potential short-term and partial solution to this problem since tour operators could be encouraged only to use those boat operators signed up to the Code of Conduct.

Thus suitable mitigation measures include:

- In the short term, individual tour boat operators to take responsibility themselves for upgrading emergency and lifesaving equipment onboard in line with international best practice – see for instance <https://www.amsa.gov.au/safety-navigation/safety-equipment>;
- GCGSRS to work with GTB to develop a Code of Conduct for tourist boat operators that specifies minimum levels of safety provision on board;
- GCGSRS, under the remit of the Ministry of Interior, should undertake a comprehensive review of search and rescue provision along the whole of the river, with a view to upgrading provision in all key locations used by tourist craft.

4.4.13 Protecting the investments: enhancing routine maintenance and conservation activities across The Gambia's cultural and natural heritage properties

No matter what the destination, when looking at cultural and natural heritage properties that are promoted as tourist attractions in their own right, evidence demonstrates that there are two key areas that require appropriate resourcing from central government funds. As previously discussed, resource constraints mean that in general The Gambia is remiss in its responsibilities here and this issue needs to be tackled at the national level.

Ordinary programmed maintenance is essentially a preventive maintenance activity performed on the basis of a time program or an established number of quantities. For instance, an organisation commits to maintaining and repairing a certain number of linear metres of wall or footpath per year, or to completely renovate a particular building every 15 or 20 years. Such programmes are informed by an understanding of the specific cultural values of a heritage property (i.e. WHY it is being conserved) and employ techniques that guarantee appropriate material conservation and which avoid any tampering that may diminish a property's authentic testimony of the past.

There are very real economic benefits of a programme of regular maintenance and appropriate repairs. Attending to minor defects at built heritage sites avoids the need for major repair works later on, which are not only damaging to the architectural and heritage value of the building, but can also be expensive. And at natural heritage sites, regular programmes of, for instance, removing invasive vegetation species or repairing retaining walls or drainage ditches will help avoid unwanted environmental problems, as will clearing dead grass and brush at the start of the dry season to help combat the risk of wildfire.

Emergency maintenance includes all works that must be done immediately for health, safety or security reasons or that may result in the rapid deterioration of the structure or site if not done immediately. Examples at built heritage sites include roof repairs after a storm or repairing broken glass to prevent ingress of water into fragile structures, whilst at natural heritage sites it might include filling in breaches in dams after a flood, or tackling pollution from an oil spill in a waterway, for instance.

As indicated above, there is currently an almost complete absence of planned maintenance and conservation works at many of the cultural and natural heritage sites that have been identified as being key targets for development by the PIU and partners. This is fundamentally due to budget-

ary constraints within organisations such as NCAC and DPWM who are charged with protecting, managing and promoting access to the nation's built and natural heritage sites.

It is essential that this issue is addressed at the earliest opportunity by the Ministry of Finance and other public bodies, so that any future investment in development at these sites is not compromised in the future by a lack of ongoing maintenance and conservation.

A key reason why more public funds should be made available for introducing routine maintenance initiatives at The Gambia's key cultural and natural heritage sites is based on international evidence which demonstrates that the absence of such a program tends to result in an "irrational" succession of occasional or emergency interventions. This represents a significant waste of resources and is an inefficient way of approaching the professional management of cultural and natural heritage sites.

Therefore, for every site that is to be developed and promoted for tourism it is essential that funds are available for such formal site maintenance activities. In other words, managers at all major cultural and natural heritage sites need to have sufficient funds to carry out regular inspections; implement appropriate repairs and other works that respond to problems at the site in question; and finally to evaluate the impact of those interventions.

In essence, there is a need to introduce across the The Gambia a well-resourced and well-planned programme of preventative conservation for heritage assets. Preventive conservation includes all measures and actions aimed at avoiding and minimizing future deterioration or loss to heritage assets.

At built heritage assets, such actions tend to be indirect and should not interfere with the original materials and structures of the items, nor do they modify the appearance of the property. At some natural heritage sites, however, actions may involve environmental management activities that reshape local landforms and/or alter prevalent vegetation types. Preventive conservation not only provides the chance for relevant authorities to build capacity within their own organisations as they manage the assets they are charged with protecting, but also gives public sector agencies the opportunities to involve host communities more directly in the day to day management of heritage assets. This is important as local people tend to be most impacted by tourist activity at such locations, and it is vital that they understand why such sites are protected and promoted to visitors.

Such a maintenance programme should include details on:

- the frequency of inspection which should be undertaken (for example daily, weekly, monthly, annual or longer quinquennial inspections);
- what issues are to be investigated (e.g. levels of damp in a building; condition of access paths; species present at a natural heritage site);
- what needs to be done when problems are identified;
- when any remedial works should be done/ level of priority;
- who will do the work;
- the cost of the work;
- record of the Inspection.

Detailed guidance on drawing up site management plans that incorporate a detailed maintenance programme can be provided by international organisations such as ICOMOS (for cultural heritage sites) and IUCN (for natural heritage site).

There is a need to ensure that organisations in the Gambia charged with protecting, managing and maintaining both cultural and natural heritage sites are properly resourced

4.4.14 Concluding comments

This section of the report has raised some generic issues surrounding the broader environment in which the development proposals at each of the 10 locations will be worked up, planned, financed and implemented. In some cases there are some site specific issues to be addressed and these are highlighted in the detailed project proposals presented in the companion report to this document. However, the more generic and cross-cutting issues require careful consideration by the PIU and its partners in the public, private and third sectors as well as by host communities themselves. We recommend that running parallel to the process of seeking investors for the proposed interventions is a co-ordinated programme of actions led by the PIU to ensure that the enabling environment is as supportive as possible.

5. Conclusions and Way Forward

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

This report, and its companion document, present proposals for the significant upgrading of tourism infrastructure at 10 carefully selected locations across the whole of The Gambia. As each project is implemented, it will stimulate additional tourism activity in and around the specific location. And as more and more of the projects are delivered, collectively they will begin to make a difference by supporting the creation of new tour products that can be sold to domestic, regional and international tourists.

As a reminder, the 10 locations and the conceptual approach we have identified for each of them are summarised in Table 21.

Table 21 – Summary of selected locations and proposed conceptual approach to tourism development

| Location | Concept/ Theme |
|---|--|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | Reshaping Heritage Tourism at Gambia's First WHS |
| Basse | Traditions of Basse (handicrafts initiative) |
| Bintang Bolong | Bringing the river closer |
| Denton Bridge | Developing the river gateway |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | Crossroads of cultures |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | Welcoming the spiritual traveller |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | Celebrating Gambia's Biodiversity |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | Reimagining Gambia's craft sector |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | Supporting conservation through tourism |
| Wassu Stone Circles | Celebrating 1,000 years of culture |

By theming each of the proposed interventions, we have sought to stimulate new approaches to marketing the different destinations and hope that our proposals provide some useful groundwork for the PIU-sponsored work that has recently commenced to identify how best to position and market Destination Gambia in the coming years. It also provides a 'hook' to communicate to potential partners and the host communities how tourism might develop in each location, a topic we explore in a little more detail below.

5.2 NEXT STEPS

5.2.1 Sharing the recommendations with stakeholders

Given the levels of public interest already shown in this study, as evidenced by the widespread support the team has received during the research and fieldwork stages as well as by the positive response by all the delegates at the workshop in mid-May where the original short list was discussed, we propose that the project's findings and recommendations are launched with some 'fan-fare' in early/mid September.

One option could be to hold a full-day event with an invited audience, possibly at the Sir Dawda Jawara International Conference Centre in Serrekunda. The morning session would be taken up with a presentation by the PIU about the background to the project followed by an elaboration by the consultant team of the process followed to come to the short list; a description of the main interventions proposed at each location and the anticipated benefits – economic and social.

In the afternoon, we would propose inviting other agencies including the MoTC, GTB, MCC, DPWM and NCAC to talk about some of their ongoing initiatives that align with, or intersect with, the proposals arising from this study. A concluding discussion, chaired by the PIU Project Director or a nominee, would then draw together the day's events and offer some suggestions on how the different partners should work together to progress these initiatives.

Such an event could gain considerable media coverage from the Gambian TV and press, stimulating further interest in the proposals.

In terms of the composition of the audience, invitations should be made to:

- all of the consultees who were involved in the original discussions during the March field mission (listed in Appendix 4 of the Phase B report);
- all those who attended the workshop on May 15th where the final short list was agreed (listed in Appendix 8 of the Phase B report);
- all those who were consulted during the second field mission in June 2024 and who do not appear on either of the above lists (see Appendix 2 of this report).

It is possible that some potential attendees, particularly those living in North Bank, Central River and Upper River Regions, may be unable to make the time to travel to Serrekunda for the event. To ensure that they too get the opportunity to hear at first hand the proposals, we would propose holding a second, smaller half-day event one or two days later, perhaps using the education space at the Kankurang Museum in Janjanbureh, where the consultancy team leader, other colleagues and key personnel from the PIU, present the findings and host a discussion about the next steps.

One further opportunity for disseminating the key findings to a broad market would be for the consultants to prepare a relatively concise (10 to 15 minutes) narrated PowerPoint presentation detailing the main recommendations, that could be hosted on an official Gambian government YouTube channel and promoted by the PIU and others.

5.2.2 Sharing the information with impacted parties

In almost every one of the project ideas put forward in this report there will be some parties who are more affected than others by the proposed interventions. In Bintang Bolong, Bao Bolong and Niumi National Park, for instance, it will be lodge owners whilst in Janjanbureh it is the owner of the parcel of land identified as being a prime location for the creation of new public open space near the ferry crossing. In Albreda and Kotu the existing craft workers and retailers are a primary audience, as are the boat operators at Denton Bridge and the leaseholder of the former Government Rest House outside Fort Bullen. And at the Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque, the Gambia Su-

preme Islamic Council will have a key interest in what happens at that site. Some, but not all, have been consulted during the course of this exercise and thus will know in broad terms what is going on. But others may be relatively unaware of the project and its recommendations, and this needs to be addressed early on so that no unexpected obstacles are placed in the path of implementation.

Each affected person or group will need to be approached by the PIU at an early stage of the information dissemination process. In all cases, this should start with a formal communication from the Project Director or other senior representative, requesting a face to face meeting with the relevant individual or group, so that they can be provided with sufficient detail to allay any concerns and, where their co-operation or participation is essential, so that they can begin to develop their own strategies to help the project in question move towards implementation.

This should happen in parallel with the preparation for the proposed launch event described in Section 5.2.1.

5.2.3 Attracting interest from investors

As made evident in the detailed project descriptions presented in the companion report to this document, each proposed intervention will involve at least some element of private sector involvement. In some instances these private sector partners may already be on site (e.g; the boat owners operating out of Denton Bridge or the many craft workers at Kotu) whilst in other instances, such as at Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque, there is effectively a clean slate on which to draw.

It is recommended that professional designers are commissioned to draw up a series of investment prospectuses that can be circulated widely both electronically and in hard copy. All of the relevant project information for each prospectus can be found in the project details in the companion document accompanying this report. The Gambia Investment & Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA) has prepared such documents in the past (see below) and it would be worthwhile the PIU canvassing their opinion on how best to disseminate these to national and international investors to achieve maximum interest and return.



Figure 14 : GIEPA Investment brochure, front

5.2.4 Promoting the project proposals to host communities

Section 4 of this report identified in some detail a wide range of issues around the importance of involving host communities in planning, delivering and managing tourism experiences in their home areas. It is essential, in the view of the consultancy team, that each community of place affected by the proposals drawn up for this project are made aware, at the earliest opportunity, of the proposals and what it might mean for them.

Given the potential language barriers, and also the optics associated with the European Team Leader coming in and talking about the ideas for developing the sites, we propose that the PIU and partner agencies, supported by the local consultant, runs a short awareness raising campaign in which each of the affected communities is visited and a public meeting held, with all invited, so that the ideas contained in this report are clearly communicated, along with the Ministry's decisions on what the next steps are to take these concepts through to implementation in the coming years. Involving Alkalos, Village Development Committees and elected officials in the larger towns will be important from both a protocol perspective but also practically, in terms of securing appropriate venues and ensuring that word gets out about the meetings and their purpose.

5.3 PRIORITISING AND PHASING THE INVESTMENTS

5.3.1 Prioritising the project list

Inevitably the proposed interventions for 10 different locations will require significant investment from a range of sources (see Section 3.3 of this report and the detailed descriptions for each project in the accompanying document), and it is extremely unlikely that funds can be made available to implement all 10 projects at the same time. Indeed, it is likely that delivery of all 10 projects to their full extent may take the best part of a decade or more, depending on resource availability. It is therefore helpful to have an indicative prioritisation of the various opportunities so that the PIU and partners in both the public and private sector can then determine where to focus efforts in the coming months and years.

Our proposed prioritisation is based on a quantitative assessment that reflects an understanding of the scale of investment required; the likely economic benefits of each project (in terms of jobs supported once operational); their attractiveness in investment terms; and whether or not the site or destination can continue to function for some years without enhanced facilities (in other words, is there an immediate need to upgrade the site or destination to protect the assets, or can it still support attempts to diversify The Gambia's appeal to niche markets without the proposed interventions, at least in the short to medium term).

Table 22 below, records the consultancy team's scores for each of the 10 short-listed destinations/projects against four relevant criteria in order to present an indicative prioritisation. As the broader political, social and economic environment across The Gambia is in a constant state of change, other factors may emerge that impact upon the desirability (or not) of investing in each one of these projects. In particular, the outcomes of the ongoing study to prepare a new marketing strategy for Destination Gambia may impact on the GTB's views, for instance, on where attention in product development should be focussed. However, for the purposes of this assignment, the assessment exercise would suggest the following prioritisation:

- highest priority: Historic Georgetown; Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque and Kotu Beach Craft Market;
- next highest priority: Bintang Bolong; Basse; Denton Bridge; and Kiang West/ Bao Bolong;
- lesser priority: Niuni National Park; Wassu; Albreda, Juffureh and Associated Sites.

Table 22 – Outline prioritisation scoring matrix

| Location | Total capital costs | Anticipated benefits (FTE jobs created once operational) | Return on investment after 10 years | Ability to still function and attract visitors without the proposed investment | Total score |
|---|---------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Basse | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 11 |
| Bintang Bolong | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 11 |
| Denton Bridge | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 10 |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 13 |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 13 |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 9 |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 12 |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| Wassu Stone Circles | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 |

Note that the principal reason that the Albreda cluster and Wassu all score so low is that they do not contain proposals for significant overnight accommodation provision for staying visitors and thus they score relatively low on both jobs created/ supported (because of the low daily spend per visitor) and also do not score well on the anticipated return on investment for the same reason.

However, for political, cultural and other more subjective reasons, it may be appropriate to move Albreda, Juffureh and Associated Sites (including Fort Bullen) up the list since it is by far the most high profile cultural tourism attraction in the country as far as international visitors are concerned. Moreover, an early start on the project at Denton Bridge is also desirable as it then supports the development of river-based tourism in the western part of the country in particular.

Similarly, although the Basse project scored relatively low compared to others, there could be an argument for implementing it fairly quickly as its presence would do much to signal to tourists and investors alike that the eastern-most reaches of the country are worth visiting and investing in. The lodge at nearby Kossamar is due to open in 2025 and guests will need attractions to visit during their stay. And finally, although the project at Kotu Beach Craft Market scores highly it is not, on its own, going to transform The Gambia as a tourism destination and therefore could easily be moved down the list.

These are all essentially political decisions should be made by the PIU and partners as they take forward the proposals presented in this document, perhaps commencing with a discussion of stakeholder priorities at the launch event for this report.

An explanation of the scoring for each criteria is given below:

Total capital costs (from QS and architect estimates – the greater the investment requirement, the lower the score):

- \$1 - \$2 million scored 4;
- \$2 -5 million scored 3;
- \$5 - \$10 million scored 2;
- \$10m + scored 1.

Anticipated benefits (FTE jobs supported once operational, based on outline economic impact analysis – the more jobs supported, the higher the score):

- under 200 FTE jobs scored 1;
- 201 – 500 jobs scored 2;
- 501 – 1,000 jobs scored 3;
- 1,001 jobs and over scored 4.

Return after 10 years (based on CBA – the greater the anticipated return overall, the higher the score):

- under 1.0 scored 1;
- 1.1 – 5.0 scored 2;
- 5.1 to 10.0 scored 3;
- 10.1 + scored 4.

Whether or not the site can still function without the proposed investments (subjective assessment by the consultant team):

- investment needed immediately scored 3;
- investment needed in short term scored 2;
- investment could wait to medium or long term scored 1.

5.3.2 Phasing the developments at different locations

In addition to prioritising the developments across the 10 locations to ensure some ‘quick wins’ are achieved, it is also helpful to consider how the different projects proposed for these locations can be broken down into more manageable packages that reflect possible funding availability. Our proposals for ‘chunking’ the 10 different projects into separate components is presented below in Table 23

Table 23 – Proposed packaging of each project into separate components

| Location | Potential packages of works |
|---|---|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Associated Sites | <p>Albreda & Juffureh: Four phases of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – provision of new craft retail facility and landscaping around entrance, linked to jetty improvements; – creation of trails up to the museum and out to San Domingo; – conservation works to the fort and installation of new interpretation on the island; – refurbishment of museum & learning centre in Juffureh village. <p>Fort Bullen: Two components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – conservation work and enhancement of the fort proper; – landscaping of surrounding area. |
| Basse | Project must be delivered as one |
| Bintang Bolong | <p>Packages of investment as follows (no ‘correct’ sequence):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – environmental and access improvements at Bintang Bolong; – installation of new viewing and landing facilities along the Bolong; – development of new lodge, restaurant and landing stage at Kalagi; – development of new lodge elsewhere along the bolong. |
| Denton Bridge | <p>Project could be broken into three components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ground works, replacement of all jetties, refurbishment of essential businesses currently serving tourists; – redevelopment of boat repair facilities etc; – provision of additional visitor infrastructure (walkways, viewing platform etc). |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | <p>Project could be broken into seven discrete components. The two Kunkilling Forest parts can be delivered at any time and are not mutually dependent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – creation of new public open space and associated facilities in town centre (priority); – creation of new museum in the so-called ‘Slavery’ House; – refurbishment of Post Office and restoration of Wooden House (each can be delivered separately by NCAC, if needed); – redevelopment of the Kankurang Museum site; – development of trail out to Colonial cemetery and refurbishment of same; – development of new eco-lodge at Kunkilling; – restoration of Musa Mollah tomb and landscaping works. |
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | <p>Different components could be sequenced thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sea defences/ promenade; – conservation works to mosque; – completion of lodges; – construction of new hotel/ hostel; – landscaping works across whole area; – development of museum/ visitor centre. |

| Location | Potential packages of works |
|---|--|
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | <p>Kiang West: Six potential phases of work, in sequence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – refurbishment of Park HQ as proposed; – upgrading of access roads & internal circulation routes; – installation of canopy walk; – creation of new viewing facilities & water holes; – development of other leisure activities; – development of new lodges within the park. <p>Bao Bolong: Two potential phases of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – provision of upgraded landing platforms etc; – development of new lodges. |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | <p>Project could be broken into two:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – craft market redevelopment; – capital works to adjacent taxi area etc. |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | <p>Project could be broken down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – creation of enhanced access, trails and viewing platforms; – development of new National Park centre; – completion of new lodge developments. |
| Wassu Stone Circles | <p>Project could be sequenced as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – prepare management plan for WHS extension to include quarry, submit to UNESCO; – upgrade the museum and associated facilities, including improved access to the quarry; – community-centred project to enhance protection and utilisation of the buffer zone. |

5.4 DELIVERING THE PROJECTS IN THE COMING YEARS

The first point to note is that there is no ideal sequencing for the investments and that none are dependent on others being delivered. But having said that, early completion of the proposed interventions at Denton Bridge could provide a catalyst for other river-related works on both banks and hence support the early establishment of a new, high quality river-based tourism product. Realistically, it will be the availability of funding that governs how quickly (or slowly) each project will progress from concept through to detailed planning, construction and operations. The initial prioritisation exercise reported in 5.3.1 has provided some guidance on a possible sequencing of investment though circumstances and priorities may shift according to changes in the country's political, economic and cultural circumstances. But whatever the preferred (and actual) ordering of investment there is a need for the recommendations presented here and in the companion report to be delivered effectively and efficiently so that the anticipated benefits are delivered.

To oversee the co-ordinated delivery of the proposals contained in this document, it is recommended that the MoTC establishes a term-limited working group with senior representatives of all of the key public sector organisations involved (i.e. PIU, DPWM, GTB, NCAC). The working group would convene on a quarterly basis to monitor the progress of each of the 10 projects put forward by this study. This working group should also report to relevant Ministers on an annual basis how each of the initiatives is progressing. This will help to ensure that work on each of the interventions is delivered in accordance with the national interest. Such an annual review can also allow for

new opportunities to be integrated in to the existing proposals where appropriate, as well as for modifications to be made as new funding streams or market opportunities reveal themselves.

The working group will also act as a source of support for each of the project-specific vehicles established to oversee implementation. Across the 10 projects there are different partnership opportunities to oversee detailed planning and delivery and these are presented in more detail in the relevant documentation in the companion report. In some instances, public sector organisations such as the DPWM, GTB or NCAC will take a lead and will be responsible for seeing the projects through to completion. Elsewhere it may be more appropriate for a special vehicle to be established to oversee delivery. This might be a public-private partnership (PPP) or a public-private-community partnership (PPCP).

Proposals for each site are summarised below in Table 24. Note that the host communities are not specifically identified as partners in any of the projects at this stage, though they are all most definitely key stakeholders in the broader sense. In the individual project briefs there is more detail on proposed delivery procedures, timescales and also more detail on all partners including lots of named community groups. For instance, in almost every instance the relevant Village Development Committee (VDC) will wish to be involved, along with other organised groups and associations.

Table 24 – Summary of preferred delivery strategy for each location

| Location | Relevant Ministry | Proposed delivery Mechanism | Suggested Lead agency | Key Partners Include |
|--|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Albreda, Juffureh & Kunta Kinteh Island | MoTC | PPP or PPCP | GTB | NCAC JAYS |
| Fort Bullen (part of the Albreda/ Juffureh Site) | MoTC | PPP | NCAC | GTB Fort Bullen Festival Group Rest House Leaseholder, |
| Basse | MoTC | PPP | Local Council or GTB | ITC/YEP Existing owner of 'Traditions' Gambia Ports Authority EbA NCAC |
| Bintang Bolong | DPWM | PPCP | GTB or MoTC | Bintang Bolong Co-Management Committee Existing lodge operators New lodge investors |
| Denton Bridge | Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs | PPP | KMC | Existing businesses GCGSRS GTB Gambia Ports Authority |
| Historic Georgetown/ Janjanbureh & surroundings | MoTC | PPP | Local Council | GTB NCAC Existing landowners & owner of 'Slavery House' Gampost Gambia Ferry Services Company Ltd Just Act |

| Location | Relevant Ministry | Proposed delivery Mechanism | Suggested Lead agency | Key Partners Include |
|---|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque | Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs | PPP | Gambia Supreme Islamic Council | MoTC GTB Hotel investor & operator Lodge investor & operator |
| Kiang West National Park & Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve | DPWM | PPCP | DPWM | GTB University of the Gambia Ministry of Basic & Secondary Ed Bao Bolong WR Co-management committee Kiang West WR Co-management committee Lodge investor(s) & operator(s) |
| Kotu Beach Craft Market | MoTC | PPP | GTB | Gambia Craft Market Associations OTGA Tourist Taxi driver Association Fruit Sellers Association Juice Pressers Association |
| Niumi National Park & Jinack Island | DPWM | PPCP | DPWM | GTB Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education IUCN NNP Co-management committee Fishermen's Association Shellfish Association Existing & potential lodge investor(s) & operator(s) |
| Wassu Stone Circles | MoTC | PPCP | NCAC | GTB Potential homestay operators Agricultural tenants (buffer zone) |

5.5 THE ROLE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN TAKING THIS FORWARD

It is anticipated that the **Ministry of Tourism and Culture**, through the PIU, will take the lead role in pushing forward the recommendations contained in this report. However, substantial progress can only be made by the PIU if it works in partnership with a range of public and private sector interests. Section 5.4 has indicated potential partnerships on a project-by-project basis and also contains some recommendations on how the main public sector players should work together to oversee delivery of the various interventions up and down the country at the macro level. Gambia Tourist Board and NCAC both come under the purview of the MoTC and as indicated earlier, will each play a key role in the detailed planning, delivery and ongoing monitoring of the recommendations presented in Section 2 of this report and in the supporting detailed project plans.

It is, however, also worth considering what else the Gambian Government can do to facilitate this process at the macro-level. Whilst the contents of this report are unlikely to be discussed at Cabinet level, they certainly need to be brought to the attention of a number of different Ministries

within whose purview certain issues will appear. Below we present some of the generic issues associated with delivering the proposals contained in this report and how different Ministries might be able to contribute towards their resolution. For ease of presentation, Ministries and their potential inputs are listed in alphabetical order.

Several of the proposed projects such as those at Bintang Bolong; Wassu and Historic Georgetown (Kunkilling element) propose stronger links with local agricultural producers, either supplying lodges with food stuffs (Bintang Bolong, Kunkilling) or in terms of making better use of the land surrounding the historic monument to ensure its long term protection (Wassu). The **Ministry of Agriculture** already works with a range of external partners on agricultural development initiatives (e.g. FAO) and should be made aware of any recommendations contained within the project proposals that might benefit from their involvement, either to share good practice or to develop best practice examples with the PIU and partners.

The **Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs** needs to be made aware of the requirement by organisations such as DPWM and NCAC for additional funds to support the daily conservation and management activities at both natural and cultural heritage sites. Locations such as Kiang West National Park; Kunta Kinteh Island; Fort Bullen and Kunkilling Forest Park all showed the impact of a lack of revenue funding for such activities. In particular, resources for routine maintenance and conservation works are extremely scarce, resulting in poor states of repair at many built heritage structures. It is evident from reviewing the experiences of past projects at different locations around the country that injections of capital funding, often from aid agencies, are used to deliver capital projects such as museum developments or infrastructure works but there is no built-in revenue support to ensure that these investments are protected. Moreover, funds for marketing; research and outreach work with local communities are also almost non-existent, thus compromising the ability of site management teams to deliver high quality experiences to visitors.

Almost every location visited during the course of the fieldwork for this study found major problems with solid waste, whether this was deposited carelessly on the edge of communities; wind-blown waste in agricultural areas or plastics washed up on river banks and beaches. The **Ministry of Forestry, Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources** is the appropriate agency to consider whether a major national initiative is required to tackle the real problem of solid waste across the Gambia. Not only is it visually intrusive (and thus compromising the destination's ability to truly offer a high-quality tourist experience, but it is also a potential health and safety issue for marine and terrestrial wildlife. It is strongly recommended that this particular Ministry is encouraged to explore strategies for combatting the problems of solid waste and for identifying appropriate tools for recycling, re-using and reducing the volumes of solid waste discharged into the environment.

As discussed earlier in Section 4.4.11, there are some concerns about the poor state of safety provision on most of the tourist boats operating on the river. It would only take one tragic accident where lives are lost to shine a spotlight on this with the likely result that demand for river excursions would decline dramatically for several seasons until memories of the event faded. It is therefore recommended that relevant personnel within the **Ministry of the Interior**, which has responsibility for the Police and for the Gambian Coast Guard & Sea Rescue Service, are invited to consider how best to improve both the legislation surrounding provision of safety equipment on board all craft taking paying passengers, but also how adherence to any new legislation or guidelines can be enforced and monitored.

The **Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Religious Affairs** will play an important role in helping to deliver the interventions at the Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque but will also be called upon to facilitate the proposed land acquisitions in Historic Georgetown in particular. That specific proposal, which calls for an exchange of land holdings with a private owner and also for the (possible compulsory) acquisition of a privately owned building (the so-called Slavery House), could set a precedent in terms of how The Gambia approaches issues of land ownership in the fu-

ture, when a site in private ownership is deemed essential to the success of a public project, and thus the relevant team within that Ministry needs to be briefed at an early stage so that appropriate negotiations can be held with the respective land owners.

Given the importance of the river as an access corridor, there is a role for the **Ministry of Transport, Works and Infrastructure** in ensuring that best practice guidelines in the construction and maintenance of jetties and landing stages are developed, promoted and adhered to. Such guidelines should not only reflect good practice in the use of sustainable materials, but should also accommodate the likely impacts of climate change on water levels along the coast and river banks as well as guaranteeing a minimum level of safety for tourists and others using the jetties and landing stages.

In all cases, initial approaches should be made by the MoTC and PIU at senior officer level through the usual formal channels, to set up briefing meetings and thereafter to agree how to proceed with the relevant tasks or discussions.

5.6 NEXT STEPS

In terms of taking forward the proposals contained within this report and the companion document that contains more detailed proposals, Figure 15 presents an outline action plan for consideration by the PIU and partners.

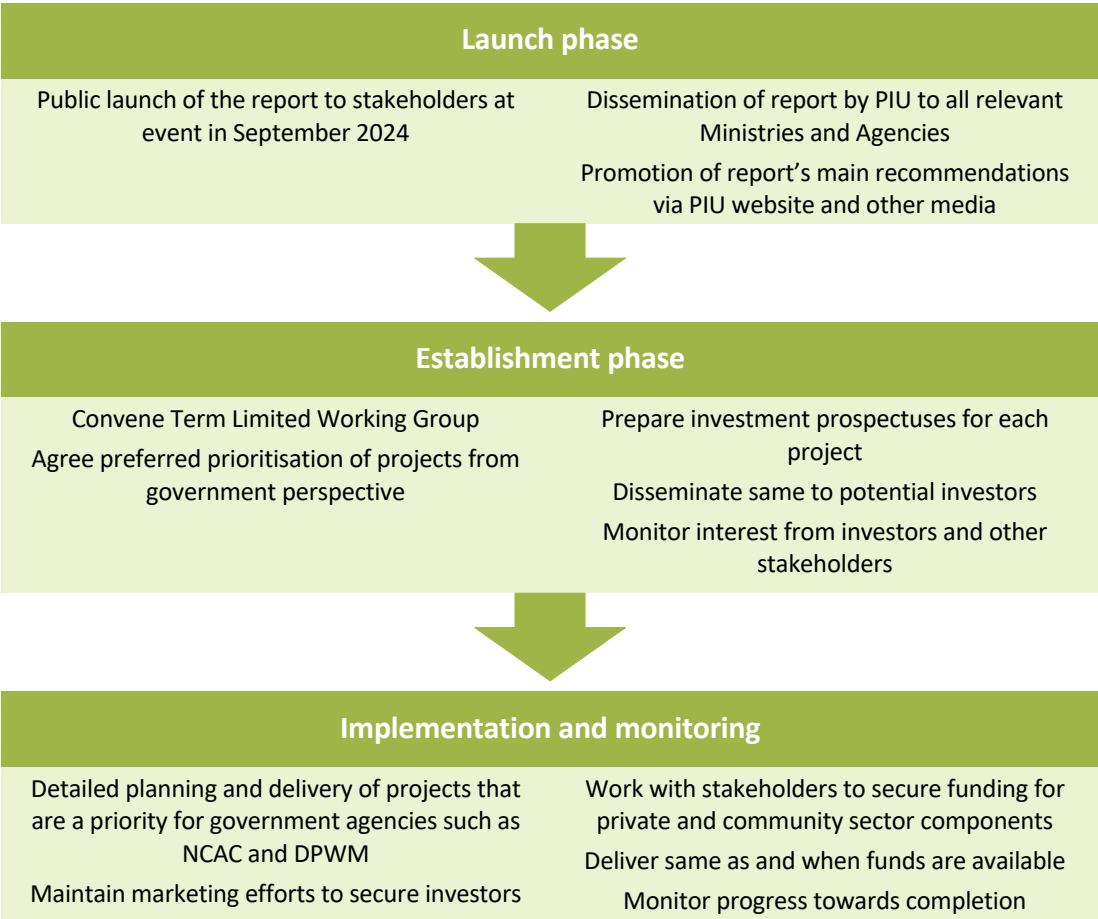


Figure 15 : Outline action plan for PIU and partners

5.7 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This final report has addressed feedback received from the PIU and partners on a draft that was submitted in July 2024 and we look forward to presenting its main conclusions to all relevant stakeholders at an event to be held in Banjul in September 2024. We wish the PIU, MoTC, GTB, NCAC, DPWM and all other stakeholder organisations every success as they work together to transform these initial concepts into reality.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Details of Field Mission, June 2024

| | | | |
|-----------|------------------|------|---|
| Monday | 10 th | June | Courtesy call to Ministry of Tourism & Culture |
| Tuesday | 11 th | June | Meeting with Craft Market Federation Site visit to Kotu Beach Craft Market Site visit to Bintang Village, including Bintang Bolong Lodge |
| Wednesday | 12 th | June | Site visit to Bintang Bolong (including possible landing stage site at Kalagi) Site visit to AbCa Creek Lodge, Kassagne Site visit to Kiang West National Park |
| Thursday | 13 th | June | Site visit to Bao Bolong Wetlands Site visit to Jirrong Bolong Site visit to Wassu Stone Circles & Museum Site visit to Kuntaur Site visit to Historic Georgetown (Janjanbureh) |
| Friday | 14 th | June | Site visit to Fort Campbell Further visit to Historic Georgetown Site visit to Kankurang Museum and festival ground Site visit to Kunkilling Forest and Musa Molloh Tomb |
| Saturday | 15 th | June | Site visit to Kossemar Tenda Eco-lodge Site visit to several locations in Basse |
| Sunday | 16 th | June | Site visit to Albreda, Juffureh, Kunta Kinteh Island |
| Monday | 17 th | June | No meetings or visits – <i>Tobaski</i> |
| Tuesday | 18 th | June | Site visit to Fort Bullen Site visit to Niumi National Park and Jinack Island |
| Wednesday | 19 th | June | Site visit to Denton Bridge Site visit to Kenye Kenye Jamango Mosque |
| Thursday | 20 th | June | 1-1 meetings with PIU, MoTC, GTB |
| Friday | 21 st | June | Meeting with Tourism and Travel Association of the Gambia |

Appendix 2 Details of consultation programme, June 2024

| | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| 10.06.24 | Ministry Of Tourism Meeting | Cordu Jabang Senghore, Permanent Secretary MoTC Momodou Ceesay, Director, PIU |
| 11.06.24 | Craft Market Federation | Pa Mbye, Treasurer Craft Market Federation & President Cape Point Craft Market |
| 11.06.24 | Bintang Bolong Lodge | Ebrima Drammeh (Solo), General Manager Fakebba Gassama, Chairman Of Indigenous Community Conservation Area |
| 12.06.24 | AbCa Creek Lodge | Abdul Gaye, GM Mowdo Jallow, Assistant Director Parks And Wildlife Momodou Ceesay, Director PIU |
| 12.06.24 | Kiang West National Park | Lamin Manneh, Park Manager Fakebba Njie, Research Officer Modou Manneh, Education & Research Gibril Darboe, Senior Ranger Saikou Bayo, Wildlife Ranger Mowdo Jallow, Assistant Director Parks And Wildlife Momodou Ceesay, Director PIU |
| 13.06.24 | Bao Bolong Wetlands | Lamin Njie, Bao Bolong Wetland Park Manager Kalilu Jammeh, Jirrong Bolong Landing Site Mowdo Jallow, Assistant Director Parks And Wildlife Momodou Ceesay, Director PIU |
| 13.06.24 | Wassu Stone Circles | Agi Jainaba Jah, Curator Ebrima Krubally, Chief Guide |
| 13.06.24 & 14.06.24 | Janjanbureh/ Historic George Town/ Kankurang Museum/ Fort Campbell | Hon. Omar Jammeh, National Assembly Member for Janjanbureh Musa Mbye, Governor Of Central River Region Moriba Jam Jawo, Chief's Representative Abdoulie Jallow, Councillor Saiba Darboe, VDC Chairman Daddy Dampha, Former National Assembly Member Kebba Mbenga, Youth Representative Foday Conteh, District Youth Representative Ibrahim Barry, Guide, Kankurang Museum |
| 14.06.24 | Kunkilling Forest Park | Harona Kandeh, Park Warden Musa Singhateh, Forestry Committee Chairman Sarra Sowe, Committee Member |
| 15.06.24 | Kossemar Tenda Ecolodge | Dr. Malamin Jaiteh, Director, EbA Alieu Khan, Building Work Foreman Bora Sanneh, VDC Chairman |
| 15.06.24 | Basse Pottery And Weaving | Mohamadou Ceesay, Basse Area Council Chairman Yaya Ceesay, Development & Planning Director, Basse Area Council |

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| 16.06.24 | Juffureh, Albreda and Kunta Kinteh Island | Lamin Njie, Chief Guide Lamin Tarawally, JAYS Yahya Sonko, JAYS Guide Dembo Jabang, Boat Owner Patrick Gomez, NCAC Destination Manager |
| 18.06.24 | Fort Bullen | Fatomata Hydera, Assistant Curator |
| 18.06.24 | Niumi National Park | Sarjo Manneh, Park Manager Amadou Manneh, Jinack Lodge Manager |
| 19.06.24 | Denton Bridge | Baboucarr Chorr, President Boat Owners Association Ebrima Drammeh, Executive Committee Member Betty Sallah, Boat Owner Mike King, Boat Owner |
| 19.06.24 | Kenye Kenye Jamango | Omar Jabang, Mosque Guide |
| 20.06.24 | One To One Meetings | Abubacarr Camara, Director General, GTB Momodou Ceesay, Director PIU Hassoum Ceesay, Director General, NCAC |
| 21.06.24 | Meeting With Tourism And Travel Association Of The Gambia (TTAG) | Liane Sallah, African Adventure/ Pocoloco Charbel Hobaika, Gambia Tours Julie Maio, Luigis Hotel Complex Clotide Jansen, Luigis Hotel Mac Van Naldegem, El Sol/ Aquarium Restaurant Momodou Ceesay, Jean's Boat Ana Sidebeh, Lamin Lodge/ JJBCamp Bernard Landstra, Rendezvous Restaurant Antin Van Aaist, Rendezvous Restaurant Kebba Njie, Executive Secretary Of TTAG |

Appendix 3 Breakdown of estimated costs for an associated capacity-building programme

| CAPACITY ISSUE | PROJECT INTERVENTIONS | DURATION | ESTIMATED COST (US\$) |
|---|---|----------|-----------------------|
| Site management at protected areas & heritage sites | Development new approach On-site technical & management training Equipment Technical expertise | 2 years | 500,000 |
| Interpretation, storytelling, experiential design & product development | Interpretation plans On-site training Technical expertise New interpretation media Product development plans Pilot new products/experiences | 3 years | 300,000 |
| Improving quality of experience at accommodation, restaurants & bars | Training for accommodation providers & restaurant/bar Interior design support Skills training for tradesmen Awareness-raising activities Technical expertise | 2 years | 200,000 |
| Site maintenance, management, health & safety and sustainability | Awareness-raising campaigns On-site technical & management training Equipment Technical expertise | 2 years | 300,000 |
| Management tourist-host interaction | Awareness-raising Product development Codes of conduct Technical expertise Training | 2 years | 200,000 |
| CBT | Training (based on ITC CBT process) Technical expertise Awareness raising Equipment Product development | 3 years | 200,000 |
| SMME and tourism product quality | Materials & equipment Mentoring/Training Design & specialist expertise SMME incubators/workshops Product development Market access initiatives | 3 years | 300,000 |
| Development of PPPs/PPCPs | Training Awareness-raising Technical expertise Partnership building Incentives | 2 years | 100,000 |
| Women & youth empowerment | Medium-term mentoring Training (basic skills to senior management-level) Interventions to address barriers to participation (e.g. transport, access to finance, market access) Development of network Technical expertise | 3 years | 200,000 |

| CAPACITY ISSUE | PROJECT INTERVENTIONS | DURATION | ESTIMATED COST (US\$) |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------|-----------------------|
| Child protection and sex tourism | Awareness-raising Training Preventative measures Implementation of "The Code" Technical expertise | 2 years | 100,000 |
| Public safety provision on the river | Training Awareness-raising Technical expertise Equipment Code of conduct | 2 years | 200,000 |
| TOTAL COSTS | | | US\$2,600,000 |



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