

JANUARY | JUNE | 2026



Newsletter

WETLANDS

COMMUNITIES

BIRDS

Highlights



PRESERVATION

ODZH is investigating and reporting on the vulture die-off recorded in Mansoa, specifically in the Cussana and Jugudul areas.



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

ODZH establishes more than 10 new environmental clubs in the Jeta, Pecixe, and Cacheu areas of the Future Jeta Biosphere Reserve



SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES

Mata de Ucó and Bote: 30 Women Receive Training in Oyster Farming to Boost Family Income

Descubra como a ODZH contribui para a conservação da biodiversidade na Guiné-Bissau.



EDITORIAL

The Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) is a Guinean civil society environmental nongovernmental organization. ODZH currently has 347 active members across all regions of Guinea-Bissau.

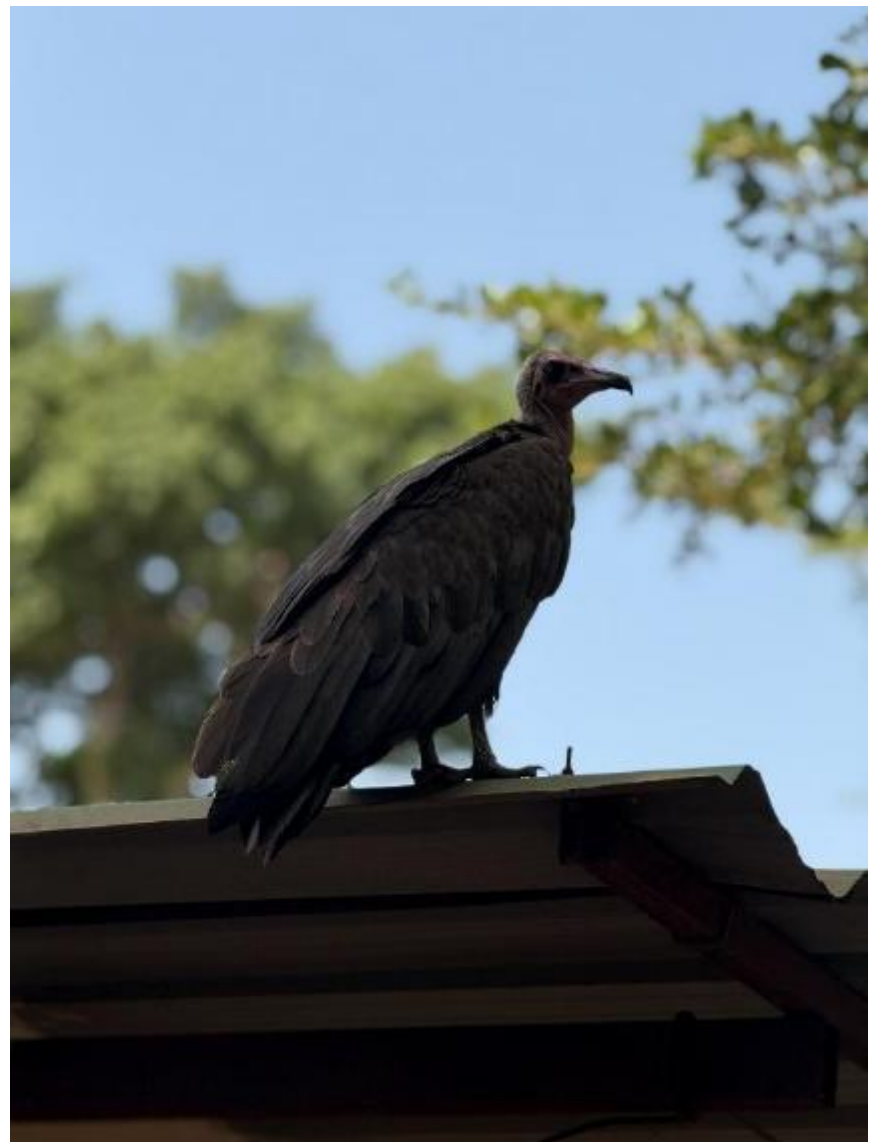
The conservation and preservation of wetlands as important ecosystems representative of Guinea-Bissau has become an unprecedented challenge for the ODZH and Guinean society. The degradation of wetlands is a central concern for the organization, which has made it a key part of national discussions on the environment and sustainable development; it has been drawing attention to the need to change the current course and strategies of development, with the aim of safeguarding wetlands as habitats that are essential to biodiversity throughout the country.

This concern, along with the work carried out by ODZH, has transformed the organization into an open space for study, open dialogue, learning, reflection, innovation, and the generation of knowledge about wetlands in Guinea-Bissau.

The first half of 2026 was marked by intense activity on the part of the Organization for the Defense and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH). The work carried out has reinforced its commitment to biodiversity conservation, scientific research, environmental education, and the strengthening of community-based management of natural systems.

During this period, ODZH carried out capacity-building activities, awareness-raising campaigns, species monitoring, institutional strengthening of community-based organizations, environmental education in schools on various Bijagós Islands in the Cacheu, Oio, and Tombali regions, and forest restoration as an initiative to promote Guinea-Bissau's natural and cultural heritage.

This newsletter provides a summary of the organization's main activities during the period.



• OUR PROJECTS

Over the past two years, ODZH has been discussing various ideas to identify projects on different topics related to nature conservation, particularly regarding wetlands and birdlife in Guinea-Bissau. These projects have been submitted to various international donors interested in conservation. Currently, ODZH has three main projects underway, namely:

1. Strengthening the Management and Governance of the Mata de Ucó and Bote Community Area

Duration: 3 years
Project Funder: Audemars Watkins

The project aims to strengthen the participatory management and governance of the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area, a reserve covering approximately 20,000 hectares in northwestern Guinea-Bissau.

It was established in 2018 and expanded in 2024 as an initiative aimed at strengthening community governance, conserving biodiversity, and promoting the sustainable use of natural systems. Furthermore, it contributes to the creation of the future Jeta, Pecixe, and Cacheu Biosphere Reserve, which is still under development.

Key initiatives include strengthening the capacity of the management committees in the northern and southern parts of the community area; restoring degraded areas of terrestrial forest in certain locations; monitoring biodiversity; conducting surveillance; building 250 improved stoves; training young people and women in sustainable activities; and promoting environmental education in schools and communities.

2. Working Together for a Strong and Resilient ODZH in the Conservation of Wetlands and Biodiversity, particularly birds, in Guinea-Bissau

Duration: 3 years
Project Funder: Fondation Hans Wilsdorf

The Institutional Support Project, funded by the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, aims to strengthen ODZH’s institutional capacity and ensure better working and administrative conditions. The goal is to strengthen institutional governance, promote improvements in organizational management efficiency, and create better conditions for implementing conservation and community development activities more effectively.

Among the key initiatives are support for the administrative and financial operations of ODZH. Strengthening institutional management to help ensure the continuity of activities and of the organization itself, given its role in the conservation of wetlands, their biodiversity, and the development of human communities in priority conservation sites.

3. Habitats and livelihoods of the Limosa I. limosa and the communities of Patche lala and Untché

Duration: 3 years
Project Funder: VBN

The project aims to conserve the Limosa limosa species and its habitats in the Mansoa River valley, with a special focus on the communities of Patche lalá and Untché, where the species has always been found in greater numbers from September through December of each year.

The initiative combines biodiversity conservation efforts with efforts to improve the living conditions of local communities, promoting mangrove restoration, the sustainable use of natural resources, and income-generating activities.

Key initiatives include the restoration of mangroves along the containment dikes and the monitoring of *Limosa limosa* and its habitats. Implementation of environmental education programs to build the capacity of local staff in the bird monitoring mentioned above.

In the renovation of schools aimed at improving operating conditions and teaching and learning. It will also provide an opportunity to strengthen environmental education through bird drawings on the school walls.

Environmental Education: A Strategic Pillar of ODZH's Work



Following our Editorial, we begin our overview of the main initiatives carried out by the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) during the first half of 2026.

In this first part of the Bulletin, we highlight the strategic areas whose activities were of particular importance to the organization: **the area of Environmental Education and Communication for the Conservation of Biodiversity and the Environment.**

Considered one of the strongest pillars of ODZH's work, it reflects the organization's commitment to raising awareness in communities, educating children and youth, strengthening teachers' capacities, and encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices for the protection and conservation of wetlands as habitats and their biodiversity.

During this period, ODZH organized a series of environmental education activities in the Cacheu, Oio, and Tombali regions and in the autonomous sector of Bissau.

The activities involved community schools, local communities, and local authorities, as well as national and international partners, through the presentations given during the celebrations focused on the conservation of migratory birds, wetlands, and biodiversity in general.

I also work to build capacity among teachers, establish Wetlands and Bird Friends Clubs (CAZHA), conduct awareness campaigns, and carry out other educational initiatives aimed at strengthening environmental citizenship in various local communities through the conservation of habitats and biodiversity, with a special focus on wetlands ecosystems that are essential to the health and productivity of planet Earth.

ODZH promotes environmental education in schools through clubs; one example is in the Cacheu region



In the first half of 2026, the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) established **12 Clubs of Friends of Wetlands and Birds (CAZHA) in the Cacheu region**. These clubs serve as a means to raise awareness and engage the younger generation in discussions and in the search for solutions to local environmental issues through environmental education.

An initiative that took place from April 26 to May 7, 2026, in the Cacheu region, thanks to financial support from **Wetlands International**, and which represents an important pillar in the exchange of experiences and knowledge with children and young people regarding the issues of biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of natural systems.

The clubs were established in seven schools in Pecixe, one in Canchungo, one in Tame, and two each in Canhobe and Djita—areas that are part of one of the core zones that will be included in **the future Jeta, Pecixe, and Cacheu Biosphere Reserve**, which is still in the early stages of the process with local communities.

During their fieldwork and interactions with local communities, ODZH teams conducted environmental education presentations focused on the importance of wetlands, the conservation of migratory birds, and the conservation of mangroves. They also discussed the role of youth in the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The time spent at schools and in communities is also used—for a few hours—to strengthen teachers' ability to convey certain concepts in the field of environmental education, thereby helping to facilitate their work with students and local communities, as well as contributing to the improvement of teaching methods in the field of environmental education.

The creation of clubs should be viewed as an innovative mechanism aimed at familiarizing children, adolescents, and young people with natural systems and the biodiversity around them. It also helps them better understand and interact with the world and enables them to gradually participate in discussions about environmental issues in their communities, thereby gaining an increasingly comprehensive understanding of these issues.

As described in one of the paragraphs, the creation of **12 wetland and bird clubs in schools on the islands of Pecixe, Tame, Canhobe, Canchungo, and Djita involved more than 1,000 participants**, including students, teachers, and members of local communities. This helps transform the clubs into permanent spaces for learning, raising awareness, and environmental action, encouraging young people to take an active role in protecting natural systems.

To support the clubs' operations, ODZH helps build the capacity of teachers at the participating schools and provides teaching materials for environmental education classes, and donates backpacks and sweatshirts to the participating students.

Activities are planned in collaboration with the schools, and their implementation is monitored through a WhatsApp group where teachers report on their activities based on the topic covered and the number of participants, taking into account gender issues and the environmental conditions of the visited location.





Often, when clubs are established in an area, it takes time for results to become apparent. On the island of **Pecixe**, for example, members of the newly formed clubs organized beach cleanup efforts during the Festival of the Children and Friends of Pecixe, demonstrating their commitment to environmental conservation and their ability to mobilize the community around sound ecosystem management practices.

The creation of these clubs reinforces ODZH's strategy of promoting environmental education as a tool for biodiversity conservation, preparing a new generation of citizens who are more aware, engaged, and committed to the sustainable development of their communities. The initiative also highlights the importance of partnering with Wetlands International and others to strengthen conservation efforts in the communities of the future Jeta–Pecixe–Cacheu Biosphere Reserve.



ODZH Strengthens Teachers' Capabilities to Promote Environmental Education in Schools

During the first half of 2026, ODZH organized a series of capacity-building initiatives in environmental education and communication for teachers in various regions of the country. Some of these capacity-building activities took place in **Bissau**, involving faculty members from teacher training centers such as Tcheco-Té, 17 de Fevereiro, and Domingos Mendonça in Cacheu, as well as others in different regions of the country.

Other sessions took place in the interior of the country, such as in the communities of **Patche Ialá** (Oio region), with 30 teachers from Patche Ialá, **Untché, and Binar**; as well as in **Calequisse** (Cacheu region), involving teachers from elementary and secondary schools, and in Cacine (Tombali region), bringing together teachers from the **Cacine and Komo districts**.

These are activities carried out as part of various projects implemented by ODZH in partnership with national and international organizations, with the goal of strengthening environmental education in schools and communities within priority conservation areas.

During these capacity-building sessions, participants deepened their knowledge of the Earth's components, ecosystems, biodiversity, wetlands, mangroves, climate change, bird conservation, the impacts of solid waste on wetlands, unsustainable fishing, and the sustainable management of natural systems. The sessions combine theoretical and practical components using various techniques from the maieutic methodology, including group work, individual work, observation, and the exchange of ideas among participants. This provided teachers with tools to integrate environmental education into their teaching practices.

One of the most memorable aspects of the training sessions were the field trips to important ecosystems, including the wetlands of Bissau, the bolanhas of Patché Ialá and Untché, and the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area in Calequisse. Activities of this kind allowed participants to directly observe the richness of local biodiversity, understand the challenges of conservation, and relate the topics covered to the realities of the communities where they teach.

These initiatives support the creation of a network of educators working in the environmental field to promote environmental education among students and communities.

Building teachers' capacity is one of the priorities of ODZH's Environmental Education and Communication strategy, which recognizes schools as key settings for fostering mutual learning in order to help build a culture of concern for environmental issues in Guinea-Bissau.



ODZH Brings Environmental Education to Schools and Raises Awareness Among Hundreds of Students



Environmental education remains one of the pillars of the work carried out by the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH). Between January and June 2026, **the organization held more than ten lectures as part of its awareness-raising efforts in schools in Bissau** and throughout the country, reinforcing its commitment to nurturing a new generation of citizens who are aware of and motivated to fight for the protection of natural heritage.

In the capital, ODZH organized environmental education and communication sessions at various educational institutions, **including the 23 de Janeiro School (Block 2), the Agostinho Neto Public High School, the SOS School in Bissau, the Justado Vieira School, and the Higher Technical Teacher Training College.**

The activities involved elementary and secondary school students, providing opportunities for learning, dialogue, and reflection on the environmental challenges affecting Guinea-Bissau and the planet Earth.

The presentations covered topics such as **“Wetlands, Biodiversity, and Conservation”** and **“Ecosystem Services of Mangroves in Guinea-Bissau,”** highlighting the importance of these ecosystems for biodiversity conservation, coastal protection, climate regulation, and the livelihoods of local communities.

In some schools, the activities were supplemented with field trips to the Blola wetlands and the Pessubé Farm, allowing students to observe the ecosystems firsthand and connect what they had learned in the classroom with the environmental reality of the capital.

Throughout the sessions, the students actively participated in the discussions, asked questions, and shared what they had learned, demonstrating a greater understanding of the importance of wetland conservation and the role that every citizen can play in protecting the environment. The enthusiasm and interest shown by the students highlighted the positive impact of these initiatives in promoting a culture of environmental responsibility.

These initiatives are part of ODZH's Environmental Education and Communication Program, developed in partnership with various national and international institutions, and reflect the organization's commitment to bringing scientific knowledge to school communities.

By investing in raising awareness among children and young people, ODZH helps foster a generation of citizens who are better informed, more engaged, and committed to biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of natural resources in Guinea-Bissau.

Environmental Clubs Organize Cleanup Efforts and Educational Visits in Communities

The Wetlands and Birds Friends Clubs (CAZHA), established by ODZH, continue to prove themselves as important vehicles for environmental education and youth participation in various initiatives aimed at raising awareness and conserving the natural ecosystems of the communities where they live.

The clubs are encouraged to organize cleanup campaigns, field trips, lectures, and environmental awareness activities in various communities within priority conservation sites, involving students, teachers, and community members in discussions about environmental conditions, wetlands, and biodiversity.





In Bubaque, CAZHA members organized cleanup efforts and awareness-raising activities among the local population, participated in educational visits to the House of Environment and Culture, and helped with the cleanup campaign held during the Easter celebrations.

In the **Cacheu region**, the clubs in **Canchungo, Canhobe, and Caió** organized cleanup days, bird-watching events, field trips, and environmental education lectures, encouraging students to learn more about local ecosystems and adopt more responsible behaviors toward nature conservation.

In the **Calequisse** sector, teachers trained by ODZH organized educational field trips to the wetlands with students from the community schools in **Bô and Timate**. These field trips allow the students to learn about and observe up close the coastal ecosystems and the production of palm oil, which is used to support the livelihoods of local communities.

These field trips create the conditions for the clubs to generate knowledge based on observation and perception. By carrying out activities that promote traditional conservation practices, as well as enabling the active involvement of young people, ODZH fosters a culture of environmental citizenship.

It also encourages their involvement in the protection of natural systems, as a way to help foster a new generation of advocates for wetlands and their biodiversity in Guinea-Bissau.



Celebrate to Preserve: Dates That Mobilize People and Inspire Action

Environmental commemorative dates provide unique opportunities to raise awareness, exchange ideas and knowledge, and mobilize society around the protection of nature. Throughout the first half of 2026, the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) celebrated World Migratory Bird Day, World Wetlands Day, and World Environment Day with its partners, promoting initiatives that involved students, teachers, communities, government officials, and institutional partners.

To celebrate these dates, ODZH helped organize **a themed Djumbai** event in Bubaque, in partnership with Wetlands International, IBAP, and other institutions, fostering a space for dialogue on the importance of traditional knowledge in the conservation of wetlands and biodiversity.

More than just marking dates, these initiatives reinforce ODZH's commitment to environmental education, the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, and community involvement in building a more sustainable future.

As part of the celebrations for World Earth Day, observed on April 22, the Organization for the Defense and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) joined the international effort to defend the planet, emphasizing the importance of conserving natural systems, protecting biodiversity, and promoting fair and sustainable environmental management.

The Earth is the foundation of life, but it faces ever-greater challenges due to pollution, deforestation, and the overexploitation of natural resources.

In Guinea-Bissau and around the world, many communities depend directly on the land for their survival. However, not everyone has fair access to natural resources. The lack of equitable distribution contributes to social inequalities, poverty, and environmental degradation.

ODZH emphasizes the importance of protecting the environment and promoting fair and sustainable resource management. Caring for the Earth is an environmental responsibility, as well as a commitment to social justice and the well-being of future generations.

Every action counts. From avoiding waste to preserving biodiversity, we all have a role to play.



ODZH Participates in the Celebrations for International Biodiversity Day 2026

Continuing its awareness-raising efforts on key dates on the environmental calendar, ODZH participated in the International **Day for Biological Diversity** celebrations, organized by IBAP under the slogan “Act locally for a global impact.”

During the event, held in Bissau, the organization presented its biodiversity conservation initiatives and raised awareness among students, institutions, and the public about the importance of protecting Guinea-Bissau’s ecosystems. The program included lectures, exhibitions, and opportunities for discussion, reinforcing the need for collective action to preserve the country’s natural heritage and ensure a more sustainable future.

“Today we celebrate the richness of life on our planet and reaffirm the importance of preserving the ecosystems that sustain environmental balance and the future of coming generations.

Biodiversity is found in rivers, mangroves, forests, oceans, and in all the species that share this land with us. Every animal, plant, and habitat plays a vital role in sustaining life and ensuring the well-being of communities.

On this World Biodiversity Day, ODZH calls for greater environmental awareness, appreciation of nature, and a united effort to ensure a healthier and more sustainable planet.”



Aua Lopes Barbosa, ODZH Administrative Assistant during the International Day for Biological Diversity celebration at IBAP

ODZH joins in the World Environment Day celebrations



Image from the official celebration of World Environment Day

As part of the **celebrations for World Environment Day**, observed on June 5, ODZH reaffirmed the importance of environmental education as an essential tool for conserving biodiversity and promoting a sustainable future.

Under the slogan **“Act for the Climate Now,”** the organization participated in the event organized by the Youth Climate Club, in partnership with IBAP, which brought together students, representatives from the government and the United Nations system, development partners, and institutions involved in environmental protection.

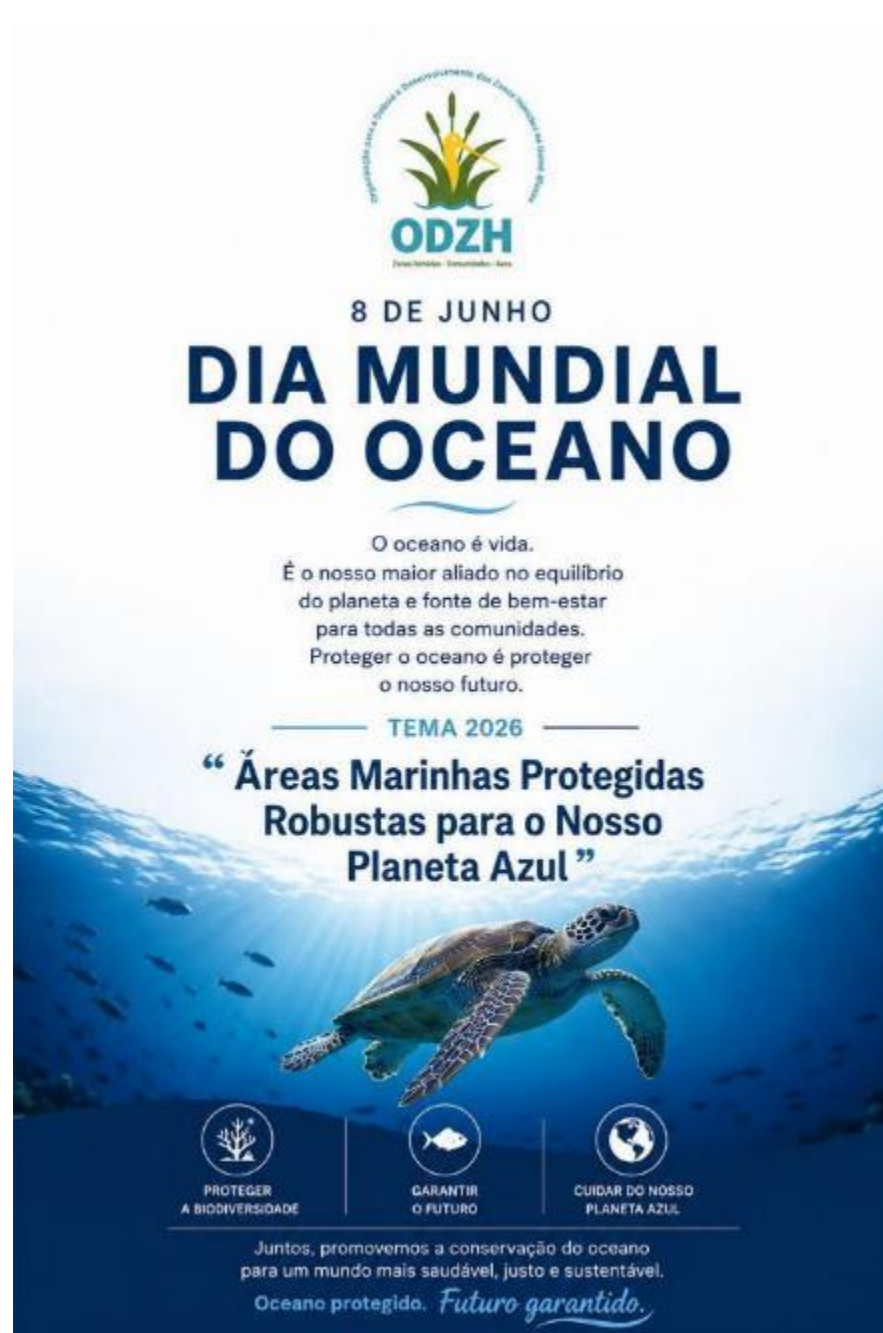
The event provided an opportunity to reflect on Guinea-Bissau’s main environmental challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, highlighting the role of youth and environmental education in adopting sustainable practices.

The celebration concluded with a joint call to strengthen public environmental policies and implement concrete measures to ensure the conservation of ecosystems and the sustainable use of natural resources, for the benefit of present and future generations.

ODZH Marks World Oceans Day and Reinforces Its Call for the Protection of Marine Ecosystems

Continuing its celebrations of key dates on the environmental calendar, the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) marked **World Oceans Day on June 8** by renewing its commitment to the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems and to promoting the sustainable management of natural resources.

Under the theme **“Robust Marine Protected Areas for Our Blue Planet,”** the celebration highlighted the importance of the oceans for environmental balance, food security, and sustainable development. In Guinea-Bissau, the oceans, estuaries, mangroves, and archipelagos constitute a natural heritage of immense ecological and socioeconomic value, providing a livelihood for thousands of families and playing an essential role in biodiversity conservation and adaptation to climate change.



ODZH used the occasion to raise public awareness about the threats affecting these ecosystems, including plastic pollution, illegal and destructive fishing, mangrove degradation, and the impacts of climate change. The organization emphasized that protecting marine areas is not only an environmental imperative but also an essential condition for ensuring the well-being of coastal communities and the sustainable use of natural resources.

As part of its mission, ODZH continues to carry out initiatives focused on environmental education, the conservation of mangroves and wetlands, the sustainable management of natural resources, and support for coastal communities, thereby contributing to the preservation of marine biodiversity and to strengthening the resilience of local populations in the face of environmental challenges.

To mark World Oceans Day, the organization called on citizens, communities, institutions, and partners to adopt responsible practices that contribute to the protection of the seas and coastal ecosystems, emphasizing that the conservation of natural heritage is a shared responsibility and an investment in the future of Guinea-Bissau.

ODZH marks the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought with awareness-raising activities and discussions

Continuing its celebrations of key dates on the environmental calendar, the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) marked **World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought on June 17** with a series of initiatives aimed at raising awareness and promoting reflection on one of today's greatest environmental challenges.

Under the theme **“Grazing Lands: Recognize, Respect, and Restore,”** ODZH organized a lecture for its interns on the topic “Combating Desertification in Guinea-Bissau,” presented by Namir Lopes, National Coordinator of the APICA-GNB Project.

The session provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of soil degradation, highlighting factors such as deforestation, uncontrolled burning, overgrazing, climate change, cashew monoculture, and other unsustainable land-use practices.



The training also highlighted the importance of solutions such as reforestation, agroforestry, sustainable land and water management, environmental education, and the strengthening of public policies as key tools for halting ecosystem degradation and increasing community resilience.

The celebrations also included **a radio debate, broadcast live by Rádio Galáxia in Pindjiquiti, on the topic “Guinea-Bissau’s Efforts to Combat Desertification and Drought.”**

The program brought together representatives from ODZH, the Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP), and the APICA Project, who discussed the impacts of soil degradation on food security, biodiversity, and people’s livelihoods, as well as the need to promote more sustainable management of natural resources.



Through these initiatives, ODZH has emphasized the importance of environmental education, science outreach, and public dialogue as essential tools for raising public awareness and mobilizing various stakeholders to conserve natural resources.

These initiatives also highlighted that combating desertification requires the joint involvement of institutions, communities, and citizens in adopting sustainable practices that ensure the protection of ecosystems and a more resilient future for Guinea-Bissau.

World Migratory Bird Day Mobilizes Young People and Communities for Wetland Conservation

To conclude the celebrations of the key dates on the environmental calendar for the first half of the year, the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH), in partnership with the Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP) and other national and international institutions, marked **World Migratory Bird Day 2026 (DMAM)** with a series of environmental education and birdwatching activities, reinforcing its commitment to the conservation of biodiversity and wetlands in Guinea-Bissau.

Celebrated under the international slogan **“Every bird counts—your observations matter!”**, DMAM highlighted the role of citizen science and community participation in monitoring and protecting migratory birds. For ODZH, this event represents an opportunity to bring citizens closer to nature and raise awareness about the importance of the ecosystems that are home to hundreds of bird species along the Afro-Eurasian migratory route.

The celebrations took place on May 9 and 16, with two birdwatching events held, respectively, at Bijante Beach on the island of Bubaque and at the Antula Wetland in Bissau. The activities involved students, members of the Clubs of Friends of Wetlands and Birds (CAZHA), teachers, technicians from ODZH and IBAP, environmental facilitators, and representatives from educational institutions, providing a hands-on experience with biodiversity.



During the birdwatching sessions, participants had the opportunity to identify different species of migratory and resident birds, learn about their habitats, and understand the ecological importance of wetlands for these species' feeding, resting, and breeding. The activities also included environmental awareness sessions, demonstrations of bird identification techniques, discussions, and the sharing of knowledge about the challenges of biodiversity conservation.

The initiative helped increase youth participation in citizen science, promote the appreciation of wetlands, and foster greater environmental awareness among communities. The students highlighted the impact of the experience on their acquisition of new knowledge about national biodiversity and expressed their commitment to contributing to the protection of nature.

The DMAM 2026 celebration also took place in conjunction with national efforts to monitor migratory waterbirds, carried out as part of the World Waterbird Census, underscoring the importance of Guinea-Bissau as one of the main refuges for migratory birds along the Afro-Eurasian flyway. With its mangrove forests, estuaries, coastal wetlands, and the Bijagós Archipelago, the country hosts hundreds of species each year that depend on these ecosystems to complete their migratory cycle.



Through this initiative, ODZH reaffirms its commitment to environmental education, wetland conservation, and the protection of migratory birds, while promoting the active involvement of communities and institutions in preserving Guinea-Bissau's natural heritage. More than just marking a date, the celebration of World Migratory Bird Day demonstrated that **every sighting, every young person whose awareness has been raised, and every conservation effort represents a concrete contribution to the protection of biodiversity and a more sustainable future.**

Environmental Education Yields Tangible Results in Schools

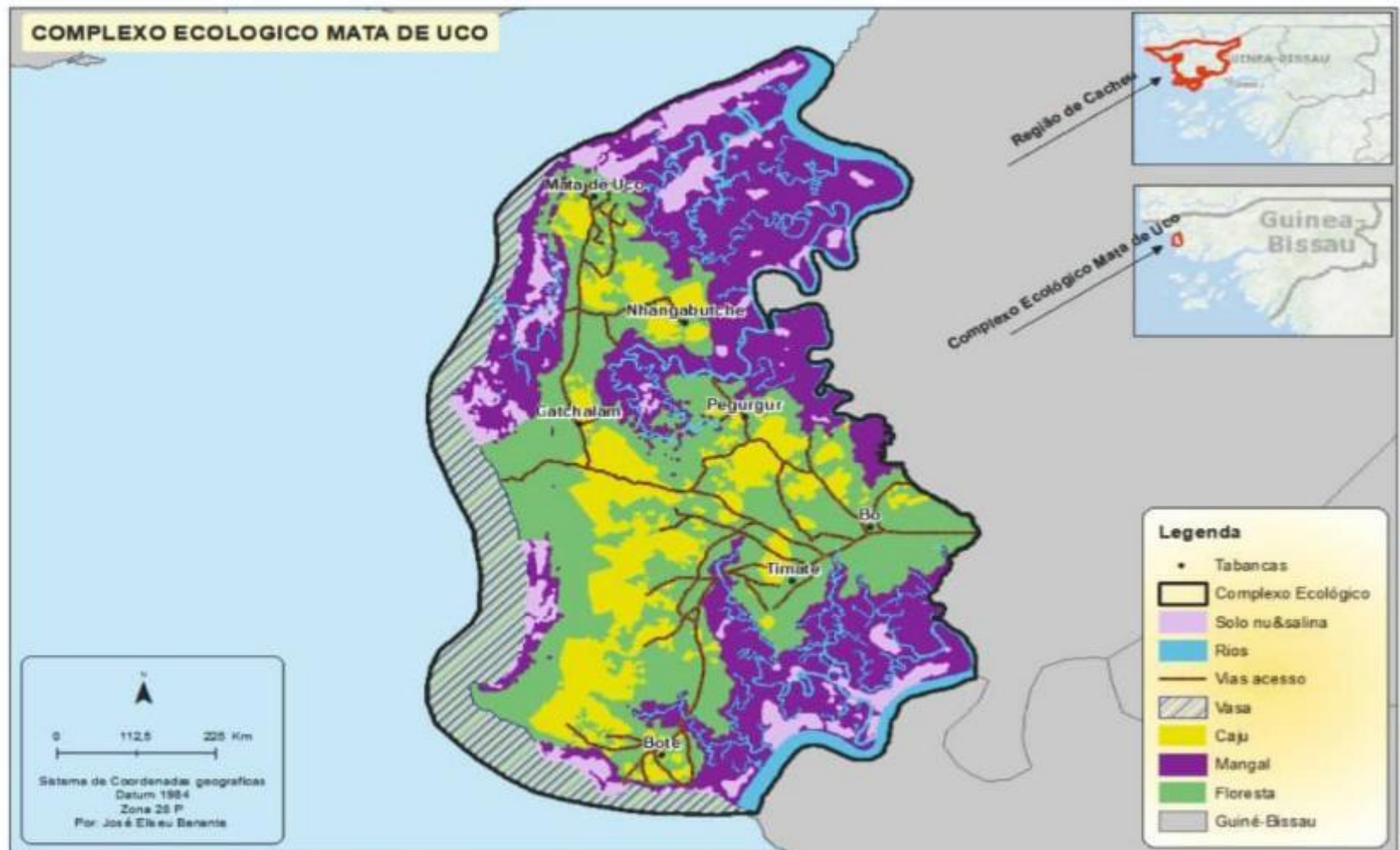
The environmental education and communication initiatives promoted by the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) continue to yield concrete results in schools and communities. An inspiring example comes from the **Domingos Mendonça Teaching Unit Teacher Training Center in the Cacheu region**, where teachers and students have turned the knowledge, they've acquired into practical initiatives to protect the environment.

With guidance from **teachers of the Physical and Social Environment and Natural Sciences courses**, students carried out activities to recycle and reuse plastic bags, giving new life to waste that represents one of the main sources of environmental pollution. Among the initiatives carried out, one that stands out is the artisanal production of ropes from recycled plastic, demonstrating that materials considered waste can be transformed into useful resources through creativity and education.

This experience highlights the impact of ODZH's work in promoting environmental education, encouraging behavioral changes, and strengthening ecological awareness among teachers and students. More than just imparting knowledge, the organization's initiatives have helped shape citizens capable of developing sustainable solutions and taking an active role in environmental conservation and the responsible management of natural resources.



Community Management and Forest Conservation



ODZH Strengthens Community Management of the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area

During the first half of 2026, the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) carried out a series of initiatives to strengthen participatory governance of the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area (ACMUB), in the Calequisse sector of the Cacheu region, as part of the project **“Strengthening Local Management of the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area,”** funded by the Audemars Watkins Foundation.

The interventions were aimed at consolidating the community structures responsible for managing the area, strengthening the capacities of the North and South Management Committees, and promoting greater community participation in the conservation of natural systems and their biodiversity.

Among the key initiatives undertaken, the training of Management Committee members stands out, focusing on community leadership, participatory governance, communication, conflict management, and the implementation of the Management Plan and the Internal Regulations for the community area. The training program received support from institutional and financial partners, notably IBAP and Wetlands International, helping to improve the technical and organizational skills of community organizations.





As part of its efforts to monitor the governance process, ODZH also held meetings with the Northern and Southern Management Committees to evaluate progress and set priorities, which made it possible to analyze the functioning of community structures, identify institutional challenges, define strategic priorities, and develop an action plan to strengthen coordination, leadership, and participatory management in the area. These meetings also strengthened coordination among the committees, local authorities, and other partners involved in the conservation of natural resources.

The various initiatives carried out throughout the semester helped strengthen coordination between the Northern and Southern Management Committees, improve communication among the communities, reinforce local conflict resolution mechanisms, and promote greater participation by women and young people in decision-making processes. These efforts also helped consolidate institutional partnerships and reinforce the collective commitment to the conservation of the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area.

At the same time, community awareness-raising activities were carried out in the tabancas of **Timate, Bô, Boté, Catatchet, and Pugurgur**, creating opportunities for dialogue with local residents on the sustainable use of natural resources, the prevention of wildfires, the fight against illegal logging, and the importance of community participation in protecting the forest. These meetings provided an opportunity to gather concerns and recommendations from the communities, thereby strengthening a more inclusive and participatory management approach.

The Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area is part of one of the conservation units of the **future Jeta-Pecixe-Cacheu Biosphere Reserve**. By investing in the strengthening of community management structures, ODZH helps create a solid foundation for local governance, which is essential for the protection of biodiversity, the sustainable use of natural resources, and the improvement of livelihoods for the communities that depend on this important ecosystem.

Improved stoves promote health, reduce pressure on forests, and strengthen community action



Improved Stove Construction Process



Otávio Semedo, ODZH Program Coordinator

Between February and April 2026, ODZH carried out capacity-building, monitoring, and evaluation of the initiative to build improved stoves in the eight villages of the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area, in the Calequisse sector of the Cacheu region. This activity is part of the Project to Support the Management of the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area, funded by the Audemars Watkins Foundation.

With technical support from the NGO Palmeirinha, ODZH trained community members to build improved stoves using local materials such as clay, sand, and cow dung. Following the training, the organization conducted a monitoring and evaluation mission to assess the initial results of the initiative among the beneficiary families.

The testimonials collected show that the stoves are already bringing about tangible changes in the daily lives of these communities. Families highlight the reduction in firewood consumption, less smoke inside their kitchens, faster food preparation, and easier cleaning of pots and pans—all of which translate into better health, comfort, and quality of life, especially for women.



Community members who benefited from the training

The beneficiaries also expressed their satisfaction with the initiative and called for more communities to be able to benefit from this sustainable technology, recognizing its contribution to protecting forests and improving living conditions.

The assessment conducted by ODZH also revealed strong community involvement in the implementation of the activity. According to ODZH's Program Manager, the commitment demonstrated by the community reinforces the importance of community-based management in the conservation of natural resources and highlights that environmental protection brings direct benefits to those living in the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area.

Although the training and monitoring phase has been completed, work continues on the ground. Local youth trained by ODZH continue to build improved stoves in the eight villages of the Community Area, ensuring the initiative's continuity and helping to achieve **the goal of 300 improved stoves**, which will benefit hundreds of families.



The Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area is one of the conservation units of **the future Jeta–Pecixe–Cacheu Biosphere Reserve**, making this initiative an important contribution to the sustainable management of natural resources, the reduction of pressure on forests, and the promotion of more resilient livelihoods for local communities.

Under the motto **"Cook Better, Protect Forests, and Ensure a Sustainable Future,"** the initiative demonstrates that when communities are empowered and take an active role in conservation, it is possible to generate lasting impacts both in protecting biodiversity and in improving people's living conditions.

Communities in the future Cacheu–Jeta–Pecixe Biosphere Reserve benefit from new water wells



Between June 16 and 19, 2026, several communities in **the future Cacheu–Jeta–Pecixe Biosphere Reserve** gained access to new water wells, thereby improving access to drinking water, enhancing living conditions for local residents, and helping to prevent waterborne diseases.

The infrastructure was installed in the communities of **Atanque, Nhangabot, Boté, Timate, Bagongo, Quessete, and Yafa**, providing hundreds of families with easier and safer access to clean water.

The seven boreholes were constructed by **the BioGuinea Foundation, in partnership with PRCM, IBAP, and ODZH, as part of the Ocean 5 Project**. The initiative reinforces the link between community development and environmental conservation, demonstrating that improving people's well-being is essential for the sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of ecosystems in the future Cacheu–Jeta–Pecixe Biosphere Reserve.



Oyster Farming Training Boosts the Economic Independence of Women in Mata de Ucó and Boté

As part of the project to strengthen the management of the Mata de Ucó and Boté Community Area, **30 women from the communities of Mata de Ucó, Nhangabot, and Pugurgur**, in the Calequisse sector of the Cacheu region, participated in an oyster farming training program organized by the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH).

The initiative aimed to equip participants with technical knowledge about sustainable oyster farming, creating new income-generating opportunities and helping to improve their families' living conditions. Throughout the training, participants acquired skills in production techniques, the installation and management of farming structures, as well as the identification of suitable areas for this activity within mangrove ecosystems.

In addition to the theoretical sessions, the trainees participated in hands-on activities to prepare materials and set up cultivation structures along the river branches in the three communities, allowing them to apply the knowledge they had acquired and prepare to carry out the activity independently.

Through this training, it is hoped that women will be able to launch small income-generating initiatives, diversify their families' sources of livelihood, and strengthen food security in their communities. At the same time, promoting sustainable oyster farming helps reduce pressure on other natural resources and encourages a more responsible use of mangrove ecosystems, which are essential for biodiversity conservation and the livelihoods of local communities.

By investing in women's capacity building, ODZH promotes not only economic inclusion and community entrepreneurship, but also sustainable solutions that balance local development with the conservation of natural resources.



ODZH Strengthens Biodiversity Monitoring Through Training on the Eurasian Curlew (*Limosa limosa*) in the Mansoa River Corridor



The Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) has begun a new phase of its biodiversity conservation work by conducting the first training session on monitoring *Limosa limosa* in the rice paddies of the Mansoa River corridor. The event took place **from February 14 to 16, 2026**, in the community of Cussana (Mansoa), bringing together representatives from the communities of **Patche-lalá, Nguntche, Jugudul, Cussentche, and Cussana**.

The initiative marks the launch of one of the strategic components of a project currently being implemented by the organization, reinforcing ODZH's commitment to the production of scientific knowledge and community participation in wetland conservation.

Over the course of three days, technicians and community monitors received training on methods for monitoring *Limosa limosa*, a migratory bird that uses Guinea-Bissau's rice paddies as an important feeding and resting area. The training covered counting techniques, habitat quality assessment, identification of key threats, and data collection to support future conservation efforts.

The practical component allowed participants to apply the knowledge they had acquired in the field, while the exchange of experiences between more experienced instructors and new participants helped strengthen the capabilities of the community teams.



Through this initiative, ODZH strengthens participatory biodiversity monitoring and reaffirms its commitment to empowering local communities, recognizing their vital role in the sustainable management of wetlands and the conservation of migratory birds in Guinea-Bissau.

ODZH Strengthens Partnership with Communities in the Mansoa River Valley to Conserve the *Limosa limosa* and Improve Livelihoods

The Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH) held community meetings on March 4 and 5, 2026, in the villages of Patche Ialá and Untché, in the Mansoa sector, as part of the project “**Life and Subsistence Habitats of *Limosa limosa* and the Communities of Patche Ialá and Untché.**”

The meetings brought together community leaders, farmers, women, and young people to identify the main challenges affecting the bolanhas, raise environmental awareness, and set priorities for the conservation of the *Limosa limosa*, a migratory bird that uses the rice paddies of the Mansoa River Valley as an important feeding and resting site during its stay in Guinea-Bissau.

Data collected by ODZH indicate that the Mansoa River Valley is home to one of the largest concentrations of *Limosa limosa* between September and December, highlighting the importance of this landscape for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and the country’s wetlands.

During the meetings, the communities identified the deterioration of the perimeter dikes, rising water levels, and frequent flooding of the rice paddies as the main challenges—factors that reduce rice production and threaten families’ livelihoods and the species’ habitats.



[Photo1: Patche Yalá Community](#)



[Photo 2: Nghuntche Community](#)

During the meetings, the communities identified the deterioration of the perimeter dikes, rising water levels, and frequent flooding of the rice paddies as the main challenges factors that reduce rice production and threaten families’ livelihoods and the species’ habitats.

The meetings helped solidify a community action plan for the recovery of the bolanhas and strengthen the communities' commitment to the sustainable management of natural resources, recognizing the link between biodiversity conservation and the well-being of local populations.

As a result of this process, renovation work is currently underway at the schools in Untché and Patche Ialá, addressing one of the priorities identified by the communities and contributing to the improvement of teaching and learning conditions for the children, as well as to the social development of the communities covered by the project.



Photos of the renovation of the schools in Patche Ialá and Untché

Community Reports Mass Poisoning of Vultures and Steps Up Conservation Efforts in Mansoa



A report filed by residents of the **Cussana community**, in the Mansoa sector, led to the discovery of one of the most serious cases of bird mortality due to poisoning recently recorded in the region. The alert mobilized a technical team from the Organization for the Protection and Development of Wetlands in Guinea-Bissau (ODZH), which traveled to the site to assess the situation and gather information about what had happened.

The fact-finding mission confirmed a troubling situation. Along the Cussana riverbank, the technicians found about 50 vulture carcasses scattered among the plantations and flooded areas, while others remained submerged, making an exact count impossible. The scale of the incident raised serious concerns about the impact on the region's wildlife and ecosystems.



During the on-site inspection, the team also found that all the birds discovered were either headless or had their heads cut off, a pattern that rules out the possibility of natural death. This fact points to deliberate human action. Based on the observations made and the testimonies gathered from the local population, there is strong evidence that the animals were poisoned and subsequently mutilated. Information shared by the community suggests that parts of the vultures' bodies may be used in traditional practices, a situation that should be clarified by the relevant authorities as part of the investigations.

In addition to collecting photographic and audiovisual evidence, the mission provided an opportunity to speak with several community residents, who expressed concern about the loss of these birds and the potential environmental consequences of this type of practice. The evidence gathered by ODZH was subsequently forwarded to the relevant authorities to support the investigation and help identify those responsible for this possible environmental crime.

Vultures play a vital role in ecological balance, as they feed on dead animals, help prevent the spread of disease, and contribute to the health of ecosystems. The death of a large number of these birds therefore represents a serious loss to biodiversity and a risk to the environmental balance of wetlands. One of the most significant aspects of this case was the report filed by the community of Cussana, which allowed ODZH to act quickly and document the incident. For the organization, this action demonstrates a growing awareness among local communities of the importance of wildlife conservation, reflecting the results of the environmental awareness and education initiatives carried out in the region.

In the wake of the incident, ODZH called for increased surveillance in wetlands, intensified awareness-raising efforts, and an investigation into the causes of the birds' deaths, reaffirming its commitment to working with communities, authorities, and partners to protect biodiversity and prevent environmental crimes.



Key Findings

12
New
Environmental
Clubs

More than
100 teachers
trained in
environmental
education

2 Schools
Under
Renovation
in the Oio
Region

More than
100 families
have
received
improved
stoves

The results achieved during the first quarter of 2026 demonstrate ODZH's ongoing commitment to wetland conservation, biodiversity protection, and the empowerment of local communities.

Through environmental education, scientific research, community participation, and the promotion of sustainable solutions, the organization continues to contribute to building a more resilient and environmentally sustainable Guinea-Bissau.

Thank you to all of our partners



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