



MANGROVE SCHOOL CLUBS

Mangrove Best Practices



Wetlands
INTERNATIONAL



The issue

When local communities truly understand the ecological and economic value of mangroves, they become strong advocates for their restoration and conservation. One of the best ways to build this awareness is by engaging directly with young people. They not only share what they learn with their families and peers, but also carry these insights into adulthood, shaping their choices and actions. Young people are among our most powerful allies in securing the future of mangroves.

▶ THE SOLUTION

In Senegal, Tanzania, Guinea Bissau and The Gambia, Wetlands International has established Mangrove School Clubs to engage young people in mangrove conservation and restoration. As the name suggests, these are initiatives in selected primary and secondary schools where teachers and students come together to learn about the forest ecosystems surrounding them, using a curriculum and materials co-developed by Wetlands International. These clubs are proving very successful, and our goal is to work with partners to upscale the approach across Africa and beyond.



"Before we joined the Mangrove School Club, we did not know much about mangroves and their importance. Now, we understand that they provide food, medicine, and protection against storms. We are proud to be part of a club that educates our community and helps protect the mangroves."

Hamisi Bakari Chega,
Secretary - Nyamisati Secondary
Mangrove School Club

The process

We followed a stepwise process to establish our first Mangrove School Clubs. While adapting to local circumstances, the key steps have been the same in each country:

1. **Develop educational programmes:** Create engaging educational materials that highlight the importance of mangroves and the threats they face.
2. **Establish School Clubs:** Form Mangrove School Clubs in selected schools, using specific criteria to identify student participants.
3. **Training-of-trainers:** Provide in-depth training for schoolteachers, enabling them to effectively deliver the mangrove curriculum and spread its message widely.
4. **Engaging activities:** Organise engaging and interactive activities – such as songs, poetry, drama, field trips, and visits from mangrove practitioners – to create and maintain high levels of student interest and involvement.
5. **Special events:** Involve Mangrove School Clubs in significant events like World Mangrove Day to give them visibility and a sense of mission, further spreading the message of mangrove conservation.



Impact in the field

Rufiji Delta, Tanzania

- 13 Mangrove School Clubs
- 626 students, 13 patrons

In collaboration with the Institute of Marine Sciences and the Nairobi Convention, our work has included classroom teaching along with a poetry and art competition, as well as field excursions to two mangrove restoration sites where the children learned about local mangrove species and the need to look after them. One of the clubs used theatre to showcase its activities during an exchange visit involving participants from 12 African countries. The programme has helped develop engaging teaching materials for use across schools in the wider region, which have also received litter bins to keep their environment clean, and t-shirts with the slogan 'Mikoko ni Uhai' – Mangroves are Life.

Cacheu and Castanheira National Parks, Guinea Bissau:

- 13 Mangrove School Clubs
- 260 pupils

In Guinea Bissau we have organised public clean-up days in the mangroves, theatre plays, drawings and excursions to the mangrove forests.

'It's vital to prepare the children for a climate that might threaten their way of life and equip them with the knowledge and actions to protect their environment.'

Youssoupha Sané,
Mbam 2 Mangrove School Club,
Grand Saloum

Casamance and Grand Saloum, Senegal and the Gambia

- 90 Mangrove School Clubs (including 20 in neighbouring Gambia)
- 1,600+ pupils

We've been running a range of activities to engage and educate young people in Senegal, from excursions into the mangrove forests to creative projects such as drama and drawing. Annually, during school vacations several clubs joined up with children in The Gambia to raise mangrove awareness through paintings, games and restoration work. Along with regular community radio broadcasts, the Mangrove School Clubs have been instrumental in foregrounding the links between healthy mangroves and sustainable livelihoods: many local people now come and assist our restoration activities in areas where the clubs operate.



'I'm very happy to be here for this camp, where I've learnt a lot of interesting things about wetlands, mangroves and the work that Wetlands International does for the environment. Inchallah, I'm taking care of the environment because I now know how much good it does us. I'm also going to raise awareness among my friends.'

Thérèse,
a pupil at Mangrove School Club
in Casamance

Contact us

To find out more about Mangrove School Clubs and how Wetlands International can support their creation and development, please get in touch with **Therese Musabe**, Programme Director Mangrove Capital Africa, Wetlands International.
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Lessons learned

Our experience in setting up Mangrove School Clubs highlights some key practical considerations:

- Programmes should be **tailored to the local environment** and its conservation needs.
- Teachers and students should be actively involved in the **planning and decision-making** process.
- Teachers know their students and can help develop engaging materials: **collaborate** closely with them.
- Selecting participants who already have a **strong connection to mangroves** will boost engagement.
- Making club activities fun increases student **participation and motivation**.
- Continuous **evaluation and refinement** of the programme is needed to keep it relevant and effective.

Replication and scalability

The growing success of our Mangrove School Clubs in Senegal, Tanzania, Guinea Bissau and The Gambia reflects their potential for replication and scalability in other regions – we're now working to establish a network of clubs in Lamu, Kenya. We're also joining other CSOs in advocating to mainstream mangrove education into national curricula across Africa at both primary and secondary level.

Key stakeholder groups can encourage further replication and scaling of the Mangrove School Club approach in the following ways:

1. **NGOs:** Setting up Mangrove School Clubs in mangrove project areas is a very effective way to educate and empower young people as active participants in mangrove conservation, amplifying community awareness and engagement. Wetlands International can provide expert knowledge and practical support to NGOs interested in adopting the approach.
2. **Funders:** Investing in the Mangrove School Club system offers a sustainable and scalable solution for environmental education and conservation. Donor support will enable the expansion of the model, protecting vital mangrove ecosystems and nurturing future generations committed to environmental stewardship. Wetlands International has the connections needed to set up further school clubs in these countries, and the experience to set them in other countries too with funders keen to make an impact.
3. **Governments:** Government stakeholders should institutionalize Mangrove School Clubs within curricula in regions where sustained environmental education and conservation efforts are required. Wetlands International can help facilitate this integration.