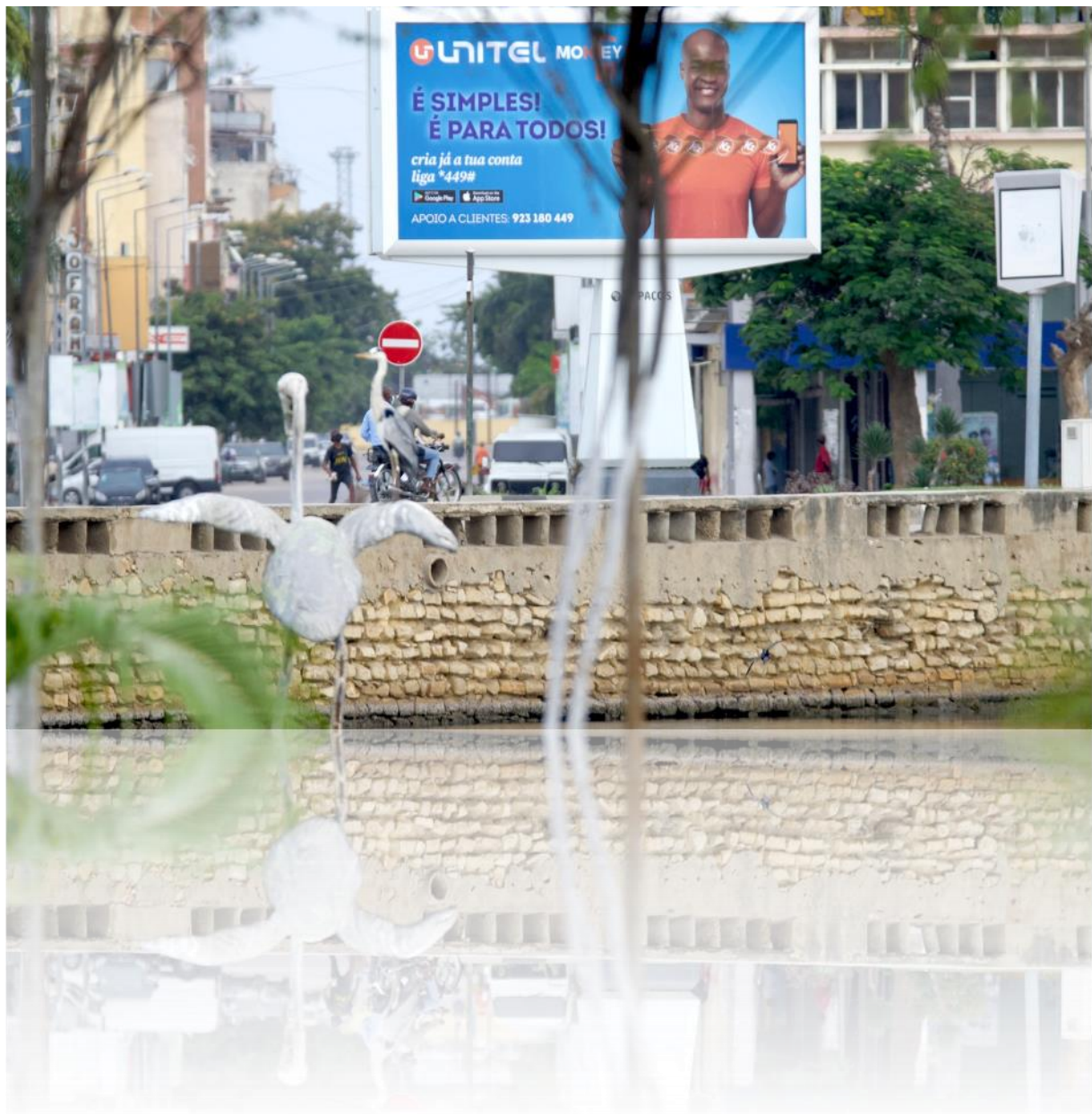




## REPORT ON THE WATERBIRDS HABITAT PROTECTION PROJECT IN LOBITO, ANGOLA



LUANDA, 2022

## 1. Introduction

The Angolan coast, 1600km long, from the mouth of the Nkisi river in Cabinda to the mouth of the Cunene River, in Moçâmedes, has several sites of great importance for waterbirds. In fact, in the counts carried out in 2017, the sites considered most important for waterbirds were identified, among others the sites in the city of Lobito, among others the *Mangal de Caponte* site (figure 1). However, many efforts were made to protect other important sites, particularly *Ilhéu dos Pássaros* and *Saco dos Flamingos*, both located in Luanda.

From 2017 to date, the habitat situation for waterbirds of the *Mangal de Caponte* has been degraded, due to the pressure of human activities, mainly the urban waste that has accumulated in this important site. To try to reverse the current situation, with the financial support of the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative and technical support of Tim Dodman, a small Pilot Project, implemented by ADAMA (Associação dos Defensores e Amigos do Ambiente), for the Protection of the Caponte Mangrove site was carried out, with two main objectives: (1) a campaign to clean and remove urban waste from the site, and (2) raise environmental awareness of local authorities and community members of the city of Lobito, especially those of Catana commune.



**Figure 1-** Project Area

In general, the project was successful, and the main goals were achieved. During the two main activities, namely cleaning and garbage removal, as well as the holding of a community forum on the importance of waterbirds and the protection of the Mangal de Caponte ecosystem, several members of the different communities of the city of Lobito and representatives of the local and traditional authorities participated.

## 2. Implementation of activities

The two main activities were carried out in the period from December 2021 to February 2022. Both field activities were successful, judging by the results obtained in the field.



**Figure 2-** A Whimbrel in degraded habitat, Lobito

### 2.1. Campaign for cleaning and removing urban waste

The campaign to clean and remove urban waste was carried out in December 2021. This campaign had the permanent presence of 27 ADAMA volunteers and other members of the community, including students from schools in Catana municipality. Fieldwork was carried out over three days, from December 21 to December 23, 2021. Volunteers worked hard, under the burning sun of Lobito, to remove the urban waste deposited at this site (figures 2 and 3).

The removal of urban waste from the Mangal de Caponte site was one of the biggest challenges during these activities. It was necessary to find adequate and adapted mechanisms to remove the grass and urban waste taken from the Mangal de Caponte to the appropriate places. For this purpose, wheelbarrows were used (figure 4), from the point of removal to the main place where this waste was placed, waiting for it to be taken to the main landfill in the city of Lobito.



**Figure 3-** Some volunteers removing accumulated urban waste with the grass

In general, urban waste of all kinds and types was removed, with greater emphasis on plastics. This is essentially due to the location of the Mangal de Caponte, which is in the main route of the inhabitants of Catana municipality to the sandbank of Lobito. It was not possible to assess the amount of rubbish removed during the three days of field activity. However, it can be estimated that all the rubbish removed could weigh between 1 and 2 tonnes, which is a considerable quantity.



**Figure 4-** Wheelbarrows were used for the removal of rubbish from the site

This accumulated garbage has considerably affected the proper functioning of the ecosystem of the Mangrove de Caponte and consequently the waterbirds that frequent this important site. It is obvious that the protection of this important waterbird habitat, which is now classified as

a Ramsar site, will help in providing habitat for resident birds and a stopover site for migratory birds (figure 5), which pass through during the wintering period, such as Ruff.



**Figure 5-** A group of birds in the Mangal de Caponte, including waders, terns, Grey Heron and African Spoonbill

## **2.2. The forum**

The forum on the protection of the Mangal de Caponte site was one of the most important activities of this small Project. The forum was held on January 31st, on the National Environment Day in Angola. The venue for the meeting was provided by the Municipal Administration of the city of Lobito. The meeting, which started at 9 am and lasted until 2 pm, counted, in addition to the other guests present, on the presence of the Deputy Municipal Administrator and representatives of the traditional authorities, highlighting the presence of Soba Grande do Lobito. In total, 97 participants from various strata of society were present at this meeting (figure 6).

The forum was extremely successful, both in terms of organization, as well as the themes presented and the interaction of the participants. The themes presented were proposed based on the challenges facing the Mangal de Caponte site, and, as highlighted above, the accumulation of garbage was probably the most discussed topic.

### 2.2.1. Forum results

It should be noted that the number of participants was much higher than expected, which demonstrates the interest that residents of the city of Lobito have for the conservation of their wetlands and its waterbirds. In fact, one cannot talk about the city of Lobito without mentioning the waterbirds, notably the Greater Flamingo, considered the emblem of the city of Lobito. There are artistic representations of this bird in every corner of the city of Lobito.



**Figure 6-** Participants at the forum

The ADAMA Representative, Mr. Joaquim Teixeira (figure 7), gave an interesting retrospective on the work carried out by ADAMA in the last two decades and its impact on the protection and conservation of waterbird sites in the city of Lobito, highlighting the Mangal do Caponte site.

During this meeting, three main topics were addressed:

- i. Brief consideration on the conservation of waterbirds in Angola.
- ii. Habitats of waterbirds in Lobito, works carried out and their challenges.
- iii. Prospects for the conservation of threatened habitats.

Through these three main themes, the issues relating to the protection of waterbird sites in the city of Lobito were addressed. The speakers presented the main problems and likely solutions to mitigate the degradation of waterbirds habitats, with a focus on the Caponte Mangrove.



Figure 7- Presentation of the ADAMA Representative

The question-and-answer session held after the presentations allowed participants to ask their questions and/or propose some suggestions for the protection of the most important sites in the city of Lobito. In fact, the participants' interventions were very positive, as they all focused on the need to implement immediate actions towards the conservation and protection of the most important habitats. On the other hand, the participants joined the Project carried out by ADAMA, financed by the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, in the sense of creating a waterbird observatory in Mangal de Caponte, which can play a dual role: *the observation of waterbirds* and as a *small wetlands centre*.

### 3. Financial report

The implementation of the Project was funded by the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, with a total budget of 4,000 euros. The costs were essentially divided into 6 groups (table 1). However, it should be noted that there was also a contribution, free of charge, from the

Municipal Administration of Lobito, which provided the forum room, and ADAMA, which provided all the sound and filming equipment.

Item	Costs (Euros)
Purchase of cleaning materials	269
Production of awareness materials	546
Feeding the participants	423
Transport	624
Workshop organisation	887
Observatory conception and design	1,279
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,028</b>

#### 4. Final considerations

Project implementation was successful at all levels. The main objectives pursued were achieved with the greatest satisfaction. However, the model of the Observatory Project that ADAMA plans to install in Mangal de Caponte is still being finalized and will be submitted shortly.

The participation of the provincial authorities, marked by the presence of the Deputy Municipal Administrator of the city of Lobito and of the highest entity of traditional authority demonstrates how seriously this ADAMA initiative is taken and supported by the local authorities. Also, noteworthy here is the active and engaged participation of the citizens of the city of Lobito who participated in the forum and contributed with constructive suggestions for the protection of waterbird sites.

Based on the above, and considering the need to carry out effective protection of the waterbird site in the city of Lobito, the following steps are recommended:

- a. Secure funds for the creation of the Caponte Mangrove Observatory / Wetlands Centre.
- b. Provision of a space by the Municipal Administration of Lobito to place the observatory.
- c. Monitor the most important wetland sites in the city of Lobito.