

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund  
28th Meeting of the CEPF Donor Council  
Brussels, Belgium  
20 January 2016  
2:00 to 5:00 pm CET**

**Ecosystem profile for the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot**

**Background**

The ecosystem profile for the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot was shared with the Working Group for review on 17 November 2015 and comments from its members have been incorporated into the final draft. A matrix showing how comments from the Working Group have been addressed is attached.

## RESPONSE TO WORKING GROUP COMMENTS ON THE GUINEAN FORESTS ECOSYSTEM PROFILE

TOPIC	WORKING GROUP COMMENTS	SECRETARIAT RESPONSE
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS OF EARLIER CEPF INVESTMENT	<p>The profile and summary lack an analysis of what was achieved in the first phase of CEPF investment in the Guinean Forests.</p> <p>Would be good to identify lessons learned from the first CEPF investment phase. Communication of Phase I results and lessons learned is essential.</p>	<p>The ecosystem profile now includes a summary of previous CEPF investment in the hotspot (Section 1.3, pp2-5), including an analysis of lessons learned. This analysis draws on the final assessment report from the first investment phase and discussions among Secretariat staff involved in overseeing CEPF grant making in the hotspot. The findings of the analysis are reflected in the investment strategy (Section 12.2, pp257-270), most notably in Investment Priorities 1.3, 4.1, 4.3 and 5.2.</p>
CEPF INVESTMENT NICHE	<p>The CEPF niche and investment strategy sections are thin relative to the situational analysis; the profile provides a clear justification of <i>where</i> we want to invest but we need more on <i>how</i> and <i>what</i>.</p> <p>The strategy appears quite similar to ones seen in other ecosystem profiles. CEPF investment cannot do everything so should focus on two or three thematic issues (e.g. mining, agriculture, etc.), and adopt a policy and landscape approach. Rather than the six SDs, would be better to have fewer; the six SDs are quite intertwined, so could reduce down to around four; SD1 is a higher-level goal. Six SDs is simply too many; please consider consolidating to maximum four based on a clear theory of change for the biodiversity hotspot; CEPF cannot effectively cover everything that is needed to secure the ecosystem, but it can build on and leverage a wider range of opportunities, including resources from others.</p> <p>It makes no sense to focus SD2 on just the 40 KBAs; that is simply too business-as-usual; please consider focusing this on community engagement for "integrated management of the conservation corridors" and have the 40 KBAs as major outcomes alongside community-driven actions to reduce pressures on biodiversity.</p> <p>Some indication of the relative importance of different SDs would be useful.</p> <p>The final version should present a wider investment strategy, with opportunities for contributions by regional donors but should pinpoint the comparative advantage of CEPF within this strategy.</p> <p>The current investment strategy requires some further focus first, <i>only then</i> should it prioritize which thematic issues CEPF should focus on.</p> <p>A clearer understanding of the priorities for CEPF within the overall investment strategy is important; there is a need for more clarity on the role of other agencies and actors.</p>	<p>The CEPF investment strategy (Section 12.2, pp257-270) has been overhauled to address these comments from the Working Group. First, the investment strategy as a whole has been narrowed in scope, with the number of strategic directions reduced from six to five (or four, if the RIT is excluded), and the number of investment priorities reduced from 16 to 13. This has given greater focus to the strategy, concentrating on those investment priorities that, in the opinion of the Secretariat, the profiling team and the consulted stakeholders, present the greatest opportunity to address the highest priority threats. As part of the narrowing of the investment strategy, the former Strategic Direction 1 ("promote conservation and sustainable management of 40 priority sites") from the previous draft has been removed, and the language moved to a higher conceptual level in the results framework. In addition, two investment priorities that were previously restricted to just the 40 priority KBAs were moved under a different strategic direction, which has a focus on the nine conservation corridors.</p> <p>Second, within the overall investment strategy, a more focused niche for CEPF has been defined (Section 11.2, pp247-248), with a specific emphasis on three sectors with large biodiversity footprints: agriculture; forestry; and mining. By focusing the investment niche in this way, CEPF investments will be mutually reinforcing, be sufficiently concentrated to achieve transformational impacts, and create opportunities for development and dissemination of good practice approaches among a community of grantees working on similar issues.</p>
COLLABORATION WITH OTHER INITIATIVES	<p>Responding to drivers of deforestation requires collaboration and partnership; the profile should identify important and relevant ongoing activities to collaborate with; the profile should also inform national REDD readiness strategies.</p> <p>The ecosystem profile coincides with work of European Commission on wildlife conservation for Sub-Saharan Africa and with regional programming cycle of European Development fund; can help target this investment.</p> <p>Should integrate an analysis of opportunities for collaboration and expected actions of other funders over the investment period.</p>	<p>An analysis of opportunities for collaboration and partnership with other initiatives has been added under Section 13.1 (pp270-272). This section reviews potential areas for collaboration with the USAID West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change program, French and German government support to protected area systems in the hotspot, le Program de Petites Initiatives (PPI) of FFEM, and the EU Wildlife Conservation Strategy for Africa.</p> <p>Opportunities to inform national REDD+ strategies and Readiness Preparation Proposals are discussed in Section 13.2.</p>

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GEOGRAPHIC LENS FOR INVESTMENT	<p>The connectivity issue is really important, and a landscape approach would be valuable.</p> <p>Given that nearly all the remaining forest blocks are KBAs, I was quite disappointed that the profile still reflects some degree of “conservation triage.” Perhaps even more importantly, there was no rationale for the triage with respect to prioritizing KBAs for CEPF investments.</p> <p>It would seem prudent to set explicit outcome targets at landscape-scale to ensure that investments are tailored toward integrated management of the conservation corridors. One would then expect that within each corridor, specific KBAs will be targeted based on established gaps related to protection and/or management effectiveness.</p> <p>Why would all of the forest KBAs in southeastern Sierra Leone (i.e. Golas) be excluded from the list of 40 priorities, even though the Gola-Lofa-Mano corridor is one of the most “intact” transboundary system in Upper Guinea? For this reason, I see no logic in putting the KBA priorities (Fig 12.1) before the conservation corridors (Fig 12.3). The other way around will send a clear message that all KBAs warrant attention within the corridors, even if only 40 will be considered for targeted investment.</p> <p>The consideration of ecological corridors seems entirely justified to ensure connectivity between habitats and species. The criteria are less explicit than for species (IUCN list) and sites (KBAs). It would undoubtedly be interesting to clarify the nature of the tools that were used (cf. MARXAN).</p> <p>If the interest of intervening in ecological corridors, notably by linking together several KBAs, is justified, do the resources available to CEPF for Phase III allow this? Is there not a risk of scattering resources too thinly? Do donors involved in this hotspot have actions to develop ecological connectivity (cf. the landscape approach in particular)?</p>	<p>The need for CEPF investments to give consideration to ecological connectivity, even when they are for species-focused or site-based projects, is emphasized in the theory of change set out in Section 11.3 (pp248-249), and elsewhere in the document. In addition, the number of strategic directions with a geographic focus on KBAs has been reduced from two to one, and the remaining strategic direction has been reworded to make clear that investments in priority KBAs are intended “to consolidate ecological connectivity at the landscape scale” (Section 12.2, p259).</p> <p>The message that all KBAs are global priorities in need of conservation attention has been emphasized in Section 12.1 (p251) and Section 13.1 (p270).</p> <p>Explicit conservation targets have been set at the landscape scale. These include: (i) at least 100,000 hectares within production landscapes are managed for biodiversity conservation or sustainable use; (ii) public policies and/or private sector business practices in at least 6 conservation corridors incorporate provisions for biodiversity conservation; (iii) at least 5 private companies adopt new management practices consistent with biodiversity conservation at operations in the conservation corridors.</p> <p>Section 12.1, which sets out the geographic priorities for CEPF investment, has now been reordered to present the conservation corridors (Figure 12.1, p250) before the priority KBAs (Figure 12.2, p255).</p> <p>Section 4.4 (pp78-79) clarifies that, while systematic conservation planning tools such as MARXAN are increasingly being used to plan conservation at landscape scales, these were not in fact used for this exercise, as there was a desire to incorporate the results of previous conservation planning exercises in the region (and thereby define conservation corridors that were both familiar and acceptable to local stakeholders). Rather, conservation corridors were defined through the application of expert opinion, following four predefined criteria: (i) hydrological units; (ii) existing corridors; (iii) clusters of connected KBAs; and (iv) clusters of spatially proximate KBAs.</p>
RESULTS FRAMEWORK	<p>The results framework is currently not developed.</p> <p>The profile needs a results framework with indicators.</p>	<p>A results framework with indicators has been developed, based upon the revised investment strategy, and included in the full ecosystem profile (pp275-278).</p>
THEORY OF CHANGE	<p>CEPF needs a clear theory of change for this highly fragmented ecosystem. Basically, given that this is a second round of CEPF programming, I was expecting to see a clear vision for what the investment should seek to achieve, including assumptions based on social, economic, and political realities in the region (and the post-Ebola recovery needs that is estimated to top \$3.5 billion!). From what I know about this hotspot as a whole, we should increasingly focus on <i>Connectivity</i> (species, habitats and ecosystem function), <i>Community</i> (people matter), and <i>Capacity</i> (civil society, governance, institutions). Rather than merely focusing on “where,” the profile should demonstrate “how” the modest resources from CEPF could be invested to maximize potential for transformational change in the entire hotspot. I would argue that simply targeting a consolidated set of KBAs will only address short-term needs at those sites, and likely ignore that actions that underpin sustainability of outcomes.</p>	<p>A new section has been added (Section 11.3 pp248-249), setting out the theory of change for the hotspot. This theory of change recognizes that investments by CEPF will need to focus on ecological connectivity, the needs and aspirations of communities (especially vulnerable groups like Indigenous People and women) and the capacity of key actors. Focusing resources effectively on these three areas will require robust partnerships, informed by a solid information base.</p> <p>All of these elements are addressed by the investment strategy. Strategic Direction 1 responds to the need to empower local communities. Strategic Direction 2 responds to the need to secure ecological connectivity at the corridor scale by mainstreaming biodiversity into public policy and private sector practice. Strategic Direction 3 responds to the need for research to address critical knowledge gaps. Strategic Direction 4 responds to the need to strengthen the capacity of key actors, including indigenous people’s, women’s and youth groups. Finally, Strategic Direction 5 responds to build strong partnerships around a common conservation agenda.</p>
INDIGENOUS PEOPLE	<p>Happy to see a strong emphasis on gender in the investment strategy but would like to see something similar on Indigenous People.</p>	<p>Indigenous people’s groups are explicitly recognized as one of the constituents of civil society that will be particularly targeted by capacity building activities under Strategic Direction 4. The description of Investment Priority 1.3 has been reworked to prioritize the participation of Indigenous People in the development of benefit sharing mechanisms that are envisioned as conservation incentives at priority sites. Similarly, the description of Investment Priority 4.1 now states that “priority will be given to capacity building initiatives that target Indigenous People’s organizations”.</p>

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PRIVATE SECTOR	<p>Would like to see something clearer in the investment strategy in relation to the private sector.</p> <p>Private sector leveraging is inappropriately buried as “investment priorities” under SD2, when it should in fact warrant a strategic direction for the entire ecosystem; there is simply too much at stake to assume that private sector role can only be boiled down to specific KBAs; how will CEPF investments influence the expansion of commodities in the conservation corridors?</p>	<p>In the updated investment strategy, mainstreaming biodiversity into the business practices of civil society is included at the strategic direction level (SD2). The geographic focus of CEPF investments in engaging and influencing the private sector is no longer restricted to specific KBAs but open to all nine conservation corridors. This is reflected in the definition of the strategic direction and the accompanying narrative (p262).</p>
OUTREACH TO GOVERNMENT	<p>Need to increase local and national governments’ understanding of values of biodiversity in economic development, especially in the mining and agriculture sectors.</p>	<p>Under the new investment strategy, Investment Priority 2.2 provides for generation of information on the values of natural ecosystems that can be used to influence economic decision making in favor of their conservation. This information may feed into activities under Investment Priority 2.1, which provides for policy-relevant research, analysis and outreach to government. As mentioned above, the focus of the CEPF investment niche will be on three sectors: agriculture; mining; and forestry. These actions are further supported by an explicit focus on building the communication capacity of civil society organizations under Investment Priority 4.3.</p>
CIVIL SOCIETY ANALYSIS	<p>How are CSOs and their potential being analyzed? More information on this would help.</p> <p>SD5 on civil society capacity building must be informed by past experience to make it more robust; indicators will be key here.</p> <p>It is correctly stated (on p30, section 10.4) that one of the strong constraints on conservation actions undertaken by civil society is a lack of continuity in funding, and the difficulty of registering in time. Does CEPF intend to prioritize, during Phase III, NGOs and sites that were funded during earlier phases? Should this not constitute a criterion, regardless, for those NGOs that performed during the first phases?</p>	<p>As mentioned above, the ecosystem profile now includes an analysis of lessons learned from previous CEPF investment in the hotspot (Section 1.3, pp2-5). This includes a review of past experience with capacity building. This experience has been incorporated into the investment strategy, particularly Strategic Direction 4 (previously SD5) on capacity building. For example, the investment strategy now gives priority to mentoring arrangements and other innovative approaches, as opposed to conventional training courses, which were not found to have lasting impacts. CEPF recognizes the need for civil society organizations to have continuity in funding, if they are to retain trained staff, develop effective programs, build trust among communities and grow in capacity and credibility. For this reason, previous receipt of CEPF grants (and performance implementing them) will be an important factor taken into account when reviewing grant applications. Many of the grantees from earlier phases of CEPF investment in the hotspot were consulted as part of the ecosystem profiling process, and the resulting strategy includes priorities consistent with their needs and capabilities. At the same time, CEPF grants are awarded on a competitive basis, and it is likely that organizations that were not formerly grantees of CEPF will receive grants where they present opportunities to implement high quality work in line with the priorities of the ecosystem profile. This will inevitably be the case in the Lower Guinean Forests sub-region, which was not the focus of previous CEPF investment.</p>
THREAT ANALYSIS	<p>The threat factors should mention demographic pressure (85 million inhabitants, 136 people per km<sup>2</sup>) exerted on the natural environment, which will increase in years to come given the very high population growth rate.</p> <p>Given the predominance of the demographic factor, should it not be considered in the criteria for prioritization? In the interests of efficiency of the funds investment by CEPF, it is undoubtedly preferable to retain areas that will suffer less than others from rural population growth and is corollaries in terms of agricultural expansion and pressures on habitats and species.</p>	<p>To account for the complex relationship between the growing human population densities and their associated environmental pressures, demographic pressure has been considered as an underlying driver, rather than a direct threat to biodiversity, including in the review of threats (Chapter 8) and in the prioritization process used to define conservation outcomes (Chapter 4) and investment priorities (Chapter 12). This point is made explicitly in Section 5.2.1 (p94).</p>

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SOCIAL ANALYSIS	Before investing, there is a need for social analysis at the level of individual KBAs.	A brief summary of the range of variation in the social context for conservation that exists among different KBAs in the hotspot has been added to Section 12.1 (pp252-253). This is by no means a substitute for social analysis at the level of individual KBAs, which is definitely needed. To ensure that such analysis is up to date, relevant to proposed actions and incorporated into their design, it will be undertaken during the proposal preparation stage for individual grants, as is the case for all previous CEPF investments. All grant proposals must include a description of the social context for the grant, and a more detailed analysis, in the form of a Social Assessment or Process Framework is required for all projects working in areas with Indigenous Peoples or introducing or strengthening involuntary restrictions on access to natural resources within protected areas.
BENEFIT-SHARING	Is there a benefit-sharing plan for communities?	The description of Investment Priority 1.3 (p261) has been reworded, to emphasize the need for CEPF grantees to ensure that participatory benefit-sharing mechanisms are designed, implemented and monitored.
SUSTAINABILITY	The discussion on sustainability in the profile should be included in the summary document.	The summary document now contains a synopsis of the discussion on sustainability that appears in the full ecosystem profile.
SMALL GRANT SIZE LIMIT	The maximum amount of US\$50,000 does not specify whether it is an amount over one year (and thus renewable) or over the duration of Phase III.	It is now specified in Section 11.3 (p249) that the limit of USD 50,000 is per grant (which may be one or more years in duration).
DOCUMENT STRUCTURE	<p>For future ecosystem profiles, would like to have a narrative supported by annexes, rather than a separate summary and full ecosystem profile.</p> <p>Would like to see a shorter summary with infographics; a lot of the information presented in the profile can go into annexes.</p> <p>The current structure, with a summary, is useful.</p> <p>See merit of a narrative with annexes but maybe for the future, not this profile.</p>	The topic of the most appropriate structure for ecosystem profiles will be revisited at a future Working Group meeting, recognizing that there are multiple audiences for these documents, and there may, therefore, be a need to present the information generated during the profiling process in more than one format. For the current exercise, the Secretariat proposes to continue with the current structure of a full document (with annexes) plus an extended summary.