

Annual Portfolio Overview: Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

March 2010

Introduction

The Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot represents the Guinean portion of the Guinea-Congolian forests and contains two main blocks: the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem and the Lower Guinean Forest. The focal area for Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment — the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem — extends from Guinea into eastern Sierra Leone, and eastward through Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana into western Togo.

The hotspot contains impressive levels of biodiversity and unique species, or endemism. Approximately 9,000 species of vascular plants occur in the hotspot, including significant assemblages of endemic plant species. There are 785 species of birds, more than 200 reptile species, and nearly 225 amphibian species, although knowledge of the herpetological fauna is inadequate. Mammal diversity is exceptional, with nearly a quarter of the mammals that are native to continental Africa represented. More than 60 species are endemic to the hotspot. The hotspot is among the top priorities for primate conservation — five species are Critically Endangered and another 21 are Endangered, while 92 percent of the hotspot's primates are endemic.

CEPF is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

Over the past nine years, since CEPF began investing in the region, the threats to biodiversity have evolved. In 2001, the greatest threat was clearly the pervasive civil unrest, warfare and post-conflict recovery, with its attendant economic crises, refugees and internally displaced persons creating unsustainable demands on the landscape. While conflict has subsided, poverty remains as do issues surrounding ethnicity, land tenure and access to high-value natural resources, including forests, diamonds, gold, iron ore and bauxite.

Today, the hotspot is under pressure from forest clearance, mining, road construction and commercial bushmeat trade. Further, as expected after a period of civil strife, there is relatively low capacity in the field of natural resource management, either within government or civil society.

At the start of investment in 2001, CEPF entered an important funding niche by focusing on connectivity, seeking to address not only ecological but also political, social and administrative fragmentation. CEPF recognized that a sustainable conservation program required skilled and viable civil society groups to drive the process. As such, an initial five-year investment phase

focused on providing nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private organizations with the capacity to manage biodiversity conservation, with strategic funding for strengthening institutional capacity; hotspot biodiversity monitoring; conservation corridors; public awareness; and a small grants fund.

By the completion of the five-year investment, CEPF had contributed substantially to the strengthening of 25 national and international NGOs or private sector partners in the region and the increased protection of more than 186,000 hectares of land. This includes creation of a new reserve in Liberia (Nimba) that is contiguous with reserves in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, the establishment of a new legal framework for forest conservation in Liberia, and the strengthening of protected areas throughout the hotspot.

At the same time, there are areas where more work is needed. Important initiatives begun by CEPF and its grantee partners are not yet financially sustainable; they need additional assistance to ensure they remain on sound footing. Communities continue to need assistance making the link between livelihoods and conservation. Further, insufficient capacity among government agencies and civil society continues to impede conservation work. These factors threaten the long term success of conservation efforts, and addressing them therefore remains a focus for CEPF.

Niche for CEPF Investment

Overview

The ecosystem profile for the region was formally approved in December 2001, and over the subsequent five years, through December 2005, CEPF awarded 72 grants for \$6.2 million. This region did not have a formal coordination unit largely because no organization had the ability to perform coordination tasks across six highly diverse countries. As such, all coordination functions were carried out by the CEPF Secretariat. The five-year assessment report was completed in October 2006. There was a purposeful break as the first phase of grants came to an end and CEPF assessed how to best move forward in the region. As described further below, CEPF has now moved the Guinean Forests Region into a phase of consolidation grants, with five grants for a total of almost \$2.1 million running from December 2008 through December 2011.

The consolidation grants fall within three investment priorities, which themselves build on the strategic directions identified in the 2001 ecosystem profile. The strategic directions in the ecosystem profile focused on strengthening institutional capacities for conservation, establishing a biodiversity monitoring system, developing conservation corridors, public awareness, and a small-grants fund. The five investment priorities of the consolidation grants continue in this direction, building on the most opportunistic areas:

1. Ensure financial sustainability in the hotspot.
2. Integrate livelihoods and community participation into the conservation agenda through a mentored small-grants program.
3. Secure and sustain capacity building gains through targeted conservation action.

The consolidation phase focuses on particular areas of geographic emphasis — Liberia's protected area network, plus the Gola, Nimba, Sapo and Tiwai Island protected areas — while also ensuring that capacity-building opportunities exist for a wide group of individuals across the hotspot.

Portfolio Status

Through a targeted and rapid award of grants with a maximum duration of 36 months, CEPF has committed the entire allotment of funds for consolidation in the region. There are five grants to five organizations, which fit into the three investment priorities, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 represents the portfolio for consolidation. At this time, the Secretariat has no intention of allotting more funds or issuing further calls for proposals.

Table 1. Guinean Forests Region Consolidation Grants by Investment Priority

Organization	Grant	Amount	Active Dates
<i>Investment priority 1: Ensure financial sustainability in the hotspot</i>			
Conservation International (CI)	Ensuring Long Term Sustainable Financing For Key Protected Areas in the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem	\$799,930	June 2009 – July 2011
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Sustainable Finance for Protected Areas in Sierra Leone	\$200,000	January 2009 – December 2011
<i>Investment priority 2: Integrate livelihoods and community participation into the conservation agenda through a mentored small grants program</i>			
Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA)	Upscaling and Promoting Biodiversity Conservation and Community Livelihoods in the Upper Guinea Forest Ecosystem	\$250,000	January 2009 – December 2011
Flora & Fauna International (FFI)	Consolidating and Learning from Livelihood Interventions in Support Of Biodiversity Conservation And Management at Nimba Mountain (Guinea), Sapo National Park (Liberia) and Tiwai Island (Sierra Leone)	\$249,440	December 2008 – March 2011
<i>Investment priority 3: Secure and sustain capacity-building gains through targeted conservation action</i>			
Birdlife International	Sustaining and Securing Capacity in Biodiversity Conservation Action in the Upper Guinea Forest Area	\$599,984	January 2009 – December 2011
Total		\$2,099,354	

Coordinating CEPF Grantmaking

Consolidation programs do not have formal coordinating entities or regional implementation teams beyond the U.S.-based grant director. The five grantee organizations are extraordinarily strong. CI maintains a program office in Liberia, independent of the CEPF grant. BirdLife, FFI and RSPB are all based in the United Kingdom, with significant and long-term on-site presence. EFA, based in Sierra Leone, is perhaps the strongest local organization to have emerged out of the first five-year phase of grantmaking.

Performance Assessment

In relation to the outcomes and targets listed in the logical framework (Annex 1), performance to date is appropriate. Progress on the Birdlife, EFA and FFI projects is according to plan. Commencement of the RSPB program was effectively delayed for one year because the CEPF investment was only one part of a multi-donor, multi-country program RSPB was seeking to launch. Similarly, approval for the CI grant from the CEPF Working Group came later than the other grants; thus this project is approximately five months behind the originally planned schedule. CI has made significant progress in a short period of time, and RSPB is working to leverage large amounts of money and resources.

The extremely challenging conditions facing grantees during the first five years of CEPF investment — threats to personal security, remote and difficult working environments, a rapidly changing political landscape, and limited on-site capacity among partner groups — are still present. These consolidation grants are much more about long-term programs that are sustainable, so measurement indicators over one year of implementation may not present the full measure of progress.

Portfolio Investment Highlights by Investment Priority

Investment priority 1: Ensure financial sustainability in the hotspot

This investment priority seeks to establish long-term financial mechanisms that support the functioning of Liberia’s protected-area network and the Gola forests of Liberia and Sierra Leone. It will also support a regional meeting (Elmina +10) to be held in 2010 to review progress since the 1999 priority-setting workshop held in Elmina, Ghana. This meeting will also aim to revitalize conservation efforts in the region. CI and RSPB lead these efforts.

Highlights to date:

- Working to make national public area trusts and loan mechanisms operational in Liberia, CI updated the protected-area financing plan and included this in the “Low Carbon Development Plan.”
- CI facilitated meetings of Liberia’s REDD technical working group and assisted in drafting the terms of reference for a National Climate Change Steering Committee and Secretariat in the office of the president in an effort to improve the quality of REDD projects and national readiness.
- Working to improve the performance of ecosystem service and product markets, CI helped establish a PES “incubator” in Liberia.
- CI leveraged CEPF funds by raising \$650,000 from the MacCall MacBain Foundation in support of REDD and the PES incubator in Liberia; securing \$50,000 in support from the USAID BATS program for private sector and climate adaptation. This helped ensure U.S. government support for the STEWARD 2 program, which in turn has agreed to participate in Elmina + 10. It also helped ensure support and participation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Elmina +10.
- Partnering with Ghana’s Nature Conservation Resource Centre, CI is implementing a nodes approach in Liberia’s Lake Piso and Wonegizi, supporting training in livelihood activities. This is an important example of intra-regional support, from a group with high capacity in Ghana to communities in Liberia.
- CI has documented lessons learned from the Sapo conservation program and shared these with partners through the Community Forestry Working Group.
- To demonstrate the gains that could be made in Liberia by implementing policy options to reduce deforestation, C I completed a cost-benefit analysis.
- CI is working to strengthen local governance structures (for example, cooperatives, community forestry development committees) by linking them within regional growth pole sites.

Investment priority 2: Integrate livelihoods and community participation into the conservation agenda through a mentored small grants program

This investment priority seeks to strengthen conservation corridors by promoting projects that link sustainable livelihoods, human well-being and biodiversity conservation. It includes such elements as ecotourism and small-scale production. EFA and FFI lead these efforts.

Highlights to date:

- Working to improve and upgrade ecotourism facilities on Tiwai Island in Sierra Leone, EFA completed construction of a bridge from the main boat landing to the visitor center and improved tent platforms and a well.
- EFA provided first aid training for Tiwai staff and representatives from eight communities.
- Training began on Tiwai Island on weaving, gara tie-dyeing, bamboo crafts and furniture making. Training was also given for nature guides and for hospitality and catering.
- Tiwai managers are working with the Gola Forest Program and Ministry of Tourism to develop joint marketing materials.
- EFA leveraged \$50,000 from the EU-funded Conservation of the Western Area Peninsula Forest and Watershed project.
- Tiwai Island had 533 paying visitors, up from 414 in 2008 and 119 in 2007.
- School groups made regular visits and students from Njala University undertook field research.
- FFI conducted SWOT analyses with three community-based organizations at Nimba Mountain in Guinea: the Lola Women Bushmeat Sellers Association, the Hunters Association of Gbakore and Zouguepo, and the Women's Association of Bossou.
- To provide an alternative to bushmeat in Nimba, FFI helped expand the Gbakore cane rat facility.
- An FFI-conducted study gathered baseline information on livelihoods and hunting practices to understand the role of bushmeat in the local diet and income generation around Sapo in Liberia.
- FFI and EFA held a joint seminar at Tiwai Island discussing alternative livelihoods in relation to bushmeat hunting and trade.
- FFI organized hunters groups to study hunting and trapping.
- FFI conducted a bushmeat market survey with women in Zwedru, Liberia.
- Three villages around Sapo National Park participated in an FFI study on household income and consumption.

Investment priority 3: Secure and sustain capacity building gains through targeted conservation action

This investment priority seeks to build the capacity of West African scientists and project implementers and also create opportunities for them to apply their skills on targeted conservation projects. Funding is also available to support universities and NGOs to gain technical training allowing them to participate in negotiations on carbon markets, protected-area networks, and debt-for-nature swaps. BirdLife International leads these efforts.

Highlights to date:

- BirdLife held a workshop in late September in Accra with 17 protected-area managers from the five countries. The workshop addressed forest law enforcement and governance, REDD and carbon finance. Participants received scientific field books and equipment.
- National workshops in Liberia and Guinea reached 27 more participants.
- Liberia has established a protected-area managers' platform headed by the chief park warden of Lake Piso Nature Reserve.
- BirdLife has organized site support groups at Azangy National Park (Cote d'Ivoire), Sikakoro, near l'Haut Niger National Park (Guinea), and at the Kapatchez and Loos Island sites (Guinea).
- BirdLife established a Web site for protected-area managers in the Guinean Forest to share information.

Collaboration with CEPF Donors

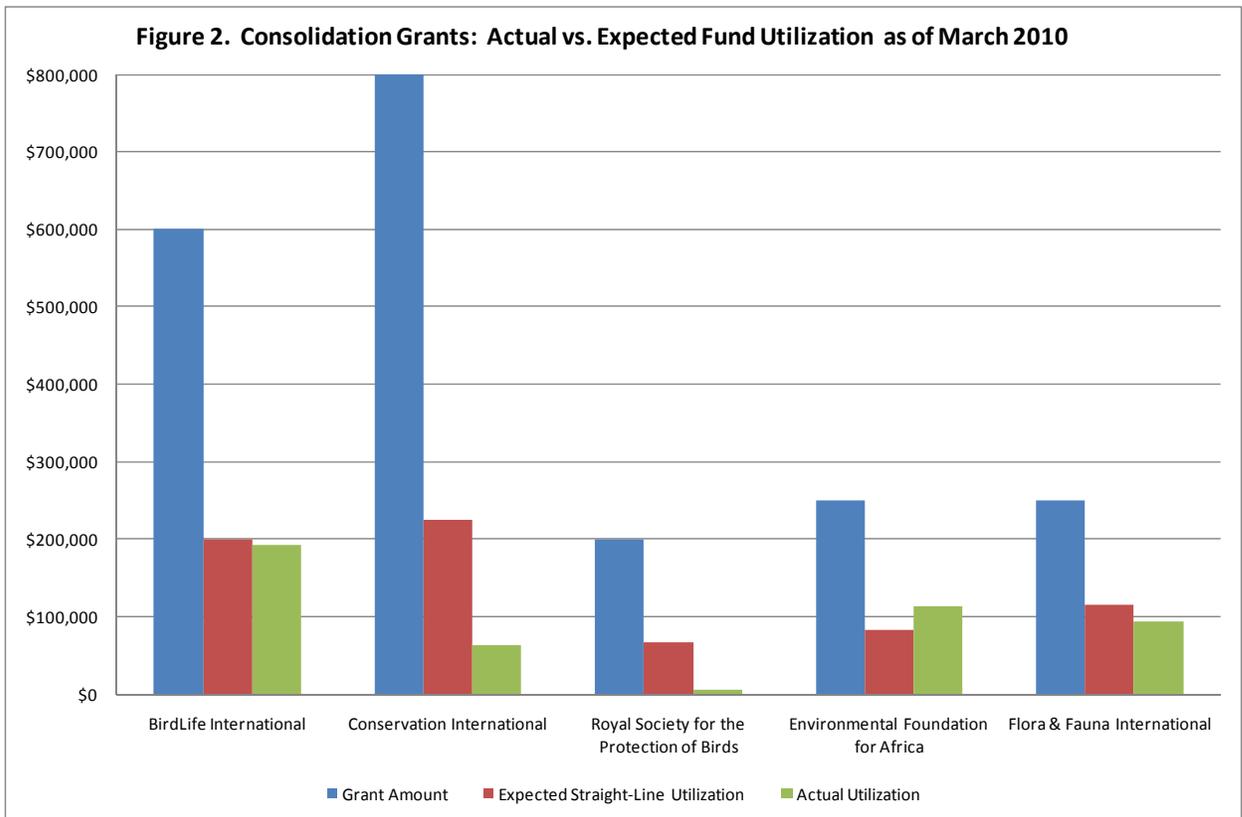
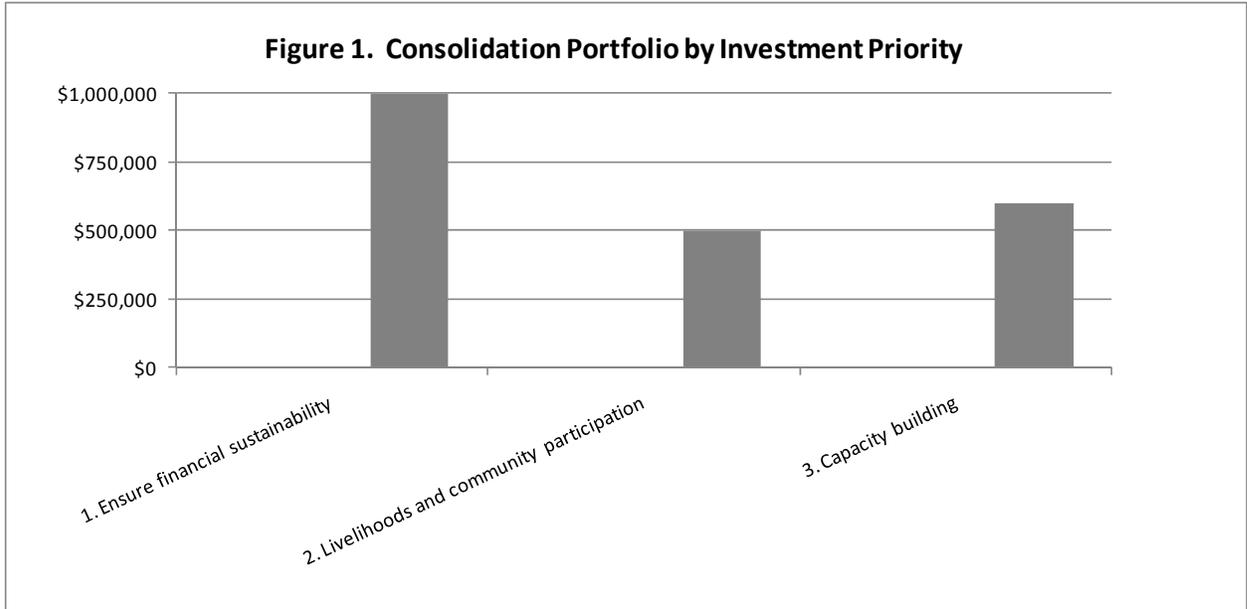
By their nature, the five consolidation grants are far-reaching, long-term and programmatic, meaning the efforts that CEPF supports overlap with other donors. This is intentional. Thus, CEPF grantees leverage funds from the World Bank, GEF, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USAID and others to ensure that their programs will continue beyond the period of their CEPF grants.

Among the five grantees, there is explicit cooperation and coordination. FFI takes its expertise from throughout the region to share lessons with EFA's practitioners in Sierra Leone. BirdLife's capacity building efforts extend to protected area managers working on sites supported by the other four organizations. BirdLife and RSPB collaborate on the transboundary Gola Forest, with the former working from the Sierra Leone side and the latter from Liberia. Lastly, CI and RSPB are working together on carbon finance efforts.

Conclusion

Working in the Guinean Forest region is unusually challenging. The CEPF consolidation portfolio was designed to be opportunistic in order to ensure the sustainability of a small number of efforts from the first phase of grant-making, while also taking a broader approach toward sustainable financing mechanisms in the region. As with the grants from 2001-2006, the consolidation grants are maintaining momentum. Thus, progress may come rapidly when political conditions are right and sufficient human capacity is present. The CEPF Secretariat will work with the grantees to ensure that there is a balance between near-term gains and support for long-term efforts, like creating the enabling environment for finance schemes, which do not demonstrate the more obvious tangible success.

Figures



Annex 1: Logical Framework Reporting for CEPF Investment in Guinean Forests of West Africa

Objective	Targets	Progress
Reinforce and sustain the conservation gains achieved as a result of previous CEPF investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa.	At least five civil society actors, including NGOs and the private sector, actively participate in conservation programs guided by the Guinean Forests ecosystem profile and Program for Consolidation.	Five grants awarded.
	190,000 hectares of key biodiversity areas with strengthened protection and management.	Underway; BirdLife-sponsored protected-area managers are using METTs.
	1,200 hectares in production landscapes managed for biodiversity conservation or sustainable use.	Underway; BirdLife-sponsored protected-area managers are using METTs.
	Two stakeholder networks strengthened to support long-term conservation action by replicating and scaling up CEPF successes.	Three networks being strengthened: protected-area managers (BirdLife); livelihoods (EFA and FFI); environmental services and finance (Conservation International).
	\$1.8 million leveraged.	\$650,000 confirmed, to date (CI); RSPB leveraging in progress.

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Progress
Outcome 1. Long-term financing mechanisms established and functioning for Liberia's protected-area network and the Gola forests of Liberia and Sierra Leone. (Conservation International and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.) \$999,930	Two conservation investment mechanisms including national protected-area trusts and loan mechanisms operational.	One national public area trust underway in Liberia.
	One REDD project operational.	Underway in Liberia: REDD technical working group meeting.
	One pilot incentive mechanism implemented, one biodiversity offset utilized, and one carbon project design document developed.	Pilot program underway in Lake Piso and Wonegizi in Liberia.
	Elmina+10 conference planned and implemented.	Conference being planned tentatively for November 2010.

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Progress
	Two land use agreements executed with communities for community forest carbon projects.	No progress to date.
	Laws and procedures for carbon management reviewed and proposed in Sierra Leone.	No progress to date.
	100 percent of direct stakeholders have improved capacity to access carbon income.	No progress to date.
<p>Outcome 2. Conservation corridors in West Africa are strengthened by promoting projects that link sustainable livelihoods, human well-being, and biodiversity conservation. (Environmental Foundation for Africa and Flora & Fauna International.)</p> <p>\$499,440</p>	Facilities for ecotourism on Tiwai Island (in Sierra Leone and part of the Gola Reserve corridor) upgraded and tourism value-chain analysis and marketing strategy completed, leading to increased revenue and investment.	Facilities have been upgraded, strategy completed, modest increase in revenue.
	100 percent of targeted communities and staff on Tiwai Island involved in sustainable use projects demonstrating tangible socioeconomic benefits.	EFA is working only with local community members to ensure ownership and participation.
	Biodiversity Learning and Alternative Energy Center established in Freetown.	Inception scheduled for 2010.
	Stakeholders from initial CEPF grants, plus additional networks, enabled to share lessons and address challenges to livelihoods and conservation.	Seminar held on alternative livelihoods in relation to bushmeat hunting and trade.
	Alternative livelihoods promoted as an alternative to hunting for, and trade in, bushmeat in Nimba Mountain (Guinea) and Sapo National Park (Liberia).	Underway: baseline study completed of livelihoods and hunting practices; hunters' groups organized for study; bushmeat marketers' groups organized for study.
<p>Outcome 3. Capacitated West African scientists/project implementers have advanced skills, and opportunities to apply these skills through targeted conservation projects. (Birdlife International.)</p> <p>\$599,984</p>	50 conservationists, including protected area managers, trained.	34 protected-area managers trained to date from Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.
	Six protected-area workshops and 10 training courses executed, and one in-service training program instituted.	Three workshops complete in Ghana, Guinea, and Liberia.

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Progress
	National networks established in two countries.	Underway in Ghana, Guinea and Liberia.
	Five individuals supported to obtain advanced degrees focusing on emerging conservation opportunities.	No progress to date.
	Capacity of three site support groups enhanced in Liberia (Sapo National Park, Lake Piso Forest Reserve), Sierra Leone (Gola Forest Reserve) and Cote d'Ivoire (Azagny Forest Reserve).	Site support groups have been organized.