

Annual Portfolio Overview 2011

Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

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 ten 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 in 2006, 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, it was evident that more work was needed. Important initiatives begun by CEPF and its grantee partners were not yet financially sustainable, and needed additional assistance to ensure they would remain on sound footing. Communities still needed assistance making the link between livelihoods and conservation. Further, insufficient capacity among government agencies and civil society continued to impede conservation work. These factors threatened the long term success of conservation efforts, and addressing them therefore remained a focus for CEPF. Consequently, CEPF embarked upon a further three years of investment, starting in December 2008. This document provides a report on progress of this investment for the period January to December, 2011.

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 June 2012.

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

CEPF committed the entire allocation of funds for consolidation in the region in the initial months of 2009. Five large grants were awarded, for an expected duration of 36 months. At this time, the Secretariat has no intention of allocating more funds or issuing further calls for proposals.

In 2011, when projects were entering their last phase, CEPF agreed to amend all of the grant agreements in order to adapt to changes in the institutional environment or to challenges encountered by the grantees during implementation. In four cases, the grantees requested additional time to finalize some activities that couldn't be completed within the initial schedule; CEPF approved all four contract extensions at no extra cost, as it was generally well justified by external or internal reasons. In three cases, grantees requested a diminution of their budget – in fact an adjustment to the real costs, always easier to estimate towards the end of projects. Only one grantee received an increase in their budget, and only one completed the project earlier than expected. Details are provided in following sections. Table 1 provides an overview of the status of the five grants as of 31st of December, 2011.

Table 1. Guinean Forests of West Africa Consolidation Grants by Investment Priority

Organization	Grant	Initial Amount	Active Dates	Date Amendment	Amended Active Dates	New Project Amount
Investment priority 1: Ensure financial sustainability in the hotspot						
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Sustainable Finance for Protected Areas in Sierra Leone	\$200,000	Jan 2009 Dec 2011	Dec 2011	Jan 2009 Feb 2012 (+ 2 months)	↓ \$192,475
Conservation International (CI)	Ensuring Long Term Sustainable Financing For Key Protected Areas in the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem	\$799,930	Jun 2009 Jul 2011	Sept 2011	Jun 2009 Jun 2012 (+ 11 months)	↓ \$711,242
Investment priority 2: Integrate livelihoods and community participation into the conservation agenda through a mentored small grants program						
Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA)	Upscaling and Promoting Biodiversity Conservation and Community Livelihoods in the Upper Guinea Forest Ecosystem	\$250,000	Jan 2009 Dec 2011	Dec 2011	Jan 2009 Jun 2012 (+ 6 months)	↑ \$285,000
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	Dec 2008 Mar 2011	Mar 2011	Dec 2008 Sept 2011 (+ 6 months)	No change
Investment priority 3: Secure and sustain capacity-building gains through targeted conservation action						
Birdlife International	Sustaining and Securing Capacity in Biodiversity Conservation Action in the Upper Guinea Forest Area	\$599,984	Jan 2009 Dec 2011	July 2011	Jan 2009 Aug 2011 (- 4 months)	↓ \$469,099
Total		\$2,099,354			New total	\$1,907,208

Coordinating CEPF Grantmaking

Consolidation programs do not have formal coordinating entities or regional implementation teams beyond the grant director based in Washington, USA. The five grantee organizations have a strong presence in the hotspot. 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 (and programmes generally managed by nationals). EFA, based in Sierra Leone, is perhaps the strongest local organization to have emerged out of the first five-year phase of grantmaking.

Grant Amendments in 2011

The five grants of the portfolio have been amended in 2011, as a direct consequence of the will of the CEPF Secretariat to manage this portfolio in an adaptive way, and to take into consideration changes that occurred in this difficult region during implementation.

Birdlife's grant on capacity building was both reduced in duration and cost. The reduction pertains to the fact that activities have been suspended in Ivory Coast, and that most of the other planned activities had been undertaken, therefore not justifying maintenance of operating costs for several extra months while expected impacts for beneficiaries were low.

Fauna and Flora International and RSPB requested additional time (*no cost extension*) to finalize some of the planned activities that had been delayed for several well justified reasons – one of them being the heavy rains in 2010-2011 that impeded field activities and delayed field visits.

Environmental Foundation for Africa also requested an extension in order to achieve their activities related to the construction of the Biodiversity Learning and Alternative Energy Center (BLAEC). The construction works started late due to unexpected delays in obtaining permits. The unforeseen increase in cost of materials and fuel in the region (partly related to the crisis) also justified the budget increase for this project.

Finally, the Conservation International grant was amended – its duration extended and budget reduced – as a follow up of the Grant Director's visit in 2010. The Secretariat asked CI to focus on a set of activities in a specific part of the country, that could serve as a pilot for the green economy concept, and which has good potential for leveraging sustainable funding. After several months of discussions and priority planning with CI Liberia, an agreement was reached for CI to work on the Nimba region, for which a potential private partnership with ArcelorMittal exists.

Performance Assessment

Two grants were closed during 2011, FFI's *Consolidating and Learning from Livelihood Interventions in Support Of Biodiversity Conservation* and the Birdlife's *Sustaining and Securing Capacity in Biodiversity Conservation Action*. Final completion reports have been submitted and approved by the Secretariat, and are available on the CEPF website.

The Birdlife grant has been moderately successful. The final report estimates the achievement at approximately 80% of the short-term objective, which was to secure and sustain capacity for the conservation and management of protected areas in the Upper Guinea Forest region, with a focus on protected area managers, recent graduates and Site Support Groups in and around hotspots. The project faced serious political problems which halted activities during six months of insecurity in Guinea and from 2010 until the end of project with post-election violence in Côte d'Ivoire. However, this difficult context does not explain the gaps between expected and achieved results. Several activities remained unachieved or partially achieved, and corrective measures were not taken on time (i.e. creating functional networks, ensuring regular use of METTs tools).

Allocation of activities to weak local Birdlife partners, without sufficient support from Birdlife's West Africa office, has been identified as one of the main weaknesses of the project by the CEPF Secretariat.

FFI achieved a large part of its expected results by the end of the (extended) project in September 2011. Indeed, results even exceeded expectations for some activities. Community-based organizations in the Nimba area of Guinea are now well-established, and most have good governance structures in place. They have developed alternative livelihood options, and have received sub-grants from new donors. These communities are now building their own piggeries, without support from donors, and are using their own revenue to expand activities that they learned about during the project. Studies and reports for Sapo region have been produced, and additional funds have been secured for continuation of the work with communities there.

RSPB's carbon finance study and advocacy work with authorities experienced some delays – necessitating that the organization ask for a two month extension – but this should not impact the achievement of the objectives of the project, which is scheduled to end in February 2012.

The CI project is back on track, and the deliverables set up in the amended proposal are being achieved on time.

The EFA project now focuses on the remaining unachieved activities for construction of the BLAEC Center, which should be completed during the second semester of 2012, with support from additional donors.

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.

Highlights during 2011:

- On 3 December 2011, the President of Sierra Leone launched the Gola Rainforest National Park (71,000 ha) and mentioned explicitly the important prospects of a Carbon project for the Gola Rainforest National Park and for the nation, thereby marking a tremendous milestone.
- The feasibility study for a carbon project in Gola was completed in August 2011 by Winrock under RSPB supervision.
- The Memorandum of Understanding between the government of Sierra Leone and stakeholders has been signed for developing a REDD project for the Gola Rainforest National Park. Winrock has been hired to develop the project modalities.
- The MoU involves the Paramount chiefs of the Gola area, and a plan is being developed to involve wider communities.
- Conservation International, with support from ArcelorMittal, is developing a feasibility analysis for financing mechanisms for protected areas and community development.
- CI is developing a protected area business plan on the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR) and at least 5 communities located adjacent to the protected area.
- Nine communities in East Nimba were selected for implementation of Conservation Agreements (five under CEPF funding in the short term); workshop training took place in Monrovia, and experimentation took place with a community in Buchanan (Oct-Dec 2011).

- Negotiations and preparation of an agreement for a long-term sustainable financing mechanism or trust fund have been under preparation, and funds should be secured from ArcelorMittal in January 2012.

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 during 2011:

- Tiwai Island received a grant from the National Tourism Board of Sierra Leone to improve its facilities and expand eco-lodges.
- EFA has engaged with University of Durrel (UK) and Rennes (FR) to make Tiwai a field research center for these two renowned ecology and primatology labs.
- Discussions are underway between Gola Forest National Park authorities and other partners to finalise plans for an ecotourism circuit that will include Gola Forest, Tiwai Island, Kambui Hills and Outamba-Kilimi National Park.
- EFA secured funds from FoSEd for development of economic activities, and funds from the EC for renewable energy, that will benefit 80 communities, including the Tiwai area.
- Local authorities have awarded the permit for construction of the Biodiversity Learning and Alternative Energy Center (BLAEC), which has received strong support from the conservation community, scientists and authorities. Plans have been finalized with support of Architects without Borders. The foundation has been completed, and framing is underway as of December 2011.



(plan of the BLAEC under construction)

- Tree nursery established for the BLAEC, and preparatory work for medicinal plant garden and herbarium completed, to serve for community training in the future.
- In Guinea, all of FFI's planned livelihood activities have been supported. CBOs are well established, legally registered, and have their governance structures approved. Sale of bush meat has decreased in Lola and surrounding communities, following empirical observation by local staff and partners.
- FFI has received additional funding from the European Commission to support scaling-up of livelihood activities with communities in Guinea (\$500,000)
- FFI has produced reports on livelihood activities and potential livelihood options (including report on medicinal plants potential) for Sapo, Liberia.

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

The main grant under this investment priority was to Birdlife International, whose project was completed in August 2011. The final report was approved by the CEPF Secretariat in September 2011 and is available on the CEPF website.

Collaboration with CEPF Donors

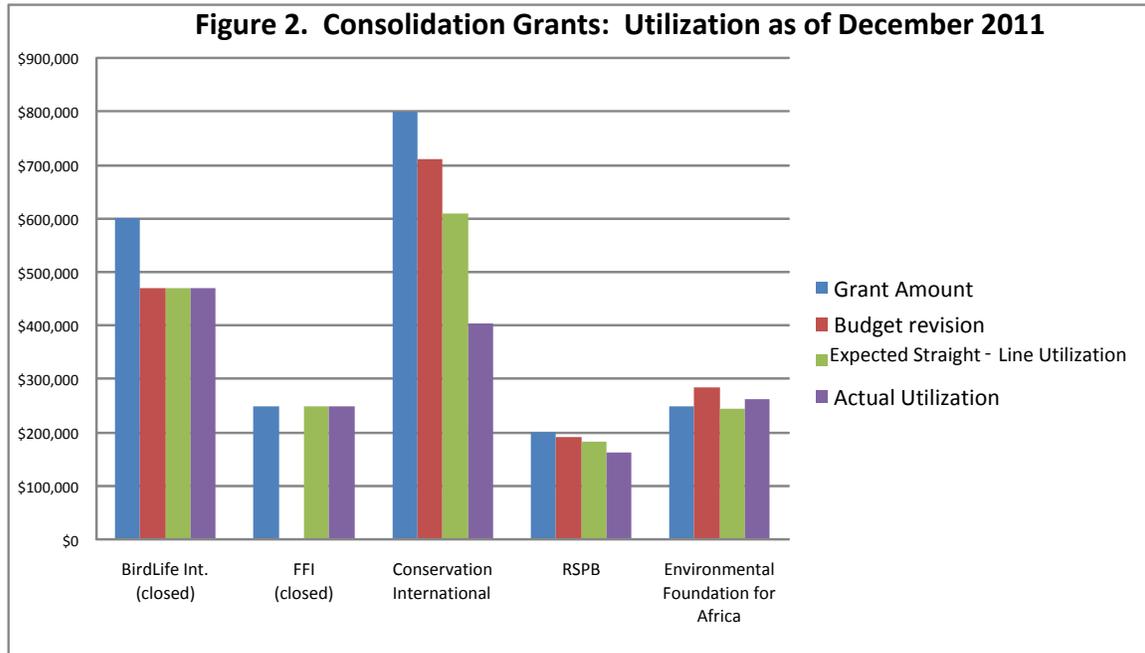
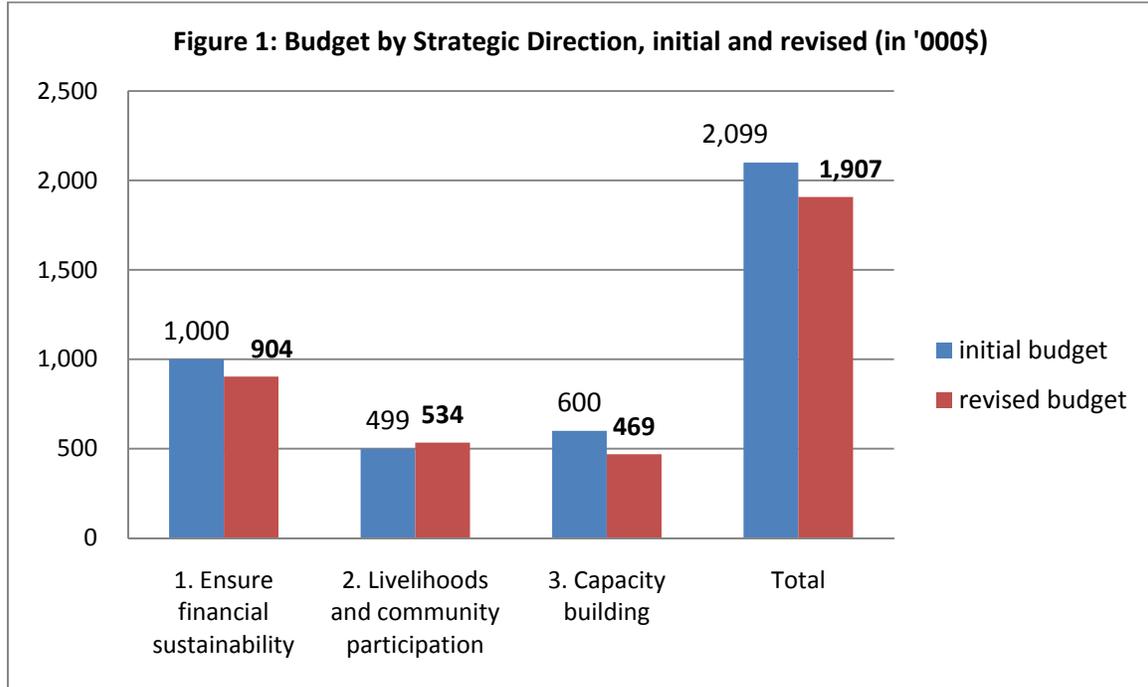
By their nature, the five consolidation grants are far-reaching, long-term and programmatic, meaning the efforts that CEPF supports overlap with other donors. This is intentional. Thus, CEPF grantees leverage funds from the World Bank, GEF, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USAID, European Commission and 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 extended 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 is working 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.

Annex 1: Tables and figures



Note: Under-utilization of funds for the Conservation international grant is due to the fact that the grant was suspended while being reviewed, between September 2010 and August, 2011.

Annex 2: Logical Framework Reporting for CEPF Investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa

Objective	Targets	Progress
<p>Reinforce and sustain the conservation gains achieved as a result of previous CEPF investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Five grants awarded. Two projects completed in 2011.</p>
	<p>190,000 hectares of key biodiversity areas with strengthened protection and management.</p>	<p>Secured: more than 420,000 ha</p> <p>Guinea: FFI improved management in 145,200 ha Sierra Leone: EFA improves management in Tiwai (1,200 ha) + buffer zones. Sierra Leone: Gola National Park declared officially the 3rd of December 2011 from amalgamation of several forest reserves (71,070 ha) Liberia: CI is laying the foundation for 5 conservation stewardship agreements in/around Nimba and is preparing a business plan for East Nimba Forest Reserve Birdlife supported capacity building activities for PA managers, influencing over 284,328 ha of protected areas in five countries (95,000 also covered by other CEPF consolidation grants).</p> <p><i>Final reports expected to aggregate figures</i></p>
	<p>1,200 hectares in production landscapes managed for biodiversity conservation or sustainable use.</p>	<p>FFI work in the transition and buffer zones of Nimba Biosphere Reserve has resulted in improved management in 123,400 ha.</p>
	<p>Two stakeholder networks strengthened to support long-term conservation action by replicating and scaling up CEPF successes.</p>	<p>Three networks being strengthened: protected-area managers (BirdLife); livelihoods (EFA and FFI); environmental services and finance (Conservation International).</p>

	<p>\$1.8 million leveraged.</p>	<p>A total of \$2,100,000 secured. By the end of 2011 the figure will exceed \$2,441,000, not including some in-kind contributions and non-secured pledges. Most contributions are from public donors, but \$636,000+ is from the private sector.</p> <p>Guinea: FFI leveraged \$575,000 for expansion of activities (EC grant), and FFEM co-funded some components of FFI's project in Sapo (Liberia) for \$301,668; while USAID contributed \$40,000.</p> <p>EFA leveraged \$50,000 from the EC, with additional pledges received from several other donors. In-kind collaboration with <i>Architects without Borders</i>.</p> <p>CI secured \$636,000+ through a collaborative agreement with ArcelorMittal, and is working to secure additional co-funding.</p> <p>RSPB secured \$485,000 (EC, Co-op Bank UK) and is working on additional support.</p> <p>Birdlife secured \$354,000 plus some in-kind contributions at the beginning of the project (EC, BL-Netherlands) .</p>
--	---------------------------------	--

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Progress
<p>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.)</p> <p>\$903,717</p>	<p>Two conservation investment mechanisms including national protected-area trusts and loan mechanisms operational.</p>	<p>One analysis for protected area and local community conservation on-going in Liberia, with support from private sector (AML). Integrated landscape plan for Nimba developed in collaboration with all stakeholders in preparation</p> <p>RSPB working on a carbon fund for Gola (on-going)</p>
	<p>One REDD project operational.</p>	<p>Underway in Liberia: participation of CI to REDD working group meeting for Forest Carbon Partnership Fund grant.</p> <p>Underway in Sierra Leone, large momentum from all stakeholders and support from President secured. Study for design undergoing.</p>
	<p>One pilot incentive mechanism implemented, one biodiversity offset utilized, and one carbon project design document developed.</p>	<p>Pilot program underway in Lake Piso and Wonegizi in Liberia.</p>
	<p>Elmina+10 conference planned and implemented.</p>	<p>This target has been removed from CI's proposal.</p>
	<p>Two land use agreements executed with communities for community forest carbon projects.</p>	<p>In Sierra Leone, Paramount chiefs around Gola signed Memorandum for participation of communities in carbon projects, and a participatory plan is under development.</p> <p>In Liberia, the objective has moved toward land use agreements under Conservation Stewardship model. Six plans are under preparation in Nimba; one plan prepared in Buchanan.</p>
	<p>Laws and procedures for carbon management reviewed and proposed in Sierra Leone.</p>	<p>Development of technical requirements for PDDs for the VCS and CCBA underway.</p>
	<p>100 percent of direct stakeholders have improved capacity to access carbon income.</p>	<p>All Communities in Gola informed and participate in carbon projects. .</p>

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Progress
<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>\$434,392</p>	<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.</p>	<p>Facilities have been upgraded, strategy completed, revenue increased (modestly) for the communities.</p>
	<p>100 percent of targeted communities and staff on Tiwai Island involved in sustainable use projects demonstrating tangible socioeconomic benefits.</p>	<p>EFA is working with local community members to ensure ownership and participation.</p>
	<p>Biodiversity Learning and Alternative Energy Center established in Freetown.</p>	<p>Building authorization secured, construction underway.</p>
	<p>Stakeholders from initial CEPF grants, plus additional networks, enabled to share lessons and address challenges to livelihoods and conservation.</p>	<p>Done – and continuing.</p>
	<p>Alternative livelihoods promoted as an alternative to hunting for, and trade in, bushmeat in Nimba Mountain (Guinea) and Sapo National Park (Liberia).</p>	<p>FFI project completed satisfactorily; six communities have seen livelihood improvement. Alternative livelihood projects in Nimba region expanding with support from other donors, and self-expanding in the case of piggeries.</p>
<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>\$469,099</p>	<p>50 conservationists, including protected area managers, trained.</p>	<p>80 protected-area managers and conservation professionals trained to date from Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.</p>
	<p>Six protected-area workshops and 10 training courses executed, and one in-service training program instituted.</p>	<p>One regional and five national workshops completed in Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. Eight national trainings on biodiversity identification and surveys organized.</p>
	<p>National networks established in two countries.</p>	<p>Attempts to create networks have been made. No functional networks can be attributed to any project.</p>
	<p>Five individuals supported to obtain advanced degrees focusing on emerging conservation opportunities.</p>	<p>Five students supported (2 PhD, 3 MSc) in four countries. Three completed degrees. University shut-down in Cote d'Ivoire prevented two students from completing their studies.</p>

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Progress
	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).	14 Site support groups have been organized or supported (three in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone, two in Liberia) with various levels of engagement and small grant support. The enhancement of capacities has been difficult to measure.