

Annual Portfolio Overview: Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

March 2011

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 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

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 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. 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 EFA, RSPB 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. At present the project is progressing at a good pace.

The Birdlife grant, focused on capacity-building for PA managers in five countries, experienced several difficulties, partly due to political situations in some countries, and partly to organizational problems with management of sub-grantees. Following site visit in June 2010 by

grant director Dan Rothberg, CEPF and BirdLife have decided to review the grant, downscale the objectives, and reduce some activities as well as the corresponding budget.

The CI grant started in June 2009, six months later than the other grants in the portfolio due to the need for additional review by the CEPF Technical Working Group and subsequent responses to their questions. Then, during the first year of project implementation, CI-Liberia faced the challenges of staff transitions, the closing of CI-Ghana (which provided operational support to CI-Liberia), and the fact that CI, itself, was revising its organizational mission. Further, the designers of the project were perhaps overly optimistic about the buy-in they would receive from the Government of Liberia and other partners in the region. When the Grant Director visited in June 2010, the CI-Liberia team agreed that the breadth of project components and the number of products/deliverables was no longer realistic. Therefore the CEPF Secretariat asked CI-Liberia to propose an amendment to their grant, focusing on Liberia-based activities, particularly those demonstrating CI's "Green Economies" concept and ensuring consolidation of CEPF efforts from the first five years of implementation in the country. The grant was informally suspended for the second half of 2010 while the CI's U.S. and Liberia-based staff developed a new project that took advantage of leveraged funds from a mining company, ArcelorMittal. As of early 2011, CI and the CEPF Secretariat were still negotiating to ensure a sound project design and spending on the grant remained on hold.

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. In this context, it is important to note that the main part of the objectives of the programme has been or is in the process of being achieved (see the logframe presented at the end of this document).

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 to date:

- 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.
- To demonstrate the gains that could be made in Liberia by implementing policy options to reduce deforestation, CI 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.
- CI has worked continuously with the Government of Liberia on the preparation of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility – Readiness Preparatory Proposal (FCPF-RPP).
- CI has been working through the Office of the President to develop relationship with the Minister of Planning and several Deputy Ministers to raise awareness about the principles of green economies.

- RSPB organized an education and advocacy workshop in January 2010 to develop a framework for developing messages with contents that signify the importance of transboundary natural resources management initiatives and the roles and responsibilities for the different stakeholders from both sides of the border.
- The Community Mobilization Officers from Conservation Society of Sierra Leone participated in the first joint field excursion with the Research Technicians from Sierra Leone.
- SCNL in Liberia held a ground breaking ceremony at Jenemana Village in Grand Cape Mount County to officially launch the opening of a field office to oversee community consultation, advocacy and conservation education awareness programmes in the Gola Forests.
- RSPB hired Winrock International to work on the Carbon Project Design Document, and has provided the consultancy group with relevant data (including GIS). The consultancy is working with the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone and Forest Division and will finalize a document during the first semester of 2011.

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:

- EFA completed the construction of ecotourism facilities on Tiwai Island in Sierra Leone,
- Tiwai Island had 605 paying visitors, a number comparable to 2009 (642), and up from 414 in 2008 and 119 in 2007. Even if number of visitors is stabilizing, income generated for local communities continued to raise in 2010 from 8% compare with 2009. Local populations received regular training on Tiwai Island on weaving, gara tie-dying, bamboo crafts and furniture making. Training was also given for nature guides and for hospitality and catering.
- Every community around Tiwai has been allocated a plot for establishing vegetable garden, tree nursery and medicinal herbal garden, with the support of EFA staff – and the interest in those activities is increasing.
- Memorandum of understanding has been signed with local communities, leading to a significant decrease in illegal activities in and around the protected area, with only two cases documented in 2010.
- EFA started to work with Ministry of Tourism, National Tourist Board, Western Area Peninsula Forest Eco-tourism Team and a new UK-based charity (Atlantic Whale Foundation) to develop sustainable funding strategy. A consultant has been recruited to help EFA on this process.
- EFA leveraged \$50,000 from the EU-funded Conservation of the Western Area Peninsula Forest and Watershed project. EFA is working to secure several additional pledges.
- 5 ten-minutes film for awareness raising has been produced and begin to be distributed
- The site for the regional resource and eco-friendly technologies demonstration center has been chosen and plans designed. The construction is on-going and EFA has secured co-funding for completing this activity.

- 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.
- 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 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.
- FFI conducted an extensive study, both with hunters and sellers of bushmeat, to assess the importance of this trade and help develop alternatives that are culturally acceptable, economically feasible and sustainable.
- To provide an alternative to bushmeat in Nimba, FFI helped expand and maintain two cane rat husbandries, and developed other economic alternatives, such as pig-farming
- FFI and EFA held a joint seminar at Tiwai on alternative to illegal hunting and organized exchange sharing field visit between several communities
- FFI has designed a plan and secured additional funding for the expansion of women-driven initiatives to N'Zoo and as well as with the women pig farming initiative in Lola
- FFI secured a 410.000 Euros grant from the European commission for continuation and expansion of their activities in the Mount Nimba areas, in republic of Guinea.
- FFI has secured additional funding from WWF and Estelle Levine Inc. to study the biological, economic and social impacts of mining activities in the region
- A total of 14 local groups have benefitted from Birdlife support, such as increased collaboration with PA managers and PA monitoring leading to reduction in illegal activities.

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 established a Web site for protected-area managers in the Guinean Forest to share information.
- Birdlife supported 3 national organizations to develop their training needs assessment report for management and conservation
- Birdlife organized 4 national and 1 regional workshops, on emerging conservation initiatives with focus on carbon finance, REDD and Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG). 84 national representatives were trained.
- Eighty national benefitted from the training courses on biodiversity identification with a focus on birds, plants and mammals.
- The small grant programme supported 6 students in the region (Ghana: 1 PhD, 1 MSc; Cote d'Ivoire: 1 PhD, 1 MSc; Guinea and Sierra Leone: 1 MSc each), working on the link between

conservation and carbon storage, on the impact of climate change on forest reserves, on community forestry or on specific species (picathartes and amphibians)

- Information on the management of 15 protected areas is available in the METT's forms filled out by partners.

Collaboration with CEPF Donors

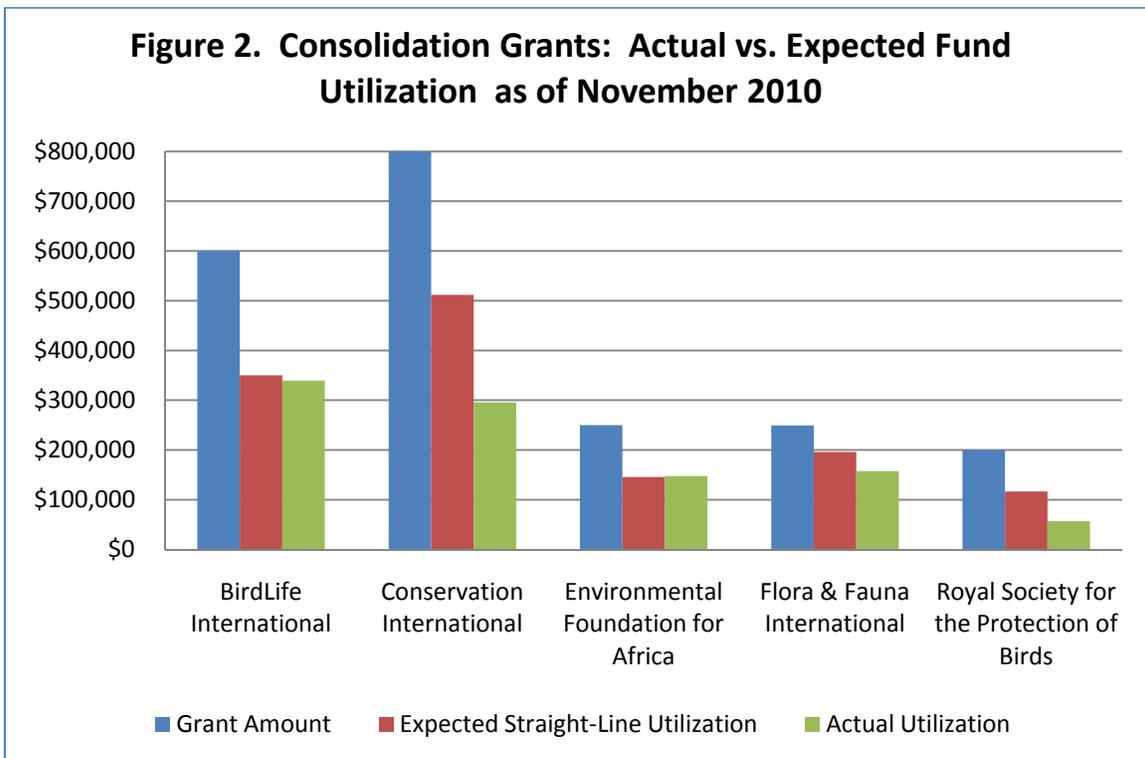
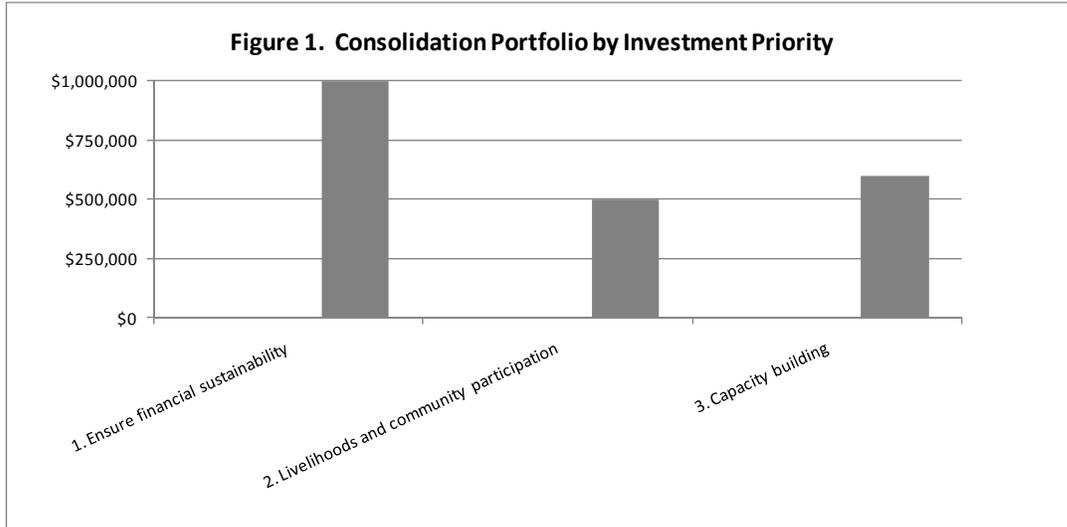
By their nature, the five consolidation grants are far-reaching, long-term and programmatic, meaning the efforts that CEPF supports overlap with other donors. This is intentional. Thus, CEPF grantees leverage funds from the World Bank, GEF, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USAID, European Commission (two of them in 2010) 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.	Secured leveraged Funds: \$1.804.000 In process: 750.000+ --- CI in the process of leveraging over \$650.000 FFI leveraged \$340.000 (FFEM, USAID) + 575.000 for expansion of activities in Guinea (EC) EFA leveraged \$50.000 (EC), pledges received from several other donors. In-kind collaboration with <i>architects without borders</i> . RSPB secured \$485.000 (EC, Co-op Bank UK) and is working on additional support. Birdlife secured \$354.000 plus some in-kinds at the beginning of the project (EC, BL-Netherlands)

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>\$999,930</p>	<p>Two conservation investment mechanisms including national protected-area trusts and loan mechanisms operational.</p>	<p>One national public area trust underway in Liberia. RSPB working on a carbon fund for Gola (on-going)</p>
	<p>One REDD project operational.</p>	<p>Underway in Liberia: REDD technical working group meeting.</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>No progress to date (to be reviewed)</p>
	<p>Two land use agreements executed with communities for community forest carbon projects.</p>	<p>No progress to date.</p>
	<p>Laws and procedures for carbon management reviewed and proposed in Sierra Leone.</p>	<p>No progress to date.</p>
	<p>100 percent of direct stakeholders have improved capacity to access carbon income.</p>	<p>No progress to date.</p>
<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>	<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>Inception scheduled for 2011. Site identified and secured. Plans realized.</p>

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Progress
	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. Exchange of experience held. Reduction in terms of reported illegal activities measured (2 cases in 2010)
	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. Two cane-rats husbandry in place, additional pig-farming activities in place in Nimba. Training completed for alternative activities with Tiwai communities.
<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.	80 protected-area managers and conservation professionals 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.	1 regional and 5 national workshops completed in Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. 8 national trainings on biodiversity identification and surveys organized.
	National networks established in two countries.	Underway in Ghana, Guinea and Liberia.
	Five individuals supported to obtain advanced degrees focusing on emerging conservation opportunities.	Six students supported (2 PhD, 4 MSc) in 4 countries. Completion of their degrees in 2011.
	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 (3 in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone, 2 in Liberia) with various level of engagement and small grant support. The enhancement of capacities is difficult to measure to date.