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Mid-Term Assessment July 2016 - October 2019

CEPF Investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

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Participants in the mid-term assessment of the CEPF investment for the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot, Monrovia, Liberia.

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INTRODUCTION

The Guinean Forests of West Africa (GFWA) Biodiversity Hotspot extends across the southern part of West Africa and into Central Africa north of the Congo Wilderness Area (as in Figure 1). The hotspot covers 621,705 km² and can be divided into two subregions. The first subregion, referred to as the 'Upper Guinean Forests', stretches from Guinea in the west, through Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and, marginally, into Benin. The second subregion, the 'Lower Guinean Forests', covers much of southern Nigeria, extends into southwestern Cameroon, and also includes São Tomé and Príncipe and the offshore islands of Equatorial Guinea.



Figure 1 – Boundaries of the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot

The Guinean Forests support impressive levels of biodiversity, having high levels of species richness and endemism. Approximately 9,000 species of vascular plant are believed to occur in the hotspot, including 1,800 endemic species. The hotspot also supports an exceptional diversity of other terrestrial species. There are 416 mammal (representing nearly a quarter of the mammals native to continental Africa), 917 bird, 107 reptile and 269 amphibian species within the hotspot boundary, of which 65 mammals, 48 birds, 20 reptiles and 118 amphibians are thought to be endemic to the hotspot. The hotspot is among the world's top priorities for primate conservation, with five Critically Endangered and 21 Endangered species.

In addition to its biological richness, a number of ongoing threats to biodiversity in the hotspot have resulted in the loss of more than 85 percent of the native vegetation cover. These include agricultural expansion to provide for the needs of an expanding population in rural and urban areas, unsustainable logging and fishing, hunting and trade of bushmeat, industrial and artisanal mining, industrial development, climate change and pollution, among numerous others. Many of the threats to biodiversity occurring in the region are

linked, either directly or indirectly, to a high incidence of poverty, political instability and/or civil conflict.

This report aims to assess progress towards the goals set out in the ecosystem profile (which outlines CEPF's investment strategy through "Strategic Directions"), evaluate gaps on the CEPF grant portfolio and set priorities for the remainder of the 5-year investment period. It draws on experience, lessons learned, and project reports generated by civil society organizations implementing CEPF grants. In addition, it incorporates the findings of the mid-term assessment workshops, held in Monrovia, Liberia, on the 28th to 31st October 2019. The workshops were attended by over 50 representatives of CEPF grantees, CEPF's donor partners, private sector and international civil society.

I. CEPF Niche

1. Overview

The CEPF investment niche in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot is to provide Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) at grassroots, national and international levels with the tools, capacity and resources to establish and sustain multi-stakeholder partnerships that demonstrate models for sustainable, pro-poor growth and achieve priority conservation outcomes in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot. The resulting investment strategy includes actions appropriate for civil society to lead at local, national and regional levels, as summarily presented on Table 1. At the local level, the focus is on demonstrating practical solutions to conservation and development threats and problems that have the potential for wider replication. At the national level, the focus is on empowering civil society to influence conservation policies and private sector business practices in ways that positively affect biodiversity conservation, through partnerships and dialogue.

To ensure that CEPF investments are not spread too thinly, and are thus able to deliver significant, sustained impacts, it was necessary to select a set of priority sites, from among the full list of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in the hotspot, to receive targeted investment. A list of 40 sites was prioritized for the implementation of Strategic Direction 1, aiming to engage local actors in conservation action (the prioritization exercise and list of sites, as well of all the participatory process, is described in the Ecosystem Profile). These priorities allow investments by CEPF to focus on sites of high global biodiversity value that present good opportunities to engage civil society in conservation, without duplicating investments by national governments or international donors.

Since some priority KBAs and conservation corridors are transboundary in nature, for the investment at the landscape scale were defined as a set of 9 'conservation corridors', providing for conservation actions related to development and land-use planning and policy. To balance the exigencies of development and the need to conserve biodiversity, Strategic Direction 2 focus on the need to mainstream biodiversity conservation into government development policies, legislation and regulatory frameworks, as well as the business practices of private sector companies (focusing on the sectors of agriculture, forestry and mining).

Strategic Direction 3 funds actions taken for the most highly threatened species across the hotspot, and guided by available species conservation action plans, and in parallel, support

analysis of newly available data, complemented by targeted research to fill critical gaps. The KBA analysis and consultations with partners have shown that much remains to be understood regarding biodiversity in the Guinean Forests Hotspot. IUCN Red List assessments are lacking for many species, with plants, butterflies and reptiles (particularly in parts of the Lower Guinean Forests subregion), but also freshwater species, notably incomplete. The conservation needs of many globally threatened species would be adequately addressed through habitat protection and controls on unsustainable exploitation at the KBAs where they occur; this calls for site-based conservation actions.

In addition, there is a strong focus on capacity building that runs through the investment strategy and across the hotspot, which aims at enabling local CSOs to play an increasingly important role in conceiving, implementing and monitoring conservation projects. Strategic Direction 4 aims to promote capacity building activities which will be closely coordinated with the overall development of the grant portfolio, with the RIT playing the key coordinating role. Grants should be awarded to a mixture of CSOs in need of capacity building and local and international service providers, able to provide training, mentoring and/or networking for groups of CSOs with common capacity needs.

Table 1: CEPF Strategic Directions and Investment Priorities in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

Strategic Directions	Investment Priorities
1. Empower local communities to engage in sustainable management of 40 priority sites and consolidate ecological connectivity at the landscape scale	1.1 Strengthen the elaboration and/or implementation of land-use planning, land tenure and forestry reforms to facilitate good governance in the management of community and private reserves and concessions
	1.2 Promote preparation and implementation of participatory management plans that support stakeholder collaboration in protected area management
	1.3 Demonstrate sustainable livelihood/job creation activities for local communities that will act as incentives for the conservation of priority sites (e.g. domestication of wildlife species, sustainable logging from locally controlled forests, harvesting of NTFPs, sustainable agriculture, etc.)
2. Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice in the nine conservation corridors, at local, sub-national and national levels	2.1 Conduct policy-relevant research, analysis and outreach that informs and influences the development of national government conservation policies, including on protected area management, payment for ecosystem services, REDD+ and ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change
	2.2 Generate locally-relevant information on natural ecosystems (e.g., economic valuations of ecosystem services) to influence political and economic decision-making in favour of their conservation
	2.3 Facilitate partnerships among local communities, private sector and government to demonstrate models for best practice mining, sustainable forestry and sustainable agriculture by private companies
3. Safeguard priority globally threatened species by identifying and addressing major threats and information gaps	3.1 Support the implementation of Conservation Action Plans for Critically Endangered and Endangered species on the IUCN Red List
	3.2 Update the KBA analysis by incorporating recently available data, including on Alliance for Zero Extinction sites and global Red List assessments and by conducting targeted research to fill critical knowledge gaps

4. Build the capacity of local civil society organizations, including Indigenous people's, women's and youth groups, to conserve and manage globally important biodiversity	4.1 Strengthen the capacity of local civil society organizations in financial, institutional and project management, organizational governance, and fundraising
	4.2 Establish and strengthen women-led conservation and development organizations, associations and networks to foster gender equality in natural resource management and benefit sharing
	4.3 Strengthen the communication capacity of local civil society organizations in support of their mission and to build public awareness on the importance of conservation outcomes
5. Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of conservation investment through a regional implementation team	5.1 Operationalize and coordinate CEPF's grant-making processes and procedures to ensure effective implementation of the investment strategy throughout the hotspot
	5.2 Build a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries to achieve common conservation objectives

The implementation of the CEPF investment strategy started in July 2016 with the contracting of the funds of Strategic Direction (SD) 5 to Birdlife International, to act as the regional implementation team (RIT) and to coordinate a small grants (under US\$ 50,000.00) mechanism with a dedicated US\$ 1M budget. The total investment was initially of US\$ 9M from July 2016 to June 2021, but was topped up with funds from the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) in 2018 to reach a total of US\$ 10.1M. These added funds were distributed through the Strategic Directions as described below, informed by a gaps and strengths analysis conducted between CEPF and the RIT:

Spending authority: raised from US\$9,000,000 to US\$10,117,900
Investment period: increased from July 2016-June 2021 to July 2016-June 2022
Budget SD1: unchanged at US\$3M
Budget SD2: unchanged at US\$2M
Budget SD3: increased from US\$1.2M to US\$1,535,370
Budget SD4: increased from US\$1.3M to US\$1,747,160
Budget SD5: increased from US\$1.5M to US\$1,835,370

2. Coordinating CEPF Grant-Making

BirdLife International as the implementing partner has set up a dedicated regional implementation team (RIT) in the BirdLife West Africa Sub-Regional Office (WASRO) in Accra, Ghana to operate under the supervision of BirdLife Secretariat structures (with technical and management support from Nairobi and Cambridge). The RIT has undertaken several changes from the beginning of the implementation, as described in the table below:

Table 2: Setup of the Regional Implementation Team in 2016 and Changes Made until October 2019

Position	Changes
Head, BirdLife International West Africa (overall RIT supervision)	No changes
Team Leader	Left in April 2018, replaced by SRPO Gulf of Guinea Islands
Small Grant Manager	Left in January 2018, replaced by SRPO Nigeria
Senior Communication Officer	Left in October 2018, no replacement
RIT Sub-regional Project Officer Gulf of Guinea Islands	Accumulates positions since May 2018
RIT Sub-regional Project Officer Nigeria	Accumulates positions since May 2018
RIT Sub-regional Project Officer Upper Guinea	Left in August 2019, replacement in progress
Finance Officer	No changes

The team setup as for October 2019 is as described in Table 3.

Table 3: Setup of the Regional Implementation Team as for October 2019

Position	% of time RIT	Locations and responsibilities
Team Leader and Sub-regional Project Officer	100%	Cambridge, UK. Day to day management of the team and the workplan. Country Coordination for Sao Tome et Principe, Guinea and Equatorial Guinea
Small Grant Manager and Sub-regional Project Officer	100%	Accra, Ghana. Management of Small Grants processes and Country Coordination for Nigeria
Sub-regional Project Officer	100%	Accra, Ghana. Country Coordination for Cameroon, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and support to Monitoring and Evaluation of the investment
Finance Officer	100%	Accra, Ghana. Admin and finance issues
Head - BirdLife International WASRO	20%	Dakar, Senegal. Team Supervision and oversight
Finance support	10%	Accra, Ghana. Admin and finance supervision and overview

At the time of the Assessment, a new Sub Regional Project Officer for the Upper Guinean countries was in process of being recruited. In addition, the ECOFAC program (see section II-1 below) was recruiting a part time Sub Regional Project Officer to support the RIT in São Tomé and Príncipe.

The role of the RIT is overarched by Strategic Direction 5 as a means of supporting the delivery of the full suite of SDs for this granting period in the hotspot. The RIT operationalizes and co-ordinate CEPF’s grant-making processes and procedures whilst building a broad constituency of civil society groups working across international and political boundaries – all towards achieving the shared conservation goals described in the Ecosystem Profile. To deliver on these general objectives, the RIT work plan is structured in 9 components and summarily presented in Figure 2.

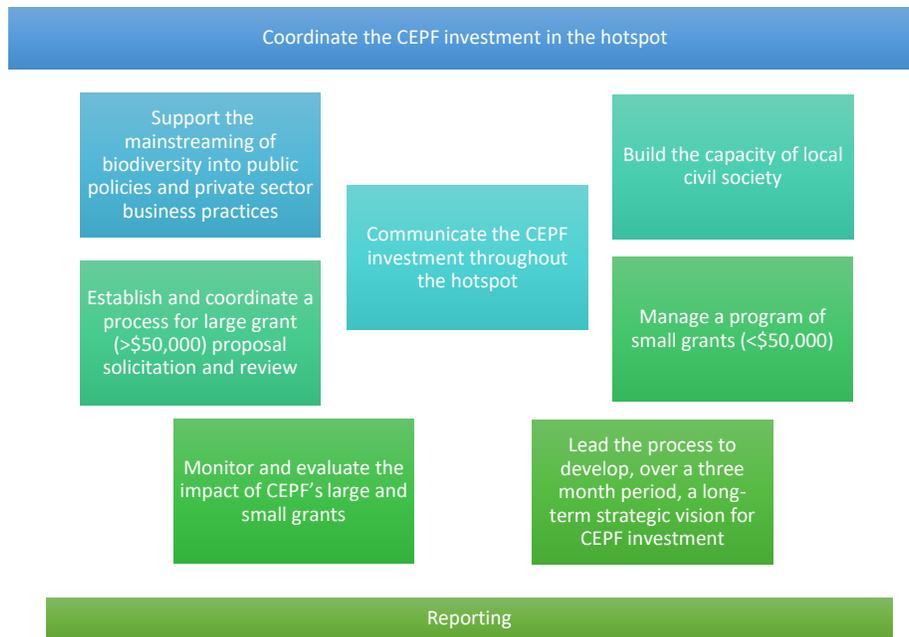


Figure 2: The GFWA Regional Implementation Team’s Work Components

II. Implementing the Strategy

1. Collaboration with CEPF’s Donors and Other Funders

Collaboration beyond the CEPF investment has been a priority for the RIT and Secretariat since its inception, and the following points should be highlighted:

- **Stakeholders and donor-roundtable meeting**

In January 2017, the CEPF and the RIT promoted a 2-day stakeholders and donor-roundtable meeting addressing financing, managing and implementing biodiversity conservation programs in the GFWA Hotspot and the wider West Africa region. The meeting was, attended by representatives of key donors and their executing agencies, private sector and civil society actors, currently supporting and / or implementing biodiversity conservation programmes in the region. The discussions were guided by the following key objectives:

1. Sourcing of the relevant information from key stakeholders to enable ‘mapping’ of the various donors and other actors, financing / supporting biodiversity conservation work in the region, to determine their thematic and geographic areas of focus.
2. Discuss and agree on some practical steps for coordination among stakeholders, to guide on how to use the ‘map’ for more effective and efficient grant-making.
3. Identify the main challenges / obstacles to building / strengthening and / or sustaining the institutional and operational capacities of civil society organisations working in the regions.
4. Discuss and prioritise practical steps for addressing the identified capacity needs, including agreeing on the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders to this end.

The meeting participants agreed in a set of practical and implementable actions / solutions to the challenges / problems identified in four key areas: Human Resources; Private Sector; Capacity to Influence Public Policy; Coordination among Stakeholders. This meeting also paved the way for the emergence of an alliance around the Programme des Petites Initiatives (PPI).

- ***Alliance with PPI, FFEM, IUCN Fr, IUCN PACO, IUCN-NL and MAVA Foundation***

Since 2017, close cooperation and project co-funding have been in place with the PPI in light of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by CEPF with the PPI (consisting of the Agence Française de Développement, acting in the framework of the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM), the French Committee of IUCN (IUCN-Fr), and the Program for Central and West Africa of IUCN (IUCN PACO) and two other donors acting in the region that focus on capacity building of civil society being the MAVA Foundation and IUCN Netherlands (IUCN-NL).

There is a geographic and thematic overlap among CEPF and PPI, which resulted in the co-funding of three projects so far; in advice and review support from the PPI team for the CEPF capacity development implementation; and external review support from CEPF to applications received by PPI.

The CEPF Grant Director participated in a 2017 partners' meeting which was an opportunity to discuss about NGO Organizational Development approaches and how to best accompany smaller organizations. The RIT Team Leader also participated with the PPI team, in 2018 in a workshop on good governance promoted by the MAVA Foundation. The MAVA Foundation also provided advice and external review support for the development of CEPF's strategy to implement its capacity building approach under SD4.

- ***Program ECOFAC in Sao Tome and Principe, Birdlife International***

BirdLife International has secured in 2018 an ECOFAC (EU) grant to support the management of the Natural Parks of Sao Tome and Principe. Since the inception of this program, the coordination between the two investments has been promoted and ensured. All CEPF funded projects are contributing towards the current and upcoming implementation of the ECOFAC program, in particular for underfunded priorities like the revision of mangrove management plans, the increase knowledge, protection and education on threatened and endemic species, and the investigation of potential sustainable financing mechanisms from forest resources.

This close collaboration reached a milestone with the ECOFAC program about to fund, with additional resources from UNDP-GEF, the position of a part time RIT focal point in Sao Tome until the end of the CEPF investment. This person will support close monitoring of projects and ensure coordination among local stakeholders. He/she will take over part of the responsibilities of the current RIT's Sub-Regional Project Officer for the islands.

- ***Other contacts and collaborations***

Portfolio and other relevant updates have been communicated regularly to the GEF focal points across the region. The team has also been engaging with AFD local representatives whenever possible, including visits/meetings during country missions in Ghana and Liberia.

2. Portfolio Status

At the time of the Mid Term Assessment (October 2019), the portfolio of the GFWA, excluding the grant under SD5 for the RIT, comprised 42 contracted grants (25 small grants, under US\$ 50,000.00; and 17 large grants, over US\$ 50,000.00), for a total committed amount of US\$ 4,732,522.46 as described in table 4 below.

Table 4: Grant-Making Status by Strategic Direction, October 2019

Strategic Direction		Budget Allocation	Contracted Grants			% Contracted
			Total Amount	No. Large Grants	No. Small grants	
SD1	Engaging communities	\$3,000,000.00	\$ 1,887,811.94	6	10	63%
SD2	Mainstreaming biodiversity	\$2,000,000.00	\$ 776,574.52	4	2	39%
SD3	Species and KBAs	\$1,535,370.00	\$ 1,938,715.00	7	9	126%
SD4	CSO capacity development	\$1,747,160.00	\$ 129,421.00	0	4	7%
SD5	Regional Implementation Team	\$1,830,000.00	\$1,715,000.00	1	0	94%
Total		\$10,112,530.00	\$5,541,526.94	18	25	66%

The first calls for proposals overlapped with the start of the implementation of the RIT in the hotspot, with the team and CEPF having to get traction throughout the first two years and being considerably more comfortable with the granting process in 2018/19. During the first two years of the investment, four calls for proposals (two for large and two for small grants), were open for all the countries in the hotspot (Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea only became eligible on the second round), and most Strategic Directions. This approach returned a large number of Letters of Inquiry (LOIs) being submitted (first call, 63 LOIs submitted for small grants, 37 for large grants; second call, 145 LOIs for small grants and 148 for large grants), but it allowed civil society to access all the strategic directions and the RIT/CEPF to analyze the landscape as for the distribution of active CSOs and main working lines. 11.45% of the LOIs submitted were funded by CEPF grants. It also resulted in the commitment of about 57% of the overall amount of the allocated investment (large plus small grants), and 83% of the small grants allocation.

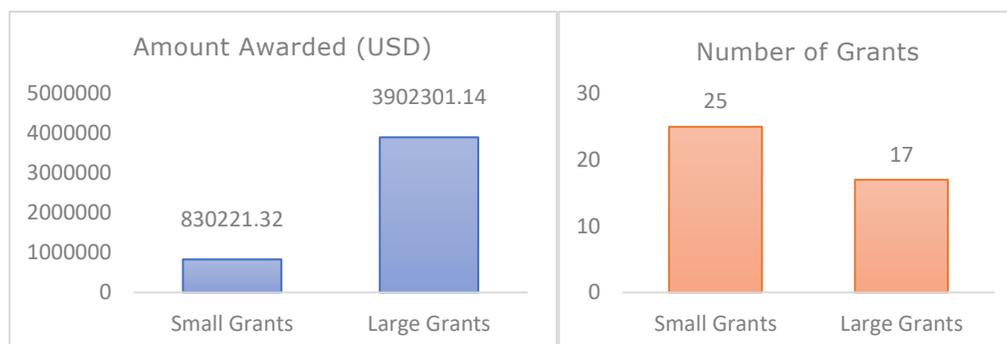


Figure 3: CEPF Granting Scenario in October 2019 with Total Committed Amounts and Number of Grants Awarded, per Type of Grant

The grants awarded cover 9 of the 11 countries of the hotspot and are generally well spread across the hotspot eligible areas (Figure 4).

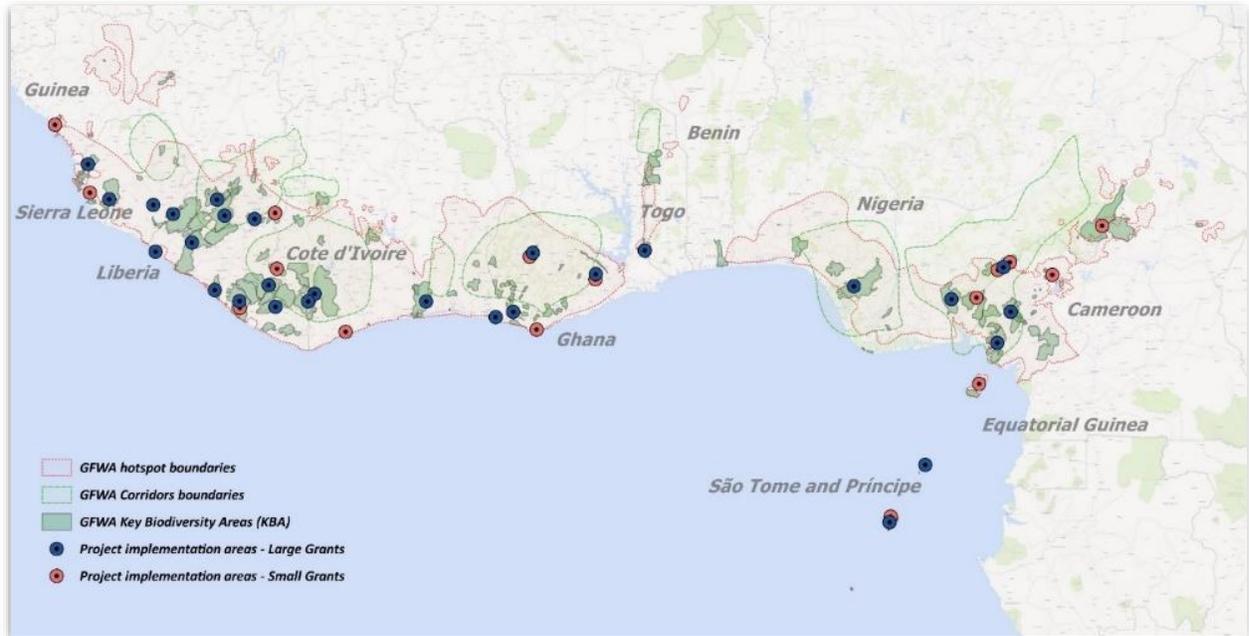


Figure 4: Geographic Distribution of the GFWA CEPF Funded Projects, October 2019

As expected, most of the small grants (SG) were attributed to local CSOs and only a smaller fraction to international ones (Figure 4). On the contrary, more than double of the funds for large grants (LG) have been attributed to international NGOs - these mainly include multi-country grants.

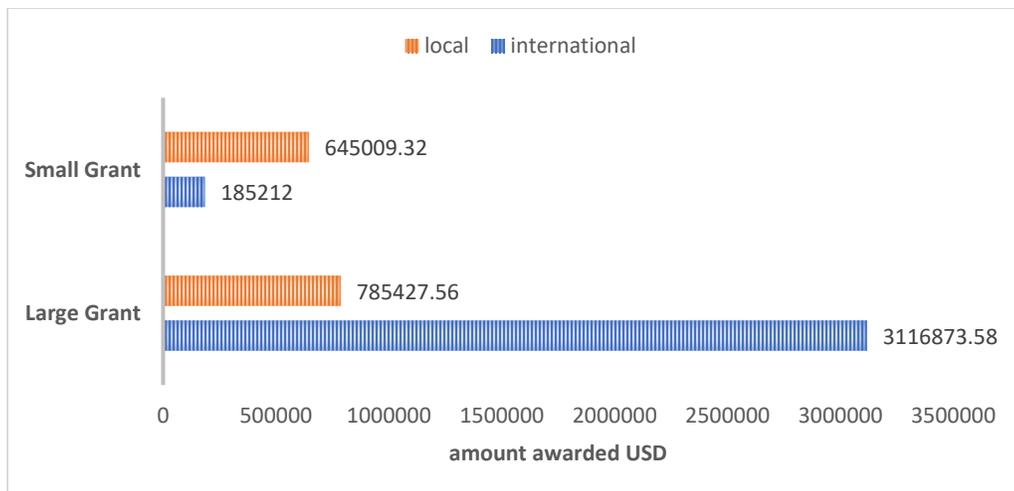


Figure 5: Grant-Making by Type of Grant and of Organization

There is a reasonable balance in the distribution of country specific grants between local and international NGOs (Figure 6). An exception is made for Sao Tome and Principe, where all the grants were awarded to international NGOs (including several large grants), an

indication of the low local capacity combined with an internationally-dominated context. This imbalance was considered for the implementation of SD4, aiming to upscale work with local NGOs and build their capacities. On the other hand, Ghana and Cameroon are fully represented by local CSOs, suggesting a greater organization of civil society and/or stronger national engagement.

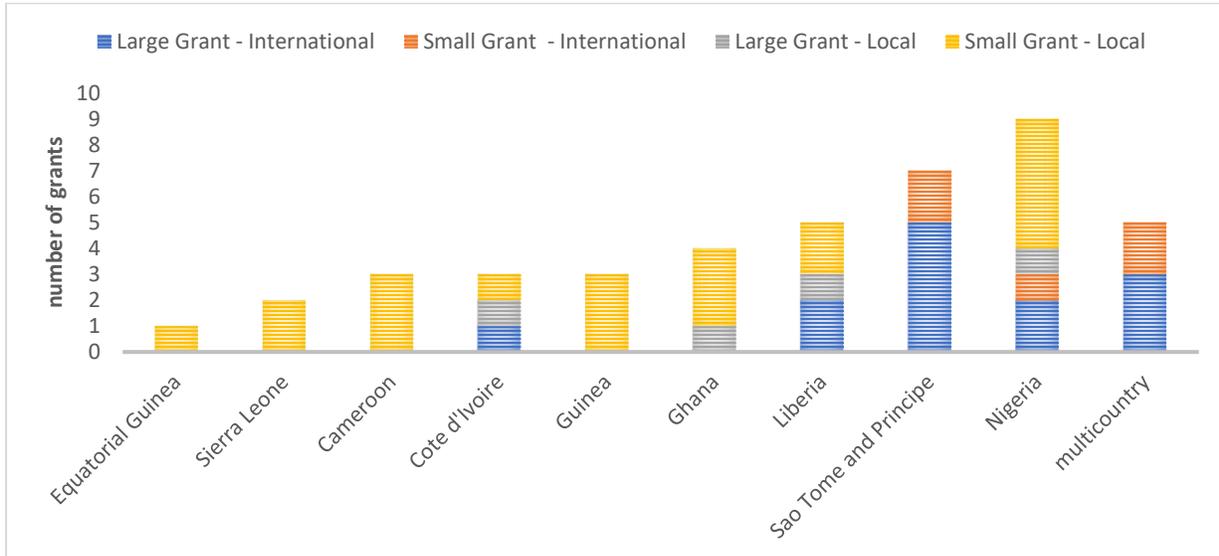


Figure 6: Grant-Making by Country and Type of Organization

Nigeria and Sao Tome and Principe are the two countries with the most grants and largest amount awarded. These two countries were not included in the previous CEPF phase of investment in the region (focusing on Upper Guinean Forests, between 2001 and 2012, including a consolidation phase, and a total investment of US\$ 8.3M) and the receptivity was very high, with a lot of LOIs being submitted and a large number of stakeholders engaged.

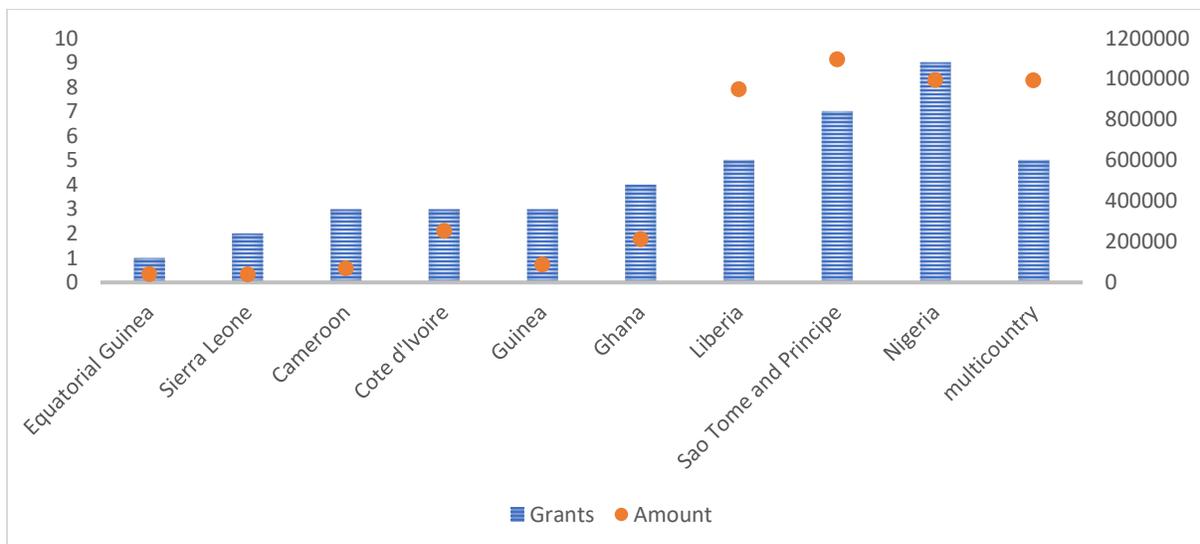


Figure 7: Grant Allocation per Country, Referring to Total Amount and Number of Grants

Five multi-country grants were awarded by October 2019, including grants to address key species' information gaps. These grants represent 21.6% of the total awarded. Four more large grants with a predicted amount of US\$ 1 million were in the pipeline to contribute to capacity development across the hotspot, making these grants comprise the largest share of the investment.

Some countries are underrepresented, namely Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea, and to a lesser extent Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Despite a considerable number of priority KBAs in these countries and the RIT's efforts to engage local stakeholders there, the number and quality of the LOIs submitted was on average lower than for the majority of the other countries. Togo and Benin are not represented at all, with no grants awarded in these two countries, mostly due to the reduced eligible area covering both Togo and Benin, and generally lower engagement of the RIT with local civil society.

Expenditure against the funding allocation per strategic direction varies and generally reflects the alignment of the CSOs' main current focus and expertise (Figure 8). These observations are important to adaptively adjust the CEPF and RIT's work plan in light of gaps and priorities identified.

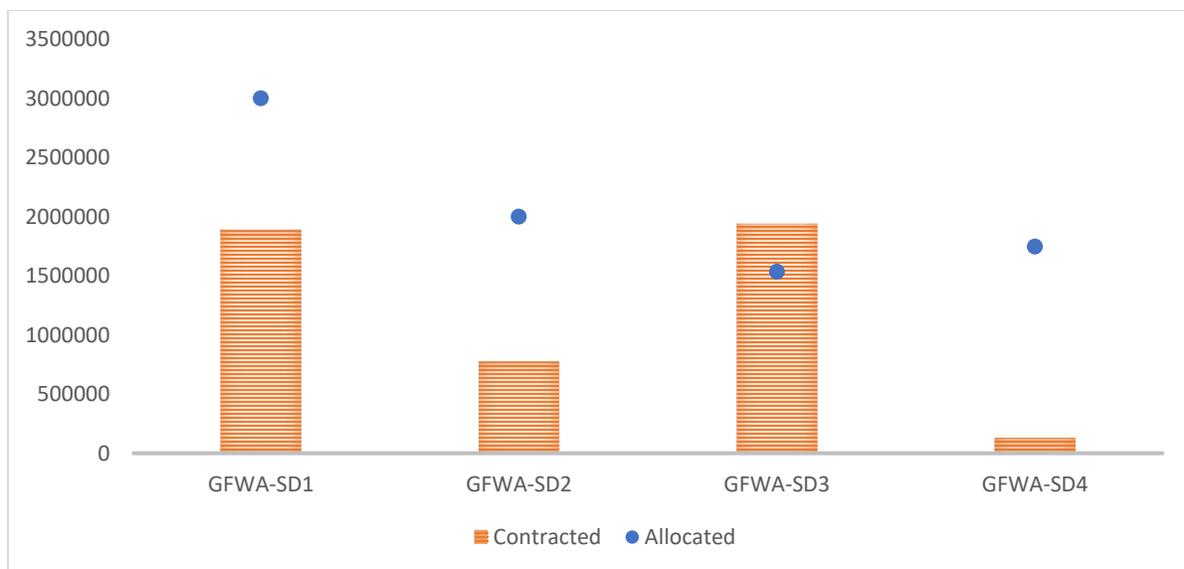


Figure 8: Grant Allocation (US\$) per Strategic Direction Compared with Funding Allocations in the Ecosystem Profile

Strategic Directions 1 and 3 were the ones demonstrating better engagement and stronger proposals across the hotspot.

With 63% of the allocation committed under SD1 by October 2019, and a fair amount of LOIs and proposals submitted, this suggests a strong engagement of CSOs with communities in priority areas. At the time of the mid-term assessment, one other Large Grant of circa US\$ 230,000 was on the pipeline for Cameroon to cover for this important geographical gap. To promote the contracting of the remaining allocation under SD1 until the end of the investment, one targeted call or a combination of a targeted call and grants by invitation may be used.

For SD3, which focus on species data and data gaps, there was also a substantial number of good quality and important proposals, demonstrating the civil society interest and capacity for science-based conservation. The funding allocation was exceeded, but this was clearly justified by the relevance of the proposed projects to address essential information gaps and/or specific conservation actions.

As for gaps, two main ones were identified at the first half of the investment period. One relates to SD4, the strategic direction targeting capacity development across the hotspot. The proposals received in the first call for large grants were all rejected, as, despite reflecting a high interest from larger NGOs to lead on the implementation of capacity development activities, it was felt by the RIT and the Grant Director that these would need more coordination for the available funds to better cover the region and the priorities identified in the Ecosystem Profile. Also, LOIs were not reflecting lessons learned from the previous investment phase, which had highlighted that conventional once-off trainings had yielded low to no increase of capacities due to recurrent staff turnover and lack of hands-on practice. For that reason, the RIT and CEPF developed a strategy to implement SD4 to guide a mentorship scheme of a proportional number of CSOs (some pre-identified by demonstrating interest in the CEPF program) in each one of the hotspot countries.

A dedicated call for proposals under this SD, underlining the specific criteria and implementation lines, was launched at the end of 2018. Three mentors covering seven countries were pre-selected and proposals being reviewed by the time of the Mid Term Assessment, for a project pipeline of circa US\$ 850,000. It is expected that these grants will be linked with specific calls for small grants to provide most mentees with the opportunity to implement their newly acquired skills and tools in the scope of the support provided by the mentors. There will still be a financial and geographical gap after the signature of these grants (mentors and mentees). The RIT and CEPF are working on the possibility for a Grant by Invitation to fill the gap in Cameroon, with a pipeline of US\$ 150,000.

The other identified gap relates to SD2, with fewer projects submitted, and the target indicators (and financial allocation) far from being reached during the first half of the program. It was observed that most of the civil society across the hotspot does not yet have the capacity and/or tools to engage with either (or both) the public and/or the private sector. This mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector practices is essential for both the RIT and the grantees' work to ensure the sustainability of the CEPF investment and conservation goals in the region. By analyzing the constraints and challenges during the first half of the investment and looking forward with a potential exit strategy in the future, the RIT with the Grant Director decided to focus on mainstreaming as a focal theme of the Mid Term Assessment, including a theory of change exercise and a training workshop with current grantees (report available under this [link](#)). This approach during the mid-term assessment was hoped to subsequently result in the development of an implementation strategy to guide the RIT's work on its role of supporting local civil society at the capacity development and granting levels, both from an immediate and long term perspectives. It is also hoped to pave the way for an open call for large grants specifically on SD2, using the results from the Theory of Change and grantees' workshop conducted in October 2019 during the mid-term assessment event.

After the contracting all the SD4 and SD2 small and large grants, the team will reassess the gaps and the action points to cover for these in the remaining time of the investment, as we expect to be significantly closer to targets after these two granting processes are finalized. No more global calls for small grants are anticipated, as the dedicated funds are nearly all awarded (81% of US\$ 1M), and only mentee-specific calls for small (and short-length large)

grants are to be open in the scope of SD4 implementation as previously mentioned. One dedicated call may be needed to cover for gaps under SD1, and grants by invitation may be considered as part of the increasing knowledge and network being established between the different actors in the region. A summarized analysis of the results, gaps and action points for each SD is presented section 3.

III. Performance of CEPF’s Investment

1. Portfolio-Level Performance

To assess the operational and technical performance of CEPF’s investment in the hotspot by the time of the mid-term assessment, two different actions were taken:

- 1) A stakeholder survey was made available online (for a period of 6 weeks between August and September 2019), to collect feedback not just from the current grantees but also from applicants and other actors that have interacted with the program in the first half of its implementation (58 responses received from 10 countries); and
- 2) An assessment group session was promoted by the mid-term assessment workshop facilitators to collect specific feedback from the CEPF grantees in the hotspot (34 grantees present).

The results obtained through these assessments suggest how we can improve the grant-making as a reflection of both the monitoring process and the log frame. Due to the extensiveness of the questionnaires, the full list of responses and comments are annexed to this report (see Annex 3), and the most relevant outcomes are described in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of Portfolio Level Performance Survey and Follow up Lines of Action

Performance aspect	Good levels of performance	Performance gaps and points to address	Lines for Improvement/ action
<i>CEPF and RIT as a grant maker</i>	Processes for grant application, project development and implementation are accessible and user friendly Good responsiveness and technical support from the RIT and Secretariat	A somehow burdensome administration Slow reports processing time by the RIT and need to support realistic timelines Need for more site visits to the projects	Develop simple and visual reference materials on the amount and length of administrative processes Clear communication with applicants and new grantees on the above Internal review and improvement of some operational procedures of the RIT to address raised concerns – review and communicate the expected timeframe for responses and report processing; review and prioritize site visits when possible

Grantees reaching their objectives	Very good engagement with communities and local authorities Generally good relationship with the government and private sector Capacity and means to participate in Management Plans for Natural Areas	High expectations and low ownership of the communities Inadequate or lack of response from authorities or private sector Need for more synergies and cooperation between projects	Support shortlisted applicants/grantees prepare realistic timelines and objectives Provide training/training materials to grantees to help them implement and communicate their project and impacts Support grantees with relevant knowledge resources and promotion of networks
CEPF reaching overall targets	Nearly all the logframe targets are expected to be achieved with the current grants Extremely good results as for covering knowledge gaps (under SD3)	Specific gaps regarding the indicators for biodiversity mainstreaming Country gaps – underrepresentation of some countries	Develop targeted calls for proposals to cover identified gaps
Sustainability of projects	A considerable investment in alternative livelihoods Generally good engagement with government and private sector	Need to clarify the conservation aims of livelihoods’ initiatives Need for skills and tools to upscale biodiversity into public policies and private sector practices	Introduce to grantees/applicants the “Conservation Agreements” which support livelihoods in return for conservation actions/commitments

2. Preliminary Impacts Summary

By the time of the mid-term assessment, out of a total of 42 projects awarded under this CEPF investment in the hotspot, a total of one planning grant, four small grants and one large grant had already closed their project activities and two small grant projects has been terminated due to unfeasibility of their continuation (both in conflict areas in Cameroon). Considering the limited number of closed grants, the sections below present both expected (anticipated impacts at the moment of granting) and, whenever possible, real project impacts (actual impacts after the implementation of the project).

Biodiversity Impacts:

a. Species

CEPF’s interest in promoting local interventions toward research and conservation of globally threatened species in the hotspot materialized by the support of 16 projects (seven large grants and nine small grants). Currently, updated information on the status and distribution of an estimated 1,200 freshwater species and about 300 plants species is ongoing and 38 globally threatened terrestrial species are expected to have stable or increasing populations as a result of CEPF supported conservation projects in the hotspot, through the

implementation of conservation of action plans and mitigation of threats. Examples of supported work include the training and support of patrols to protect gorillas in Cross River National Park, in Nigeria; defining a new protected area in coastal Cote d'Ivoire, which will protect species as white bellied pangolins and snouted crocodiles; research and awareness of hunters and other stakeholders in Ghana to reduce the pressure over threatened primates. According to the classification of the IUCN Red List, some of these species include:

- **Data Deficient:** forest hinge-back tortoise (*Kinixys erosa*);
- **Vulnerable:** Lowe's monkey (*Cercopithecus lowei*), white-thighed colobus (*Colobus vellerosus*), olive colobus (*Procolobus verus*), Home's hinge-back tortoise (*Kinixys homeana*), green-breasted bush-shrike (*Malaconotus gladiator*), Bannerman's weaver (*Ploceus bannermani*), giant West African snail (*Archachatina marginata*);
- **Endangered:** Pygmy hippo (*Hexaprotodon liberiensis*), Preuss's monkey (*Allochrocebus preussi*), drill (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*), Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*), white-naped mangabey (*Cercocebus lunulatus*), white-throated mountain-babbler (*Kupeornis gilberti*);
- **Critically endangered:** Cross River gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*), slender-snouted crocodile (*Mecistops cataphractus*), Príncipe thrush (*Turdus xanthorhynchus*).

b. Sites

- Out of 124 terrestrial KBAs and 13 freshwater KBAs in the 11 countries of the GFWA hotspot, a total of 41 terrestrial KBAs directly benefiting from conservation intervention thanks to CEPF's funded projects are expected to have new or strengthened protection and management, while all 13 freshwater KBAs are currently receiving indirect conservation actions, namely via scientific inventories and biodiversity assessment.
- In addition, one KBA of 14 ha has already benefited from strengthened management in Guinea thanks to a close grant.
- At least eight protected areas in the GFWA monitored through the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool at the beginning (baseline) and at the end (final) are expected to show improved management.
- 907 ha within production landscapes have been managed for biodiversity conservation or sustainable use.

Strengthening Civil Society:

- Apart from the future mentees to be selected as part of the dedicated capacity development program under SD4, a total of 61 civil society organizations in the Guinean Forests of West Africa, including two women's groups, are expected to show increased capacity.
- The capacity of grantee organizations is monitored through the Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT) at the beginning (baseline) and at the end (final) of the project implementation. The average baseline score of 30 CSTTs collected, mostly with local organizations, was 70 (out of 100), ranging from 46 to 93. A more detailed analysis is in course, but preliminary results suggest that areas that mostly need support are organizational good governance and strategizing, resourcing and maintaining staff, reporting and monitoring & evaluation, and, more specifically, mainstreaming/advocating and GIS.
- 10 new networks are expected to be formed as results of CEPF-funded projects in the hotspot.

- A total of 61 civil society organizations are expected to show improved understanding of and commitment to gender issues. This is being monitored through the Gender Tracking Tool (GTT) at the beginning (baseline) and at the end (final) of the project implementation.

Socio-Economic Impacts:

- 73 local and indigenous communities expected to receive training to initiate and advocate for land tenure and forestry reforms in relation to management of community and private reserves and concessions.
- 159 local communities are currently targeted by sustainable livelihood/ job creation activities or benefit- sharing mechanisms.
- 380 people including 174 men and 206 women have already received structured trainings in several topics (sustainable fishing techniques, assessment of ecosystem services...) from CEPF-funded projects in the hotspot.
- 741 people including 325 men and 416 women have so far received non-cash benefits other than structured training from CEPF-funded projects in the hotspot.
- 47 people including 8 men and 39 women in Guinea have so far received cash benefits from CEPF supported projects through selling of solar-light produced salt.

Enabling Conditions:

- A total of 13 conservation-related policies of national governments are expected to be informed or influenced by research, analysis and outreach supported by CEPF grants.
- 5 private companies are expected to adopt new management practices consistent with biodiversity conservation at operations in the conservation corridors as result of CEPF supported grants.

3. Investment Highlights by Strategic Direction

For the purpose of presentation and discussion during the Mid Term Assessment of the GFWA hotspot event, the following summarized analysis of the investment per strategic direction was produced:

SD1 - Outcome 1: Local Communities are Empowered to Engage in Sustainable Management of 40 Priority Sites and Consolidate Ecological Connectivity at the Landscape Scale

Current committed investment <i>US\$ 1,887,811.94</i>	Still to award <i>US\$ 1,112,188.06</i>
<p><u>Major achievements</u> Currently covering 30 priority sites</p> <p>Good engagement of conservation CSOs with local communities</p> <p>Fairly good cooperation with governmental authorities for work within/around Protected Areas</p>	<p><u>Gaps to address</u> Not many private or community forests – because they’re in low numbers or the engagement is weak?</p> <p>Few innovative livelihood approaches</p> <p>Attention required to the impacts and sustainability of projects</p>

<p><u>Lessons learned</u> Alternative livelihoods attract a lot of the attention of projects, but projects are fairly similar across the hotspot. True conservation impacts and sustainability should be further discussed</p> <p>Donor/project fatigue in communities targeted, shortfalls of multi-stakeholder approach</p>	<p><u>Planning ahead</u> Probably one targeted call (based on the discussion of portfolio, targets and lessons learned)</p>
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SD2 - Outcome 2: Biodiversity Conservation Mainstreamed into Public Policy and Private Sector Practice in Nine Conservation Corridors, at Local, Sub-National and National Levels

Current committed investment US\$ 776,574.52	Still to award US\$ 1,223,425.48
<p><u>Major achievements</u> A significant number of projects from Ghana illustrate higher capacity and stronger links with government and private sector</p>	<p><u>Gaps to address</u> Low CSO capacity to develop and implement proposals under this SD</p> <p>RIT's few resources to orient CSOs to develop and deliver on this SD</p>
<p><u>Lessons learned</u> It is still a challenge to get proposals from NGOs that address mainstreaming</p> <p>Recommendations for policies or best practices out of the hands of the CSO to implement</p>	<p><u>Planning ahead</u> Capacity development of current grantees on mainstreaming</p> <p>Development of an implementation strategy for this SD and guidelines for the RIT work</p> <p>At least one targeted call</p>

SD3 - Outcome 3: Priority Globally Threatened Species are Safeguarded by Identifying and Addressing Major Threats and Information Gaps

Current committed investment US\$ 1,938,715	Still to award funding allocation overspent by US\$ 403,345
<p><u>Major achievements</u> An exceptional number of updates for species conservation status and KBAs' criteria</p> <p>Investment will provide a good update of the species inventory for the region</p>	<p><u>Gaps to address</u> Specific capacity of grantees to use their data to input on KBA status updates</p> <p>Fairly localized work on amphibians and reptiles that could be relevant to extend</p>
<p><u>Lessons learned</u> Many and good quality proposals submitted (and a lot having to be turned down due to limited funds)</p> <p>Financial allocation was low considering the current knowledge and baseline KBA work within the hotspot</p>	<p><u>Planning ahead</u> <i>(pending more fundraising)</i> Training grantees to contribute to KBA status updates with the new KBA standards</p> <p>The RIT to support KBA work to ensure impact and sustainability of collected data</p>

SD4 - Outcome 4: Capacity of Local Civil Society Organizations, Including Indigenous People's, Women's and Youth Groups Built to Conserve and Manage Globally Important Biodiversity

Current committed investment <i>US\$ 129,421.00</i>	Still to grant <i>US\$ 1,270,579.00</i>
<p><u>Major achievements</u> An implementation strategy for capacity development decided and about to be applied consistently across the hotspot</p> <p>Circa US\$ 850,000.00 in the pipeline to grant to mentors in 7-8 countries</p> <p>Capacity development as part of the process for conservation goals</p>	<p><u>Gaps to address</u> Some countries have not yet been possible to reach because of lack of qualifying proposals (Cameroon, Togo, Benin, Equatorial Guinea)</p>
<p><u>Lessons learned</u> Need to shift the paradigm from the business as usual of capacity development training sessions</p> <p>Although there is an extended number of conservation CSOs, there are structural challenges common to most countries</p>	<p><u>Planning ahead</u> Continued coordination with other donors for capacity development for conservation across the hotspot</p> <p>Supervise the implementation of the mentorship program</p> <p>Looking at the sustainability of mentored CSOs beyond CEPF investment</p>

IV. Priorities for January 2020 to June 2021 for CEPF Investment Strategy

Type of priority	Activities	Expected results	Period of Implementation
Grant-Making	Open a dedicated SD2 call in line with the results from the theory of change workshop of the mid-term assessment	The financial and portfolio indicators should be met for this SD with the implementation of selected projects	<i>Feb.-Oct. 2020</i> (projects until 2022)
	Identify a suitable mentor for capacity development of local CSOs in Cameroon and award a grant by invitation	Close the gaps for the implementation of SD4 in this country (10-15 mentees)	<i>Feb.-Sep. 2020</i>
	Open a Small Grants call dedicated to mentees under SD4	About 30 small grants will be awarded to mentees of the mentorship program	<i>Sep. - Dec. 2020</i> (projects in 2021)
	Potentially open a targeted call under SD1	The financial and portfolio indicators should be met for this SD with the implementation of selected projects	<i>Sep. 2020- May 2021</i> (projects in 2021-2022)

Operational aspects	Review and readjust processes and timeframes under small grants management and general communication with grantees	Considerations made in the assessment to operational issues are integrated and adjusted always as possible	<i>Feb. 2020</i>
	Review and prioritize the RIT workplan every semester	Adaptive management of the programme and early identification of gaps and action points needing attention	Throughout
Strategic planning	Develop the Long-Term Vision for the hotspot	Clear strategy with financial plan to reach CSOs graduation from CEPF funds in the hotspot	<i>Jan.-Jun. 2021</i>
	Continue engagement with regional donors (incl. CEPF donors) and other initiatives in the region and contribute to the prorogation of the PPI Alliance MoU	Continuous and increasing collaborations/synergies among donors in the region and less overlaps in their strategies	Throughout
Capacity Support	Support to grantees to update KBAs to current standards	Grantees are capacitated and know how to integrate the updating of KBAs, and namely priority KBAs	<i>Jan. - Jul. 2020</i>
	Support grantees to communicate about their projects	More project stories and images shared by grantees are disseminated through CEPF, RIT and BirdLife channels	Throughout
	Support to mentors and mentees in planning and implementing small grants, and in integrating gender considerations	CEPF grantees will know how to plan and implement projects and integrate gender and mainstreaming	Throughout
	Support to grantees on mainstreaming of biodiversity into public and private sector practices		Throughout

CONCLUSION / PERSPECTIVES

During approximately three years of implementation (June 2016 – October 2019), CEPF awarded a grant for one regional implementation team plus a total of 42 grants (25 small and 17 large) in nine of the 11 countries of the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot. Another four large grants are in the pipeline to address capacity development across the hotspot. Only one large and four small grants were closed by the time of this Mid-Term Assessment (plus one planning grant and two terminated grants due to insecurity), so the impacts of the investment are still preliminary at this stage.

Taking into account the additional contribution from l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD), which increased the spending authority from the initial US\$ 9 million to US\$ 10.1 million, 57% (US\$ 4,732,522.46) of the amount allocated to Strategic Directions 1 to 4 (except SD5, which funds the RIT) has been awarded so far. The pipeline accounts for another US\$ 1.1 million under Strategic Direction 4, adding up to 70% of the available funds under these four Strategic Directions. The major gap identified under Strategic Direction 2 (biodiversity mainstreaming) will be addressed with a dedicated call in early 2020. The remaining funds, under Strategic Direction 1 in particular, should be targeted to identified gaps.

The participatory analysis of the CEPF operations in the hotspot, which took place in preparation of and during the mid-term assessment, showed that the majority of respondents (applicants and grantees) are happy with the processes and the support from the Secretariat and RIT as a grant maker. But it also highlighted some concerns with administrative overload or slowness of processes. Follow up actions were agreed upon and are described in this report, including more support from the RIT and more field visits, when possible.

With regard to the CEPF investment niche for the hotspot, the current portfolio of projects demonstrates a strong engagement of grantees with communities and local authorities, around management of natural areas or towards promoting alternative livelihood models that benefit conservation in priority sites. To address the challenge of CSOs' capacity and resource constraints, CEPF reinforces with tools and skills some of the main local CSOs involved in conservation in the hotspot by providing mentorship and access to small grants. Extensive baseline work is currently being done by CEPF grantees on priority conservation species and sites, with specific actions being implemented to protect them. Looking at how better to support civil society to develop multi-stakeholder partnerships with governments and the private sector, (a clearly identified gap from previous calls for projects), the RIT and CEPF supported, during the mid-term assessment, the organization of a dedicated workshop for the participative development of a strategy for the investment resulting, in the elaboration of the [Theory of Change for mainstreaming biodiversity in the hotspot](#). Using the outcomes of the workshop, a dedicated and informed call will be opened in 2020. Clearly, in such a wide and complex hotspot, these impacts are limited, but good coordination with other donors and stakeholders is being promoted to scale up these impacts and the sustainability of the investment.

ANNEX 1 - Logical Framework

Immediate outcomes	Intermediate indicators	Logframe targets	Anticipated results	Achieved at the time of Mid-Term Assessment	Notes
Outcome 1: Local communities are empowered to engage in sustainable management of 40 priority sites and consolidate ecological connectivity at the landscape scale	At least 15 local land use plans elaborated and implemented to facilitate good governance in the management of community and private reserves and concessions	15	12	0	None of the projects contributing to this intermediate indicator had closed by the time of the Mid-Term Assessment.
	At least 10 local and indigenous communities are trained to initiate and advocate for land tenure and forestry reforms in relation to management of community and private reserves and concessions	10	69	0	None of the projects contributing to this intermediate indicator had closed by the time of the Mid-Term Assessment.
	At least 10 participatory management plans that support stakeholder collaboration in protected area management are prepared and implemented	10	9	1	By the time of the Mid-Term Assessment, Guinea Ecology had contributed to the elaboration and implementation of a participatory management plan in Guinea.
	At least 30 local communities targeted by sustainable livelihood/ job creation activities or benefit-sharing mechanisms show tangible wellbeing benefits	30	159	11	A total of 11 communities are already implementing sustainable fishing, fish smoking and solar salt production techniques with the support from Guinea Ecology and Development Pour Tous in Guinea

<p>Outcome 2: Biodiversity conservation mainstreamed into public policy and private sector practice in 9 conservation corridors, at local, sub-national and national levels</p>	At least 5 conservation-related policies of national governments are informed or influenced by research, analysis and outreach supported by CEPF grants.	5	13	1	The project led by Ghana Wildlife Society has advocated for the passage of the wildlife resource management bill which is being considered by cabinet in Ghana.
	Locally-relevant information on natural ecosystems is generated for at least 20 Key Biodiversity Areas and used to influence political and economic decision making in favor of their conservation	20	37	1	The project led by Ghana Wildlife Society has contributed the most recent data on the ecosystem values of two KBA's (Atewa and Cape Three Point Forest Reserves) making a case for local government to mainstream ecosystem services and biodiversity into district medium-term development plans.
	At least 20 partnerships are formed or strengthened among civil society, government, private sector and communities to promote best practices in mining, sustainable forestry and agriculture by private companies.	20	14	0	None of the projects contributing to this intermediate indicator had closed by the time of the Mid-Term Assessment.
	At least 5 private companies adopt new management practices consistent with biodiversity conservation at operations in the conservation corridors.	5	8	1	An MoU has been signed between Ghana Wildlife Society and Ghana Rubber Estate Limited which establishes the foundation for trials to be conducted on rubber plantations within off-reserves and transition areas of Cape Three Points Forest Reserve to promote conservation agriculture.
<p>Outcome 3: Priority globally threatened species are safeguarded by identifying and addressing major threats and information gaps.</p>	Priority actions identified in Conservation Action Plans are implemented for at least 15 Critically Endangered and Endangered species.	15	38	1	Baseline research and community sensitization activities have been implemented as priority actions for the Conservation Action Plans for Chimpanzees in West Africa by Presbyterian University College in Ghana.
	The inventory of Key Biodiversity Areas in the hotspot is updated to fill critical information gaps, particularly with regard to the	N/A	42	1	The project led by Presbyterian University College in Ghana has contributed to update the inventory of 3 KBA's (Atewa, Cape Three

	lower Guinean Forests sub-region, and freshwater ecosystems.				Points and Tano Offin Forest Reserves).
	The global conservation status of at least 100 species from poorly assessed taxonomic groups is updated or assessed for the first time on the IUCN Red List.	100	1529	1	The Presbyterian University College in Ghana project has contributed to the assessment of 1 poorly studied species the Spot-nosed monkey (<i>Cercopithecus petaurista</i>).
Outcome 4: Capacity of local civil society organizations, including Indigenous People's, women's and youth groups built to conserve and manage globally important biodiversity.	At least 50 local civil society organizations, including at least 10 Indigenous People's organizations, demonstrate strengthened capacity with regard to financial, institutional and project management, organizational governance, and fundraising.	50	26	8	8 organizations (6 projects closed and 2 projects terminated) from Ghana, Guinea and Cameroon received capacity building directly from the RIT and during regional workshops. Apart from the planning and terminated grants which did not submit a final Civil Society Tracking tool (CSTT), all other organizations have seen their CSTT score increase between 1 and 11.5, in average 6.5.
	At least 20 women-led conservation and development organizations, associations and networks are established and strengthened to foster gender equality in natural resource management and benefit sharing	20	37	0	None of the projects contributing to this intermediate indicator had closed by the time of the Mid-Term Assessment.
	At least 20 local civil society organizations demonstrate increased communication capacity in ways that support the delivery of their mission.	20	10	3	Three CEPF's grantees (Society for Women and Vulnerable Group Empowerment , Conservation des Espèces Marines and Biodiversity Preservation Centre) received basic communication training during field visit and contributed to the production of a video by the CEPF's comms team.

ANNEX 2 - Contracted Grants to Date

Opportunity Name	Grantee Organization	Country(ies)	Type	Amount (US\$)	Stage	Strategic Direction
CEPF-109610	A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute	Nigeria	Small Grant	10,000.00	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	The project will provide up-to-date population status, population structure, and trends of five globally threatened bird species (<i>Kupeornis gilberti</i> - White-throated Mountain-babbler, <i>Andropadus montanus</i> - Cameroon Montane Greenbul, <i>Bradypterus bangwaensis</i> - Bangwa Forest Warbler, <i>Malaconotus gladiator</i> - Green-breasted Bush-shrike, <i>Ploceus bannermani</i> - Bannerman's Weaver) found in the Gashaka-Gumti National Park (NGA5) Key Biodiversity Area. This information will be used to revise the global conservation status of these species. The project will also provide for the first time, baseline information on the population size, status and distribution of five plants species. Three of these plants are of global conservation concern <i>Vepris</i> (<i>Vepris heterophylla</i>), Mahogany (<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>) and <i>Afzelia</i> (<i>Afzelia africana</i>) in the region. The project will strive to collate information and fill in the knowledge gap on two other plant species, <i>Boswellia dalzielii</i> and <i>Sterculia setigera</i> that are poorly assessed and appear threatened from field observations in north eastern Nigeria. This will guide the development of recovery strategies and conservation action plans at the Key Biodiversity Areas. Information gathered from this project will be supplied to the necessary conservation agencies such as BirdLife International and IUCN for the updating conservation status of these species					
CEPF-103792	African Research Association Ltd by Guarantee	Nigeria	Large Grant	208,174.21	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Support 12 communities of Obudu Plateau (KBA-NGA9 Cross River State, Nigeria), to carry out integrated sustainable forest management. Build community-driven commitments through increased awareness, fire management incentive and adapted alternative livelihood initiatives. Support two pilot communities regenerating degraded forests and establishing woodlots for sustainable firewood extraction. Build capacity of community rulers for collective actions with government, NGOs and private sector.					
CEPF-109607	Alisei ONG	Sao Tome and Principe	Small Grant	24,840.00	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	The São Tomé Obô Natural Park (STONP), home to a remarkable unique biodiversity, hosts at least 30 species of endemic molluscs, including the iconic Giant Land Snail, <i>Archachatina bicarinata</i> . This species is herbivorous and substrate decomposer, indicator of well-preserved native and secondary forest, widely known by local inhabitants for its medicinal and food uses. This species, endemic to São Tomé and Príncipe, has suffered a rapid decline in the last decades, due to a combination of habitat loss and indirect competition with the introduced West African Giant Snail, <i>Archachatina marginata</i> , an invasive species in many countries outside the native distribution range in West continental Africa. The project is aimed at creating a São Tomé Giant Snail conservation breeding Centre as a tool to involve, aware and educate local communities about the conservation of the Obô Natural Park. Update the IUCN Red List status by obtaining fundamental knowledge about the ecology and biology of the endemic threatened São Tomé Giant Snail, through the breeding Centre.					

	Investigate the major threats affecting the species. Specifically, investigate on factors that influence and/or favour the entrance of the invasive species inside the limits of the Natural Park and its interaction with the endemic species.					
CEPF-102089	Biodiversity Preservation Centre	Nigeria	Small Grant	32,114.91	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	Analyse the impact of forest habitat loss, fragmentation and hunting on threatened species of tortoises including hinged tortoises of the genus <i>Kinixys Testudinidae</i> , Home's hinge-back tortoise (<i>K. homeana</i>) and forest-Hinged tortoise (<i>K. erosa</i>). The aim is to provide useful data for prioritizing and recommending effective conservation and livelihood actions for its range. Conservation action plans for the target tortoise species in south-eastern Nigeria shall be implemented and their population size and connectivity evaluated.					
CEPF-109612	Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch	Cameroon	Small Grant	47,250.00	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	The Apiculture for Mount Oku Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Improvement project, seeks to protect habitat of many plants and animals, re-organize and build capacity of community based forest groups and develop a strong sustainable market for forest products to reduce pressure on forest resources and biodiversity. This will be achieved through, strengthening the Oku White Honey value chain by improving the quality of the finished products and developing robust markets and regenerate degraded forest biodiversity with native bee loving and economic trees, which will help increase the quantity of honey produced. This program will help organize bee farmers, lead to job creation and increase the revenue of the local population. The development of this green value chain will reduce pressure on natural resources, encourage communities to support conservation effort, build capacity among community leaders including women and improve the livelihood of the population.					
CEPF-100814	Centre d'Etudes, Formation, Conseils et Audits	Cote d'Ivoire	Large Grant	303,704.53	Grant Active	SD2
Web Description	Support mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and deforestation-free agricultural economy through Public Private Partnership in the cocoa sector in the Cavally region of Cote d'Ivoire. Train cocoa farmers in biodiversity conservation friendly practices. Empower communities to adopt best practices toward conservation.					
CEPF-102092	Conservation des Espèces Marines	Cote d'Ivoire	Small Grant	44,819.00	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	The zone near the Tai National Park and La Forêt classée de la Haut Dodo in Côte d'Ivoire is of high value, for spawning and growth of several species of marine turtles such as hawksbills, leatherback turtle, green turtle and olive turtles. However, uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, deforestation, poaching and illegal fishing are putting pressure on these species and their habitat. Through this project, the local NGO, Conservation des Espèces Marines, will work closely with local and national stakeholders to create a Marine Protected Area in the area, which will be the first to exist in the country. It will target mainly villages located on the riverside such as Mani, Pitiké and Kablake, and is expected to lead to an increased population of marine turtles and other water species.					
CEPF-103713	Conservation Society of Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	Planning Grant	4,500.00	Grant Closed	SD4
Web Description	To work with other partners toward planning activities with various stakeholders and actors currently active at the proposed project site, while clearly taking into account current roles, impacts and sources of funding. Identify gaps and conceive new initiatives that will be developed into a new proposal to add value to ongoing interventions.					

CEPF-109613	Cross River State Environment and Carbon Board	Nigeria	Small Grant	39,996.00	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	This project is intended to reclaim the fast disappearing natural water sources through the restoration of a 10.55km stretch of water shed by planting of trees along both sides of the water course up to a distance of two to three kilometres thereby boosting the ecosystem services provided by the natural course of the streams; Significantly, the project will empower the women and youths in the selected rural communities through, the formation of 4 community-based women and youth groups and providing training and extension services in the cultivation of economic trees (cocoa, mango, bush mango, avocado, etc. which will have a direct impact on their incomes, employment and poverty reduction.					
CEPF-109614	Development Concern (DEVCON)	Nigeria	Small Grant	49,995.00	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Contribute to the sustainable management of the Cross River National Park Oban Division by strengthening local community's capacity to manage 20,000ha of community forest contiguous with the Cross River National Park Oban Division. The project will strive to achieve this through; Community organizing and institutional capacity; Forest business development through management planning and implementation, ecotourism, and education; and Sustainable livelihoods development.					
CEPF-109615	Développement Pour Tous	Guinea	Small Grant	20,000.00	Grant Closed	SD1
Web Description	Introduce new technology that will enable the production of salt using sunlight and tarpaulins instead of fuelwood.					
CEPF-109616	Environmental Governance Institute	Cameroon	Small Grant	10,894.00	Grant Terminated	SD2
Web Description	The SHARPening Local - Agro-industries Partnerships in the Mount Cameroon and Mokoko-Onge Landscape project focuses on reducing the impacts of the oil palm value chain on high conservation value areas in Mount Cameroon and Mokoko-Onge forest Key Biodiversity Areas and improve oil palm productivity through; technical and organizational capacity building, intensification agriculture based on replanting, improved extraction rates and use of high yield seedlings and farm inputs and the development of a functional, credible win-win partnership model between the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and oil palm smallholders' cooperatives in Tiko Area Oil Palm Farmers' Cooperative – TAOPF-COOP and Bamusso Mainland. Maintain the integrity of the Mount Cameroon and Mokoko-Onge Key Biodiversity Area through reduction of impacts of the oil palm value chain on these HCVs.					
CEPF-100793	Fauna & Flora International	Liberia	Large Grant	259,906.66	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	Develop applied training to build Liberian capacity for the implementation of the Regional Conservation Strategy and the National Action Plan for Pygmy Hippopotamus in the Cestos-Sapo-Grebo-Taï-Cavally and Lofa-Mano-Gola Corridor areas. Implement a national and transboundary Pygmy Hippo survey. Reassess the national and regional status and increase governmental and public awareness of this flagship species.					
CEPF-100793	Fauna & Flora International	Liberia	Large Grant	259,906.66	Grant Active	SD3

Web Description	Develop applied training to build Liberian capacity for the implementation of the Regional Conservation Strategy and the National Action Plan for Pygmy Hippopotamus in the Cestos-Sapo-Grebo-Taï-Cavally and Lofa-Mano-Gola Corridor areas. Implement a national and transboundary Pygmy Hippo survey. Reassess the national and regional status and increase governmental and public awareness of this flagship species.					
CEPF-103778	Fauna & Flora International	Sao Tome and Principe	Large Grant	99,999.09	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	Train and support capacity of local people to address knowledge gaps identified in the Action Plan for the Príncipe Thrush (<i>Turdus xanthorhynchus</i>). Understand social context and human pressures on the bird. Support the government in implementing and reviewing existing legislations regarding forest use, the Príncipe Thrush Conservation Action Plan as well as the Management Plan of Ôbo National Park.					
CEPF-100798	Fauna & Flora International	Sao Tome and Principe	Large Grant	198,890.81	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Establish beekeeping and agroforestry as sustainable livelihood options on Príncipe in and around the Obô Natural Park (Parque Natural Obô do Príncipe) to incentivize better management of forest habitat, threat reduction to the western honeybee and restoration of degraded areas.					
CEPF-110280	Fauna & Flora International	Multicountry	Small Grant	49,966.00	Grant Active	SD4
Web Description	Support the production of a working draft of a Theory of Change (ToC) for biodiversity mainstreaming in private and public policy and practice across the GFWA hotspot. This will provide the basis and the rationale for actions and partnerships with private sector and will guide and facilitate partnerships among local communities, private sector and government to develop models for best practices in mining, sustainable forestry and sustainable agriculture by private companies. The ToC will guide the RIT and CSOs/NGOs in delivering on the SD 2. Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice in the nine conservation corridors, at local, sub-national and national levels and its associated Investment Priorities.					
CEPF-110281	Fauna & Flora International	Multicountry	Small Grant	49,987.00	Grant Active	SD4
Web Description	Build the capacity, confidence and connections of 40 CEPF grantees, in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot. This will result in a more effective and credible civil society capable of engaging more effectively in regional conservation including, specifically, the mainstreaming of biodiversity. CEPF grantees will be connected and actively sharing knowledge and experiences with each other, develop realistic and concrete plans for their organization to more actively mainstream biodiversity into the public and/or private sector locally, nationally or regionally.					
CEPF-109617	Friends of Ecosystem and the Environment	Liberia	Small Grant	44,099.95	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Provide critical support to the local people's efforts to strengthen the coastal and marine protected area system and conservation of globally significant species and habitats in the Cesto-Senkwen.					
CEPF-100805	Ghana Wildlife Society	Ghana	Large Grant	93,663.71	Grant Closed	SD2

Web Description	Assess ecosystem values of Cape Three Points Forest Reserve and Tano-Offin Forest Reserve in Ghana through the use of the Toolkit for Ecosystem Site Ecosystem Services Assessment (TESSA). Make a case for mainstreaming biodiversity into District Assembly planning and private sector business practices for these two sites and Atewa Range Forest Reserve, all priority Key Biodiversity Areas.					
CEPF-102090	Guinée Ecologie	Guinea	Small Grant	41,800.00	Grant Closed	SD1
Web Description	The Island of Touguissoury in Guinea is under serious threat owing to excessive deforestation activities in the mangrove forests, weak enforcement of existing national laws relating to biodiversity preservation and the lack of awareness on the importance of the site to people and nature, among others. Guinée Ecologie's project will be implemented with full participation of local communities in Touguissoury to carry out socio-economic studies, identify and build on best practices to conserve the mangroves. The goal is to develop a participatory land use management plan for the Island and empower biodiversity friendly income generating activities.					
CEPF-109618	Hen Mpoano	Ghana	Small Grant	39,977.10	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	To ensure the preparation and implementation of a participatory management plan for coastal wetlands and mangrove forests and the Cape Three Point Forest Reserve (CTPFR). To strengthen capacities of Community Resources Management Area (CREMA) committees and Community Biodiversity Advisory Groups on values and importance of biodiversity to allow informed conservation decision making. To establish a tree nursery and reforest fragmented areas to connect terrestrial forest to coastal wetland. To train local community on honey production and organic vegetable production.					
CEPF-102091	Initiative de Base pour la Gestion des Ressources Naturelles	Guinea	Small Grant	24968	Grant Closed	SD4
Web Description	Mount Nimba is a nature reserve and world heritage site that spans Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. It covers significant portions of the Nimba Range, a rich geographical area with unique flora and fauna, including remarkable populations of single-site endemic species, such as viviparous toads, and horseshoe bats. Population growth and industrial activities on site by locals are putting intense pressure on fauna and flora. The project will build a more effective network of community-based and women-led organizations that works to conserve natural resources. In addition, the project will directly support the creation and registration of seven local organizations to work around Mount Nimba. IBGRN will also conduct a series of trainings in communication, marketing, advocacy, financial management and project management, as well as in market gardening and livestock farming.					
CEPF-104060	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources	Multicountry	Large Grant	219,702.30	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	Improve the conservation of freshwater biodiversity throughout the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot by updating existing freshwater species Red List assessments, upgrading existing freshwater Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) to meet the new Global Standard and by identifying and validating additional freshwater KBAs not currently recognized in the ecosystem profile (CEPF 2015).					
CEPF-109619	Korup Rainforest Forest Conservation Society	Cameroon	Small Grant	10,578.51	Grant Active	SD3

Web Description	The project is aimed at Tackling Threats to Endangered Species through Community Empowerment in Korup National Park. This is envisaged through, support for good local governance of Protected Area in Permanent Use Zone (PUZ) designation and management, Improved livelihood for communities living in the 5 "PUZ" through diversified alternatives and improved literacy, awareness and participation in conservation and climate change related issues.					
CEPF-104022	Missouri Botanical Garden	Multicountry	Large Grant	244,458.24	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	Identify the threatened components of the flora and habitats of the two cross-border complexes Lofa-Gola-Mano and Mounts Nimba to update the analysis of Key Biodiversity Areas. Foster regional collaboration between several key actors in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, to harmonize inventory and conservation practices, and by disseminating project results at regional scale.					
CEPF-104130	Missouri Botanical Garden	Sao Tome and Principe	Large Grant	227,643.39	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	Identify the endangered plant species of São Tomé and Príncipe and rigorously evaluate their conservation status according to the criteria and categories of the IUCN Red List. Document, and if necessary, improve the network of Key Biodiversity Areas in the archipelago. Build local capacities by training two botanists and two parataxonomists. Disseminate relevant information to stakeholders involved in biodiversity management. Project website: https://cepf-stp-threat-flora.netlify.app/					
CEPF-109620	Muloma Women's Development Association	Sierra Leone	Small Grant	34,903.00	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Contribute in conserving the Yawri Bay Key Biodiversity Area, its ecosystem and its biodiversity as a key global heritage site.					
CEPF-100792	Noé	Cote d'Ivoire; Ghana	Large Grant	427,999.68	Grant Active	SD2
Web Description	Demonstrate the efficiency of the community-based conservation model and illustrate that synergies can be, and need to be, created between conservation and economic development of communities in the Tanoé and Kwabre swamp forests of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. Develop green value chains that adapt global best practices to the local context in partnership with private companies, local communities and government bodies.					
CEPF-103972	Oikos - Cooperação e Desenvolvimento	Sao Tome and Principe	Large Grant	206,906.06	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Update and implement participative management plans for mangroves of Malanza and Praia das Conchas, in the São Tomé Natural Park, to conserve the last mangrove forests of São Tomé. Increase scientific knowledge of ecosystems. Implement mangrove conservation and enhancement measures. Constitute, train and animate mangrove management committees, which will include representatives of communities and other stakeholders.					
CEPF-109609	Organización No Gubernamental Amigos de la Naturaleza y del Desarrollo de Guinea Ecuatorial	Equatorial Guinea	Small Grant	40,000.00	Grant Active	SD1

Web Description	The Pico Basilé National Park (PNPB), with an approximate land area of 32,256 hectares and a maximum altitude of 3,008 meters, is part of the Protected Areas of Equatorial Guinea. In the forests of Bioko Island, in general, and the PNPB, in particular, one of the highest densities of primates in Africa has been found, highlighting the presence of four endemic subspecies, and one endemic plant species. All the species (fauna and flora) of the park live under strong anthropic pressure, favoured by illegal hunting (fauna) and indiscriminate and uncontrolled cutting (flora). This trend of irrational exploitation of resources diagnoses the disappearance, in the short term, of these endemic and unique species in the world, useful for the well-being and development of the human species. Therefore, the project contributes to the conservation of the natural resources of the PNPB, providing it with an essential tool for its management. To underline here that the management plan is not more than a tool; The resources that will be allocated for its implementation and, above all, the human resources in charge of this tool also depend on the future of the PNPB.					
CEPF-102086	Presbyterian University College Ghana	Ghana	Small Grant	44,259.00	Grant Closed	SD3
Web Description	This project seeks to implement the IUCN Regional Action Plan for the Conservation of Chimpanzees in West Africa targeting three priority Key Biodiversity Areas in Ghana; the Atewa Range, Cape Three Points and Tano-Offin Forest reserves. Within the project framework, Presbyterian University College Ghana will contribute to the long-term survival and conservation of endangered primates in Ghana by carrying out ecological surveys, conservation education and awareness campaigns, biomonitoring and capacity building of Wildlife Division eco-guards. The main project result is the ascertainment of approximate populations and distribution of the five primate species under study to inform the design of conservation programs in Ghana and update information on the four poorly assessed species.					
CEPF-104314	Rainforest Alliance, Inc.	Cote d'Ivoire	Large Grant	55,006.09	Grant Active	SD2
Web Description	Provide technical assistance to the Centre d'Etudes, Formation, Conseils et Audits (CEFCA) to support mainstreaming biodiversity conservation and deforestation-free agricultural economy through Public Private Partnership in the cocoa sector in the Cavally region of Cote d'Ivoire.					
CEPF-109621	Resource Trust Network	Ghana	Small Grant	34,975.00	Grant Active	SD2
Web Description	This project aims to stimulate and catalyse a process for key actors of smallholder plantations within the Forest Reserves of South-eastern Côte d'Ivoire and South-western Ghana (SW CDI SE GH) conservation corridor around Cape Three Points to work together towards achieving agricultural sustainability by incorporating biodiversity conservation in their management practices. The project will use a Smallholder-Private-Public Joint Participation, Collaboration and Contribution (PCC) Biodiversity Conservation Project model. This model will bring together related government agencies in the Ahanta West District Assembly namely: Ministry of Food and Agriculture – MOFA, Environmental Protection Agency – EPA; the two large rubber and oil palm companies NORPALM and GREL respectively and at least 10 of their smallholder out-grower plantation farmers. These key actors will work together to support smallholder out-growers to implement best management practices which avoid or minimise negative impacts on biodiversity and restores damaged ecosystems in their plantations. The results of the project are expected to inspire and inform smallholder out-grower practices and out-grower policies of these two companies. This is also to inform local government bye-laws at least related to smallholder plantations and biodiversity conservation.					
CEPF-104174	RSET - ASSOCIAÇÃO TÉCNICO-CIENTÍFICA PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO	Sao Tome and Principe	Large Grant	296,000.00	Grant Active	SD1

Web Description	Strengthen participatory community-based management of Obô National Park and its buffer zone to improve governance through the integration of stakeholders in planning and decision-making, the production of data for management, and the access to financial flows for sustainability interventions via the implementation of a REDD + pilot project.					
CEPF-109687	Society for Environmental Conservation	Liberia	Small Grant	45,249.85	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Empower and strengthen local communities capacities for sustainable landscape management.					
CEPF-100786	Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia	Liberia	Large Grant	329,553.60	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Support 15 communities in the Gola Forest area in Liberia to become active stewards of the natural resources through well-managed community forests, with strong governance structures, sustainable financing and rainforest-friendly and climate-smart income generating activities.					
CEPF-102088	Society for Women and Vulnerable Groups Empowerment	Nigeria	Small Grant	24,630.00	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Restore mangrove vegetation and improve habitat for coastal species, in the process, protecting and sustaining an important source of food for coastal communities, through reforestation and forest management activities. It will create alternative sources of income for the local population such as bee and snail farming. The main objective is to restore 10 hectares of degraded mangrove area and protect an estimated 50 hectares stretch of intact community mangrove reserve.					
CEPF-103913	United Purpose	Nigeria	Large Grant	260,005.46	Grant Active	SD1
Web Description	Support 15 communities to carry out sustainable forest management and livelihoods practices by increasing awareness on mangrove, supporting Sustainable Community Forest Management Plans, building the capacity of a Community-Based Organization dedicated to mangrove conservation, increasing profitability and sustainability of agricultural livelihood activities as viable alternatives to ecosystem depletion, regenerating depleted forests, and establishing woodlots for sustainable firewood harvesting.					
CEPF-102087	University of Coimbra	Sao Tome and Principe	Small Grant	41,474.00	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	This project aims to support the structure and technical capacities of the National Herbarium in São Tomé, and ultimately to safeguard the unique and still poorly assessed botanical knowledge of the Island. Activities include the capacitation of local human resources in herbarium techniques and identification at the University of Coimbra, and the granting of specific equipment to the ST Herbarium to follow up with cataloguing activities. Botanical collecting missions for the herbarium are to be conducted with experts from UC in the three Key Biodiversity Areas of São Tomé Island, gathering data to fill gaps for poorly assessed plants. Mentoring is to be provided for the duration and beyond the extent of the project. It also aims to involve and the local users (traditional healers, field guides), and to promote botanical knowledge and biodiversity awareness. Expected outcomes of the proposed requalification of the National Herbarium of São Tomé and Príncipe, include (1) To document and conserve the flora diversity of São Tomé and Príncipe, constituting itself as a reference collection for future projects; (2) Fill gaps in the taxonomy of the flora of the archipelago, as well as their distribution, ecology and uses; (3) Support management measures and design strategies for the conservation of endangered habitats and species, (4) Act as a centre of science education and communication.					

CEPF-104076	WILD CHIMPANZEE FOUNDATION	Liberia	Large Grant	280,080.64	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	Protect the Critically Endangered West African Chimpanzee through consultation of communities in and around the proposed area, creation of green jobs as alternatives for local hunters and bushmeat traders, capacity building of the Forestry Development Authority in protected area management, creation of livelihood alternatives for local communities through a beekeeping project, and awareness raising of communities through theatre outreach.					
CEPF-100813	Wildlife Conservation Society	Nigeria	Large Grant	349,997.16	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	Reduce immediate threats to key species at three Cross River gorilla sites in Nigeria by enabling rangers to sustain longer and more frequent patrols and generate data for strategic decisions on future patrols. Support an outreach program to change local attitudes and practices for the conservation of watersheds and the sustainability of non-timber forest products important for local women.					
CEPF-109686	World Parrot Trust	Nigeria	Small Grant	18,945.00	Grant Active	SD3
Web Description	The project will establish a foundation for actions to address the overexploitation of Grey parrots through dismantling trade networks and addressing threats to key populations in Nigeria. Specifically, its objectives are to: Identify priority sites for Grey parrot conservation and threats to key populations. Provide up-to-date information for the analysis of KBAs, species Red List Assessments and strategy for species conservation, Identify the socio-economic dimensions of trade in Grey parrots, with particular emphasis on informing actions to disrupt illegal trade to remove threat of exploitation. Build capacity for the implementation of a conservation strategy for Grey parrots within Conservation Corridors and KBAs of the Lower Guinean Forests within the Guinean forests hotspot. This project will build a solid knowledge base and establishes capacity for the implementation and monitoring of conservation actions for this globally threatened species. Importantly it will also provide an early career conservationist from the region with an opportunity to gain field experience and work with conservation organizations.					

ANNEX 3 - Outcomes of the Mid-Term Assessment

This annex includes the main results of two different surveys conducted with CEPF applicants and grantees between September and October 2019, on the scope of the Mid Term Assessment of the programme.

- An online survey was available online between the 2nd September and 12th October, in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Targeted emails were sent to grantees and previous applicants requesting for their participation. A total of 58 responses were obtained from CEPF grant applicants, from which 26 had grants awarded.
- A group of dedicated sessions we conducted during the Mid Term Assessment Workshop in Monrovia, on the 28-9th October, with 34 grantees. The sessions were independently led by Fauna and Flora International, as part of a small grant to organize a Learning Exchange during the mid-term assessment to foster CSO capacity and networks.

The results are presented in two corresponding sections:

- A. Analysis of the online survey qualitative responses with highlights and recommendations.
- B. Main concerns and suggestions extracted from grantees focus group discussions during mid-term assessment sessions

A. Analysis of the Online Survey

AS CEPF
APPLICANTS

N=58

Survey questions	Highlights	Survey answers							
Have you ever consulted the Guinean Forests of West Africa Ecosystem Profile?	All respondents consulted the EP	Yes, in detail	Yes, parts	Yes, the summary	No				
		32	18	8	0				
Do you think the Guinean Forests of West Africa Ecosystem Profile should be updated?	The majority of respondents would update the EP	No	No opinion	Yes					
		10	19	29					
How do you keep updated with news in the Guinean Forests of West Africa programme? (tick all that apply)	The RIT newsletter, regular contact with CSOs in the region, and Facebook, are the most used channels of communication	Website	Facebook	Twitter	Workshop(s)	RIT newsletter	Regular contact (email, skype)	Other s	No recent commun i- cation
		3	15	2	18	24	23	3	1
What type of grant did you apply for (tick all that apply)?	Most respondents applied for a SG	Small Grant	Large Grant	Planning Grant	Multiple				
		30	19	1	8				
How many times did you apply for a CEPF-GFWA RIT's grant?	Most respondents only applied once	Once	Twice	Three times					
		39	17	2					
Was the Call for Proposal (CfP) document understandable?	Most respondents find the CfP easy to understand	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult				
		7	41	9	1				
How would you rate the	The large majority of respondents find	Very Useful	Somewhat useful	Of little use	Not useful	I didn't look at the site			

information on www.cepf.net about eligibility and how to apply for a grant?	the information on website very or somewhat useful	37	18	1	1	1
What do you think about the difficulty to complete the Letter of Inquiry form?	Most respondents find the LOI easy or very easy to understand, but 27,6% consider it difficult or very difficult	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	
		7	35	14	2	
After the deadline of the Call for Proposals, how long did you wait before you received CEPF-GFWA RIT's response letter or decision on your application?	Most feedback was provided more than 16 weeks after submission	4-6 weeks	7-9 weeks	10-15 weeks	16 weeks or more	
		8	9	9	32	
Rate the content of your response letter based on the reasoning of the decision, suggestions made, actions requested and guidance given	Most respondents found the response letter very or somehow useful, but 20,6% considered it not helpful at all	Extremely helpful	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Slightly helpful	Not helpful at all
		4	23	13	6	12
How would you rate the efficiency (number of steps; etc) of the grant application process?	Most respondents found the process very efficient or satisfactory, but 38.8% considered it not efficient	Very efficient	Satisfactory	Not efficient		
		7	32	19		

N=26 (10 LG; 16 SG)

Survey questions	Highlights	Survey answers				
Do you consider that reporting to CEPF-RIT on your project performance is:	Most respondents find the grant reporting easy or very easy, but 34.6% consider it difficult or very difficult (2 small grantees)	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	
		2	15	7	2	
How would you rate the usefulness of CEPF-GFWA RIT's technical support during project implementation?	The large majority of respondents find the technical support during project very or somewhat useful	Very useful	Somewhat useful	of little use	not useful	I had no support
		16	7	1	1	1
Do you consider that the financial reporting to CEPF-GFWA RIT is:	Most respondents find the financial reporting easy or very easy, but 34.6% consider it difficult or very difficult	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	
		5	12	8	1	
How would you rate the response and follow-up to the financial reports that you submitted?	Most respondents find the response useful or very useful	Very useful	Somewhat useful	I had no support		
		15	10	1		
How would you rate the usefulness of a site visit by the CEPF or GFWA RIT?	The majority of respondents find the field visit very useful. Still, to highlight that one large grantee did not find it useful, and 17% of	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful	My project was not visited	
		17	3	1	5	

	projects haven't been visited (yet)					
Do you consider that the grant close out process is:	Most of respondents' grants were yet to close (57.7%). The majority of others found it easy or very easy.	Very easy	Easy	Difficult	Very difficult	Yet to close
		2	6	1	1	15
How do you rate the overall support you had from the RIT and CEPF Secretariat:	The large majority of respondents rate overall support has extremely or very helpful (73%).	Extremely helpful	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	Slightly helpful	Not helpful at all
		12	7	4	2	1
How would you rate CEPF GFWA RIT's reporting requirements compared with other donors?	Most respondents found the CEPF process less time-consuming or the same as other donors, but 38.5% considered it more time-consuming	I have not received a grant from another donor	They are less time-consuming	They are about the same	They are more time-consuming	
		2	3	11	10	

Concerns and Lines of Action:

- Updates to the Ecosystem Profile

50% of the respondents would update section(s) of the GFWA Ecosystem Profile document. The main suggestions included

- a) KBA's updates (several respondents)
- b) Forest threats and cover updates, inclusion of forest High Conservation Value (HCV)
- c) More focus on mangroves; and coastal areas
- d) Re-examine and further prioritize actions directed at supporting local level livelihoods to both demonstrate its connection to conservation outcomes and as evidence to influence private and public conservation policies and programmes.

- Accessibility of the Call for Proposal document and efficiency of grant-making process

Approximately one third of the respondents found the LOI application difficult, and the grant-making process not efficient. Although there is not a great flexibility to change templates or processes, maybe to produce and disseminate summary communication tools on what it implies can improve effectiveness.

- Relevance of the response letter

One fifth of the applicants found the response letter not helpful at all. Although there are limitations on what is included in the letter, the RIT and the Grant Director will work together to ensure the relevance of ALL of the response letters.

- Feedback to applicants

55% of the response to applicants were provided more than 16 weeks after submission. These delays were a consequence of the learning curve needed for the review processes, combined with team structural challenges and agendas overload, as well as high number of Letters of Inquiry received. Future opening of the call for proposals should be better planned regarding workloads of the teams involved in review and response.

- Reporting to the RIT and CEPF

35% of grantees considered technical and financial reporting difficult or very difficult, highlighting the need of the RIT to assess needs and engage in capacity development of the grantees.

B. Results of the Focus Groups Discussions

Designed to feed into the Mid Term Assessment of the CEPF Investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot, grantees were divided into a maximum of 7 people in a group. They were asked for their thoughts on the program and their recommendations for the future, specifically through 3 questions:

Question 1: How can your projects be made more sustainable?

Respondents, based on their work in the region, advised the following:

- Engage with the local authorities. This will help to build their capacity, as well help facilitate maintaining and extending results. You may also need to provide them with equipment e.g. GPS units.
- As soon as you design a project you need to think of sustainability through identifying and engaging stakeholders to ensure full ownership of activities and outputs. Must be driven by the people and owned by the people
- Train people/co-operatives in necessary skills e.g. Business and entrepreneurship, negotiation skills etc.
- Establish trust funds and funding mechanism to provide longer term funding
- Involve women youth and community leaders
- Establish networks among communities and/or Protected Area Authorities to meet, share experience and get motivated.
- Set up cooperatives with a dedicated manager to take care of the day to day management and focus on the capacity building of this person.
- Focus more on existing businesses for the communities and have the livelihood interventions chosen by the communities themselves.
- Scaling up production to access bigger market.
- Work with the private sector to develop an internal model for financing best management practices of smallholders.
- Diversify the income of small holders and carry out advocacy actions to increase the selling prices of products
- Engage private sector but negotiate with them to pay a conservation premium to fund the community group conservation actions.
- Sign a Conservation Agreement between the community and the private sector to capture what are the roles of each, the sanctions, and the prices. The private companies are interested in this type of agreement because they can communicate better
- At project level: value-chain approach (long-term partnership with private sector, added-value, diversification, creation of cooperatives/networks, identification and capacity building of leaders, capacity building of farmers, entrepreneurship/business training, tool banks...)
- At broader level: stakeholder engagements and conservation funds creation.
- Have an exit strategy.
- If we make some connections with other projects we can collaborate and build synergies. One project might end, but others would continue.

Question 2: What has been your greatest success and your greatest failure of your CEPF project to date? If you could go back in time, what lessons would you pass on to past-you when you started the project? What has surprised you the most?

Success:

- Increased engagement of the local authorities, protected area authorities and communities to think about the problems/threats, etc. in their area. This led to the development of land management plans and the creation of an exchange platform which represents all the stakeholders.
- Identification of communities through the local authorities, followed by capacity building and obtaining legal documents that recognized them as legal entities).
- Mobilization of communities to adopt a local convention on sustainable use.
- Gained trust of private sector and communities.
- High level of community involvement and participation.
- Restoring confidence of local communities.
- Diversifying livelihood options offered.
- National government involvement.
- Community participation. At start we confiscated 10 chainsaws. After community involvement it is much less because they understand
- Developed a Forest Management Action Plan for Cape Three Points Reserve with the forestry commission.
- Communities are taking control of the process and showing ownership – the local authorities are the ones taking the lead.
- Consolidating smallholders into cooperatives.
- Forming associations with local communities and bringing them into one group.

Challenges:

- No synergy between projects.
- Satellite imagery is difficult to get in Sao Tome.
- Implementation of forest management action plan due to mistrust amongst stakeholders.
- Getting government management authorities to take ownership.
- Community expectations are so high- impossible to meet
- We have struggled to engage with industry
- Some of the community members are supposed to be protecting the forest but instead they are letting people in.
- Not enough funding to support communities to implement their action plans.
- Did not manage to group them into a 'federation'.
- Given up on waiting for national initiatives (not just from the government) which take forever to get started and initiative the field activities regardless.
- Incorrect assumptions/conceptions by community members.
- Inadequate political will.
- Local governance is difficult and/or weak.
- Inaccessibility of CEPF priority sites.

Lessons Learned:

- Need more communication so that the communities know what is going to be done and thus manage expectations.
- Tell yourself that you need more time to implement the project.
- Be careful not to over-estimate the objectives that you can reach at the end of the project.
- Dependence on government decision-making is sometimes hard to overcome.

- Support livelihoods IN RETURN of conservation actions/commitments.
- Community buy-in/ownership of the project should be secured at the beginning of the project.
- Take time to critically look at the log frame, regardless of the timeframe and work plan, to assess what activity is key to come first (adaptive work plan). Key to have a funders' flexibility.
- Should allocate financial resources for the communication of the project instead of relying on other projects/partners resources for communication.
- Pre-assessment is needed to know how to make all stakeholders accept to come at the table. Don't wait for project implementation to ask yourself this question.
- Not only define indicators for your project but also define how you will be collecting data to monitor them.

Question 3: Thinking of the whole process of CEPF, including things like the calls for proposals, support from the RIT, workshops and final reporting, can you recommend any part of the CEPF grant-making process which could be improved?

- Respond in a timelier manner, including approval of projects, signing contracts and making payments.
- Provide detailed feedback to unsuccessful applicants help them improve if they apply again. What were the weaknesses? Strengths?
- The RIT and CEPF should make more frequent visits to projects to see challenges directly.
- Promote exchange learning among grantees.
- The RIT needs to increase their communication at all levels. Would like more communication from the RIT at all levels.
- Support grantees to develop a more realistic timeframe. When writing the grant proposal, the timeline is often underestimated. During implementation often there is not enough time, and then one needs an extension.
- Support grantees to raise funding from other organizations.
- Reporting overkill for small grants. Too much paperwork taking disproportionate amount of time for amount of money.
- More clarity on document requirements and cashflow explanations. Should make a complete table to clarify requirements at outset for compliance and reporting.
- Staff procurement process is difficult because the length of contract does not matter, the requirements are the same.
- Promote exchange learning among grantees.
- Have a deadline for review of report and funds transfer, for example 2 weeks- to ensure organisations get the money in a timely manner.
- More RIT staff with more capacity- they are overloaded.
- Now you have identified a group of dedicated people to the completion of their projects, can you keep this group of people, and form us into a fixed group, and stop looking for new grantees. (This means a better, firmer relationship, for one thing.)
- Increase the maximum size of projects
- Strengthen project management capacity for grantees using technological approaches e.g. webinars.
- Make the online portal more user friendly, remove bugs.
- The online platform is good and grant managers are responsive- thank you!
- Less rigidity in strategic directions that enable more holistic projects.