

Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot Program for Consolidation

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Background

Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem concluded in December 2005 following allocation of \$6.2 million in grant funds. Funds were awarded based on five strategic directions, and spread over numerous geographic priorities in six countries. CEPF's investment in West Africa came at a time when the region's biodiversity was facing many formidable threats, with the most severe and pervasive being civil conflict. Ranging from tension to warfare to post-conflict recovery, conflict posed an ever-present factor and obstacle to conservation efforts. Other threats such as poverty, deforestation, mining and hunting compounded this challenge.

As investments began, the region's ability to respond to and counteract these threats was inadequate. Despite the presence of a number of committed donors and the regional IUCN network, environmental nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were few in number, and most had limited capacity. These organizations had few professionals, insufficient academic support for training, research and implementation, and inadequate biodiversity data to inform their objectives. Civil society groups often operated in isolation, without connections and, most significantly, without a regional vision or awareness. This lack of capacity and institutional maturity hindered progress in all areas of conservation, ranging from direct project implementation to policy and decisionmaking at the national and regional levels.

As detailed in the CEPF ecosystem profile¹, the five-year investment sought to support connectivity to address not only ecological but also political, social and administrative fragmentation. In recognizing that sustainable biodiversity conservation will only be achieved if civil society groups drive the process and have the skills to do so, CEPF focused on providing NGOs and other private organizations with the capacity to participate in efforts to manage biodiversity conservation more effectively.

Achievements

CEPF assessed its five years of investment and concluded that the CEPF investment in the Upper Guinean Forest had significant impact in improving capacity in the region, improving biological knowledge, promoting a better conservation vision and improving community participation in conservation². In total, 18 national NGOs and private sector partners significantly expanded their staff, diversity of abilities and total coverage with the help of CEPF support. At least seven international NGOs also expanded their in-country national staff, abilities and activities. Networks, such as the Environmental Forum for Action in Sierra Leone, and partnerships, such as that of Birdlife's West African partners, were

¹ Ecosystem Profile, Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem, Guinean Forests of West Africa, December 2000. [English](#) (PDF - 585 KB) / [Français](#) (PDF - 617 KB)

² Assessing Five Years of CEPF Investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot, Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem, October 2006. [English](#) (PDF - 352 KB) / [Français](#) (PDF - 496 KB)

established and/or strengthened. These networks serve as avenues for communication, collaboration and learning.

CEPF's biodiversity impact has been significant given the obstacles, with more than 186,268 hectares of biologically rich land newly protected or given increased protection. This includes the creation of the Nimba Nature Reserve (estimated at about 13,568 hectares) in Liberia, out of the former Nimba East National Forest. The reserve is contiguous with the Nimba Nature reserves of Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, which together were declared a World Heritage Site in 1981. Creation of the Nimba Nature Reserve occurred in 2003, alongside other legal developments in Liberia including the expansion of Sapo National Park (by 72,700 hectares, from 107,300 hectares to approximately 180,000 hectares), and establishment of Liberia's first coherent legal framework for conservation of forest resources. In Ghana, the government upgraded 100,000 hectares of forest reserves to Globally Significant Biodiversity Areas; the Ghanaian Forestry Division will manage these areas for strict protection.

Numerous protected areas have benefited from improved management due to CEPF funding and the improved capability of CEPF grantees. These areas include Marahoué, Mont Peko and Tai national parks in Côte d'Ivoire, Sapo National Park in Liberia, and Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary in Sierra Leone. These and other areas, such as classified forests and forest reserves in Guinea and Togo, have benefited from increased and improved biodiversity monitoring, better management and increased educational outreach to local communities.

As testament to the improved image that CEPF's grantees have developed, more than \$11.9 million in project co-financing and additional leveraged funds has been generated for conserving the rich natural wealth of the hotspot. This is more than double the \$4.3 million funding originally approved for CEPF investment that was subsequently increased to the \$6.2 million invested.

Justification for Consolidation

In the two-year period since the completion of CEPF's initial investment in the Guinean Forests, progress has continued on a number of fronts. In Liberia, where more than half of the remaining forest is located, Conservation International (CI) and partners are continuing critical work to establish the nation's protected area network, and pursuing the emerging market for avoided deforestation carbon, which could have significant repercussions for ensuring sustainable financing for priority sites and interventions in Liberia and neighboring countries.

An opportunity now exists for long-term financing of this protected area network via a debt swap, and three sustainable financing mechanisms are now under discussion and negotiation. In Sierra Leone, efforts are underway to gazette seven protected areas totaling 256,981 hectares and set up a trust fund for their management. This includes a Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)-BirdLife agreement with the Government of Sierra Leone to secure the entire Gola Forests (76,100 hectares) as a Conservation Concession managed with local authorities. CI's Global Conservation Fund currently has \$1.8 million earmarked for a contribution to the Trust Fund that will support long-term management of Gola. RSPB has committed to matching this amount.

This recent progress is phenomenal, and represents a suite of key opportunities for the region, some of which can be viewed as having been catalyzed by the first phase of CEPF funding. As these long-term financing mechanisms become a reality, there is a real and urgent need to lay the groundwork for these funds and ensure they are negotiated, established and implemented in a manner that is cost-efficient and appropriate to achieve conservation goals. CEPF funding can play this role, thereby ushering this long-term financing into the region for a substantial improvement in the protection and management of West African forests.

CEPF funding will complement the contributions of several other donors active in the region, including the IUCN-Netherlands, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Global Environment Facility and the World Bank. With all of the above in mind, a consolidation program of \$2.1 million is planned to be implemented over three years. This funding will help to take the region forward in a proactive, financially sustainable manner. The investment priorities and justifications are listed below.

Investment Priorities and Outcomes

Investment Priority 1: *Ensure financial sustainability in the hotspot*

This investment priority aims to address the funding situation in the Guinean Forests, which can be characterized as being insufficient and irregular. Activities will include development of an organized strategy and examples to attract donors and long-term financing. The project will evaluate innovative funding mechanisms based on emerging opportunities such as carbon financing. With Sierra Leone and Liberia already leading efforts in this regard, the lessons and experience will help attract additional investors. Given the region's unique biodiversity, highly fragmented status and high levels of poverty, carbon-based initiatives could have a higher return to potential investors if aligned in this context.

This investment priority will also provide essential funds for establishment of three funds in Liberia that will be the result of an upcoming debt swap, and significant contributions from several donors. This portion of the project will ensure sustainable financing for key portions of Liberia's protected area system, not only for protected area management, but also for community-based conservation in the areas surrounding these sites. Funding will also go to Sierra Leone to strengthen a long-term financing mechanism for the Gola Forests.

Also of major significance under this priority is the potential to assess progress in the region since the 1999 priority-setting workshop held in Elmina, Ghana, and to revitalize conservation in the region with a regional congress set for 2010. This event will include review of actions, projects and other progress in the 10-year period since Elmina and will provide a platform for prioritization for the future.

Outcome 1: Long-term financing mechanisms established and functioning for Liberia's protected area network and the Gola forests of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

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

Local action under the guidance of a mentor can ensure success in thematic areas that are critical to ensure long-lasting conservation gains. Poverty and community involvement are recurring issues in West Africa, and successful efforts need to be replicated. This project aims to replicate sustainable livelihood initiatives such as ecotourism and small-scale production (e.g. soap) and to encourage alternative livelihoods to enable communities to play a role in conserving the environment in which they live, while generating income. Project activities will support corridor conservation.

Outcome 2: Conservation corridors in West Africa are strengthened by promoting projects that link sustainable livelihoods, human well-being and biodiversity conservation.

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

This investment priority aims to ensure that the capacity-building efforts already undertaken during the first phase of CEPF funding evolve to a new level, and that new efforts are tied to on-the-ground conservation action. Specifically, CEPF funding will enable the scaling up of capacity-building efforts via targeted support to manage new and expanded protected areas in the hotspot (in particular in Liberia and Sierra Leone), and support universities and NGOs to gain essential advanced technical training to take

advantage of conservation opportunities such as carbon markets, new protected area networks and debt-for-nature swaps.

Outcome 3: Capacitated West African scientists/project implementers have advanced skills, and opportunities to apply these skills through targeted conservation projects.

Table 1. Guinean Forests of West Africa Logical Framework for Consolidation

Objective	Targets	Means of Verification
Reinforce and sustain the conservation gains achieved as a result of previous CEPF investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa.	At least 5 civil society actors, including NGOs and the private sector, actively participate in conservation programs guided by the Guinean Forests ecosystem profile and Program for Consolidation.	Grantee performance reports and Annual Portfolio Overview Reports
	190,000 hectares of key biodiversity areas with strengthened protection and management.	Grantee performance reports and Protected Areas Tracking Tool (SP1 METT)
	1,200 hectares in production landscapes managed for biodiversity conservation or sustainable use.	Grantee performance reports and Productive Landscape Tracking Tool (SP2 METT)
	2 stakeholder networks strengthened to support long-term conservation action by replicating and scaling up CEPF successes.	Grantee performance reports and Annual Portfolio Overview Reports
	\$1.8 million leveraged.	Final project reports

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Means of Verification
Outcome 1. Long-term financing mechanisms established and functioning for Liberia’s protected area network and the Gola forests of Liberia and Sierra Leone. (Conservation International and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.) \$999,930	2 conservation investment mechanisms including national PA trusts and loan mechanisms operational.	Grantee performance reports
	1 REDD project operational.	Grantee performance reports
	1 pilot incentive mechanism implemented, 1 biodiversity offset utilized, and 1 carbon project design document developed.	Grantee performance reports
	Elmina+10 conference planned and implemented.	Grantee performance reports

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Means of Verification
	2 land use agreements executed with communities for community forest carbon projects.	Grantee performance reports
	Laws and procedures for carbon management reviewed and proposed in Sierra Leone.	Grantee performance reports
	100 percent of direct stakeholders have improved capacity to access carbon income.	Grantee performance reports
<p>Outcome 2. Conservation corridors in West Africa are strengthened by promoting projects that link sustainable livelihoods, human well-being, and biodiversity conservation. (Environmental Foundation for Africa and Flora & Fauna International.)</p> <p>\$499,440</p>	Facilities for ecotourism on Tiwai Island (in Sierra Leone and part of the Gola Reserve corridor) upgraded and tourism value chain analysis and marketing strategy completed, leading to increased revenue and investment.	Grantee performance reports
	100% of targeted communities and staff on Tiwai Island involved in sustainable use projects demonstrating tangible socioeconomic benefits.	Grantee performance reports
	Biodiversity Learning and Alternative Energy Center established in Freetown.	Grantee performance reports
	Stakeholders from initial CEPF grants, plus additional networks, enabled to share lessons and address challenges to livelihoods and conservation.	Grantee performance reports
	Alternative livelihoods promoted as an alternative to hunting for, and trade in, bushmeat in Nimba Mountain (Guinea) and Sapo National Park (Liberia).	Grantee performance reports

Intermediate Outcomes	Targets	Means of Verification
<p>Outcome 3. Capacitated West African scientists/project implementers have advanced skills, and opportunities to apply these skills through targeted conservation projects. (Birdlife International.)</p> <p>\$599,984</p>	<p>50 conservationists, including protected area managers, trained.</p>	<p>Grantee performance reports</p>
	<p>6 protected area workshops and 10 training courses executed, and 1 in-service training program instituted.</p>	<p>Grantee performance reports</p>
	<p>National networks established in 2 countries.</p>	<p>Grantee performance reports</p>
	<p>5 individuals supported to obtain advanced degrees focusing on emerging conservation opportunities.</p>	<p>Grantee performance reports</p>
	<p>Capacity of 3 site support groups enhanced in Liberia (Sapo National Park, Lake Piso Forest Reserve), Sierra Leone (Gola Forest Reserve), and Cote d'Ivoire (Azagny Forest Reserve).</p>	<p>Grantee performance reports</p>