



**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**  
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET

GEF'S PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO  
biodiversity conservation in  
**West and  
Central Africa**





# Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b> , by Abdoulaye Wade, President, Republic of Senegal	3
<b>Foreword</b> , by Monique Barbut, GEF CEO and Chairperson	5
<b>Introduction</b>	9
<b>GEF Support to Biodiversity Conservation in West and Central Africa</b>	10
<b>Improving GEF Performance through Programmatic Approaches</b>	11
<b>The Programmatic Approach in West and Central Africa</b>	11
<i>Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin</i>	
<i>Linking Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Reduction in West Africa</i>	
<b>The Benefits of the Programmatic Approach</b>	12
<b>Examples of GEF-financed Biodiversity Conservation Activities in West and Central Africa</b>	13
<i>Central Africa</i>	
<i>Empowering institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo</i>	
<i>Protecting gorillas and other flagship species through a protected area network</i>	
<i>Exploring innovative sustainable financing mechanisms for conservation</i>	
<i>West Africa</i>	
<i>Protecting biodiversity in fragile and post-conflict settings: The Liberia experience</i>	
<i>Supporting community livelihood strategies in biological corridors in Ghana and Burkina Faso</i>	
<i>Moving conservation from words to action in Cape Verde</i>	
<i>Linking “sacred forests” and traditions to the Benin protected area network</i>	
<i>Increasing the dialogue between scientists, site managers and local communities</i>	
<i>The GEF story in Guinea Bissau: a country-driven partnership</i>	
<i>Improving large marine ecosystems and sustaining local fishing communities</i>	
<i>Climate change impacts in protected area networks</i>	
<b>Principles to Guide Future GEF Investments in West and Central Africa</b>	26

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## Boxes

Box 1: Land-use planning in the Tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé landscape (TRIDOM)

Box 2: A multi-country strategy for supporting international river basins

# Preface





**Abdoulaye Wade**  
President  
Republic of Senegal

*Poverty reduction is a core mission of sovereign governments in Africa and throughout the developing world. Here in Africa, there is no denying the vast needs of a continent undergoing rapid urbanization—half the population in West and Central Africa is concentrated in cities, especially along the coasts. In this reality, the pressure on natural resources is greater than ever, as people struggle to meet growing food and energy needs.*

In West Africa, perhaps more than anywhere else, millions of people depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. Yet degradation of these natural resources continues unabated. Some simple facts tell a grim story: Soil degradation affects nearly 500 million people in Africa, many of them among the world's most vulnerable populations, and two-thirds of currently arable land remains at risk for degradation. We have already lost 80 percent of the forests in West Africa over the last century. The water situation is equally dire. Never before have the wetlands and water bodies of the region been under so much pressure; Lake Chad, for example, has shrunk from 25,000 ha to 2,500 ha in just forty years. In addition, coastal erosion threatens our coasts and our cities. And all of these direct pressures are further exacerbated by climate change, the effects of which are even more evident in already vulnerable areas.

Yet, despite these enormous and growing threats, it can be difficult to convince people and governments in Africa to manage protected areas, when basic human services are still woefully inadequate. Still, we are cognizant of the fact that sound ecosystems provide invaluable benefits to humankind. Wetlands absorb flood waters. Meadows provide pastureland. Forests provide myriad products and benefits for local populations and global benefits in terms of biodiversity and carbon. And of course let us not forget that we are fortunate to still have—for now—unique plant and animal species that are part of our heritage. But what will we tell our elders who passed this land down to us? What will we tell our grandchildren if we hand over an empty, exhausted and unproductive landscape to them? Can you imagine an Africa without elephants? Without lions? Without antelopes? We have a duty to protect and manage this heritage.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. For almost 20 years, the Global Environment Facility has been supporting our biodiversity conservation efforts, which have helped make it possible to achieve some balance between conservation and development. Many of these activities are discussed in this publication. However, in light of the current threats to our countries, these efforts need to be scaled up and replicated in all political, economic and social sectors, in order to achieve sustainable development as quickly as possible.

This expansion of effort is the aim of the ambitious Great Green Wall Initiative, which we launched in Africa to protect our lands against desertification and degradation. We sincerely thank the Global Environment Facility for its support of this initiative. I ask all Northern countries to increase GEF resources, to allow the GEF to continue to lead the battle for the restoration of the environment and natural resources, in Africa and around the world.

The time for action is now.



# Foreword



**Monique Barbut**  
CEO and Chairperson  
Global Environment Facility

*The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is the world's largest funding mechanism for biodiversity conservation and protected areas. In West and Central Africa, the GEF has a robust portfolio: we have invested \$290 million in 75 biodiversity projects, and leveraged nearly three times more in co-financing from outside sources. This publication details some important successes in West and Central Africa, and highlights lessons we have learned to help countries more effectively manage biodiversity and invest GEF resources. Programs for sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests and biodiversity conservation in West Africa were instrumental in developing better-coordinated approaches and making the GEF an effective vehicle to drive country ownership. The countries of these two regions have seen a dramatic shift in recent years: in a region that once had little investment prior to the development of regional programmatic approaches in GEF-4, there are now nearly 30 projects worth more than \$87.5 million.*

Given that 2010 has been designated as the International Year of Biodiversity, this publication is also timely in that it details what we hope is a bright future for biodiversity conservation in Africa. Significant investments have been made and results achieved: the coverage of protected areas now exceeds 12 percent of total land area in the Congo Basin, countries have developed new legal and regulatory frameworks, and we are seeing many other successes in achieving conservation and development, at times under difficult circumstances, such as in Liberia and Guinea Bissau.

During GEF-4, we sought to increase our impact, and donors responded with an unprecedented replenishment of \$4.25 billion (a 52-percent increase) for GEF-5. These donors recognized that the GEF is well-suited to help countries tackle the myriad problems facing biodiversity and to address all areas that impact biodiversity, including public policies, zoning, economic and social development, and others. Biodiversity must not—and cannot—be addressed separately or viewed as a constraint by the other sectors. We must ensure that biodiversity is one of the top priorities on the agenda of countries and donors, find synergies between development and conservation, demonstrate innovation, and work in large enough areas to effectively test various types of protection and management methods based on the prevailing local situation. Additionally we must draw lessons from previous years to improve efficiency in the field. Partnerships will also have to be reexamined, in particular at the local level.

When people ask me what I foresee for the future, I answer that I am optimistic about biodiversity conservation in general and Africa in particular. This publication is a clarion call for our partners to renew our commitment to the next generation by working together to build a sustainable future.

BY THE

# numbers:

Since its creation, the GEF has directly

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invested more than **\$290 million**  
and leveraged another **\$933 million**  
of co-financing in West and Central Africa  
to support biodiversity.

The GEF has supported

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**75 projects**  
in **23 countries.**

In West Africa, **22 biodiversity projects**

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were approved in **17 countries**

over the past two years (18 projects under the Strategic Program for West Africa), using

**\$37.4 million** in GEF grants and leveraging more than  
**\$133 million** in co-financing

# GEF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

The Small Grant Programme, a well recognized agent, has

invested **\$37.6 million**  
in **1,152 projects** in the region.

Resources devoted to least developed countries (LDCs)  
and small island states (SIDS) has

increased from **11.9%** in GEF-3 to **18.4%** in GEF-4,  
with particular attention to climate change adaptation.

The people of these nations, while the least responsible for the effects  
of climate change, are some of the most vulnerable to its consequences.

In the six Congo Basin countries, a GEF-4 program  
on sustainable forest management

incorporated **13 projects**  
using **\$50.1 million**  
in GEF grants with another **\$167 million**

leveraged from other sources. This programmatic approach  
helped highlight the importance of forests and their multiple  
roles in protecting biodiversity, providing local income and  
combating the impacts of climate change.





# Introduction

This publication highlights the GEF's evolving programmatic approach to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in West and Central Africa. The first section reviews the benefits of the programmatic approach, which involves funding a related set of multiple projects through a phased and multi-year commitment, and GEF's focus on sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin and biodiversity conservation in West Africa. The benefits of this approach include the improvement of project cycle management, partnership arrangements and an increased ability to leverage co-financing.

The next section highlights some results from successful GEF-2 and GEF-3 projects<sup>1</sup> in the Congo Basin and West Africa. The projects included in this document were chosen with an emphasis on:

- 1) capacity building at national and local levels (Democratic Republic of Congo, Cape Verde, Ghana);
- 2) long-term GEF strategic investments at the national (Guinea Bissau) and regional (Congo Basin forests, West African savannas) scales; and
- 3) investments in thematic areas of particular importance in the sub-region (such as fragile and post conflict settings, corridor and buffer zone management, management effectiveness in the field, and empowerment of traditional authorities).

Beyond projects that focus solely on biodiversity conservation, approaches that sought to generate multiple environmental benefits have also shown promising results in West and Central Africa, on such issues as the management of large marine ecosystems, ecosystem approaches for river basins and wetlands management, adaptation to climate change, land-use planning, and sustainable land management.

This document concludes with a short synthesis of lessons learned from these projects and the programmatic approach which provides strategic direction for GEF-5 in fostering greater country ownership and promotes long-term conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in West and Central Africa.

<sup>1</sup> GEF funding cycles are four-years long: GEF-2 project concepts were approved from July 1998 to June 2002, GEF-3 project concepts from July 2002 to June 2006, and GEF-4 project concepts from 2006 to 2010. The time from concept approval to the endorsement or approval of the full project documents averaged about 44 months through GEF-3. Under GEF-4, a maximum of 22 months is targeted for Full-Size Projects (beyond US\$1 million) and 12 months for Medium-Size Projects (below US\$1 million).



## GEF Support to Biodiversity Conservation in West and Central Africa

Biodiversity conservation in West and Central Africa presents a difficult challenge, given the levels of poverty and the institutional challenges in developing countries that still lack the capacity to efficiently implement conservation programs. About 75 percent of the poorest people in this region live in rural areas, where most depend on agriculture and related activities to survive. Habitat destruction, overexploitation of natural resources, invasive species and pollution all directly threaten the ecosystems on which these populations depend. Indirect factors, including demographics, global economic trends, governance, legal frameworks, science and technology, and cultural and religious values also play a role in natural resource degradation. Furthermore, all existing threats and pressures are exacerbated by global climate change, which is expected to impact biodiversity, species dominance, and ecosystem functioning.

Yet, conserving the unique and rich biodiversity of West and Central Africa is vital not just for the lives and futures of the people of this region but also for the global environment and the global community. At the global level, current rates of extinction have never been so high: experts warn that we are facing a period of extinction not seen since the dinosaurs disappeared 65 million years ago.

As the world's largest funder of projects to improve the environment and preserve biodiversity, the GEF plays an active role in helping to conserve and protect biodiversity in West and Central Africa. The GEF's unique and critical work has a life-saving, game-changing impact on communities worldwide, particularly in this region that has such strong emotional and economic ties to the land. The GEF projects discussed in this publication help countries throughout West and Central Africa preserve natural resources that deliver multiple environmental and economic benefits both for local populations and for the world.

## Improving GEF Performance through Programmatic Approaches

The GEF was created to fulfill a unique niche—providing financing to developing countries for programs that achieve global environmental benefits and support sustainable development. In short, the GEF invests locally for global impact. Every project is intended to be a country-driven opportunity to meet the program priorities of a relevant international environment agreement.

Over nearly two decades, the GEF has had extensive experience around the world in furthering the objective of securing and enhancing global environmental objectives through local projects. As a result of this experience in the field, the GEF has learned a vital lesson: when looking to secure long-term financial support for a conservation objective, it can be more effective to consider an integrated set of multiple projects, funded through a phased and multi-year commitment. This type of “programmatic” approach is flexible and can be adapted to fit different contexts or situations.

In West and Central Africa, the programmatic approach has also been a way to attract targeted co-funding from interested donors that are looking to make the most impact in a climate of shrinking financial resources. The programmatic approach is consistent with the GEF’s strong operational mandate to “manage for results,” in order to maximize on-the-ground impacts.



Today, the GEF is moving much of its efforts in this direction, in order to be responsive to the growing calls to act synergistically across global environmental issues and to use resources most cost effectively.

During the last funding cycle of GEF-4 (2006 -2010), the GEF learned that partnership arrangements are crucial for the success of these broader programs. Integrating the activities of various stakeholder groups (including bilateral cooperation agencies, multilateral institutions and banks, civil society, the scientific community and the private sector) within a common and agreed framework, lowers transaction costs and allows the comparative advantage of each partner to be fully leveraged and revealed.

## The Programmatic Approach in West and Central Africa

In West and Central Africa, the programmatic approach has led to the development of two major program areas: (1) sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin and (2) the linking of biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction in West Africa.

### SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE CONGO BASIN

The Strategic Program for Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin was initiated after the Tropical Forest Account, a GEF pilot incentive mechanism to highlight the multiple benefits of forest conservation and management, was announced in December 2007 at the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali, Indonesia. In February 2008, the governments of the Congo Basin region endorsed a plan to collaboratively prepare a programmatic approach to sustainable forest management based on three key goals:

- Improving the effectiveness of protected areas management in more than 20 sites covering nine million hectares, in order to protect ecosystem functions and values. This will involve the creation of at least five new protected areas and the assessment of on-the-ground investments and results in key biodiversity hotspots, such as Maïko in the Democratic Republic of Congo or Bioko Island in Equatorial Guinea.



- Mainstreaming biodiversity issues into the management of more than two million hectares to foster sustainable management and use of natural resources in the productive landscapes of the Congo Basin. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will develop pilot initiatives on mangroves in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo and will work to address bushmeat issues in the region.
- Reinforcing the institutional and sustainable financing framework of sustainable forest management in the region. In all regional projects, the Commission of Ministers of Central African Forests (COMIFAC) will be part of the process to ensure that all projects are compatible with the master “convergence” plan.
- Enhancement of protected area management in more than 40 protected areas, including 11 new classified sites, covering a total of around 10 million hectares.
- Improvement of policy and legislative frameworks to support mainstreaming of biodiversity issues in at least six countries, with field projects impacting about 20 million hectares, which will test different governance systems to empower local communities in protected area management.
- Reduction of poverty through different social and economic incentives in buffer zones, corridors and other transition areas.

## LINKING BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN WEST AFRICA

The programmatic approach to biodiversity conservation in West Africa officially began in May 2008, when the ministers and heads of delegations from the region who attended the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity Conservation in Bonn, Germany, met to endorse a system of program priorities and outlines. Regional experts and partners then met in Cotonou, Benin, in August 2008 to create a regional program that would develop protected area networks, promote sustainable use of natural resources and reduce poverty among communities living around protected areas. Among the expected results of this approach are:

## The Benefits of the Programmatic Approach

Taking an integrated, programmatic approach to sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation issues has had some very specific benefits in West and Central Africa, including:

- Securing \$90 million in grants to work on forest and biodiversity issues in a region that has had recurring difficulties accessing GEF resources;
- Developing projects for each country in a time of severe under-programming; during the first two years of GEF-4, the region increased programming from



zero to 13 projects on sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin and 18 projects on biodiversity conservation in West Africa financed by the GEF; and

- Increasing country ownership on GEF issues: each project idea has been proposed and approved following a national process that is laid out in a ministerial-level roadmap for each program.

It is too soon to determine any long-term lessons from the field for these two programs, given that most of the projects are just in the beginning stages of implementation. However, the process of preparing programs and projects in West and Central Africa has opened up an opportunity to facilitate a constructive dialogue between countries and their partners that continues to have important benefits, including:

- The level of engagement of GEF-4 biodiversity resources in the region has been the highest for the global portfolio on biodiversity;
- The average co-financing ratio (a recurring challenge for countries in the region) has been 1:3.3, slightly higher than the expected target of 1:3; and
- The length of the project cycle has been dramatically improved, with projects moving many months faster than the fixed target of 22 months, and far better than past experiences, in which the project cycle times were often as slow as 44 months.

These positive results were also highlighted at a high-level meeting in Cotonou, Benin, in February 2010, where several ministers of environment from the region

endorsed the GEF's programmatic approach in a formal declaration. This declaration then contributed to the development of a framework for future investment that the GEF expects to move forward with for GEF-5.

## Examples of GEF-financed Biodiversity Conservation Activities in West and Central Africa

The following are a few examples of successful GEF-2 and GEF-3 projects that provided useful lessons for the development of the programmatic approach in GEF-4, as well as promising and innovative GEF-4 projects that seek to improve the synergies between conservation and development in West and Central Africa. The key elements of these individual projects, which are now integral to the programmatic approaches being implemented, include:

- Effective partnership building between the public sector, the private sector and NGOs;
- The development of innovative financing mechanisms;
- Support for livelihood strategies that are economically viable;
- Recognition of the importance of traditional management of natural resources;

- The use of science to address biodiversity management challenges; and
- Incorporation of the impact of climate change into the design and management of protected area networks.

## CENTRAL AFRICA

### *Empowering institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

The key to successful development of protected areas in the Democratic Republic of Congo is a concerted partnership between the private, public and non-profit sectors to build a framework that empowers local people and gives them a direct stake in their own long-term success. While the protection of gorillas and other species in the region may seem glamorous in news accounts, the reality is much different. Building or rehabilitating local governance to manage protected areas is hard and necessary work that requires constant communication to create the administrative and financial procedures that make for an effective project, and ultimately an effective protected area.

In this setting, the GEF has an important comparative advantage over other public funds, because it works with all stakeholders to streamline bureaucracy and get the job done in a fair and transparent way.

The GEF project Supporting National Authorities in Managing Environmental Challenges in Democratic Republic of Congo aimed to restore the capacity of the

Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) to empower authorities to preserve the country's rich biological diversity (Congo Basin Strategic Program (CBSP)- Rehabilitation of Protected Areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; GEF: \$6.332 million; co-financing: \$13.644 million). Under GEF's guidance, project managers helped draft landmark environmental legislation, now pending before the National Parliament. A National Strategy for Community Conservation has also been formulated, to promote a more collaborative process for managing local protected areas. For example, infrastructure was built and basic equipment provided at five protected areas sites. Project organizers also developed a communication strategy to promote protected areas conservation through the creation of an ICCN website and posters presenting the rich biodiversity of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

According to the managing director general of the ICCN, the involvement of the GEF, through United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), has significantly strengthened the ICCN's institutional and technical capacity and improved its image with partners. The adoption of a manual of administrative and financial procedures was considered a huge step toward building trust between ICCN and its partners, including the World Bank, the European Union and German Society for Technical Cooperation. At the project's last Steering Committee meeting, in February 2010, the project participants recommended a new GEF project submission to support the consolidation of the Democratic Republic of Congo's protected areas system.

### *Protecting gorillas and other flagship species through protected area networks*

Through various investments in protected areas projects in the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the GEF has made a commitment to help preserve forest protected areas as a way to protect flagship species, such as gorillas, in Central Africa. The GEF has honored its commitment to the protected areas in times of both peace and conflict. For example, during a particularly difficult period of civil unrest and war in Congo, the GEF maintained its support for the development of four critical conservation areas (Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, Conkouati-Douli National Park, Lac Télé/Likouala-aux-Herbes Community Reserve and Lefini/Lesio-Louna Forest Reserve), despite disruptions to implementation through the Wildlands Protection and Management project (GEF: \$10.112 million; co-financing: \$3.8 million).



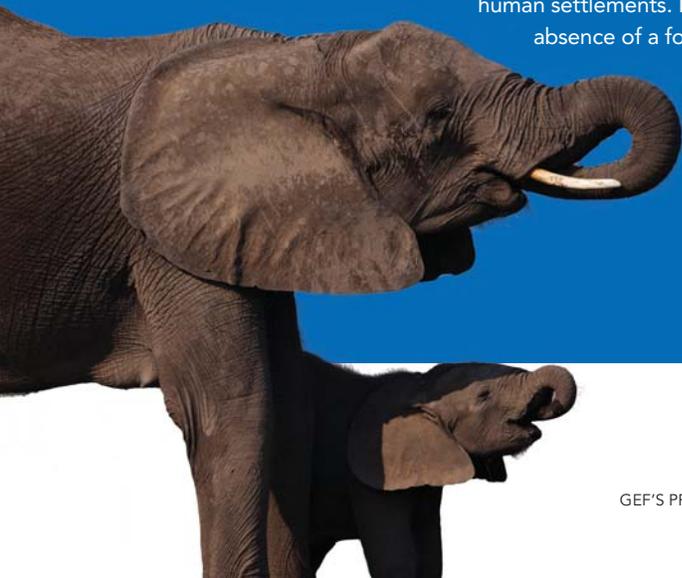


### BOX 1: Land-use planning in the Tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé landscape (TRIDOM)

The Tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) landscape is a 147,000 km<sup>2</sup> transboundary complex of nine protected areas and a central interzone that spans the borders of Cameroon, Republic of Congo and Gabon in Central Africa. It encompasses part of the Congo Basin tropical rainforest and is home to key wildlife species, such as elephants, great apes, crocodiles, otters and giant hornbills. The globally significant biodiversity of the area has been increasingly threatened over many years by commercial hunting for bush meat and ivory, timber exploitation and mining, and accompanying infrastructure projects such as roads, railways, hydroelectric dams and human settlements. In the absence of a focused

intervention to address these underlying threats, it is likely that degradation and fragmentation of the interzone forest will continue, causing the existing protected areas to lose the biological links between them. The protected areas would then eventually become biological islands, which would lead to local extinctions, reduction of biodiversity, disruption of biological processes, genetic isolation and the loss and impairment of global environmental benefits.

In order to provide the governments of Cameroon, Republic of Congo, and Gabon with the instruments they need to jointly manage the natural resources of the TRIDOM area, UNDP/GEF project managers are working with policy-makers to develop a master land-use plan that will establish conservation areas, ecological corridors and separate zones for permanent forest extractive industries, rural development, and community forests, and wildlife management. This effort is being supported through the GEF project, Conservation of Transboundary Biodiversity in the Dja-Odzala-Minkébé Interzone in Gabon, Congo, and Cameroon (GEF: \$10.463 million; co-financing: \$34.62 million).





In Uganda, the GEF and the World Bank have been instrumental in providing support for long-term conservation, first with the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Mgahinga National Park project in 1995 (GEF: \$4 million; co-financing: \$2.310 million) and continuing in 1999 with the Protected Area Management and Sustainable Use project (PAMSU; GEF: \$8 million; co-financing: \$30 million). The project, which will be closed in 2010, has built successful partnerships among international and Ugandan partners. The Bwindi Trust, the first conservation trust fund in Africa, is considered a model in the region. Poaching has been eliminated in Bwindi and populations of gorillas have increased, helping to bring in critical tourist revenues. Protected areas boundaries have all been delimited, and the Uganda Wildlife Authority, with a staff of 1,300, remains well-equipped and trained.

In Rwanda, tourism has emerged as the country's top foreign currency earner and export sector, providing 23 percent of revenue, far more than the coffee and tea sectors, which bring in 11 percent and eight percent of revenues respectively. Visitation to Rwanda's national parks has grown from 417 people in 1999 to 43,000 in

2008, greatly increasing employment opportunities for Rwandans. A portion of these tourism revenues are invested into local community projects.

Given that all these countries face common challenges in protecting their forests and flagship species, it is apparent that cooperative efforts and approaches are necessary to protect gorilla groups in Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The World Bank is now implementing a GEF-4 project for the Mikeno sector of the Virunga National Park and the Garamba National Park in a region that has suffered from civil war and ongoing militia activity (Support to the ICCN's Program for the Rehabilitation of the Democratic Republic of Congo's National Parks Network; GEF: \$7.280 million; co-financing: \$48.600 million).

More broadly, at the Congo Basin level, the GEF is supporting the development of protected area networks in Equatorial Guinea (CBSP-Strengthening the National System of Protected Areas in Equatorial Guinea for the Effective Conservation of Representative Ecosystems and Globally Significant Biodiversity; GEF: \$1.818 million; co-financing: \$4.450 million) and Central Africa



West African countries, including Cote d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau and Benin, and in the Congo Basin through a pilot sub-project in Gabon.

In the Congo Basin, a strategy developed by UNDP with the support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is evaluating and testing pilot sustainable financing mechanisms at the regional level through the project (CBSP—Sustainable Financing of Protected Area Systems in the Congo Basin; GEF: \$8.521 million; co-financing: \$50.6 million). A pilot national trust fund will be developed in one of the six countries, while a feasibility study will assess whether a regional trust fund is a possible option for the Congo Basin. A transboundary approach will be developed, probably around the TRIDOM complex (see Box 1) to reinforce existing conservation efforts, and all main protected areas will benefit from a common business plan.

Another part of the GEF's portfolio for the area includes a \$13-million regional project on REDD+<sup>2</sup> that is currently being prepared by the World Bank, under the coordination of the African Forestry Commission (COMIFAC) and with the strong support of the six Congo Basin countries. The project, Enhancing Institutional Capacities on REDD issues for Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin (GEF: \$13.339 million; co-financing: \$13.180 million), is also part of the CBSP and aims to build on country-level activities on REDD, strengthen institutional capacities to develop sound policies and incentive frameworks to efficiently reduce pressure on forest ecosystems in the Congo Basin, and reliably measure carbon

fluxes. At the national level, the GEF will reinforce this work through dialogue with specific stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and the private sector. The regional approach will foster coordination and "real-time" knowledge sharing and dissemination among Congo Basin countries.

The project will also pilot field projects to define models that can be scaled-up to the landscape, national and

(CBSP-Strengthened Management of the National Protected Areas System through Involvement of Local Communities GEF: \$1.832; co-financing: \$2.350 million), including development of legal frameworks, capacity building, sustainable financing and investments, and increased presence in the field. The GEF is also providing support on protection of key landscapes around Tele and Tumba Lakes between the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo (CBSP-Catalyzing Sustainable Forest Management in the Lake Tele-Lake Tumba (LTLT) Transboundary Wetland Landscape, GEF: \$2.272 million: co-financing: \$6.6 million), Ngoyla Mintom in Cameroon (GEF: \$3.5 million: co-financing: \$6.5 million), and Maïko National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (GEF: 6 million; co-financing: \$62 million).

### **Exploring innovative sustainable financing mechanisms for conservation**

Several projects in the Sub-Saharan Africa region are focused on assessing different and innovative options to develop sustainable financing mechanisms for biodiversity conservation in the region. Trust funds have already been developed or supported in several

2 REDD+: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of forests, including conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.



regional levels. These efforts will contribute to the creation of methodologies to reliably measure carbon sequestered and stored in forests and emitted from deforestation or forest degradation, as well as build capacity for carbon measurement at the national level.

In other efforts, stakeholders are pursuing innovative options to finance trust funds with taxes or REDD incomes. UNDP is supporting Gabon, in partnership with WCS, in testing a Payment for Environmental Services system in the Mbé River basin (CBSP-Sustainable Management of the Mbe River Forested Watershed through the Development of a Payments for Ecosystem

Services (PES) Mechanism; GEF: \$950,000; co-financing: \$2.950 million). Other field projects, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon, will explore different options to develop such systems in the surrounding areas or buffer zones of protected areas.

Finally, the option of working with the private sector to develop trust funds and/or biodiversity offsets is being explored in the region. In Mauritania and Nigeria, UNDP is working with the oil and gas sector to develop such mechanisms, while United Nations Environment Programme also is exploring similar public-private partnerships in the Congo Basin.



## WEST AFRICA

### *Protecting biodiversity in fragile and post-conflict settings: The Liberia experience*

Liberia holds a majority stake (43 percent) of the largest remaining proportion of the Upper Guinean Ecosystem in West Africa. In addition to the impressive reserves of carbon held in these forests, Liberia is also a biodiversity-rich country, boasting the highest mammal species diversity of any region in the world, as well as more than 2,000 flowering plants (225 timber species) and 600 bird species.

As often happens in times of conflict, Liberia's rich forests were tapped as a revenue source to fund armaments during the country's devastating civil war and its aftermath. This exploitation led to United Nations timber sanctions. Lifting of the sanctions in 2006 was predicated on an ambitious forestry reform process that has since become the envy of other countries. The process was underwritten and supported by the Liberia Forest Initiative, an informal grouping of international partners, including the Government of the United States, the European Commission, the FAO, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Conservation International, Fauna and Flora International, the World Bank, and others, working in partnership with the Liberian Forestry Development Authority.

Through this program, stakeholders realized that the optimal use of forest resources comes from a more balanced and integrated approach, dubbed the "3-C" approach, for the commercial, community and conservation uses that became the key driving principles for Liberia's new forest policy. GEF investments in the country are pegged to this protected area approach, which aims to balance forest conservation with sustainable commercial forestry and equitable access, utilization and benefit sharing by local communities.

Yet despite important successes, including the creation of Sapo National Park under a GEF-3 project (Establishing the Basis for Biodiversity Conservation on Sapo National Park and in South-East Liberia; GEF: \$1 million; co-financing: \$1.439 million) Liberia's forests are still threatened by illegal activities such as artisanal mining and bushmeat hunting. The continuing pressures on the country's natural resources are a reminder that it is important to develop long-term and sustainable solutions to manage protected areas, and to ensure that local communities are committed to sustainable development. Projects now being considered are expected to expand Liberia's protected area network to include five new areas and to allow local

communities to increase their participation in wildlife management, enhance their awareness of forest conservation issues and develop alternative sources of livelihood to reduce rural dependence on forests and wildlife (COPAN and EXPAN<sup>3</sup>, respectively \$806,000 and \$950,000 from the GEF; and \$6.630 million and \$9.168 million from co-financing).

### *Supporting community livelihood strategies in biological corridors in Ghana and Burkina Faso*

Through the establishment of biological corridors, the Ghana Northern Savanna Biodiversity project (GEF: \$7.93 million; co-financing: \$39.9 million) and the Burkina Faso Partnership for Ecosystem Management project (GEF: \$18.75 million; co-financing: \$25 million) are breaking new ground in sustainable development in West Africa.

These GEF projects, implemented by the World Bank, pioneered the concept of biodiversity conservation in productive landscapes. Using transboundary spatial planning, the GEF directed project managers to focus on activities in productive landscapes that allow these biological corridors to remain intact from a biodiversity perspective while simultaneously supporting livelihood strategies for nearby communities, including agroforestry, bee-keeping, shea-butter production, ecotourism, medicinal plants cultivation and the reintroduction of indigenous crops that are more drought resistant and have higher nutritional value than what is now commonly grown. Through catalytic GEF investments, both countries have reported positive results that conserve biodiversity in local productive landscapes, create new wildlife corridors and build a better quality of life.

In Ghana, stakeholders faced the challenge of balancing the needs of the local and national governments. Within such a multi-disciplinary project, addressing cross-cutting issues related to biodiversity conservation, forest reserves, sustainable agriculture activities in



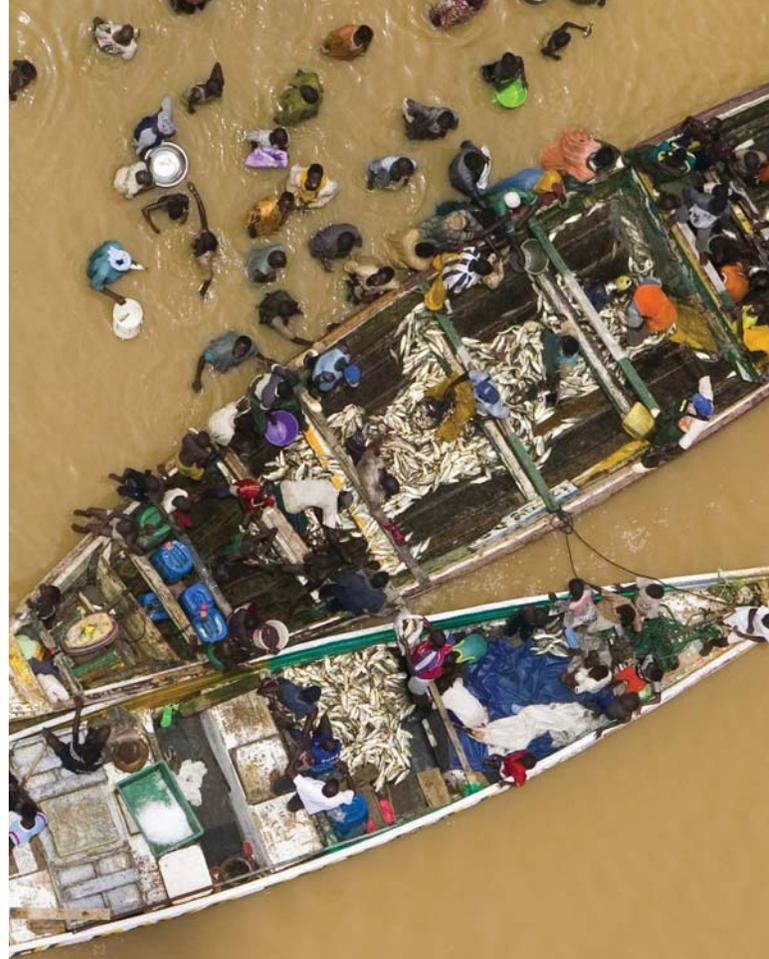
3 COPAN: Consolidation of the Protected Area Network; EXPAN: Expansion of the Protected Area Network).

degraded lands and micro-development activities posed a challenge to project managers. The potential conflicts were avoided innovatively through collaboration between national and local agencies in the Savanna Resource Center, which proved instrumental to the project's success. Employees from different sectors were seconded full time to the center, which is based in Tamale. By working in partnership with several civil society organizations, Ghana's public institutions have been able to effectively reach out and support many rural communities that otherwise would not have been reached. Multi-focal area GEF projects will build on this experience by improving protected area network effectiveness, while sustainable land management projects will in turn focus on the areas surrounding these same protected areas.

### ***Moving conservation from words to action in Cape Verde***

In Cape Verde, an innovative GEF project helped support the nation's first two protected areas: the Serra Malagueta National Park and the Monte Gordo Natural Park (Integrated Participatory Ecosystem Management In and Around Protected Areas, GEF: \$3.585 million; co-financing: \$6.186 million). Both parks are home to many endemic and threatened flora and fauna species that are threatened by uncontrolled use and land clearance, as well as invasive non-native species. The Serra Malagueta project site includes the most significant forest zones in the Serra Malagueta mountain range, which runs through the north and northeastern part of Santiago Island. The Monte Gordo site, in the western mountains of São Nicolau, includes a large representative sample of a humid ecosystem, as well as one of the most important agricultural mountain ecosystems on Cape Verde.

The project provided staff and equipment to the two parks to help protect the country's rich biological resources for future generations. A key component of the GEF project has been to involve adjacent communities and other stakeholders to integrate shared management of natural resources and promote alternative livelihoods and awareness-raising at all levels. Approval from key stakeholders was achieved through a comprehensive effort targeting the entire community that included education programs in schools, the use of mass media, and the systematic building of political and local support



### **Box 2: A multi-country strategy for supporting international river basins**

The Senegal River is the second longest river in West Africa (1,800 km), and its basin spans 300,000 km<sup>2</sup> in four riparian countries: Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. About 12 million people live in the river basin, largely concentrated near the river. For a priority basin such as this, the GEF, with the support of the World Bank and UNDP, developed a strategic and systematic approach that reinforces national authorities and installs a regional entity to address priority issues to generate multiple benefits and contribute to the larger vision of sustainable growth. Among the goals of the approach are reducing land degradation and its impacts, enhancing food security through improved irrigation and land management, reducing pollution, sustaining efficient hydropower production, protecting biodiversity and wetlands, improving data collection and information sharing, and developing participatory practices to strengthen local communities.



for the two protected areas. Today, park managers work in partnership with local authorities and businesses through site committees at each park.

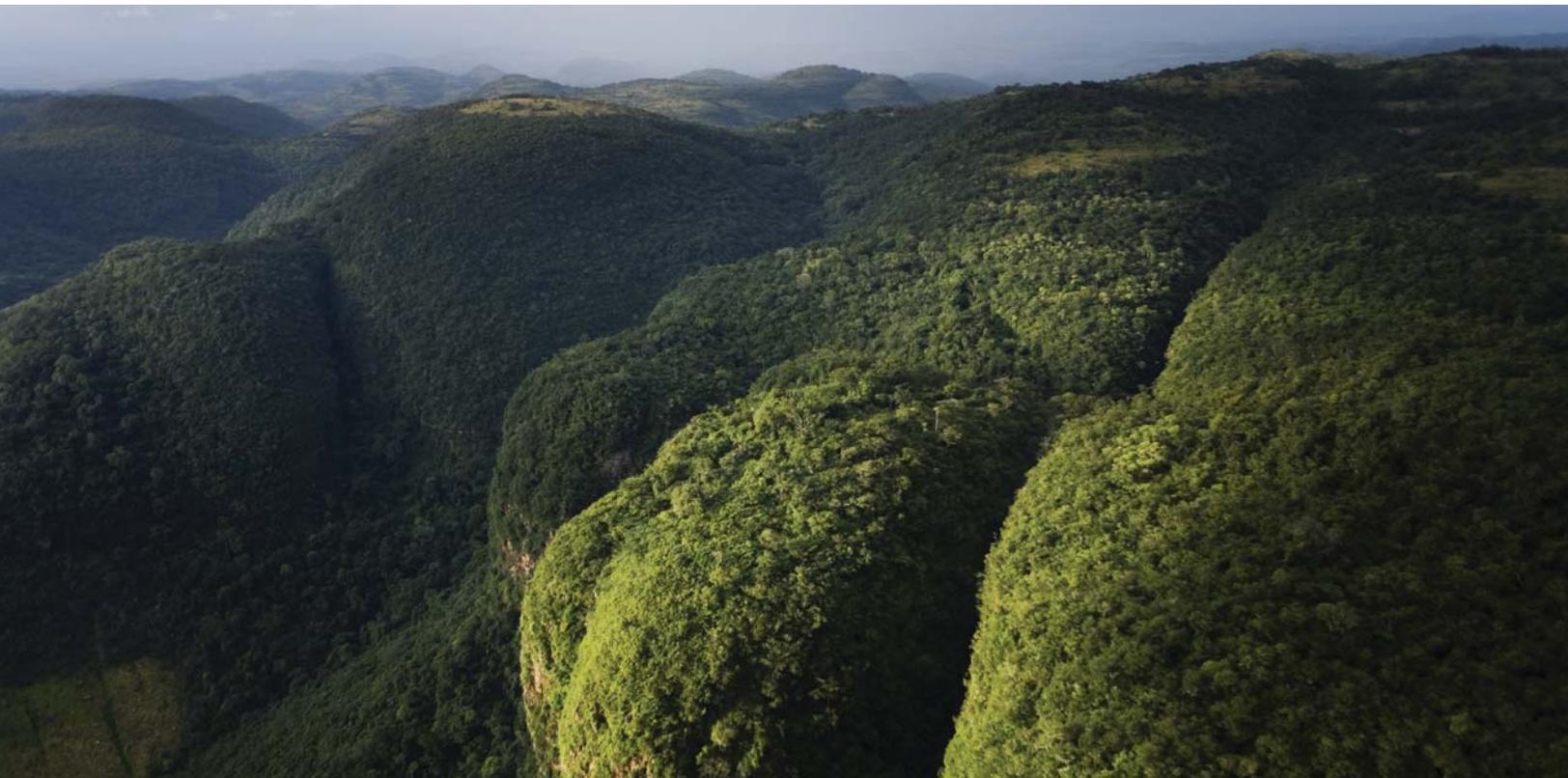
After promising results, a critical challenge now is to find ways to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the project achievements, while maintaining national confidence in the process. UNDP has been working with local and national authorities to prepare a GEF-4 project that will be implemented by the end of 2010 to consolidate the protected area network and improve the management effectiveness in four other protected areas and three consolidated marine protected areas (Strategic Program for West Africa (SPWA) Consolidation of Cape Verde's Protected Areas System, \$3.387 million; co-financing: \$14.245 million). It is the view of the GEF that this collaborative model of sustainable development has the potential to be replicated outside Cape Verde and the region.

### **Linking "sacred forests" and traditions to the Benin protected area network**

Benin is a country small in size but rich in biodiversity. The country's ecosystems include savannahs in the north

along the border with Burkina Faso and Niger, sparsely forested grazing lands, woodland savannah in the center intertwined with cotton plantations, and a mosaic of agricultural landscapes amid coastal lagoons in the south. These landscapes have been extensively managed and utilized for centuries in Benin, a tradition that created unique and resilient ecosystems. Across the entire country, near towns and villages, there are scattered patches of forest and tree groves of primary religious, ethno-botanical and conservation significance known as "forêts sacrées" or sacred forests.

However, under growing demographic and social pressures, many of these sacred forests are disappearing. Others maintain a fragile status as sites for traditional "voodoo" religious practices and as natural gardens for the collection of plant materials for traditional medicine, which is widely practiced across Benin. A GEF project (SPWA - Incorporation of Sacred Forests into the Protected Areas System of Benin; GEF: \$1 million; co-financing: \$5 million), implemented by UNDP, aims to incorporate the most significant sacred forests into the national system of protected areas, through the involvement of national authorities, municipal governments, traditional authorities and civil society. Giving legal status to areas



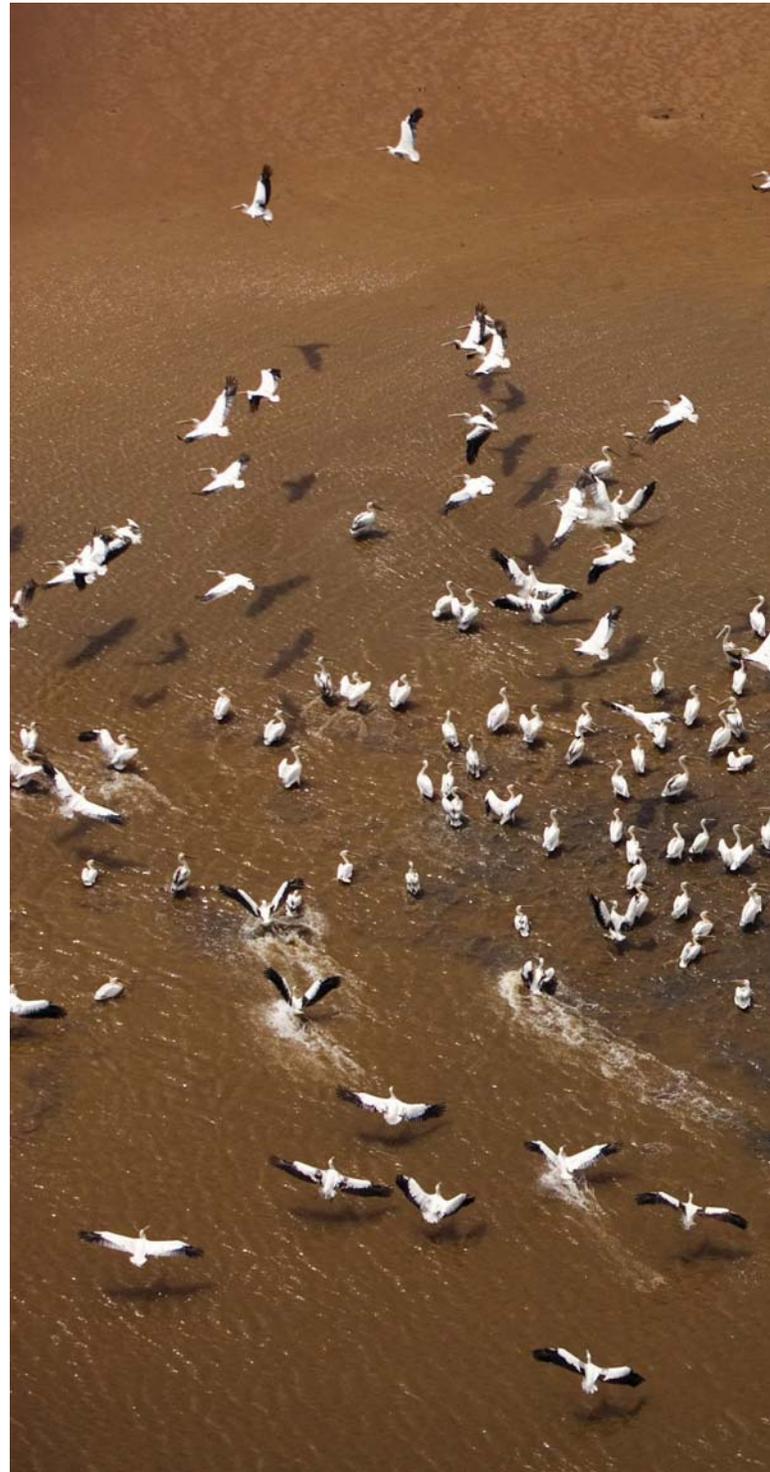
that have been managed for sacred beliefs means recognizing the role of traditions in the protection and the wise use of natural resources—linking traditions to modern rules. Beninese authorities are also promoting participatory management strategies to sustain wise uses of natural resources, including the production of medicinal plants and materials and the improvement of the livelihood of surrounding communities. Reviving good practices based on traditional management of natural resources and linking them to the modern governance system is an important innovation that could be replicated outside Benin and West Africa.

***Increasing the dialogue between scientists, site managers and local communities***

The completed UNEP-UNESCO-MAB-GEF Project “Building Scientific and Technical Capacity for Effective management and sustainable use of dryland biodiversity in West Africa Biosphere Reserves” was implemented in six West African countries (Burkina Faso, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal) that had identified Biosphere Reserves<sup>4</sup> as effective tools for the in-situ conservation of savannah ecosystems (GEF: \$2.750 million; co-financing: \$3.829 million).

This partnership strengthened scientific and technical capacity for effective management of the biosphere reserves and drew on established science to influence decisions on how to share these natural resources. Specifically, the project made extensive use of the African Network of Biosphere Reserves (AfrimAB)—in particular the sub-regional AfrimAB network for West Africa—for regional technical and scientific information exchange, capacity building and sharing of lessons learned.

An independent evaluation of this project contracted by UNEP found it to be “one of the best regional projects the evaluator has seen in Africa owing to the extremely strong regional component, the commitment and camaraderie of the managers and staff, the increased sense of trust and cooperation between the stakeholders (the national Focal Points, the Reserve Managers and staff, the scientific staff), the support from and strong coordination of UNESCO, but above all, from the involvement of the communities around the Biosphere Reserves.”



4 A Biosphere Reserve is type of conservation area designated by UNESCO in an attempt to establish an international network of protected areas encompassing examples of all the Earth's major vegetation and physiographic types.



***The GEF story in Guinea Bissau:  
a country-driven partnership***

In the early 1990s, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Swiss government were among the first partners to support Guinea Bissau and its vision to build a protected areas network to conserve biodiversity. Soon after, the GEF began its own investments in the country, starting with capacity-building activities developed by the UNDP. Then, in 2005, the GEF, World Bank and the European Commission established the Coastal and Biodiversity Management Project (GEF: \$4.8 million; co-financing: \$6.31 million).

This project consolidated management responsibility for protected areas in Guinea-Bissau under a single umbrella: the Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP). The project also funded local initiatives to create environmentally friendly development programs in communities in and around the parks. Under the project, IBAP consolidated its management efforts in the terrestrial Lagoas de Cufada National Park and the three national marine protected areas (Cacheu, Joao Vieira and Poilão, and

Orango) and established a new protected area, Cantanhez National Park.

With GEF support, management plans and specific action plans were developed for chimpanzees, marine turtles and mangroves. Today, more than 70,000 people living around the five national parks benefit directly from project investments that have developed income-generating activities, such as fish processing or sustainable wetland rice production. Project monitoring and evaluation procedures have shown that 78 percent of grants have satisfactorily achieved their objectives.

This demonstration of leadership in Guinea Bissau has now become a model for the entire region. Local leaders now understand firsthand that there are huge economic as well as environmental benefits to conserving biodiversity. Economic development and biodiversity conservation need not be mutually exclusive, provided the development of a national strategy is a country-driven process, with the coordinated support of donors and partners. Today, GEF support is helping to expand the nation's protected area





network to include the terrestrial areas of the Dulombi-Boé forest complex. The GEF is also supporting the creation of a long-term financing mechanism for managing Guinea-Bissau's parks and biodiversity through a conservation trust fund.

### **Improving large marine ecosystems and sustaining local fishing communities**

With the help of GEF grants, countries bordering large marine ecosystems in Sub-Saharan Africa are working together to improve fisheries management and reduce poverty. The *Strategic Partnership for a Sustainable Fisheries Investment Fund in the Large Marine Ecosystems of Sub-Saharan Africa* plays a catalytic role in leveraging efforts to support sustainable seascapes, including efficient fisheries management, increased public awareness about marine ecosystems and an improved quality of life for poor fishing communities.

In Senegal, for example, there are ongoing efforts under the "Integrated Coastal and Maritime Resource Management Project" (GEF: \$5 million; World Bank: \$10 million) to ensure the conservation and management of Senegal's marine and coastal ecosystems through pilot initiatives in community-based fisheries resource management and community-based management of parks and protected areas.

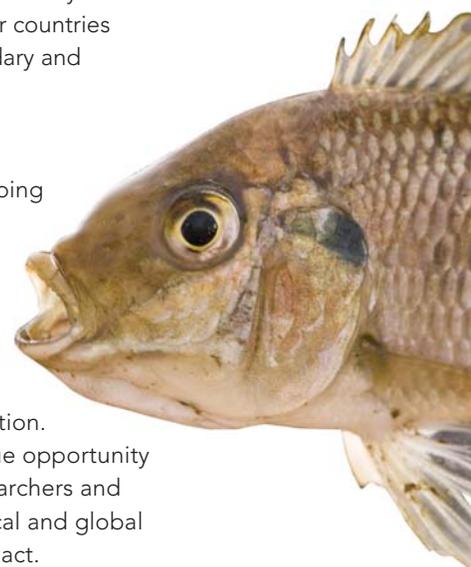
The road to success can be challenging for complex and multi-institutional projects, but so far the results of this project have been very encouraging; initial results from four pilot sites are already showing an increased shrimp catch. However, further support is needed to help fishermen sell their catch to higher value markets and translate these efforts to higher revenues. Based on these initial promising results, the World Bank and the GEF have increased their investment in the fisheries sector through the "Sustainable Management of Fish Resources Project" (GEF: \$6 million; World Bank: \$3.5 million) and the "West Africa Regional Fisheries Program" (World Bank: \$15 million).

### **Climate Change Impacts in Protected Area Networks**

With financial support from the GEF, the Governments of Chad, the Gambia, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Togo are taking the lead in a regional project that addresses the strong links between climate change and protected areas (SPWA-Evolution of Protected Area systems with regard to climate change in the West Africa Region; GEF: \$3.736 million; co-financing: \$10 million). With technical guidance from UNEP and the World Conservation Monitoring Center (WCMC), the project will build capacity so that these especially vulnerable countries may better meet the challenges that climate change will pose to their protected area strategies. The project takes a four-pronged approach:

1. Combining and distilling existing information from disparate sources;
2. Undertaking new research to contribute to the body of knowledge on climate scenarios and species response modeling;
3. Borrowing from other fields and innovating to develop new management approaches; and
4. Ensuring that training and learning are taking place to support a strong community of site managers in the region. Other countries will be involved in transboundary and regional aspects.

In West and Central Africa, UNEP representatives are developing ways to assess vulnerability and adaptation of mangroves, developing strategies for the prevention and management of invasive and alien species, and enhancing indigenous peoples' awareness and effective participation. All these projects provide a unique opportunity to work with a community of researchers and professionals that have both a local and global environmental and economic impact.





## Principles to Guide Future GEF Investments in West and Central Africa

Over the course of two decades of experience, the GEF has become the largest financier for biodiversity conservation in West and Central Africa. Results and lessons learned from previous GEF cycles have illuminated a number of principles that will underpin the development of future GEF biodiversity investments in the region:

- **Linking biodiversity to economics:** Conservation objectives cannot be dissociated from poverty reduction and local development activities in the poorest countries. Improving the standard of living of local people and developing environmentally friendly and economically viable, income-generating activities should be part of all programs and projects in the region. At the same time, the sustainable management of natural resources has to be high on the political agenda, especially in fragile or post-conflict countries.
- **Addressing biodiversity within and beyond protected areas:** Many of the projects discussed in this document have demonstrated the need to work at a broad scale, for example through networks of protected areas (as opposed to individual sites), river basins, large marine ecosystems, coastal areas, or a land-use planning approach. In the same way, the partners involved in a project should be extended beyond the traditional biodiversity and conservation actors to include the private sector, professional organizations and traditional authorities.
- **Coordinating efforts:** The GEF can be particularly effective when its investments are leveraged, focused on a specific niche, anchored in a national vision and well-coordinated with other partners.
- **Facilitating partnerships:** Cooperation between government conservation bodies and locally or regionally based Non Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations can help lay the foundations for long-term working relationships, which in turn helps promote ongoing capacity building and brings about long-term conservation outcomes.
- **Empowering local communities:** Many biodiversity-rich countries are in the process of decentralization.

While this can be an effective way to move decision-making closer to an appropriate level, strengthening capacity at the local level to undertake these new responsibilities must also be addressed. One option is to identify entities at the local level that can be given an active role as a way to build capacity “while doing”. Another option is to build *ad hoc* structures that bring together key local stakeholders in natural resource management. The empowerment of local stakeholders, including indigenous people and women, needs to be addressed in the long term.

- **Delivering impact in the field:** GEF programs and projects must focus on being able to demonstrate tangible results. Past GEF investments have included a wide range of activities, including strategies, action plans, capacity building and field demonstration. Measurable and tangible impacts in the field are vital for gaining the trust of local communities and partners.
- **Thinking innovatively:** The GEF will pioneer innovative approaches to biodiversity conservation, such as pilot projects on sustainable financing mechanisms or testing of different management models. Innovation may take many different forms and is not always linked to a new technology or approach. In some cases, the best innovations involve bringing back traditional practices of natural resource management or basing new methods on the practices of indigenous people.
- **Maximizing global environment benefits:** Climate change and biodiversity are closely interconnected: Biodiversity is affected by climate change, and biodiversity, through the ecosystem services it supports, makes an important contribution to climate change

mitigation and adaptation. Thus conserving and sustainably managing biodiversity is crucial to addressing and mitigating climate change. A particular effort is needed to address the multiple dimensions of ecosystem adaptation approaches. Potential inter-linkages between GEF focal areas can be a way to maximize synergies and deliver multiple global environment benefits. Beyond climate change and biodiversity, forest issues, sustainable land management or integrated approaches for water management can help with the transition to the sustainable use of specific landscapes, river basins, seascapes or wetland basins.

The encouraging results of GEF-2 and GEF-3 biodiversity projects at the national and local levels in West and Central Africa served as the basis for the development of GEF-4 programs that were designed using resources from different GEF focal areas. This programmatic approach links biodiversity investments to key issues for the sub-regions, including poverty alleviation, climate change and sustainable forest management, with the aim of generating multiple environmental benefits.

The GEF-4 programmatic approach has been a useful tool to increase GEF investment and leverage co-financing for the sub-regions while improving project cycle management. As such, this approach will serve as the foundation for future GEF investments, to further enhance country ownership, leverage GEF’s resources to attract additional financial support, and ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the regions irreplaceable biodiversity.





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## ABOUT THE GEF

The Global Environment Facility unites 182 member governments—in partnership with international institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector—to address global environmental issues. As an independent financial organization, the GEF provides grants to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for projects related to biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, the ozone layer, and persistent organic pollutants. These projects benefit the global environment, linking local, national, and global environmental challenges and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Established in 1991, the GEF is currently the largest funder of projects to improve the global environment. The GEF has allocated \$9 billion, supplemented by more than \$40 billion in co-financing, for more than 2,600 projects in more than 165 developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Through its Small Grants Programme, the GEF has also made more than 10,000 small grants directly to nongovernmental and community organizations.

The GEF partnership includes 10 Agencies: the UN Development Programme, the UN Environment Programme, the World Bank, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN Industrial Development Organization, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel provides technical and scientific advice on the GEF's policies and project

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