CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM PARTNERSHIP FUND

Ecosystem Profile

Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot 2025 Update

Technical Summary

Final Version Submitted to CEPF Donor Council
April 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is designed to safeguard the world's biologically richest and most threatened regions, known as biodiversity hotspots. It is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International (CI), the European Union, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Canada, the Government of Japan and the World Bank.

A fundamental purpose of CEPF is to engage civil society, such as community groups, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and private enterprises, in biodiversity conservation in the biodiversity hotspots. To guarantee their success, these efforts must complement existing strategies and programs of national governments and other conservation funders. To this end, CEPF promotes working alliances among diverse groups, combining unique capacities and reducing duplication of efforts for a comprehensive, coordinated approach to conservation. One way in which CEPF does this is through preparation of "ecosystem profiles," shared strategies, developed in consultation with local stakeholders, which articulate a multi-year investment strategy informed by a detailed situational analysis.

CEPF has two distinct features as a grant-making program. First, its focus is on biological, rather than political, boundaries and units. This allows CEPF to support strategies that are expected to be more effective with a regional, rather than national, approach, including actions and alliances that span the boundaries of one or more countries or territories. Second, CEPF's focus is on civil society organizations (CSOs). By supporting and facilitating civil society participation in nature conservation, and by aiding collaboration and alliances among groups, CEPF aims to encourage the development of new and innovative ideas and solutions to the challenges of biodiversity conservation, for the benefit of local and global stakeholders.

The Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot (hereafter, the Guinean Forests Hotspot or GFWA), as defined by Mittermeier *et al.* (2004), extends across the southern part of West Africa and into Central Africa north of the Congo Wilderness Area (Figure 1.1). The hotspot covers 617,719 km^2, and can be divided into two subregions, the upper and lower Guinea forests. The upper Guinea forest stretches from Guinea in the west, through Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and, marginally, into Benin. The lower Guinea forest covers much of southern Nigeria, extends into southwestern Cameroon, and also includes São Tomé and Príncipe and the islands of Annobon and Bioko in Equatorial Guinea. These two subregions are separated by the Dahomey Gap, in Benin and Togo, which is a climatically induced dry region originating from the late Holocene Epoch. The Guinean Forests are one of eight biodiversity hotspots in Africa.

The hotspot boundary is defined by the habitats occurring within it, in particular by the presence of forested or formerly forested areas. As a result, the hotspot cuts across political boundaries, but can be sub-divided with reference to terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems (Burgess *et al.* 2004).

The hotspot is divided unequally among countries. For example, Côte d'Ivoire contains the largest proportion of the hotspot (24.1%), while Benin contains the lowest proportion (0.2%). São Tomé and Príncipe, and Liberia are the countries with the greatest proportions of their area inside the hotspot (just under 100% and 98.5%, respectively), while Benin is again the lowest (1.2%). These figures are summarized in Table 1.1, and it is important to be aware of these values when reading the later chapters of this profile, particularly Chapters 4 and 5, where much of the information is presented at the country level, as data for the portion of each country within the hotspot was generally not available.

Figure 1.1. Boundaries of the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot

Table 1.1. Area of Country in the Hotspot

Country	Country Area (km^2)	Area GFWA in the Country (km^2)*	Percent of GFWA in Country	Percent of Country in GFWA
Benin	117,650	1,441	0.2	1.2
Cameroon	469,784	63,780	10.3	13.7
Côte d'Ivoire	325,990	148,739	24.1	46.1
Equatorial Guinea	28,051	1,961	0.3	7
Ghana	242,178	79,348	12.8	33
Guinea	249,691	47,661	7.8	19.4
Liberia	96,861	94,307	15.3	98.5
Nigeria	926,744	126,366	20.4	13.8
São Tomé and Príncipe	1,001	1,032	0.2	100
Sierra Leone	73,316	46,857	7.6	64.6
Togo	57,637	6,227	1	11
Total	**2,588,903**	617,719	**100**	**24.1**

*The area of the hotspot in the 2015 ecosystem profile is given as 621,705 km^2. The figure used here is revised after minor boundary corrections and re-measurement.

This ecosystem profile and intended investment program continues CEPF's long engagement in the region, as described in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2. Past CEPF Investment in the GFWA

Period	Investment strategy	Total Investment (USD)
2001-2006	Ecosystem profile, December 2000	$5,967,918
2008-2012	Consolidation program, June 2008	$1,907,209
2016-2022	Ecosystem profile, December 2015	$10,043,672

As this profile was written, CEPF's donors approved the allocation of an additional $800,000 for grants from 2024-2025 to serve as a "bridge" until the inception of a new program, as defined by the strategy here.

2. BACKGROUND

The ecosystem profile consultation and writing took place from March to November 2024. The process was launched through a press announcement which was circulated to CSOs active in the region and was included in communications materials distributed at the IUCN Africa Conservation Forum in June 2024. The process was supported by input from an advisory committee, chaired by the BirdLife International Africa Division, with representatives of Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Programme de Petites Initiatives of the Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM PPI), the GEF, IUCN and the West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI), plus an independent expert. The committee met three times, virtually. The second and third meetings of the advisory committee focused, successively, on organizational development and priority setting.

In-person stakeholder consultation workshops took place in Liberia, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, each hosted by a leading national CSO. Ultimately, 108 people took part in these events. Each of the workshops identified data gaps, which were filled through follow-up by the organizers with individual informants. In addition, information on key biodiversity areas (KBAs), threats, conservation efforts and stakeholders was collected through email and online consultation.

3. LESSONS FROM THE PREVIOUS INVESTMENT PHASE

The 2016-2022 phase of investment concluded having made 76 grants to 64 unique organizations. Three summary documents from this period were critical to this profile.

- The final assessment of the 2016-2022 investment phase, July 2022 (CEPF 2022a).
- The Long-term Vision for CEPF investment in the hotspot, December 2022 (CEPF 2022b).
- The evaluation of lessons learned in relation to the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the hotspot, October 2022 (Cynosure 2022).

Readers are referred to these documents for further details. Lessons from these documents are summarized in Table 12.1.

4. BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE HOTSPOT

The Guinean Forests Hotspot supports impressive levels of biodiversity, including numerous endemic species, making it a conservation priority at the global scale. With 48 primate species, the hotspot is one of the top global priorities for primate conservation.

The hotspot contains many other ecological features that render it globally unique. The Niger Delta swamp forests, for instance, are the second largest swamp forest on the continent, while the Central African Mangroves (which are partially within the hotspot) are the largest mangrove stands in Africa and the third largest in the world. The hotspot's offshore volcanic islands support high levels of endemism. One of the largest rivers in West Africa, the Volta, and the delta of the longest and largest river in West Africa, the Niger, occur within the hotspot boundary. The Western Equatorial Crater Lakes ecoregion is among several that are listed as globally outstanding.

4.1 Geography and geology

Situated in West Africa and northwestern Central Africa, and including several oceanic islands, the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot is underlain by ancient Precambrian rocks that have been eroded over many millions of years. In some areas, these ancient rocks have been uplifted into mountains and hills, for example in the Fouta Djallon in

Guinea, the Loma Hills in Sierra Leone, the Mount Nimba area of Liberia/Guinea/Côte d'Ivoire, the Togo Hills in Togo, and the Jos Plateau in Nigeria. These rocks are typically nutrient poor, making the soils derived from them similarly poor in nutrients and often challenging to farm continuously.

Along the border between Nigeria and Cameroon is a mountain range formed by volcanic activity, the Cameroon Volcanic Line, which includes the volcanic islands of Bioko, Príncipe, São Tomé, and Annobón in the Gulf of Guinea, and stretches northeast through Cameroon and beyond the hotspot as far as Lake Chad. The range includes Mount Cameroon, which at 4,040 m is the highest point and the only active volcano in the hotspot. Several other dormant volcanoes still producing quantities of carbon dioxide and other gases from below their crater lakes. These volcanic rocks weather to form much more productive soils, for example on Mount Cameroon.

There are also sedimentary deposits associated with river deltas and coastal shelves within the hotspot. There are significant deposits of oil and gas in these areas, especially associated with the ancient delta of the Niger River in Nigeria.

The hotspot is drained by three of the 13 major river basins in Africa: the Niger; the Senegal; and the Volta. The Senegal River basin spans four countries: Guinea; Mali; Mauritania; and Senegal. Its three main tributaries, the Bafing, Bakoye and Faleme, all originate from the Fouta Djallon Massif in Guinea within the hotspot. The Niger River is the longest and largest river in West Africa, and spans 10 countries, including, Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Nigeria in the hotspot. The Niger River originates in the Loma Mountains of Sierra Leone, situated within the hotspot in the Guinea Montane Forests ecoregion, and has numerous tributaries joining it. One of the major tributaries of Niger River is the Benue, which merges with the Niger at Lokoya in Nigeria. The Volta River basin spans six countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Mali. The three major tributaries of the Volta River are: the White Volta, the Black Volta (both of which originate in Ghana) and the Oti (originating in Burkina Faso), which together drain the plateau in the north, the Atakora Mountains in the east, and several highland areas in the west.

Additional large rivers draining the countries of the hotspot include the Gambia River, which stems from the Fouta Djallon Massif of Guinea, the Sewa River of Sierra Leone, which has many of its tributaries arising from the Loma Mountains and Tingi Hills, the Cross River which is the main river of southeastern Nigeria, and the Sanaga River in Cameroon.

4.2 Climate

The prevailing climate in the hotspot is tropical and humid, with annual maximum temperatures ranging from around 30 to 36°C. The climate is somewhat cooler in the coastal areas, hotter further north. The stability of climatic conditions over the millennia has allowed exceptionally diverse, complex ecosystems to develop, including the lowland tropical moist forests for which the hotspot is identified.

The hotspot shows little seasonality in terms of temperature, with maxima and minima remaining similar throughout the year at any given location but differing, rather, in terms of level of precipitation, which is governed by the annual movements of the inter-tropical convergence zone, and results in monsoon conditions (often referred to as the 'rainy season'), stating from March or April on the coast and moving inland to around 10°N. Typical annual rainfall near the coast is around 3,000-3,500 mm, and decreases to around 1,500-2,000 mm further inland. Many of the forested areas in the hotspot have an average annual precipitation of around 2,000-2,500 mm inland, rising to nearly 4,000 mm in the coastal areas (Cole 1968, Barbour *et al.* 1982).

4.3 Biological history

Over the past million years or more, the vegetation zones of West Africa have migrated north and south depending on the prevailing climate. Ice ages in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres caused a general drying across Africa, and at the height of these colder glacial periods, forest cover shrank and may have become confined to refugia located in the centers of diversity in the present-day Upper and Lower Guinean Forests subregions. During interglacial periods the forest would have expanded again, as the climate of the region became wetter. This climatic oscillation over periods of thousands of years, and the associated expansion and contraction of forest cover, is probably the most important factor contributing to the diversity and patterns of the biota seen in the lowland forests.

4.4 Biogeographical zonation and ecoregions

The hotspot represents the Guinean portion of the Guinea-Congolian forests, and comprises two main subregions: the Upper Guinean Forests and the Lower Guinean Forests. These two subregions are separated by the Dahomey Gap, in Benin and Togo, which is a climatically induced dry region originating from the late Holocene Epoch.

The hotspot is within the Afrotropic realm and is defined by one main biome: the tropical and sub-tropical moist broadleaf forests. Across the hotspot, the forests are divided into eleven terrestrial ecoregions (including one for mangrove), and freshwater systems are divided into fourteen ecoregions. Offshore (outside the hotspot), marine ecosystem are represented by four ecoregions.

4.5 Species diversity and endemism

The impressive levels of biodiversity and endemism contained within the Guinean Forests Hotspot are summarized by major taxonomic groups in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Species Richness and Endemicity

Taxonomic group	Status of Red List assessment	Number of species in hotspot	Species assessed for the Red List	Number of endemic species assessed
Amphibians	Complete	>284	284	118
Birds	Complete	>949	949	49
Bony fish	Complete	>1452	1452	no data
Coral/Anthozoan	Partial	8	8	0
Crabs and shrimps	Complete	72	69	no data
Fungi	Partial	no data	1	no data
Insects	Partial	>1000	384	>1
Mammals	Complete	444	438	67
Mollusks	Complete	105	99	no data
Plants	Partial	>9000	2256	no data
Reptiles	Partial	>308	308	20
Sea cucumber	Partial	>6	6	no data
Sharks and rays	Partial	>97	97	0
Spiders (arachnids)	Partial	>6	6	no data
Total			**6273**	

4.6 Landscape-level conservation priority setting

The hotspot is home to 363 endemic bird areas (EBAs) and secondary areas as well as twelve key landscapes for conservation and development (KLCDs) as defined by the EU (https://papfor.org/-Landscapes-).

4.7 Species priorities

Species action plans are in place for the Western Chimpanzee, red colobus monkey, amphibians, cycads, and forest elephants.

5. CONSERVATION OUTCOMES DEFINED FOR THE HOTSPOT

Selection of conservation outcomes relies on the understanding that biodiversity is not measured in any single unit. Rather, it is distributed across a hierarchical continuum of ecological scales that can be categorized into three levels: i) species; ii) sites; and iii) broad landscapes (or ecosystem-level units), termed corridors. These levels interlock geographically through the occurrence of species at sites and species and sites within corridors. Given the threats to biodiversity at each of these three levels, targets for conservation can be set in terms of 'extinctions avoided' (species outcomes), 'areas protected' (site outcomes) and 'corridors consolidated' (corridor outcomes).

For this analysis, the conservation outcomes defined in the 2015 ecosystem profile are updated with reference to the latest version of the IUCN Red List, the latest version of the World Database on KBAs, species and site data gathered during and since the previous CEPF program in the hotspot, especially on freshwater sites, and new approaches to analyzing species and site data, particularly the STAR index and the KBA scoping tool. Available data was shared with stakeholders (chapter 2) and inputs were received on species and conservation action at KBAs.

The analysis includes the results of work on freshwater ecosystems in the hotspot funded under the previous CEPF program. This work assessed the status of 1,502 freshwater species: 555 freshwater fishes, 100 freshwater mollusks, 307 odonates (dragonflies and damselflies), 54 freshwater decapods (crabs and shrimps) and 486 species of aquatic plants, and is the most complete assessment of freshwater taxa in the hotspot to date.

5.1 Species outcomes

Species selected are those classified as threatened (Critically Endangered, Endangered, or Vulnerable) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (hereafter the IUCN Red List). A list of species was generated for each country in the hotspot, and then filtered to exclude species which do not occur within the hotspot boundary, using the range maps available on the Red List website.

The IUCN Red List contains assessments for 6,273 species that occur in the hotspot. Of these, 1,084 (17%) are globally threatened (classified as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable). This number is likely to increase in the future as more species are assessed, particularly in groups such as plants, invertebrates and fungi. The globally threatened species include 216 species assessed as Critically Endangered, the highest category of threat. Table 5.1 summarizes the data.

The distribution of the major taxonomic groupings of threatened species, combined across all three realms, in each of the countries in the hotspot (Table 5.2) shows that Cameroon has the highest (57%) followed by Guinea (32%), Nigeria (27%), and Liberia (26%). The number of species assessed for each country within the hotspot is summarized in Table 5.2 and the list of priority species is in Annex 1.

Table 5.1. Number of threatened species in the hotspot, by major taxonomic group and Red List category

Group	No. of species assessed	Critically Endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable	Data Deficient	Least Concern or Near Threatened	Extinct
Mammals	436	13	38	29	36	320	
Birds	948	9	18	27	3	891	
Reptiles	307	7	9	13	24	254	
Amphibians	283	26	35	19	26	177	
Bony Fish	1452	37	82	66	107	1160	
Sharks and Rays	96	19	23	23	2	29	
Insects	384	5	8	7	24	340	
Arachnida	6					6	
Freshwater Crabs and Shrimp	69	4	9	5	16	35	
Mollusks	99	9	7	4	7	72	
Corals	8	1			3	4	
Sea Cucumbers	6				3	3	
Plants	2178	86	244	202	32	1613	1
Fungi	1					1	
Total	**6273**	**216**	**473**	**395**	**283**	**4905**	**1**

Source: IUCN Red List version 2023-1; exported in July 2024.

Table 5.2. Breakdown of Globally Threatened Species by Country and Major Taxonomic Group

Group	Benin	Cameroon	Côte d' Ivoire	Equatorial Guinea	Ghana	Guinea	Liberia	Nigeria	São Tomé and Príncipe	Sierra Leone	Togo	Hotspot
Mammals	14	33	45	20	33	23	27	34	24	4	13	80
Birds	17	29	29	25	23	6	22	24	22	15	19	54
Reptiles	9	9	22	9	9	8	9	14	10	4	9	29
Amphibians	1	8	57	8	6	7	6	14	1	3	3	80
Bony Fish	22	33	77	32	61	22	54	46	43	14	15	185
Sharks and Rays	58	59	62	60	56	58	57	59	56	28	56	65
Insects	1	1	10	2	2	1	2	6	3		1	20
Arachnida	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Freshwater Crabs and Shrimp			5	1	3	1	6	5	3	1		18
Mollusks	1	5	3	7	3	0	3	2	3	2	2	20
Corals										1		1
Sea Cucumbers	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Plants	9	73	310	31	147	54	101	91	90	30	4	532
Fungi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**132**	**250**	**620**	**195**	**343**	**180**	**287**	**295**	**255**	**102**	**122**	**1,084**

5.2 Site outcomes

Many species are best conserved by protecting their habitats and the biological communities they are part of, through conservation actions at a network of sites. CEPF has adopted key biodiversity areas (KBA) as the basis for defining important sites in the hotspots (https://www.keybiodiversityareas.org/).

One hundred and twenty-five terrestrial KBAs were listed in the 2015 ecosystem profile. Two of these are no longer included: Tiwai Island in Sierra Leone is no longer a KBA, and two KBAs in Côte d'Ivoire, 'Réserve Intégrale du Mont Nimba' and 'Mount Nimba (part of Mount Nimba transboundary AZE)' have been replaced by a single KBA: 'Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve'. In addition, this update of the ecosystem profile includes 12 KBAs that were not listed in the 2015 edition.

As of November 2024, therefore, there are 135 confirmed KBAs in the hotspot (Table 5.3). Thirty-six meet global KBA criteria, a further seven are classified as 'regional' and 92 are classified as 'global/regional to be determined'. The tables below show the KBAs per country and added KBAs.

Table 5.3. KBAs in the Hotspot, by Country

Country	Confirmed KBAs, 2015	Confirmed KBAs, 2024			
		Global	Global/regional TBD	Regional	2024 total
Benin	1	0	0	1	1
Cameroon	19	13	9	0	22
Côte d'Ivoire	15	5	11	0	16
Equatorial Guinea	3	3	0	0	3
Ghana	30	3	29	1	33
Guinea	11	1	9	1	11
Liberia	18	2	17	1	20
Nigeria	12	5	9	0	14
São Tomé-Príncipe	4	3	2	0	5
Sierra Leone	9	1	6	1	8
Togo	2	0	0	2	2
Total	**124**	**36**	**92**	**7**	**135**

Table 5.4. KBA Numbers and Area in the Hotspot, by Country

Country	No. of KBAs	Area of KBAs (hectares)	Percent of KBA area in each country
Benin	1	98,403	1
Cameroon	22	1,190,166	14
Côte d'Ivoire	16	1,191,282	15
Equatorial Guinea	3	86,202	1
Ghana	33	605,775	7
Guinea	11	311,738	4
Liberia	20	2,827,263	34
Nigeria	14	1,362,831	17
São Tomé and Príncipe	5	51,269	1
Sierra Leone	8	268,353	3
Togo	2	216,562	3
Total	**135**	**8,209,826**	**100**

The 135 KBAs identified to date in the hotspot cover a total area of 8.2 million hectares, about 13% of the total land area of the hotspot (Table 5.4). The average size of a KBA is just over 61,000 hectares, but they vary from 18 hectares (Tinhosas Islands, São Tomé and Príncipe) to over half-a-million hectares (Gashaka-Gumti National Park, Nigeria, and

Parc National de Taï et Réserve de faune du N'Zo, Côte d'Ivoire). The largest number of KBAs are in Ghana (33, a quarter of all KBAs), but the largest area of KBAs is in Liberia, where 20 KBAs cover 2.8 million hectares, over a third of the entire area of KBAs in the hotspot. Table 5.5 summarizes the number and area covered by KBAs.

Table 5.5. Proposed Freshwater KBAs in the Hotspot

Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	Notes
Cameroon			
Fw1	500001	Lake Barombi Mbo and surrounding catchments	Priority for assessment as a global KBA, data available
Fw2	500002	Lake Bermin and surrounding catchments	Priority for assessment as a global KBA, data available
Côte d'Ivoire			
Fw3	500003	Lower Bandama River	Priority for assessment as a global KBA, data available
Togo / Ghana			
Fw5	500004	Lower Volta eastern catchment	Priority for assessment as a global KBA, data available
Liberia			
Fw4	500000	Lower reaches of St Paul River	
Fw7	500006	Middle reaches of St Paul River	
Fw11	500007	Upper reaches of St Paul River	
Fw12	47038	Weeni creek and associated hydrobasin	
Nigeria			
Fw13	500008	West Niger Delta	
Fw10	500009	South East Niger Delta - near Calabar	
São Tomé- Príncipe			
Fw9	500012	São Tomé	Revision likely as part of a national KBA review
Sierra Leone			
Fw6	500011	Gbangbaia River Basin	
Fw8	500010	Rhombe Swamp and Mouth of Little and Great Scarcies Rivers	

West Africa has exceptional freshwater biodiversity, but the identification of freshwater KBAs has progressed more slowly than terrestrial KBAs. One challenge is that the hotspot boundary is drawn to encompass terrestrial biomes, while many of the freshwater lakes and rivers are part of larger systems that cross the hotspot boundary. Thus, while there are many freshwater fish that are endemic to West Africa, few are endemic to the hotspot. A second challenge is that defining the boundaries of freshwater KBAs is difficult when species occur, for example, along a linear feature such as a river.

During the development of the 2015 ecosystem profile, a preliminary analysis of important sites for freshwater biodiversity was undertaken, using river/lake sub catchments units, as the widely accepted management unit most applicable to the freshwater realm.

After review, 12 sites were chosen as the highest priorities for investment. These sites were subsequently assessed against the new global KBA criteria but lacked sufficient recent data to be classified as global KBAs. As a result, they remain 'proposed KBAs' in the list of KBAs of the region (Tables 5.6 to 5.16). Subsequent work means that at least five may now have sufficient data to be assessed. The work of refining the freshwater priorities in the region continued during the previous CEPF grant-making phase and led to the identification of 87 planning units representing gaps in the current network of KBAs and protected areas, including 22 sub-catchments identified as irreplaceable sites

for threatened freshwater species conservation (Starnes & Darwall 2021). These sites represent the only known localities of thirty-nine threatened freshwater species.

Table 5.6. GFWA Terrestrial KBAs Benin

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA Category
1	BEN1	6041	Lake Nokoué	Regional

Table 5.7. GFWA KBAs in Cameroon

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	CMR18	6112	Tchabal-Mbabo	Global
2	CMR22	6114	Njinsing - Tabenken	Global/ Regional TBD
3	CMR15	6115	Mount Oku	Global
4	CMR6	6116	Mbi Crater Faunal Reserve - Mbingo forest	Global
5	CMR14	6117	Mount Mbam	Global/ Regional TBD
6	CMR2	6119	Bali-Ngemba Forest Reserve	Global/ Regional TBD
7	CMR4	6120	Banyang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary	Global
8	CMR17	6121	Santchou Faunal Reserve	Global/ Regional TBD
9	CMR5	6122	Korup National Park	Global/ Regional TBD
10	CMR7	6123	Mont Bana	Global/ Regional TBD
11	CMR9	6124	Mont Manengouba	Global
12	CMR1	6125	Bakossi mountains	Global
13	CMR11	6126	Mont Nlonako	Global/ Regional TBD
14	CMR16	6127	Mount Rata and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve	Global
15	CMR8	6128	Mount Kupe	Global/ Regional TBD
16	CMR19	6129	Yabassi	Global/ Regional TBD
17	CMR12	6130	Mount Cameroon and Mokoko-Onge	Global
18	CMR10	26329	Mont Nganha	Global
19	CMR3	29689	Bamboutos Mountains	Global
20	CMR13	29690	Mount Lefo	Global
21	CMR20	47084	Eastern Bamenda highlands and associated hydrobasin	Global
22	CMR21	100521	Eastern Slopes of Rumpi Hills	
23	fw1	500001	Lake Barombi Mbo and surrounding catchments	Proposed
24	fw2	500002	Lake Bermin and surrounding catchments	Proposed

Table 5.8. GFWA KBAs in Côte d'Ivoire

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	CIV13	6091	Sangbe Mountain National Park	Global
2	CIV8	6092	Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
3	CIV7	6093	Gueoule and Glo Mountain Forest Reserves	Global
4	CIV12	6094	Peko Mountain National Park	Global

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
5	CIV10	6095	Marahoue National Park	Global/Regional TBD
6	CIV2	6096	Bossematie Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
7	CIV3	6097	Cavally and Goin - Debe Forest Reserves	Global
8	CIV15	6098	Lamto Ecological Research Station	Global/Regional TBD
9	CIV4	6099	Mabi Forest reserve	Global/Regional TBD
10	CIV11	6100	Taï National Park and Nzo Faunal Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
11	CIV5	6101	Mopri Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
12	CIV6	6102	Yapo and Mambo Forest Reserves	Global/Regional TBD
13	CIV9	6103	Azagny National Park	Global/Regional TBD
14	CIV16	24853	Tanoe Forest Swamp Forest	Global/Regional TBD
15	CIV1	24855	Adiopodoume	Global/Regional TBD
16	CIV17	24863	Banco National Park	Proposed
17	fw3	500003	Lower Bandama River	Global

Table 5.9. GFWA KBAs in Equatorial Guinea

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	GNQ1	6378	Annobón	Global
2	GNQ3	6379	Basilé Peak National Park	Global
3	GNQ2	6380	Luba Caldera Scientific Reserve	Global

Table 5.10. GFWA KBAs in Ghana

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	GHA2	6311	Ankasa Resource Reserve - Nini-Sushien National Park	Global
2	GHA3	6312	Atewa Range Forest Reserve	Global
3	GHA4	6313	Bia National Park and Resource Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
4	GHA6	6314	Boin Tano Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
5	GHA5	6315	Boin River Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
6	GHA7	6316	Bosomtwe Range Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
7	GHA8	6317	Bura River Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
8	GHA9	6318	Cape Three Points Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
9	GHA10	6319	Dadieso Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
10	GHA11	6320	Draw River Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
11	GHA12	6321	Ebi River Shelterbelt Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
12	GHA13	6322	Fure River Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
13	GHA14	6323	Jema-Asemkrom Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
14	GHA15	6324	Kakum National Park - Assin Attandaso Resource Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
15	GHA17	6325	Mamiri Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
16	GHA18	6326	Mount Afadjato - Agumatsa Range forest	Global/Regional TBD
17	GHA20	6327	Nsuensa-Ayiola-Bediako Forest Reserves	Global/Regional TBD

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
18	GHA21	6328	Pra-Sushien Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
19	GHA25	6329	Subri River Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
20	GHA26	6330	Tano-Anwia Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
21	GHA27	6331	Tano-Ehuro Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
22	GHA28	6332	Tano-Nimiri Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
23	GHA29	6333	Tano-Offin Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
24	GHA30	6334	Yoyo River Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
25	GHA23	6339	Shai Hills Resource Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
26	GHA1	6341	Amansuri wetland	Regional
27	GHA24	22287	Southern Scarp	Global/Regional TBD
28	GHA19	22288	Neung South	Global/Regional TBD
29	GHA22	22289	Sapawsu Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
30	GHA32	22292	Bobiri Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
31	GHA31	22293	Bandai Hills	Global/Regional TBD
32	GHA16	24265	Kyabobo National Park	Global/Regional TBD
33	GHA34	100282	Sui River Forest Reserve	Global
34	fw5	500004	Lower Volta eastern catchment	Proposed

Table 5.11. GFWA KBAs in Guinea

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	GIN1	6362	Chutes de la Sala	Global/ Regional TBD
2	GIN5	6370	Kabitaï	Global/ Regional TBD
3	GIN6	6372	Konkouré	Regional
4	GIN7	6373	Kounounkan	Global/ Regional TBD
5	GIN8	6375	Massif du Ziama	Global/ Regional TBD
6	GIN9	6376	Monts Nimba (part of Mount Nimba transboundary AZE)	Global
7	GIN2	6377	Diécké	Global/ Regional TBD
8	GIN11	22297	Sincery Oursa	Global/ Regional TBD
9	GIN4	22298	Foret Classe de Mont Bero	Global/ Regional TBD
10	GIN3	22302	Foret Classe de Balayan Souroumba	Global/ Regional TBD
11	GIN10	22304	Pic de Fon	Global/ Regional TBD

Table 5.12. GFWA KBAs in Liberia

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	LBR16	6455	Wologizi mountains	Global/Regional TBD
2	LBR17	6456	Wonegizi mountains	Global/Regional TBD
3	LBR11	6457	Lofa-Gola-Mano Complex	Global/Regional TBD
4	LBR12	6458	Nimba mountains	Global
5	LBR10	6459	Lake Piso (Cape Mount)	Regional
6	LBR18	6460	Zwedru	Global/Regional TBD

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
7	LBR1	6461	Cestos - Senkwen	Global/Regional TBD
8	LBR14	6462	Sapo	Global/Regional TBD
9	LBR7	6463	Grebo	Global/Regional TBD
10	LBR2	22308	Cestos Gbi	Global/Regional TBD
11	LBR3	22309	Cestos-Sapo North Corridor forest blocks	Global/Regional TBD
12	LBR19	22310	Cestos-Sapo South Corridor forest block	Global/Regional TBD
13	LBR4	22313	Gio National Forest	Global/Regional TBD
14	LBR5	22316	Grand Kru SouthEast Forest blocks	Global/Regional TBD
15	LBR6	22317	Grand Kru SouthWest blocks	Global/Regional TBD
16	LBR9	22318	Krahn Bassa South	Global/Regional TBD
17	LBR13	22320	Sapo - Grebo Corridor	Global/Regional TBD
18	LBR15	22321	West Nimba	Global/Regional TBD
19	LBR8	22511	Kpelle Forest	Global/Regional TBD
20	fw12	47038	Weeni creek and associated hydrobasin	Global
21	fw4	500000	Lower reaches of St Paul River	Proposed
22	fw7	500006	Middle reaches of St Paul River	Proposed
23	fw11	500007	Upper reaches of St Paul River	Proposed

Table 5.13. GFWA KBAs in Nigeria

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	NGA9	6734	Obudu Plateau	Global/Regional TBD
2	NGA5	6735	Gashaka-Gumti National Park	Global
3	NGA8	6736	Ngel-Nyaki Forest Reserve	Global
4	NGA1	6738	Afi River Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
5	NGA10	6739	Okomu National Park	Global/Regional TBD
6	NGA4	6740	Cross River National Park (Oban Division)	Global/Regional TBD
7	NGA11	6741	Omo Forest Reserve	Global/Regional TBD
8	NGA7	6743	Cross River National Park (Okwangwo Division) and Mbe Mountains	Global/Regional TBD
9	NGA6	6744	IITA Forest Reserve, Ibadan	Global/Regional TBD
10	NGA12	6748	Upper Orashi forests	Global/Regional TBD
11	NGA3	6749	Biseni forests	Global/Regional TBD
12	NGA2	6750	Akassa forests	Global
13	NGA14	100504	Idanre Hills	Global
14	NGA13	100506	Emerald Forest Reserve	Global
15	fw13	500008	West Niger Delta	Proposed
16	fw10	500009	South East Niger Delta - near Calabar	Proposed

Table 5.14. GFWA KBAs in São Tomé and Príncipe

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	STP4	6883	São Tomé northern savannas	Global/ Regional TBD
2	STP2	6884	Príncipe forests	Global
3	STP5	6885	Tinhosas Islands	Global
4	STP1	45720	Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé e Zona Tampão	Global
5	STP3	45721	Zona Ecológica dos Mangais do Rio Malanza	Global/ Regional TBD
6	fw9	500012	São Tomé (freshwater)	Proposed

Table 5.15. GFWA KBAs in Sierra Leone

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	SLE4	6832	Loma Mountains Non-hunting Forest Reserve	Global/ Regional TBD
2	SLE6	6833	Tingi Hills Non-hunting Forest Reserve	Global/ Regional TBD
3	SLE5	6834	Sierra Leone River Estuary	Regional
4	SLE3	6835	Kangari Hills Non-hunting Forest Reserve	Global/ Regional TBD
5	SLE8	6836	Western Area Peninsula Forest National Park	Global/ Regional TBD
6	SLE9	6837	Yawri Bay	Global
7	SLE2	6838	Kambui Hills Forest Reserve	Global/ Regional TBD
8	SLE1	6839	Gola Forests	Global/ Regional TBD
9	fw8	500010	Rhombe Swamp and Mouth of Little and Great Scarcies River	Proposed
10	fw6	500011	Gbangbaia River Basin	Proposed

Table 5.16. GFWA KBAs in Togo

No.	Map code	KBA code	KBA Name	KBA status
1	TGO1	6916	Fazao-Malfakassa National Park	Global/ Regional TBD
2	TGO2	6917	Misahöhe Forest Reserve	Global/ Regional TBD
3	Fw5	500004	Lower Volta Eastern Catchments (transboundary with Ghana)	Proposed

KBAs overlap imperfectly with protected areas. Seventy-four KBAs (55%) have total legal protection. This includes five KBAs that are in the process of being gazetted as Kwa National Park in Liberia. An additional 24 KBAs (18%) have at least half their area within a protected area. Thirty-two KBAs (24%) have little or no legal protection (Table 5.17).

Table 5.17: Extent of Protected Area Coverage of KBAs

Degree of overlap with a protected area	Number of KBAs
Near total (>95%)	74
Significant (50-95%)	24
Partial (10 - 50 %)	5
None or very little (<10%)	32
Total	**135**

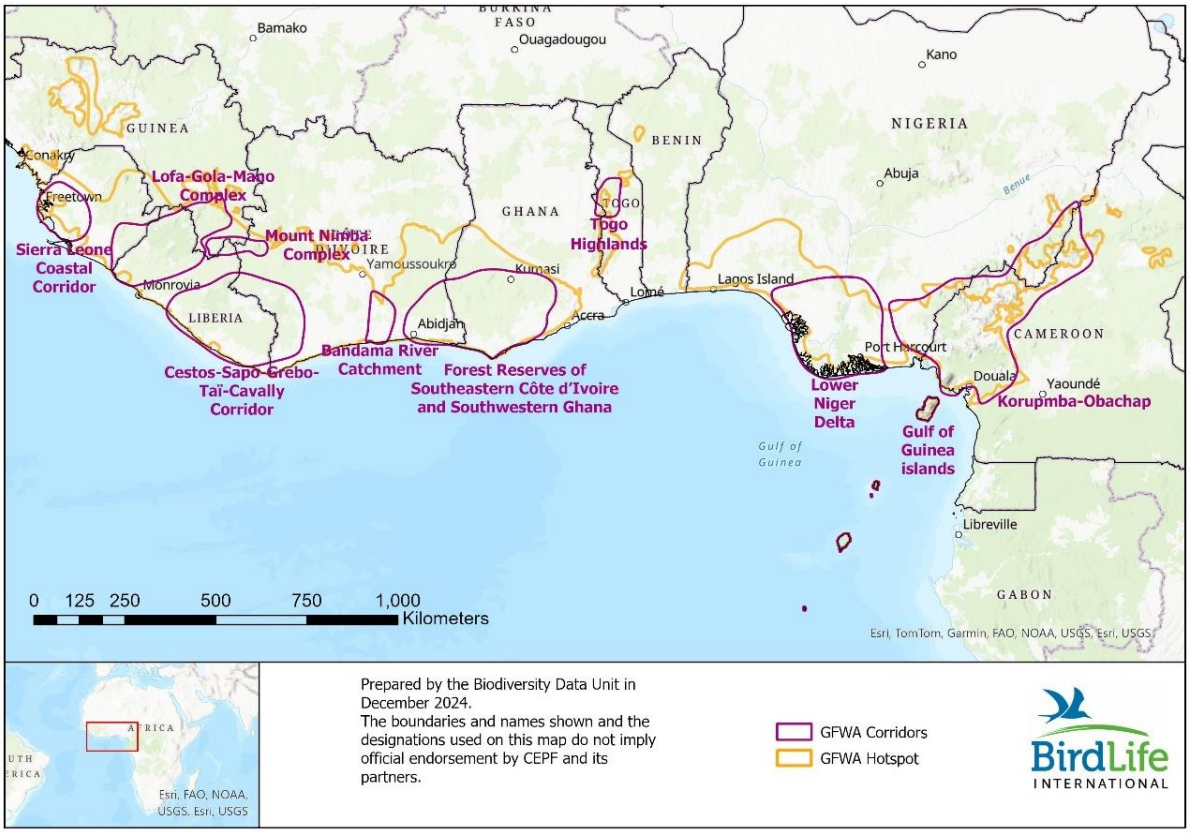
5.3 Corridor outcomes

Conservation corridors are delineated to link KBAs (in particular for trans frontier areas), secure ecological connectivity such as within river catchments, and maintain ecosystem function and services for long-term species survival.

The 2015 ecosystem profile defined nine corridors in the hotspot, covering 413,183 km^2 and 105 KBAs. The definition of corridors took account of hydrological units (i.e., river catchment basins), clusters of connected or spatial proximate KBAs, as well as land use (e.g., areas of forest remaining in the landscape mosaic outside of KBAs). The boundaries of the corridors in the 2015 ecosystem profile appear to be indicative, and not to adhere to particular landscape features.

The Gulf of Guinea islands (São Tomé and Príncipe; island Equatorial Guinea) were not included in any of the corridors delineated in the 2015 ecosystem profile. An additional corridor was, therefore, defined, to cover these islands and their exceptional biodiversity. This brings the total number of corridor outcomes in the GFWA Hotspot to 10.

Figure 5.12. Corridors Outcomes in the GFWA Hotspot



6. THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY IN THE HOTSPOT

6.1 Deforestation

West African rainforests have been greatly modified by people. Myers *et al.* (2000) estimate that the original extent of forest was 126.5 million hectares, and that only 12,650 hectares (10%) remains in primary condition. A conservative estimate is that around 10 million hectares of forest were lost in the 20th century (Fairhead and Leach 1998, Li *et al.* 2007).

FAO (2020) reports that Africa had the highest annual net forest loss of any global region in 2010–2020, at 3.9 million hectares (followed by South America, at 2.6 million hectares). Furthermore, the rate of net forest loss has increased in Africa in each of the three decades since 1990, while it has declined in South America and Asia.

In 2010 there were just under 80 million hectares of natural forest across the 11 countries which are in the hotspot. By 2020, this had been reduced to just over 75 million hectares, a loss of 4.9 million hectares, or 6%. Over half of this deforestation was in two countries: Nigeria, which lost 1.6 million hectares, and Côte d'Ivoire, which lost 1.1 million hectares. Forest loss as a proportion of forest area in 2010 was highest in Côte d'Ivoire, at 28%, but there was also substantial loss of forest in Benin (14% lost) and São Tomé and Príncipe (10% lost), although these losses represent much smaller areas of forest. Table 6.1 summarizes forest loss over the decade across the entire area of the 11 hotspot countries.

In addition to deforestation, large areas of forest are degraded (i.e., lose biomass as a result of disturbance, while remaining as forest). These changes are likely to impact on the suitability of the forest as a habitat for forest-dependent species. Vancutsem *et al* (2021) measured the extent of *undisturbed* tropical moist forest across the tropics, and their findings show that of the six African countries with the largest reductions in undisturbed moist forest extent, four are in the hotspot: Côte d'Ivoire (which lost 81.5% of its undisturbed forest between 1990 and 2020), Ghana (70.8%), Nigeria (47%) and Liberia (36%).

Table 6.1. Forest Area and Change in the Countries of the Hotspot, 2010-2020

Country	Forest area, 2010 (1,000 hectares)	Forest area, 2020 (1,000 hectares)	Change in forest area, 2010-2020 (1,000 hectares)	Change in forest area as percent of 2010 area
Benin	3,615	3,112	-503	-13.9
Cameroon	20,859	20,279	-580	-2.8
Côte d'Ivoire	3,951	2,823	-1,128	-28.5
Equatorial Guinea	2,407	2,323	-84	-3.5
Ghana	7,723	7,689	-34	-0.4
Guinea	6,517	6,132	-385	-5.9
Liberia	7,902	7,590	-312	-3.9
Nigeria	23,027	21,411	-1,616	-7.0
Sierra Leone	2,718	2,514	-204	-7.5
São Tomé Príncipe	58	52	-6	-10.3
Togo	1,192	1,149	-43	-3.6
Total	**79,969**	**75,074**	**-4,895**	**-6.1**

Source: FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment (2020), Annex Table A2: Extent of Naturally Regenerating Forest.

Deforestation is primarily driven by expansion of smallholder agriculture and commodity cultivation (particularly cocoa, rubber), and in some areas by conversion to non-agricultural land use, e.g. for mining or urban development. Forest degradation is caused by fuelwood collection, fire, grazing and selective extraction of timber. Underlying drivers which influence the direct causes of forest loss include economic opportunities, commodity prices, and levels of access; social factors such as income, unemployment, access to services and education; human population size, growth rate and urbanization; and natural factors such as soil type, topography and climate. Deforestation is more likely to happen close to areas which have already been deforested, and this has resulted in the distribution of forest becoming increasingly clumped, with patches of intact forest isolated from each other (Xiao *et al* 2022).

Measurement of deforestation in 113 of the KBAs in eight countries of the hotspot (excluding Togo, Benin and São Tomé and Príncipe) found that over the ten years from 2013 – 2023, KBAs lost 265,644 hectares of forest. Although significant, this was far less than the 5.4 million hectares of forest lost over the same period in these eight countries. Overall, the percentage of deforestation in KBAs was about a third of the percentage in each country overall (Table 6.2). Data for individual KBAs is in Annex 2.

Table 6.2. Deforestation in KBAs and Hotspot Countries, 2013-2023

Country	Total forest loss, 2013-2023 (hectares)	Percent loss of forest, 2013-2023	Forest loss in KBAs, 2013-2023 (hectares)	Percent loss of forest in KBAs
Côte d'Ivoire	1,524,566	34	121,791	14
Nigeria	934,873	15	32,981	5
Ghana	914,570	25	32,326	7
Cameroon	716,617	4	5,857	1
Liberia	640,565	8	44,289	2
Sierra Leone	518,034	29	18,291	11
Guinea	196,995	24	9,966	6
Equatorial Guinea	31,196	1	143	0
Total	**5,477,416**		**265,644**	

Source: Trew *et al.* (2024).

6.2 Other Threats

Biological resource use – which includes hunting, gathering, harvest of timber and non-timber products, and exploitation of marine and freshwater organisms – accounted for about a third of all the threats reported from KBAs. This category of threats was very widespread - at least one biological resource use threat was reported from 79/93 (84%) of KBAs. In Benin, Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria every KBA for which there was threat data reported biological resource use as an issue. In order of frequency, the main threats reported were hunting and collecting of terrestrial animals, logging and wood harvest, harvest of non-timber products, and fishing and harvest of aquatic resources.

Agriculture, plantations, livestock and aquaculture further threaten habitat critical for biodiversity, as do energy production and mining, climate change, agricultural run-off, poisoning and industrial pollution, dams, infrastructure, residential and commercial development, and invasive species.

6.3 Drivers and root causes

Fundamental to these threats are inequitable land tenure arrangements; poverty and wealth inequality; population pressure, migration, and displacement; and core socio-economic trends and development models.

Any large scale development program needs to consider these threats and their drivers. At a smaller scale, and in relation to the types of organizations with which it works, CEPF's strategy is designed in relation to these issues.

7. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF THE HOTSPOT

The 11 countries of the Guinean Forests Hotspot are extremely complex, both socially and economically. The diversity of cultures and ethnic groups found in the region has been influenced by past and current population migration. Historical and contemporary periods of civil unrest and epidemics have contributed to high levels of poverty and act as obstacles to development. Amid these problems, many of the region's industries,

including agriculture, mining, oil and forestry, have continued to shape the landscape. All these factors have repercussions for the success of conservation initiatives in the region.

The hotspot countries had an estimated combined population of 368 million people in 2023. Human populations across the hotspot were estimated to be growing at between 1.9% per year (Ghana, São Tomé and Príncipe) and 2.7% per year (Benin) in 2023. This growth is expected to continue in the coming decades, with the total population of the hotspot countries predicted to grow by over 60% to reach over 600 million people by 2050.

The hotspot countries have 30% of Africa's population in about 10% of its area, and as a result the average population density of the hotspot countries is 142 people/km^2, far higher than the African average of 51 people per km^2. There is large variation between countries, however, with the highest densities in Nigeria (242 people/km^2) and São Tomé and Príncipe (241 people/km^2), and the lowest (49 people/km^2) in Liberia.

Population data specifically for the hotspot is not available because it is limited by biogeographical rather than political boundaries. However, the total population was estimated at 84.7 million in 2004 (Mittermeier *et al.* 2004), indicating an average population density of 136 people per km^2 at that time. A later publication (Mittermeier 2011) estimates 89 million in 2006, giving a density of 144 people per km^2. If population in the hotspot has grown at the same rate as the population in the hotspot countries as a whole (58.9% between 2004 and 2023), the population of the hotspot will now be 134.6 million people, a density of 216 people per km^2.

The tables below present key information for the region.

Table 7.1. Population Statistics for the Hotspot Countries

Country	Area (km^2)	Pop. 2023 estimate (millions)	Pop. density (people per km^2, 2023)	Pop. growth rate (2023)	Projected annual pop. growth, 2023-2050 (%)	Projected pop. in 2050 (millions)
Benin	112,622	13.7	122	2.7	2.89	24.4
Cameroon	475,442	28.6	60	2.6	2.90	51.1
Côte d'Ivoire	322,463	28.9	90	2.5	3.44	55.7
Equatorial Guinea	28,051	1.7	61	2.3	2.99	3.1
Ghana	238,553	34.1	143	1.9	1.79	50.6
Guinea	245,857	14.2	58	2.4	2.40	23.4
Liberia	111,369	5.4	49	2.2	2.38	8.9
Nigeria	923,768	223.8	242	2.4	2.24	359.0
São Tomé and Príncipe	964	0.2	241	1.9	2.12	0.4
Sierra Leone	71,740	8.8	123	2.1	1.73	12.9
Togo	56,785	9.1	159	2.3	2.68	15.6
Total	**2,587,614**	**368.6**	**142**		**2.38**	**605.1**

Sources: World Bank https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?name_desc=false and World Population Review: https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries; accessed 14 Nov 2024.

The concept of ecological footprint gives an estimate of how fast a country (or other unit) uses resources and generates waste, compared to the same county's ability to sustain such use and absorb waste. In the hotspot, the five countries with the highest population density (Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Togo) are also those with an ecological footprint greater than their bio-capacity (Table 7.2). While the correlation between population density and ecological footprint is not perfect (for example, Nigeria has the highest population density but only the sixth highest ecological footprint), the figures suggest that, as the populations of the hotspot countries continue

to grow, their bio-capacity will be exceeded or further exceeded, accompanied by unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

Table 7.2. Key Demographic and Ecological Footprint Data

Country	Ecological footprint of consumption (global hectares per inhabitant, 2022)	Total biocapacity (global hectares per inhabitant, 2022)	Ecological reserve (or deficit) (global hectares per inhabitant, 2022)
Benin	0.6	1.1	-0.5
Cameroon	1.4	1	0.4
Côte d'Ivoire	1.1	0.9	0.2
Equatorial Guinea	2.7*	1.8	0.9
Ghana	0.9	1.8	-0.9
Guinea	1.7	1.5	0.2
Liberia	2.7	1.2	1.5
Nigeria	0.4	0.8	-0.4
São Tomé and Príncipe	No data	No data	No data
Sierra Leone	0.9	1	-0.1
Togo	0.6	0.9	-0.3

Foreign direct investment in West Africa fell from US$13 billion in 2021 to US$9 billion in 2022, mainly as a result of reductions in investment in Nigeria and Ghana. Nevertheless, FDI remains an important economic driver, with Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria the largest recipients . The United Arab Emirates (UAE), France, India and the USA are the leading investors in sub-Saharan Africa. China remains an important investor, although its overall level of investment dropped sharply between 2018 and 2022. Foreign investment in sub-Saharan Africa includes the acquisition of very large areas of land, particularly for edible oil and biofuel production.

8. POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE HOTSPOT

8.1 Governance, Conflicts, and Security Issues

Governance varies across the 11 hotspot countries, with information summarized by Freedom House. Most hotspot countries have experienced some form of political instability or insecurity in the past 20 years. Some regions, such as the Lake Chad Basin to which Nigeria and Cameroon belong, have seen an intensification of conflict, with the presence of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa and groups affiliated to al-Qaeda.

8.2 International environmental agreements

All the governments of all the hotspot countries have ratified the following international conventions and agreements related to conservation: Convention on Biological Diversity; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; the Paris Agreement (climate change); the Ramsar Convention (wetlands); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the World Heritage Convention.

These international commitments significantly influence the development of national policy and legislation in these states. This harmonization of legal and policy frameworks at international and national levels has fostered partnerships and increased collaboration between governments and CSOs. These international agreements have also

strengthened funding and technical support for conservation initiatives, mobilizing additional resources from multilateral and bilateral donors.

All the hotspot countries have developed National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to guide and support national implementation of the CBD. Several are now out of date, and all will need to be re-aligned with the Global Biodiversity Framework targets adopted at the Kunming-Montreal COP in 2022.

All the hotspot countries are signatories to the Paris Agreement, which requires countries to commit to emissions reductions through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). All signatory countries, including the 11 hotspot countries, have made binding commitments under the Paris Agreement to reduce GHG emissions and promote initiatives to adapt to climate change, and most of them have submitted their revised NDCs. Hotspot countries have listed 64 wetlands of international importance (i.e., Ramsar Sites) under the convention. Seventeen are located in the hotspot, nine of them confirmed KBAs and three within proposed freshwater KBAs (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1. Ramsar Sites within the GFWA Hotspot

Country	Ramsar site	KBA status
Cameroon	Barombi Mbo crater lake	KBA
Cameroon	Rio Del Rey estuary	Not a KBA
Côte d'Ivoire	Azagny National Park	KBA
Equatorial Guinea	Isla de Annobón	KBA
Ghana	Owabi reservoir	Not a KBA
Guinea	Konkouré	KBA
Liberia	Gbedin wetlands	proposed freshwater KBA
Liberia	Kpatawee wetlands	proposed freshwater KBA
Liberia	Lake Piso	KBA
Liberia	Marshall wetlands	Not a KBA
Liberia	Mesurado wetlands	proposed freshwater KBA
Nigeria	Apoi Creek forests	Not a KBA
Nigeria	Lake Oguta	Not a KBA
Nigeria	IITA	KBA
Nigeria	Upper Orashi forests	KBA
São Tomé and Príncipe	Tinhosas islets	KBA
Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone river estuary	KBA

CITES is an important convention for the countries of the Guinean Forests Hotspot, as it regulates trade in wild species. Unregulated international trade is a threat to plant and animal biodiversity (for example, the export of the grey parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) to the EU). Some trade continues, notably the export of bushmeat for the West African diaspora.

CITES parties are expected to put in place regulations and mechanisms to implement the decisions of the convention. However, of the 11 countries in the hotspot, only Nigeria is considered to have national legislation that meets the general implementation requirements of CITES. A bill adopted in 2024 will further strengthen measures against illegal wildlife trade by increasing law enforcement capacity, extending investigative powers to include financial investigations and intelligence-led operations, and enabling courts to expedite wildlife cases and recover assets.

Seven sites are listed from the hotspot countries as World Heritage Sites on the basis of their natural values. Only three are inside the hotspot: the Taï National Park in Côte d'Ivoire, and the sections of Mount Nimba in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

8.3 National legislation

In some hotspot countries, legislation relating to conservation issues is very old. For example, Ghana's environmental laws date back to colonial times (before 1957) and most of them deal with disease prevention and control, as well as wildlife protection. Sierra Leone's environmental legislation is at least two decades old. Several countries in the hotspot have modernized or are in the process of modernizing their laws, including new considerations such as provisions governing community conservation activities.

All the countries in the hotspot have made considerable progress towards creating a national network of protected areas. The protected planet database, which is the official reference of the CBD, records over 2,000 protected areas have been created covering more than 44 million hectares (Table 8.2). This is equivalent to 17.5% of the terrestrial and inland water area of the hotspot countries. However, the number of protected areas which are dedicated and managed for biodiversity conservation (IUCN category I to IV protected area) may be much smaller – for most protected areas the IUCN category is not reported, making it impossible to accurately assess this number.

Table 8.2. Summary of Data on Protected Areas in Hotspot Countries

Country	Number of Protected Areas	Hectares of Protected Areas	% of terrestrial and inland water area covered by Protected Areas
Benin	76	3,422,300	29.69
Cameroon	54	5,108,800	10.99
Côte d'Ivoire	257	7,321,400	22.83
Equatorial Guinea	16	510,300	18.99
Ghana	313	3,543,500	14.84
Guinea	132	9,195,500	37.61
Liberia	19	386,300	4.03
Nigeria	1,002	12,673,500	13.94
São Tomé and Príncipe	6	31,400	31.73
Sierra Leone	67	908,800	12.58
Togo	87	1,590,800	28.10
Total	**2,029**	**44,692,600**	**17.56**

Source: World Database of Protected Areas, https://www.protectedplanet.net/en, accessed December 2024.

Some hotspot countries have laws protecting specific species, in addition to those listed in the CITES appendices or NBSAPs. Existing laws consider three categories of threats to biodiversity classified according to the IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable species. In Nigeria, for example, the 2016 Endangered Species Act is the main legislation protecting the country's flora and fauna.

Management of forest for timber was a pre-occupation of colonial powers, and the influence of colonial era forestry laws can still be felt in some hotspot countries in the way that forests and the agencies that manage them are structured. Post-colonial reform has expanded to encompass a wider range of products and services from forest, such as carbon, and to allow the participation of wider range of stakeholders, with important initiatives allowing community-based forest management in some countries.

All the countries in the hotspot have introduced requirements for EIAs. This is partly due to the rapid expansion of the mining and oil/gas sectors and emerging pressures for the development of oil palm and rubber plantations. EIAs are crucial for anticipating and mitigating the effects of development projects on sensitive ecosystems. However, their effectiveness depends on technical capacity, transparency, data quality, and the political will to implement the recommendations.

The need to involve local communities in conservation actions is now widely accepted in international practice. Within the hotspot, regulations governing community conservation have existed in Cameroon and Ghana for over 20 years but have yet to be developed in the other countries of the hotspot, where customary rules prevail in community management of forests.

8.4 Regional agreements

The region is covered by a number of regional bodies and agreements that make an important contribution to conservation in the hotspot. Two regional bodies promote economic and conservation cooperation: ECOWAS and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The eight hotspot countries from Guinea to Nigeria are members of ECOWAS, while Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe are members of ECCAS. There are also a number of regional and pan-African programs operating in the hotspot (Table 8.3).

Table 8.3. Participation of Hotspot Countries in Regional Agreements

Regional agreements	Benin	Cameroon	Côte d' Ivoire	Equatorial Guinea	Ghana	Guinea	Liberia	Nigeria	São Tomé and Príncipe	Sierra Leone	Togo
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	x		x		x	x	x	x		x	x
Niger Basin Water Charter	x	x	x			x		x			x
Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel	x		x			x					x
Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa	x	x	x	x		x					x
African Union	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)	x		X								x
Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC)		x		x		x			x		
Lake Chad Basin Commission		x		x				x			
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)		x		x					x		
African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (revised version)	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)											
Congo Basin Forest Partnership		x		x					x		
Central African Economic and Monetary Community		x		x							
African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

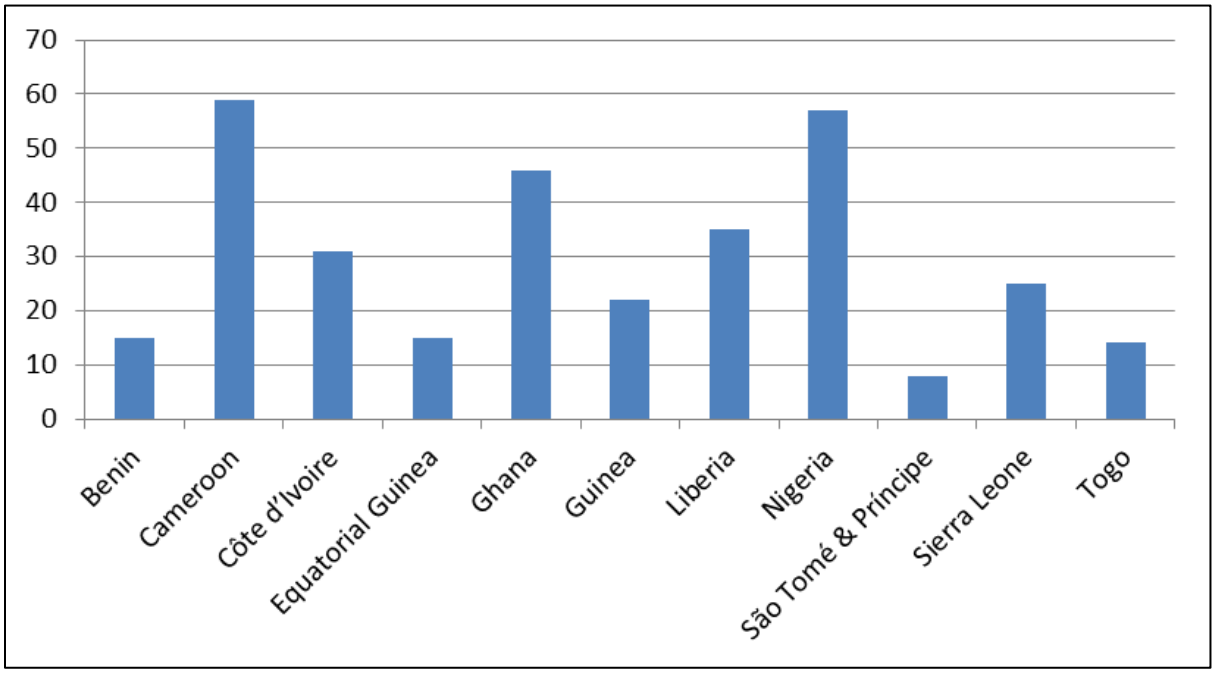
Source: FAOLEX.

9. CIVIL SOCIETY CONTEXT OF THE HOTSPOT

CEPF defines civil society broadly, as the set of institutions, organizations and individuals located between the family, the state and the market, in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests. Civil society is active in all the countries of the

hotspot. The 2015 ecosystem profile identified about 327 CSOs (including national and international NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), universities and research centers) involved in conservation in the hotspot.

Figure 9.1. Number of CSOs Involved in Conservation in Each Hotspot Country*



Note: * = includes national and international NGOs; community-based organizations; universities and research centers.

The hotspot has a number of universities and research institutions that teach and research topics relevant to conservation and sustainability within the hotspot (Table 9.1). Among the 11 hotspot countries, Nigeria has the greatest number of public and private universities offering courses on the environment and other related disciplines.

The effectiveness of civil society groups is affected by their wider environment, especially any legal restrictions placed on their ability to campaign, mobilize people and raise funds.

Some of the governments of the hotspot countries (e.g. Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone) are signatories to agreements that support partnerships between government and CSOs to assist in the management of natural resources. The forest convergence plan of ECOWAS recognizes the role of CSOs, while that of COMIFAC encourages the engagement of CSOs in forest conservation.

The Civicus Africa monitoring report measures trends in each country in respect of general political and social freedoms, classifying countries into five categories, from 'open' to 'closed'. In 2023, only São Tomé and Príncipe was 'open', and only Equatorial Guinea was "closed" (Table 9.2).

CSOs in several of the hotspot countries have successfully engaged their governments and the private sector in the development of enabling policies for natural resource utilization and conservation. Of particular note are the engagement of Liberian CSOs in the development of the community rights law, the participation of Ghanaian CSOs in the revision of national forest and wildlife policies, and the development of biodiversity action plans for specific forest reserves in the Niger Delta through cooperation between Shell Petroleum Development Company and the Nigerian Conservation Foundation. Cameroon, Ghana and Liberia are also noted for the inclusion of civil society

representatives in the composition of their national REDD+ working groups/steering committees. In Equatorial Guinea, CSOs worked with the government to promulgate a law prohibiting the hunting of large primates and other endangered species. In Cameroon, CSOs successfully advocated for a community forest reform that strengthened the management of community forestry by CSOs and CBOs. In São Tomé and Príncipe, CSOs such as MARAPA have been instrumental in promoting the sustainable management of key marine/coastal species and the protection of their habitats.

Table 9.1. Research Institutions and Universities in Hotspot countries

Country	Institution
Benin	Universite de Parakou; Universite des Sciences et Technologies du Benin
Cameroon	University of Yaoundé, Institut de Recherche Agricole pour le Développement (IRAD); University of Buea, University of Dschang; Pan African Institute for Development; University of Douala, Oxford University Fisheries Institute in Yabassi; Smithsonian Institute
Côte d'Ivoire	Centre Suisse de recherches scientifiques (CSRS); Université Félix Houphouët Boigny; Université Nangui Abrogoua; Centre de Recherche en Ecologie, Abidjan
Equatorial Guinea	Universidad Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial
Ghana	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology - Kumasi; University of Cape Coast; Centre for African Wetlands; Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG)
Guinea	SAV/Farannah; CU N'zerekore; Cerescor; IRAG; Université de Conakry ; Centre de Recherche Scientifque de Conakry; Centre National des Science Halientiques de Boussoura
Liberia	CARI; FTI; All Community Colleges in Liberia; CUC, UMU, SMPU; University of Liberia, Monrovia
Nigeria	University of Ibadan; University of Benin; Federal University of Technology, Akure; University of Calabar; Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN); A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI), Federal College of Wildlife, New Busa
São Tomé and Príncipe	Universidade Pública de São Tomé and Príncipe; Centro de Investigação Agronômica e Tecnológica de S.Tomé e Príncipe (CIAT); Gulf of Guinea Biodiversity Center
Sierra Leone	University of Sierra Leone, Freetown; Njala University, Njala/Bo; SLARI
Togo	Université des Sciences et Technologies du Togo; Université du Lomé, Université de Kara

Table 9.2. Civicus Monitoring Classifications of the Hotspot Countries

Country	Score 2023	State 2023*	Trend
Benin	47	Obstructed	Stable
Cameroon	26	Repressed	Stable
Côte d'Ivoire	54	Obstructed	Slight improvement
Equatorial Guinea	19	Closed	Stable
Ghana	55	Narrowed	Stable
Guinea	26	Obstructed	Slight improvement
Liberia	49	Obstructed	Stable
Nigeria	32	Obstructed	Improving
Sierra Leone	47	Obstructed	Stable
São Tomé and Príncipe	82	Open	Stable
Togo	39	Obstructed	Slight improvement

Note: *Civicus allocates countries to categories based on respect in law and practice for the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, drawing on data from multiple sources. Countries are categorized as closed (score 1-20); repressed (21-40); obstructed (41-60); narrowed (61-80) and open (81-100).

9.1 CSO capacity and organizational development

The concept of more *resilient* organizations is central to CEPF's vision for civil society in the hotspot. The journey towards becoming a resilient organization will be different for every CSO, depending on its history, purpose, stakeholders and the political and cultural environment in which it operates but common features of a resilient organization include that it:

- Has a clear mission that is ecologically and culturally relevant to a place.
- Delivers a program that is aligned with the mission.
- Has in place mechanisms to sustain financing and impact.
- Has appropriate governance and is accountable to key stakeholders.
- Forms part of a conservation community, collaborating and not stifling others.
- Has a positive organizational culture, motivated and satisfied staff.
- Is innovative and able to learn, embrace change and manage risk.

Nothing in this definition implies that an organization must be of a particular size or complexity: resilience is just as important for a small community-based organization as it is for a professional national NGO.

There are a wide range of actions that can support an organization in this journey to becoming more resilient, from simple, technical training (e.g. how to operate a software package) to a long-term, multi-faceted intervention which is intended to bring about fundamental change in the way an organization works. For the purposes of analysis and planning, it is useful to divide these needs and responses into capacity development and organizational development (Table 9.3):

- Capacity development (CD) is the delivery of specific knowledge and skills needed to enhance the performance of the CSO. In the context of CEPF support, CD will normally be linked to the development, delivery, monitoring and reporting of grant-funded conservation projects.
- Organizational development (OD) is the delivery of a package of support which addresses core institutional needs identified by the CSO, usually over a long timeframe and with the involvement of all or core members of the organization.

Table 9.3. Key Features of Capacity Development and Organizational Development

	Capacity Development	**Organization Development**
Objective	Specific personnel improve their knowledge and skills in a defined area of work	The organization has greater long-term resilience and adaptability
Delivery approach	Often through standard training events and modules, allowing for efficiencies such as training in groups and remote or online learning.	Tailored to the needs of the organization and its environment, with a variety of delivery types and phases over an extended period
Time and resources needed	Discrete, predictable, typically requiring limited funding and time	Long-term, requiring significant commitment of time from all levels of the organizations as well as external facilitators. Likely to be costly, but difficult to budget in detail from the start because of the iterative nature of the process

	Capacity Development	Organization Development
Measurement of impact	An immediate impact (e.g. acquisition of knowledge) is easy to define and measure, although demonstrating application of that knowledge to improve performance may be more difficult and long-term	Impact is long-term, may not be possible to define at the start, difficult to measure objectively

It is important to recognize that there is not a clear division between CD and OD, and that many actions and interventions will have some of the characteristics of both. For example, CSO staff trying to implement a newly acquired skill (CD) may encounter barriers which are to do with the organization's decision-making processes, governance or culture, so CD may have to engage with OD issues to ensure it has an impact. Conversely, OD demands time and commitment from staff which may take them away from delivering on short-term commitments to donors and stakeholders. It may be that CD is needed first, to deliver immediate improvements in performance which motivate staff and create the flexibility, before the more 'OD' activities can begin.

9.2 Recommendations

All the countries of the hotspot have an active and diverse civil society sector. The capacity of these organizations to deliver effective conservation on the ground for the benefit of biodiversity and people is variable but there appears to be a strong appetite to learn and grow. Funding, and recruiting and retaining staff are two major, inter-related problems that are widely encountered. In many countries, conservation remains heavily reliant on international CSOs. These organizations are increasingly investing in building the capacity of local community groups and CSOs, a trend which needs to be encouraged and strengthened.

While all the evidence suggests that CSOs can be more effective when they work together, especially across sectors, the reality is that competition for funding and influence makes this challenging. A key part of developing resilient CSOs will be enabling them to network and collaborate more effectively.

West Africa CSOs work in challenging economic and political contexts. While most countries in the region are nominally democratic, with space for CSOs to mobilize and act, there are also many examples of repression, corruption and elite capture of institutions and financial opportunities. Recent coups and outbreaks of insecurity and violence in several countries show that progress is fragile and can easily be undermined by economic and political forces.

The role of the private sector is complex. Natural resource companies are drivers of forest loss and degradation but may also be important contributors both to national economies and civil society funding. They have close relationships with government and other powerful elites. CSO need to become more adept at influencing these actors, working with them where appropriate, challenging them when necessary. International networks and collaboration can be critical to success, especially when challenging multinational companies.

In this context, CEPF's aim of building resilient civil society is critical. Several key conclusions and lessons emerge from this chapter and discussions (for example in the Long-term strategic vision for the hotspot):

- CSOs will be a stronger position to work with government and private sector if they are legitimate. Legitimacy is a product of delivering effective projects which are valued by local stakeholders; accountability to donors and stakeholders at

projects sites; transparency and fulfilment of legal requirements; clearly thought-out and communicated objectives and strategy, backed by analysis.
- Although networking and collaboration is critical, it cannot be imposed through donor requirements alone. CEPF's role is to facilitate greater contact between CSOs, and create opportunities for sharing and collaboration to emerge, which could then be funded through joint proposals.
- Similarly, capacity development and organizational development should build on a genuine interest and commitment from the organization to grow and improve, and not be simply a response to donor conditionalities or opportunities.
- Despite efforts to move away from donor-dependence and project-driven approaches, CSOs will be dependent on external donors for some time to come. There is a need to minimize the impact of donor-driven agendas and requirements. Donor coordination, sharing information and harmonizing approaches, can make it less burdensome for CSOs to meet donor requirements and use funds in more flexible ways.

10. CLIMATE CHANGE ASSESSMENT

The climate of West Africa is characterized by a north-south gradient, with southern areas being cooler and wetter, and the northern areas drier and hotter. Climatic conditions which support the growth of tropical rainforest – and therefore define the limits of the GFWA hotspot – are generally found in the wetter southern zone, with some forested mountains further north where altitude and topography causes sufficient rainfall to support evergreen forest vegetation.

Observed changes in temperature
In the western part of the hotspot (Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia) there has been a mild warming trend. In central and eastern parts of the hotspot, there is no clear warming trend (Docherty *et al*. 2022). Nevertheless, extreme heat events have become more common. In February 2024, most of West Africa experienced extreme heat, with Accra recording its highest ever temperature (38°C), hottest nights ever recorded in Ghana, Togo and Benin, and temperatures of 40°C recorded in several places.

Projected temperature change
Between 2020 and 2050, the mean annual temperature across the hotspot is expected to rise by between 1.5^0C and 3^0C. Given the low range of temperature variation, which is currently experienced in this zone, these changes will take temperatures outside the current normal range.

Observed changes in rainfall
The western part of the hotspot (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia) experiences the highest rainfall in the hotspot, typically during a single-peaked wet season. There is large inter-annual variability in rainfall totals. The central and eastern part of the hotspot, from Côte d'Ivoire to Nigeria, experiences a double peak of rainfall, in June and September, associated with the West African monsoon and migration of the inter-continental convergence zone northwards and then southwards across the coastal region. At the level of the whole of West Africa there is a general pattern of increasing rainfall in the north east (e.g. Lake Chad) and decreasing rainfall in the west, but the data for the hotspot does not show a consistent pattern of change in rainfall (Doherty *et al.* 2022).

Projected rainfall change
Models of rainfall change have less confidence attached to them than the models of temperature change. However, it is expected that annual variability, the number of high intensity rainfall events and the number of drought days will all increase. In the western part of the hotspot there will be reductions in rainfall in the early part of the rainy season associated with delays in the onset of the rains. The rainy season will not just shift to

later in the year, however. In extreme western end of the hotspot (Guinea, Sierra Leone) the rainy season is likely to get shorter, with later onset and earlier halt to the rains. East of this, in Liberia, later onset is expected to be more than compensated for by a later end to the rains, resulting in a longer rainy season overall. Across the rest of the hotspot, from Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana to Nigeria, annual variability in rainfall totals and intensity is expected to increase, but a shift in the rainy season is not expected. Some models predict increases in peak river flows, potentially leading to flooding, in several of the region's larger rivers (Docherty *et al*. 2022).

Observed changes in sea level

One study in Togo (Konko *et al.* 2024) found evidence of increasing annual sea levels, and greater wave energy. The local impact of these changes (e.g. erosion, accretion) is dependent on local substrate and topography. Erosion has been reported from several locations on the Ghanaian coast.

Projected sea level rise and changes to marine ecosystems

It is predicted that sea levels will rise around the entire coastline of the hotspot by around 0.3 meters between 2000 and 2050, with impacts on coastal livelihoods, infrastructure and ecosystems, including salt-water intrusion into coastal wetlands. Increases in sea surface temperature and ocean acidity are also expected, and will impact on marine organisms and ecosystems, and therefore also on the livelihoods of coastal communities which depend on them. Changes in ocean currents (the eastwards-flowing Guinea current and the cold-water upwelling in the Gulf of Guinea) are uncertain, but any changes would be likely to have a large impact on the productivity and biodiversity of the region.

11. ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT CONSERVATION INVESTMENT

Between 2015 and 2022, global biodiversity finance experienced significant growth, driven by both public and private sectors. Public international biodiversity finance expanded from approximately US$10.9 billion in 2015 to US$25.8 billion in 2022. This growth reflects heightened international commitment, fueled by the implementation of frameworks such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members, along with multilateral organizations like the GEF and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), contributed heavily to biodiversity finance, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Contributions from these institutions rose by 123% between 2021 and 2022 alone, demonstrating the strategic priority placed on biodiversity within broader development objectives.

There has been a notable shift towards leveraging private finance for biodiversity projects. Private contributions, often mobilized through public initiatives, doubled from US$748 million in 2021 to US$1.8 billion in 2022.

Biodiversity finance has increasingly aligned with climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. By 2021, nearly 88% of biodiversity-focused Official Development Assistance projects also targeted climate objectives, underscoring a trend towards projects that generate co-benefits for biodiversity and climate resilience. This integration is driven by the recognition that preserving biodiversity plays a vital role in climate adaptation strategies, especially in regions susceptible to environmental degradation.

Despite substantial increases in funding, global biodiversity finance faces several ongoing challenges:

- The funding gap remains considerable, particularly to meet global targets like those set under the Kunming-Montreal framework.
- There is limited integration of biodiversity finance across other sectors, such as agriculture and infrastructure, missing opportunities for substantial co-benefits that could arise from integrated planning.

In an important trend, innovative financing tools are gaining prominence:

- Green Bonds and Biodiversity Credits: Designed to tap into private capital, green bonds allow investors to support environmentally friendly projects, while biodiversity credits enable companies to offset environmental impacts.
- Impact Investing and Blended Finance: Public-private partnerships and blended finance structures are being explored to attract more private investors by reducing investment risks, making biodiversity projects more appealing and financially viable.

Africa receives substantial attention within global biodiversity finance, accounting for around 35% of philanthropic funding directed at biodiversity-rich areas globally. From 2015 to 2022, both multilateral and bilateral donors prioritized biodiversity-related projects across the continent.

Countries in the hotspot received net ODA of US$14 billion in 2022, with the largest sums going to Nigeria, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. The largest donor overall was the International Development Association (IDA, part of the World Bank), following by several bilateral and multilateral donors (Table 11.1).

Table 11.1. 2022 Net ODA Receipts by Country, with Top 5 Donors

Country	Income group	Top 5 donors*	Net ODA (US$ million)
Benin	Lower middle	IDA; France; USA, IsDB; Germany	968
Cameroon	Lower middle	IDA; France; USA, IsDB; Germany	1,687
Côte d'Ivoire	Lower middle	IDA; France; Belgium; Germany; AfDB	2,840
Equatorial Guinea	Upper middle	USA; Portugal; Spain; France; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	479
Ghana	Lower middle	Netherlands; Sweden; Switzerland; IDA; Mastercard Foundation	1,928
Guinea	Lower middle	IDA; EU; Global Fund; France; USA	446
Liberia	Low	USA; Japan; IDA; Korea; Sweden	878
Nigeria	Lower middle	ISA; USA; Global Fund; UK; Bill&Melinda Gates Foundation	3,896
São Tomé and Príncipe	Lower middle	Portugal; IDA; EU; France; Global Fund	64
Sierra Leone	Low	IDA; UK; USA; Global Fund; EU	535
Togo	Low	IDA; France; Global Fund; EU; Germany	381
		Total	**14,103**

Source: OECD, Aid Statistics. * IsDB – Islamic Development Bank; AfDB – African Development Bank.

National ODA receipts (2016 to 2023) show notable but varied levels of support. ODA allocations have generally risen, driven by commitments to poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and sustainable economic growth. However, the distribution varies considerably, with larger economies like Nigeria and Ghana receiving substantial portions due to their population size and strategic importance. A significant portion of ODA is climate-related, especially in sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and fishing, which are vital for biodiversity and climate adaptation. Funding has emphasized infrastructure, healthcare, and education, with additional resources directed to sectors tied closely to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Several DAC members have allocated ODA in alignment with the OECD's climate and biodiversity Rio markers, ensuring a greater flow of funding into environmental conservation alongside traditional developmental objectives. Despite increases, ODA levels still fall short of meeting the vast biodiversity and climate adaptation needs across the region. Financial support often does not fully cover the resources needed for effective biodiversity conservation, nor does it adequately address capacity-building for local environmental governance.

Major sources of investment include multilateral programs (GEF, Green Climate Fund, the World Bank, the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), bilateral programs (EU, AFD, GIZ, KfW, Norwegian International Climate and Forest Initiative, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, United Kingdom Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, philantrhopies (Arcadia Fund, Arcus Foundation, Cartier for Nature Foundation, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, Fondation L'Occitane, MAVA Foundation, Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Rainforest Trust), and various international NGOs.

Several large, multi-faceted projects bring together a group of funders and implementation partners to address conservation issues at scale across parts of the hotspot, including the *Guinean Forests Integrated Program*, Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management Program (BIOPAMA), the Save Our Species fund led by IUCN, and the West Africa Nature Transformation initiative (WANTi).

Small-grant funding for civil society has been available from the GEF Small Grants Programme, the Programme de Petites Initiatives (PPI) (an initiative of the French Committee of IUCN, funded by FFEM), plus funds from Fondation Franklinia, Global Greengrants, and the Conservation Leadership Program.

There are also funds from the private sector, including Rio Tinto, Shell Oil, Socfin-owned Agripalma, Coca Cola, international tourism operators, and various national companies.

Data on conservation funding from national governments in the hotspot is often difficult to access and may also be difficult to interpret, if it is not segregated by expenditure sector. State funding is often limited to salaries of government staff and basic operational expenses. These funds are rarely sufficient for the conservation actions they are supposed to support. Protected area monitoring is also insufficiently regular or standardized to give a clear picture of the level and trends in government funding.

Nevertheless, the increased awareness of the importance of forests for biodiversity, climate change, and the livelihoods of local communities has led to a general rise in funding allocated to forest conservation. Initiatives such as REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) have encouraged many countries to increase their forest budgets to benefit from international financing. The increasing availability of funding through partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, bilaterals and multilaterals has also encouraged national government to invest more in conservation.

Each country exhibits unique patterns in budget allocation and conservation efforts, shaped by their economic, political, and environmental contexts. Some general trends can be observed:

- Benin has seen a moderate budget allocation with slight annual increases. The country has established national funds for conservation but remains dependent on international financing. Despite a commitment to sustainability, internal financial resources are limited.

- Cameroon experiences fluctuations in its budget depending on revenues from natural resource extraction. There is a general trend of increase, heavily reliant on external financing. Intensive logging and REDD+ initiatives are significant, yet governance challenges persist.
- Côte d'Ivoire witnessed a strong post-conflict increase in budget, focusing more on reconstruction. While the environmental budget is growing, there are concerns about long-term sustainability. Political stabilization and international investments, along with the development of eco-tourism, are key factors.
- Equatorial Guinea shows variable budget allocations, heavily influenced by oil revenues, which are the country's main income source. There is potential for increased forest funds through economic diversification, but transparency is limited.
- Ghana reports a steady increase in forest budgets thanks to proactive policies and international partnerships, including the introduction of green financing mechanisms. Strong government commitment and integration of sustainable development goals are crucial.
- Guinea has a budget that is slightly increasing but constrained by internal resources and political instability. High dependence on external financing is noted, along with governance and resource management challenges.
- Liberia has seen moderate progress with increased attention post-conflict. The conservation budget is growing but is hampered by limited infrastructure. Post-conflict rehabilitation and REDD+ projects are important priorities.
- Nigeria has a relatively high budget due to the size of its economy, but corruption and mismanagement limits effectiveness. There is a slight increase in forest budgets with green financing initiatives.
- São Tomé and Príncipe has maintained a stable budget with a slight increase, mainly focusing on eco-tourism and international grants. As a small country with protected forests, the funding is limited but effective.
- Sierra Leone shows moderate post-conflict increase reliant on international funding. The conservation budget is growing, but governance challenges persist. Post-civil war rehabilitation, REDD+ projects, and fragile public management are key.
- Togo has a budget that is slightly increasing with a growing focus on conservation. There is moderate dependence on international financing. Conservation initiatives are integrated into national policies, yet financial constraints remain.

Key trends and observations:

- Countries rich in natural resources, such as Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Nigeria, often see fluctuations in environmental budgets based on revenues from mining and oil extraction.
- Despite the trend of increasing state funding in many countries, issues of corruption and mismanagement often hinder the effectiveness of the budgets allocated. Political and economic instability can lead to budgets being redirected.
- Countries that have experienced conflicts, like Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, tend to increase their conservation budgets during reconstruction phases, although sustainability can be a challenge.
- Commitments to international agreements (such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals and REDD+) and partnerships with international organizations (like the World Bank, IMF, NGOs) positively influence the budgets allocated to forests.
- The quality of governance and the level of transparency in managing public funds play a crucial role in the effectiveness of environmental budgets. Countries facing corruption issues often have less effective budgets despite nominally high allocations.

12. CEPF NICHE FOR INVESTMENT

12.1 Lessons from previous phases

Between 2001 and 2022, CEPF invested US$18.4 million through two phases of grant-making in the GFWA hotspot. The first phase (2001-2012) invested US$8.3 million in the Upper Guinean Forests, while the second phase (2016-2022) granted US$10.1 million across the entire hotspot. The projects in the second phase had impacts at the level of species (14 projects delivered priority actions for 40 CR and EN species), sites (including 12 protected areas) and in eight of the nine (now 10) conservation corridors across the hotspot.

In 2022, CEPF carried out an extensive stakeholder consultation exercise which led to the development of a Long-term Vision for the hotspot (CEPF 2022b). The process included a review of lessons from CEPF's two phases of funding, and from related conservation programs. Key lessons identified as part of this process were related to site-level conservation, scaling impact through stakeholder collaboration, science and data, CSO capacity, and long-term funding and sustainability (Table 12.1).

12.2 Strategic focus for CEPF in the Guinean Forests of West Africa, 2025-2029

Based on lessons from prior phases and the context provided by the preceding sections of this document, the CEPF investment strategy is guided by the following themes.

- Data as a basis for policy-advocacy and priority setting
- Sustainable conservation action for sites and landscapes
- Scaling site-level experience to engage with government and the private sector
- A tiered approach to capacity development and organizational development

13. CEPF INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND PROGRAMMATIC FOCUS, 2025-2030

To prioritize species, CEPF considered those that are Critical Endangered, Endangered, or that have a restricted range are likely endemic to the hotspot. This yielded 83 priority species (Table 13.1).

Sites were prioritized based on assessments of irreplaceability, vulnerability, and species threat abatement and restoration. This produced a list of 33 KBAs (Table 13.2), equivalent to 24% of all confirmed KBAs in the hotspot. The priority KBAs are located in eight of the 11 countries in the hotspot.

Table 13.3 summarizes the strategic directions and subordinate investment priorities that constitute the thematic priorities for CEPF investment in the hotspot. Full descriptions are given in the following sections.

Table 12.1. Summary of Strategic Lessons and Recommendations from the Long-term Vision for the Hotspot

Lesson	Responses relevant to CEPF
Site-level conservation strategies	
Conservation interventions cannot be successful and/or sustainable without community ownership. Without attention to these issues, communities are more likely to trade land for handouts from extractive industry	Empowering communities to work for their own development must be at the core of all investments. It is expected that livelihoods will be a core component of field-based projects. These interventions should be based on a clear theory of change which articulates the link between livelihoods and biodiversity conservation.
Community empowerment includes secure, legal access to natural resources. In many hotspot countries there are legal frameworks for community-based management	Encourage the use and expansion of existing legal frameworks permitting community-based resource management
Conservation requires behavior change at local and regional (e.g. consumer) level. Creative media is an efficient, high-impact approach	Strengthen collaboration with the media, improve CSO capacity to work on communications
Stakeholder engagement for scaling impact	
Some parts of the private sector are interested in mitigating negative environmental impacts from their business process, funding mitigation interventions, promoting sustainable supply chains	Engage with private sector (e.g. through multi-stakeholder discussion platforms) to promote adoption of sustainable practices, to increase financial contributions to conservation, and to promote investment in innovative financial mechanisms (e.g. offset, carbon trade, ecosystem services)
Government support is crucial to the success, maintenance and upscaling of all conservation interventions, from identifying KBAs to planning, licensing decisions, designation of PAs, site-based interventions and the policy framework.	Build strong relationships with relevant authorities at the onset of all investments; media campaigns and public awareness can contribute, facilitated through training for journalists, and training for CSOs on effective communications
Conservation impact will be enhanced by cross-border transboundary conservation, sharing of information and standardization of approaches. Existing cooperation mechanisms (e.g. MRU, COMIFAC, ECOWAS) offer an opportunity to do this but do not address the whole hotspot.	Encourage regional collaboration and harmonization between governments, e.g. through an informal coordination platform specifically for the hotspot countries (a model is the platform created for the Great Green Wall programme)
Science and data	
There are gaps in knowledge of biodiversity and conservation good-practice; information is fragmented	Encourage original field work and research to address key knowledge gaps. Establish a rigorous long-term monitoring systems and a mechanism to facilitate sharing information
CSO capacity development	
Grassroots organizations require tailor-made, medium- to long-term support	synchronize different funding sources to achieve the financial security needed for long-term organizational development;
The mentoring approach was highly successful, but participant commitment is critical to success	Continue promoting mentorship, ensure that participation is voluntary and supported by the CSO
Peer-to-peer learning is a powerful capacity development approach that should be maximized	Create opportunities for CSOs to meet, exchange and network at different levels

Lesson	Responses relevant to CEPF
CSOs must be encouraged to collaborate rather than compete for funding, but this cannot be forced	Encourage and support trust building through peer learning, exchanges, funding collaborative projects
Support to CSO capacity must be based on an adequate shared understanding of need and context	Hold in-person meetings and allow adequate time to establish a relationship between CSO, donor and capacity provider
Capacity development should be coupled with receiving a small grant	Put in place measures to ensure that capacity development leads to improved performance
Long-term funding and sustainability	
Mechanisms to deliver funding to small CSOs and grassroots organizations are inadequate. These organizations lack the capacity and profile required to access donor funds.	Target CEPF small grants to local and smaller organizations, and tailor the project approval and support process to the needs of this group
Insufficient funding for science-based evidence-generation projects to inform the prioritization and design of conservation investments	Ensure that funding for data collection and field work builds capacity and leaves grantees in a stronger position to seek additional funds
Insufficient knowledge sharing and collaboration between stakeholders in the hotspot limits complementarity	Engage conservation funders (especially CSO small grants providers) to share information and, as appropriate, coordinate grant-making

Table 13.1. Priority Species for CEPF Investment

No.	Scientific Name	Common Name	No.	Scientific Name	Common Name
Amphibians			**Bony Fishes**		
1	*Alexteroon jynx*	Smooth Egg-guarding Frog	32	*Callopanchax monroviae*	*na*
2	*Arthroleptis krokosua*	Krokosua Squeaking Frog	33	*Clarias maclareni*	*na*
3	*Astylosternus nganhanus*	Nganha Night Frog	34	*Coptodon coffea*	*na*
4	*Cardioglossa manengouba*	Manengouba long-fingered frog	35	*Enteromius bagbwensis*	*na*
5	*Cardioglossa trifasciata*	Nsoung Long-fingered Frog	36	*Enteromius clauseni*	*na*
6	*Conraua derooi*	Togo Slippery Frog	37	*Enteromius melanotaenia*	*na*
7	*Conraua sagyimase*	Atewa Slippery Frog	38	*Epiplatys coccinatus*	*na*
8	*Crotaphatrema lamottei*	Mount Oku caecilian	39	*Fundulopanchax scheeli*	Scheeli Killifish
9	*Leptodactylodon axillaris*	*na*	40	*Konia dikume*	*na*
10	*Leptodactylodon erythrogaster*	Redbelly Egg Frog	41	*Konia eisentrauti*	*na*
11	*Leptodactylodon wildi*	Wild's Egg Frog	42	*Labeo curriei*	*na*
12	*Nimbaphrynoides occidentalis*	Mount Nimba Viviparous Toad	43	*Ladigesia roloffi*	*na*
13	*Petropedetes perreti*	Perret's Water Frog	44	*Myaka myaka*	*na*
14	*Phrynobatrachus afiabirago*	Afia Birago's Puddle Frog	45	*Parauchenoglanis buettikoferi*	*na*
15	*Phrynobatrachus chukuchuku*	Spiny Puddle Frog	46	*Pungu maclareni*	*na*
16	*Phrynobatrachus intermedius*	Intermediate Puddle Frog	47	*Sarotherodon caroli*	*na*
17	*Phrynobatrachus jimzimkusi*	Jim Zimkus' Puddle Frog	48	*Sarotherodon linnellii*	*na*
18	*Phrynobatrachus njiomock*	Lake Oku Puddle Frog	49	*Sarotherodon steinbachi*	*na*
19	*Sclerophrys perreti*	Perret's Toad	50	*Scriptaphyosemion etzeli*	*na*
20	*Werneria bambutensis*	Bamboutos Smalltongue Toad	51	*Scriptaphyosemion schmitti*	*na*
21	*Werneria mertensiana*	Mertens' Smalltongue Toad	52	*Stomatepia mariae*	*na*
22	*Werneria tandyi*	Tandy's Smalltongue Toad	53	*Stomatepia mongo*	*na*
23	*Wolterstorffina chirioi*	Mount Oku Wolterstorff Toad	54	*Stomatepia pindu*	*na*
24	*Wolterstorffina parvipalmata*	Cameroon Wolterstorff Toad	55	*Synodontis macrophthalmus*	Squeaker Catfish
25	*Xenopus longipes*	Lake Oku Clawed Frog	**Freshwater crabs and shrimp**		
Birds			56	*Afrithelphusa leonensis*	*na*
26	*Bostrychia bocagei*	Dwarf Ibis	57	*Liberonautes grandbassa*	*na*
27	*Crithagra concolor*	São Tomé Grosbeak	58	*Liberonautes lugbe*	*na*
28	*Lanius newtoni*	Newton's Fiscal	**Insects**		
29	*Otus feae*	Annobón scops owl	59	*Elattoneura pluotae*	*na*
30	*Otus bikegila*	Principe Scops-owl			
31	*Turdus xanthorhynchus*	Principe Thrush			

Ct.	Scientific Name	Common Name
Mammals		
60	*Cercopithecus roloway*	Roloway Monkey
61	*Crocidura wimmeri*	Wimmer's Shrew
62	*Hipposideros lamottei*	Lamotte's Roundleaf Bat
63	*Lophuromys eisentrauti*	Mount Lefo Brush-furred Rat
64	*Myosorex eisentrauti*	Eisentraut's Mouse Shrew
65	*Piliocolobus epieni*	Niger Delta Red Colobus
66	*Piliocolobus pennantii*	Pennant's Red Colobus
67	*Piliocolobus preussi*	Preuss's Red Colobus
68	*Piliocolobus waldroni*	Miss Waldron’s Red Colobus
Mollusks		
69	*Bellamya liberiana*	*na*
70	*Coelatura essoensis*	*na*
71	*Melanoides voltae*	*na*
72	*Pleiodon ovatus*	*na*
73	*Potadoma angulata*	*na*
74	*Potadoma togoensis*	*na*
75	*Pseudocleopatra togoensis*	*na*
Plants		
76	*Acridocarpus staudtii*	*na*
77	*Aubregrinia taiensis*	Great Tiger-nut Tree
78	*Ledermanniella keayi*	*na*
79	*Tarenna hutchinsonii*	*na*
Reptiles		
80	*Cynisca gansi*	*na*
81	*Lacertaspis lepesmei*	Angel's Five-toed Skink
82	*Trachylepis nganghae*	*na*
Sharks, Rays		
83	*Fontitrygon garouaensis*	Niger Stingray

Table 13.2. Priority Sites for CEPF Investment

Map code	KBA Code	Country	KBA name	Single site CR species	High STAR score
CMR1	6125	Cameroon	Bakossi mountains	x	x
CMR10	26329	Cameroon	Mont Nganha*	x	
CMR11	6126	Cameroon	Mont Nlonako		x
CMR12	6130	Cameroon	Mount Cameroon and Mokoko-Onge*	x	x
CMR13	29690	Cameroon	Mount Lefo*	x	
CMR15	6115	Cameroon	Mount Oku	x	x
CMR16	6127	Cameroon	Mount Rata and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve*	x	x
CMR18	6112	Cameroon	Tchabal-Mbabo*		x
CMR19	6129	Cameroon	Yabassi		x
CMR20	47084	Cameroon	Eastern Bamenda highlands and associated hydrobasin*		x
CMR3	29689	Cameroon	Bamboutos Mountains*	x	
CMR5	6122	Cameroon	Korup National Park		x
CMR9	6124	Cameroon	Mont Manengouba*	x	x
CIV11	6100	Côte d'Ivoire	Taï National Park and Nzo Faunal Reserve		x
CIV8	6092	Côte d'Ivoire	Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve*	x	x
GNQ1	6378	Equatorial Guinea	Annobón	x	
GNQ2	6380	Equatorial Guinea	Luba Caldera Scientific Reserve*	x	
GNQ3	6379	Equatorial Guinea	Basilé Peak National Park*	x	x
GHA2	6311	Ghana	Ankasa Resource Reserve - Nini-Sushien National Park*	x	x
GHA3	6312	Ghana	Atewa Range Forest Reserve*	x	
GIN8	6375	Guinea	Massif du Ziama		x
GIN9	6376	Guinea	Monts Nimba (part of Mount Nimba transboundary AZE)*	x	x
fw12	47038	Liberia	Weeni creek and associated hydrobasin*	x	
LBR1	6461	Liberia	Cestos - Senkwen		x
LBR11	6457	Liberia	Lofa-Gola-Mano Complex		x
LBR12	6458	Liberia	Nimba mountains*	x	x
LBR14	6462	Liberia	Sapo		x
LBR2	22308	Liberia	Cestos Gbi		x
LBR7	6463	Liberia	Grebo		x
NGA14	100504	Nigeria	Idanre Hills*	x	x
NGA4	6740	Nigeria	Cross River National Park (Oban Division)		x
STP1	45720	São Tomé-Príncipe	Parque Natural Obô de São Tomé e Zona Tampão*	x	x
STP2	6884	São Tomé-Príncipe	Príncipe forests*	x	x

Note: * = sites also identified as priorities by the Alliance for Zero Extinction (see below).

Table 13.3. GFWA Strategic Directions and Investment Priorities, 2025-2030

Strategic Direction	Investment Priority
1. Support local partnerships for conservation of globally important biodiversity in priority sites and ecological corridors	1.1. Advance the protection and conservation management of priority sites and the ecological corridors that connect them
	1.2. Strengthen the long-term financial sustainability of conservation efforts for priority sites
2. Safeguard priority globally threatened species and ecosystems by identifying and addressing major threats and information gaps	2.1. Consolidate and improve critical data on threatened species and ecosystems
	2.2. Promote action for the conservation of threatened species and ecosystems
3. Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice	3.1. Update the Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) analysis for the hotspot and strengthen national mechanisms for KBA recognition and promotion, including National Coordination Groups
	3.2. Compile data and communicate the need and opportunities for conservation of KBAs and threatened species to the public, policy-makers and private sector
4. Facilitate the development of a robust and resilient community of conservation civil society organizations	4.1. Ensure that CEPF grantees have the technical capacity to plan, implement and sustain effective conservation projects
	4.2. Provide support to targeted conservation organizations engaged in a process of organizational development
	4.3. Enhance the collective strength and ability of conservation CSOs at national and regional levels
5. Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of conservation investment through a Regional Implementation Team	5.1 Support a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries towards achieving the shared conservation goals described in the ecosystem profile

Strategic Direction 1. Support local partnerships for conservation of globally important biodiversity in priority KBAs and ecological corridors

Projects under this strategic direction may aim to do one or more of the following:

- Reduce pressure on a KBA by encouraging different, more productive or sustainable forms of resource use, alternative and enhanced livelihoods linked to biodiversity protection, or by addressing other factors which are driving pressure on the site.
- Maximize opportunities to retain or improve connectivity between ecosystems in the landscape, encouraging gene-flow and more resilient populations of wild species, and allowing species to move and adapt in response to climate change.
- Maintain or restore a connection between the conservation of KBAs and the ecological services they provide to surrounding communities, including water, local climate regulation, household products and recreational opportunities.
- Ensure that there is a focus on sustainable and biodiversity-friendly land use and management in areas surrounding the KBA, as well as on the conservation of the KBA itself.

Investment Priority 1.1. Advance the protection and conservation management of priority KBAs and the ecological corridors that connect them

At the core of CEPF's mission is funding of local CSOs to work with partners (including government, private sector, community/grassroots groups and other CSOs) to conserve sites of global importance for biodiversity (i.e., KBAs). As noted above, the conservation

of KBAs will be planned and addressed in the context of wider landscapes and of connectivity between sites.

Activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Data collection, survey and assessment need to gather data on threats and management.
- Establishing coalitions and partnerships which bring together the capacities and skills needed, including establishing partnerships with community groups and facilitating coordination between clusters of grantees to address conservation in the same landscape/site.
- Meetings and consultations with stakeholders.
- Planning conservation action and associated livelihoods interventions, and mechanisms which link them, such as conservation agreements.
- Conservation management actions at the site, or action in the wider landscape to maintain or restore connectivity.
- Action to address drivers of threats, for example alternative livelihoods, awareness raising, addressing land use planning.
- Advocacy and collaboration with the relevant authorities to address issues such as land use planning, resource use licensing, regulations and budgets.
- Monitoring to establish the impact of conservation action and livelihoods work.
- Communication of results to stakeholders.
- Learning and exchange visits to other sites and projects.

Investment Priority 1.2. Strengthen the long-term financial sustainability of conservation efforts for priority sites

Difficulty in securing sustained financial support for their work is one of the greatest challenges faced by CSOs in the region. Donor funding continues to play a vital role for both government and CSO action on the environment, but the restrictions attached to such funding can limit the ability of recipients to respond to changing circumstances, and limited project time-scales prevent effective long-term planning. To mitigate these challenges, CSOs need a more diverse range of funding sources. The analysis of existing conservation funding (Chapter 11) showed that alternatives are increasingly available, globally and in West Africa, but local CSOs may not know about these opportunities, or may lack the capacity to access them.

Activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Research to identify potential donors/investors and options for financing conservation work at KBAs.
- Activities to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to access new forms of funding.
- Meetings to build stakeholder commitment and plan.
- Development of proposals and communication material related to the financing mechanisms.
- Preparing the ground for new funding mechanisms, including legal and due diligence work.
- Establish or strengthen a financing mechanism, including providing funding for operational support.

Strategic Direction 2. Safeguard priority globally threatened species and ecosystems by identifying and addressing major threats and information gaps

The conservation of many species and ecosystems will be addressed through landscape-level site conservation projects under Strategic Direction 1. However, some highly threatened species require dedicated action because:

- They depend on a one or a handful of sites or very specific ecological requirements, meaning they require specific attention to ensure their conservation needs are met.
- They are thought to be vulnerable, but not enough is known about their distribution or ecology to effectively plan for conservation.
- They depend on one of more of the KBAs that are not prioritized for investment under Strategic Direction 1.
- They are highly mobile, or widely dispersed, such that the protection of a site does not contribute significantly to the conservation of the population.
- They are targeted for unsustainable use and trade, and threatened even within protected areas.

Investment Priority 2.1. Consolidate and improve critical data on threatened species and ecosystems

Setting priorities, planning action and monitoring the impacts of conservation efforts all require improved data on species and sites. In some cases, this information may be available but unpublished. In others, field surveys and other primary data collection is needed. Under this investment priority, grantees will be supported to address key data gaps, gathering information which is critical for conservation, and communicating it in a form that is accessible for site managers and policy makers.

Activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Primary field survey work design to improve knowledge of the status and conservation needs of priority threatened species.
- Survey work relevant to planning conservation action and understanding its implications for livelihoods and households, for example market, consumer and hunter surveys.
- Consolidation of data to support effective conservation planning and action, especially unpublished data or data which is scattered in different databases and publications.
- Analyzing, interpreting and publishing data in format which makes it useful to groups managing sites, decision makers and other stakeholders.

Investment Priority 2.2. Promote action for the conservation of threatened species and ecosystems

Using the analysis of the conservation need of species and sites (IP2.1), this investment priority focuses on targeted conservation action for priority species. If the site where they occur is a protected area, the action might include working with the protected area agency to ensure that the conservation needs of the species are considered in planning the management of the site. Outside protected areas, action might include working with the site's owners and managers to raise awareness and put in place sympathetic management practices. Beyond site-based work, conservation action for species might include efforts to change consumer behavior, to behavior enhance legal protection. In all cases, there is likely to be a component of targeted monitoring, to ensure that the target species is benefitted from conservation action. In many cases, it may be useful to document data, analysis and planned conservation action in the form of a species action plan, which might be for a species at a specific site, in a landscape or at a wider level.

Activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Assessment of threats and potential solutions.
- Meetings with stakeholders and planning for conservation action.
- Work with local communities and local authorities to ensure the protection of a site
- Implementation of conservation actions.

- Monitoring and communicating results to stakeholders.
- Exchange and learning visits to relevant projects and sites.

Strategic Direction 3. Mainstream biodiversity conservation into public policy and private sector practice

While many threats to KBAs need to be dealt with by engaging with local stakeholders, the outcome of site-based conservation work is also impacted by national and sub-national policies, programs, and financial decisions. These include decisions on licensing large-scale land use projects (especially for agriculture, mining, and infrastructure); policies on land use planning, protected areas, and the economic and social development of rural communities; and financing for conservation and for other sectors such as infrastructure and energy. They also include decisions and policies of private sector companies, such as the adoption of best-practices and certification, or commitment to address conflicts over land and resources. Agencies with a mandate for biodiversity conservation are likely to be important partners. Contributing to National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, which are expected to be revised to align with the Kunming-Montreal agreement and the Global Biodiversity Framework, may be an important opportunity to ensure that the KBA analysis and the work and experience of civil society are represented within official policies and plans of each hotspot country.

Investment Priority 3.1. Update the KBA analysis for the hotspot and strengthen national mechanisms for KBA recognition and promotion, including NCGs

CEPF expects to support local CSOs, including local Universities and other non-state institutions, to conduct this work. Research should:

- Collect data which has a direct value to efforts to mitigate a threat or improve the management of the site.
- Take an approach which simultaneously builds capacity in-country and awareness amongst relevant local stakeholders, including by engaging them in the work and communicating results to them.
- Uses replicable and scalable methods, and thus establishes a baseline for future monitoring at the same site (for example using the state-pressure-response model adopted widely across Africa for monitoring KBAs), and also a model for work at similar sites.

Activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Research and evidence collection needed to understand the value and threats at a site (or a set of sites).
- Consultation with communities and other stakeholders.
- Workshops and meetings to bring together groups and plan advocacy work.
- Preparing data and materials to contribute to key opportunities, such as NBSAP revision
- Learning and exchange visits with other sites/projects.
- Legal or other analysis needed to support proposals for change.
- Expert advice on technical issues, such as methods, analysis and communication of results.

Investment Priority 3.2. Compile data and communicate the need and opportunities for conservation of KBAs and threatened species to the public, policy-makers and private sector

Activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Planning a strategic communications effort, including with external expert advice.
- Preparation and communication of key messages, including printed and online communication.
- Learning/exchange visits to relevant organizations or projects.
- Field visits for journalists, politicians, or other key stakeholder to inform them and discuss the issue.
- Meetings with stakeholders and decision makers, e.g. in government or private sector companies.

Strategic Direction 4. Facilitate the development of a robust and resilient community of conservation civil society organizations

This SD reflects a commitment by CEPF to engage more deeply with the issue of long-term sustainability of civil society organizations in the region. IP4.1 addresses the need to ensure that all CEPF grantees have access to support for the design, management and evaluation and reporting of the projects they implement with CEPF support. Joint and peer-to-peer learning will be important in delivering this. IP4.2 delivers on CEPFs commitment to invest in the strengthening of a smaller group of high-potential strategic partners in the region. IP4.3 focuses on the strengthening of networks and collaborative action. The details of calls for proposals, and the selection of projects, under this strategic direction will be informed by the global strategy for CEPF's support to organizational development, which is under development.

Investment Priority 4.1. Ensure that CEPF grantees have the technical capacity to plan, implement and sustain effective conservation projects

CEPF will consider provision of core project planning and management capacity development to any local/national organization which receives funding to implement a conservation project. This may include capacity building on participatory development, livelihoods interventions, and linking livelihoods and conservation outcomes. Needs will be identified jointly by the RIT and each grantee, either at the start of the project or during its implementation. Delivery of skills training will be primarily through standardized modules, online or through shared training courses such as the 'master class' approach developed in the Afro-montane hotspot and already used successfully in the Guinean Forests of West Africa. Where a partner CSO needs specific one-to-one support in particular capacity areas, this may be addressed by the RIT directly, by a specialist training provider, or by arranging for the CSO to partner with a more experienced mentor (often an international NGO), an approach that was used successfully during the previous investment period.

Activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Developing and running a training course (in-person or online) to address priority training needs identified by grantees, or participation in a course.
- Participation in a skills training course being organized by a specialist provider.
- Mentoring or coaching individual staff.
- Providing advice to management on capacity development.
- Learning visits and exchanges to other organizations and projects.
- Mentoring and support for writing up and publishing the results and lessons from projects.
- Procuring equipment and materials which will allow new skills to be implemented.

Investment Priority 4.2. Provide support to targeted conservation organizations engaged in a process of organizational development

CEPF intends to invest in longer-term and deeper support for the OD of a small number of strategically important CSOs in the region (indicatively, this might be 10 – 20

organizations). This support will go beyond project-related capacity (IP4.1) to issues such as strategic communications, financial sustainability, governance, management of staff turnover and regeneration.

Long-term support for OD will be prioritized for partners with:

- A track record of successful implementation of conservation projects (regardless of size of project or donor).
- Basic systems for the development and management of the organization's activities (e.g. staffing structure, finance and accountability mechanisms, governance) in place.
- Clear evidence of a commitment to organizational change, including a willingness and ability to allocate staff time and resources.
- A plan for sustainability of the impact of OD, including institutionalization of changes to working culture and jobs, continuing financial support, and access to ongoing contact and support for OD when needed.

Illustratively, activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Preparatory discussions between key people in the organization and an expert OD facilitator, to help the organization understand and plan an OD process.
- A workshop or retreat to plan an organizational development process, including, for example, to complete a diagnostic tool.
- An external facilitator to facilitate the workshop and support the planning process.
- Facilitation and organization of an initial high-priority OD activity (e.g., a strategic planning workshop) for the organization.
- The delivery of an organizational development plan over 2-3 years, including retreats, workshops, mentoring visits.
- Learning visits to other CSOs.
- Participation in peer learning events and exchanges.
- Proposal development to raise funds for continuing OD and follow-up activities.

Investment Priority 4.3. Enhance the collective strength and ability of conservation CSOs at national and regional levels

CEPF recognizes that CSOs have tended to work alone or in sectoral siloes, and that this limits the potential for creating change, especially at the level of policy or wider society. It also recognizes, however, that inducing CSOs to work together only to access funding does not create impactful collaborative partnerships and networks – indeed, funding can create inequalities of power which harm the collaborative nature of a network.

CEPF will, therefore, prioritize funding for new or existing collaborative efforts and networks where:

- There is a clear purpose and clear constituency (target audience). Examples might include collaboration for the conservation of a specific site, to address a particular problem, to influence a specific policy, or to change the public narrative on an issue.
- There is a clear mechanism for managing support received from CEPF or other sources, including mechanisms for receiving and handling funds, planning, and reporting and accountability within the network.
- There is evidence of the willingness and commitment of CSOs to work together beyond the desire to collaborate to secure funding (e.g., self-funded collaboration which can be scaled-up or sustained with CEPF support).

Actual or perceived competition between CSOs has been identified as a barrier to collaboration (though it may also drive innovation and improvement). CEPF support to

networking and collaboration should contribute to demonstrating the value of open collaboration and sharing of ideas and resources. CEPF support will therefore focus on networks and collaborative efforts which are open and actively encourage the engagement of wider civil society, including providing opportunities for less experienced individuals or organizations to learn and grow through their participation.

Activities eligible for funding under this investment priority include:

- Workshop and meetings to initiate or strengthen collaboration between CSOs on a priority issue.
- Networking meetings, communications and joint action.

Strategic Direction 5. Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of conservation investment through a Regional Implementation Team

In every hotspot approved for investment, CEPF works with a regional implementation team or RIT to convert the plans in the ecosystem profile into a cohesive portfolio of grants that exceeds in impact the sum of its parts. The RIT will consist of one or more CSOs active in conservation in the hotspot. The RIT will be selected by the CEPF Donor Council based on approved terms of reference. The team will operate in a transparent and open manner, consistent with CEPF's mission and all provisions of the CEPF Operational Manual. Organizations that are members of the RIT will not be eligible to apply for other CEPF grants within the same hotspot. Applications for grants from formal affiliates of those organizations that have an independent board of directors will be accepted, subject to additional external review.

Investment Priority 5.1. Support a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries towards achieving the shared conservation goals described in the ecosystem profile
The RIT will provide strategic leadership and local knowledge to build a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries toward achieving the conservation goals described in the ecosystem profile. It will implement several functions, as set out in the terms of reference, including.

- Act as an extension service to assist civil society groups in designing, implementing, and replicating successful conservation activities.
- Review all grant applications and manage external reviews with technical experts and advisory committees.
- Award small grants up to US$50,000 and decide jointly with the CEPF Secretariat on all other applications.
- Lead the monitoring and evaluation of individual projects using standard tools, site visits, and meetings with grantees, and assist the CEPF Secretariat in portfolio-level monitoring and evaluation.
- Build the institutional capacity of grantees to ensure efficient and effective project implementation.
- Widely communicate CEPF objectives, opportunities to apply for grants, lessons learned, and results.

14. RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The result framework primarily uses CEPF Global Indicators (GI) to set targets for the investment in the hotspot. Additional Portfolio Indicators (PI) are introduced to set target and monitor impacts specific impacts that are not covered by the global indicators.

The objective for the portfolio is to support 80 projects (40 Large Grants, 40 Small Grants) over a 5-year investment period, for at least 60 unique civil society organizations, 70 percent of which are local organizations.

This is based on an assumed five-year investment period with US $10 million, with 15 percent allocated to the RIT/Strategic Direction 5 ($1,500,000) and the remaining funds split evenly among the other four strategic directions (21.25 percent, or $2,125,000), understanding further that these allocations would quickly diverge as opportunities present themselves.

Using these expected resources, the anticipated results shown below are further based on CEPF experience in in the GFWA in Phase II, plus CEPF experience elsewhere around the world. Targets are purposefully conservative, recognizing that (1) the constituency of organizations that implement projects may have low capacity, and (2) CEPF wishes to maintain a high standard for determining the achievement of results. Various scorecards, objective monitoring and evaluation methods, and other options will be considered appropriate to the circumstances of the grantee and location.

15. SUSTAINABILITY

CEPF will support action at site level, to influence policies and decisions, and to strengthen the capacity of CSOs. Sustainability of the impact of these activities should be considered at the development stage of any project. Sustainability is premised on institutional sustainability at the site (supporting organizations), community sustainability (supporting livelihoods and the needs of communities), policy (including mainstreaming the actions of governments and the private sector), and coordination with other donors and actors to leverage the inputs of CEPF and its civil society partners.

Pillar 1: Biodiversity

Goal: Improve the status of globally significant biodiversity in critical ecosystems within hotspots.

No.	Indicator	Target	Relevant SDs	Means of verification
GI-B1	Number of globally threatened species benefiting from conservation action	40	1,2	Grantee reports
GI-B2	Number of hectares of Key Biodiversity Areas with improved management	500,000	1,2,3	Grantee reports
GI-B3	Number of hectares of protected areas created and/or expanded	350,000	1,2,3	Grantee reports, Official documents
GI-B4	Number of hectares of production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity	350,000		Grantee reports
GI-B5	Number of protected areas with improved management	10	1,2,3	METTs (or similar tool)
GI-B6	Number of hectares of terrestrial forest, terrestrial non-forest, freshwater and coastal marine areas brought under restoration	60,000	1,2	Grantee reports
PI-B1	Number of protected areas created and/or expanded	10	1,2,3	Grantee reports
PI-B2	Number of KBAs in production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity	10	1,2,3	Grantee reports
PI-B3	Number of Key Biodiversity Areas with improved management	10	1,2,3	Grantee reports

Pillar 2: Civil Society

Goal: Strengthen the capacity of civil society to be effective as environmental stewards and advocates for the conservation of globally significant biodiversity.

No.	Indicator	Target	Relevant SDs	Means of verification
GI-CS1	Number of CEPF grantees with improved institutional capacity	40	4 (IP4.1)	CSTT (or similar tool)
GI-CS2	Number of CEPF grantees with improved understanding of and commitment to gender issues	24	4	GTT (or similar tool)
GI-CS3	Number of networks and partnerships that have been created and/or strengthened	15	4	Grantee reports
PI-CS1	Number of grantees which participate in capacity training related to project development and implementation	48	4 (IP4.1)	
PI-CS2	Number of organizations engaged in an organizational development process	20	4 (IP4.2)	CEPF report

No.	Indicator	Target	Relevant SDs	Means of verification
PI-CS3	Number of CEPF grantees that have made significant progress towards their own organizational development goals at the end of the investment phase	10	4 (IP4.2)	Specific survey at mid-term and at the end of investment phase
PI-CS4	Number of countries with enhanced collective CSO capacities	5	4 (IP4.3)	Collective civil society assessment

Pillar 3: Human Well-Being

Goal: Improve the well-being of people living in and dependent on critical ecosystems within hotspots.

No.	Indicator	Target	Relevant SDs	Means of verification
GI-HW1	Number of people (male/female) receiving structured training	4,500	1, 2	*Grantee reports*
GI-HW2	Number of people (male/female) receiving non-cash benefits* other than structured training	150,000	1, 2	*Grantee reports*
GI-HW3	Number of people (male/female) receiving cash benefits**	4,500	1, 2	*Grantee reports*
GI-HW4	Number of projects promoting nature-based solutions to combat climate change	20	1, 2	*CEPF Secretariat analysis of portfolio*

Notes: * = non-cash benefits include increased access to clean water, increased food security, increased access to energy, increased access to public services, increased resilience to climate change, improved land tenure, improved recognition of traditional knowledge, improved representation and decision-making in governance forums, and improved delivery of ecosystem services; ** = cash benefits include increased income from employment, increased income from livelihood activities.

Pillar 4: Enabling conditions for conservation

Goal: Establish the conditions needed for the conservation of globally significant biodiversity.

No.	Indicator	Target	Relevant SDs	Means of verification
GI-EC1	Number of laws, regulations, and policies with conservation provisions that have been enacted or amended	5	3	*Grantee reports, official documents*
GI-EC2	Number of sustainable financing mechanisms that are delivering funds for conservation	1	1, 3	*Grantee reports*
GI-EC3	Number of companies that adopt biodiversity-friendly practices	5	1, 3	Grantee reports