

CEPF Final Completion and Impact Report

Organization’s Legal Name:	BirdLife International - HQ
Project Title:	Regional Implementation Team for Guinean Forests II Hotspot
Grant Number:	66256
Hotspot:	Guinean Forests of West Africa
Strategic Direction:	5 Provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of conservation investment through a Regional Implementation Team
Grant Amount:	\$1,835,370.00
Project Dates:	July 01, 2016 - August 31, 2022
Date of Report:	June 08, 2023

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

1. BirdLife project office in Sao Tome and Principe: Supported with project monitoring and implementation in Sao Tome and Principe until the end of the program. Also supported, in promoting CEPF investment’s results and impacts in the hotspot among the grantees and other stakeholders.
 2. BirdLife Cambridge and African Secretariat Nairobi office provided technical advice in the areas of finance, M&E, species, and site conservation
- Additionally, the programme was supported by:
- 35 external reviewers (LOI/proposal reviews) from 8 countries; and
 - RITs from other hotspots (best practices and experience exchange).
 - Planning Advisory Board support the long-term vision (including representatives from donors, civil society, and academia)

CONSERVATION IMPACTS

Planned Long-Term Impacts: 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
To contribute to strengthening the engagement of civil society in the conservation of globally threatened biodiversity through targeted investments with maximum impact on the highest conservation priorities.	Capacity of 69 civil society organizations (CSOs) were strengthened. A total of 79 (49 SG & 30 LG), projects were granted to 64 grantees. 68% of the total number of grants were awarded to local organizations from nine of the eleven eligible hotspot countries. 79% of the grants allocated to local organizations were small grants. In terms of funds, 54% were awarded to international

Impact Description	Impact Summary
	<p>organizations. Following the analysis of the Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT), 25 organizations (19 local and 6 international CSOs) showed 72% increase in their scores. These organizations worked with 144 local communities, empowered them to engage in the sustainable management of priority sites. The long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment in the region was developed. It is envisaged that the long-Term Vision will guide future investments of CEPF and its partners working on biodiversity conservation in the hotspot.</p>

Planned Short-Term Impacts: 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal)

Impact Description	Impact Summary
<p>To provide strategic leadership and effective coordination of CEPF conservation investment in the Guinean Forests Hotspot, through the Regional Implementation Team. Operationalize and coordinate CEPF’s grant-making processes and procedures to ensure effective implementation of the investment strategy throughout the hotspot Build a broad constituency of civil society groups working across institutional and political boundaries to achieve common conservation objectives</p>	<p>The RIT implemented an open call for proposals which were competitive. 8 calls for proposals, (4 for small and 4 for large grants), were issued. The RIT coordinated, engaged, and provided support to all applicants, grantees, and relevant stakeholders in the 11 countries of focus. Advisory service was provided to applicants. 577 applications were received. This was followed by thorough reviews both internally by the RIT as well as CEPF and external reviewers. 79 projects were granted to 64 grantees. The RIT provided support to 69 grantees in project design, (including mainstreaming gender into project and safeguards) implementation, technical and financial management and reporting. The RIT managed the small grants mechanism component and provided support to CEPF on the large grants. Field visits were organized to grantees that were assessed to fall under the category of high and medium risk. The team participated in conferences and meetings that enabled them to communicate and coordinate the CEPF investment in the hotspot. The team also engaged with AFD and EU local representatives whenever possible, including visits/meetings during country missions in Ghana and Liberia. We had 3 audits (1 system audit by CEPF and 2 financial audits by external auditors).</p>

Unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?

Some countries were underrepresented, namely Equatorial Guinea and to a lesser extent, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, representing respectively 0.5 % and 3% of the total amount of funds invested. Despite a considerable number of priorities KBAs in these countries and the RIT’s efforts to engage local stakeholders there, the number and quality of the Letter of Inquiry (LoI) submitted was on average lower than for most of the other countries. Togo and Benin were not represented at all, with no grants awarded in these two countries, mostly due to the reduced eligible area covering both Togo and Benin. Working within the

limits of possibility, in Togo the project supported an organization to be part of the mentorship program.

2 projects in Cameroun and 1 in Nigeria had to be closed unfinished because of insecurity and the situation remained too dangerous to continue. Nevertheless, other local grantees in these two countries, managed to keep their projects on track, without taking any unnecessary risks, which is highly commendable. It shows that, even when countries suffer from political problems, donors should not necessarily stop investing in local civil society; on the contrary, it can be beneficial to continue supporting these groups, if at all, possible, in order, to keep the organisations and their work going during and after the problem period.

All the Strategic Directions were, covered except for Strategic Direction 4 which was, only opened for large grant applications in the first call. At the time, all the applications ended up being, turned down due to a clear lack of innovation and misalignment with the ambition of CEPF. A clear approach regarding capacity development was, then deemed necessary prior to releasing any new call for this Strategic Direction. Hence, a targeted call for Strategic Direction 4 comprising a combined mentorship/training approach was, developed and only published in July - September 2018 after the conceptualization of the mentorship program approach, in consultation with some key partners from the MoU around the PPI. This resulted in the project meeting the portfolio target and indicator as was evident from the quality of proposals received from the mentees.

The most unexpected and impactful event of 2020 was clearly the Covid 19 pandemic. With all RIT staff restricted to home working and extremely limited travel, this required readjustments (e.g., in communications support to the team), Most, of the impacts from the pandemic were related with the postponing or cancelling of project monitoring visits, but other components were, fast tracked while the RIT was working from home, namely at reporting and M&E level and internal synergies within the Birdlife Secretariat and work in West Africa. This includes the leveraging and fundraising efforts of the RIT. In particular, the Team Leader attended the bi-weekly Partnerships, Communities and Capacity Development Fundraising meeting and the monthly Africa Region Fundraising meeting to explore funding opportunities and collaboration. Unfortunately, there aren't many funding lines for sub-granting mechanisms. However, concepts were developed for the Livelihoods Fund, the MAVA Foundation and the GCF, among other possibilities, to continue the work of the RIT in the region or parts of it. The GCF pre-concept was taken forward as a potential proposal. The impact of the pandemic on the project portfolio during the 2nd semester was mostly mitigated with no cost extensions, as most projects were in the closing process and the last active ones adjusted their activities/logical framework accordingly. There were no relevant meetings or events happening during the second semester, so no representation of the RIT or CEPF was possible, except for virtual meetings.

PROJECT RESULTS/DELIVERABLES

Overall results of the project:

The RIT's workplan was structured in 9 components.

1. Coordinate the CEPF investment in the hotspot

The RIT and CEPF promoted a stakeholders and donor-roundtable workshop in 2017, that brought together major donors in the region. This workshop paved the way for the emergence of an alliance. An MoU, established as general framework for cooperation among financial partners active in the region to enable CSOs active in biodiversity conservation in the region to benefit from the alignment of their initiatives and synergies, was signed by Programme des Petites Initiatives (PPI), Agence Française de Développement, acting in the framework of Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM), IUCN French committee

and IUCN Program for Central and West Africa (IUCN PACO), Conservation International, acting in its capacity as host of the CEPF Secretariat, the MAVA Foundation and IUCN Netherlands (IUCN-NL).

Portfolio and other relevant updates were communicated regularly to the GEF focal points across the region. The team engaged with AFD and EU local representatives whenever possible, including visits/meetings during country missions in Ghana and Liberia. The RIT collaborated with representative of donor agencies and CSOs e.g., IUCN NL, PPI/ IUCN Fr, GEF, Re:Wild, Environmental Foundation Africa who were represented on the Advisory Board and instrumental to the development of the CEPF long-term vision.

2. Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices

To fill in the gaps identified as challenges face by CSOs, the RIT and CEPF focused on mainstreaming as a focal theme of the Mid Term Assessment in 2019, including a theory of change exercise and a training workshop with the grantees. This resulted in the development of an implementation strategy that served as a guide to the RIT's work on its role of supporting local civil society in this matter. The strategy was key to identify the priority actions under the SD2 call, opened in the first quarter of 2020, and the selection of applicants. Based on the reviewed and approved proposals, it was clear that the training successfully achieved its intended goal, surpassing the previous proposals. This document also supported the Long-Term Vision and further donor-engagement.

3. Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot

The RIT established a regular pattern of good quality communication products and communicated extensively and continuously with potential applicants, grantees, donors, and the CEPF Secretariat, including through targeted outreach, one-on-one with grantees, mentors and mentees, production of articles, 5 newsletter, 3 videos, and various social media publications. The RIT also communicated the CEPFs' investment via meetings and events. An interactive project portfolio map was developed and link shared with grantees and key stakeholder.

4. Build the capacity of local civil society

The training provided by TBA, WASCI & FFI through the CEPF mentorship program, to grantees and non-grantees (Mentees) over the course of the project and the trainings, provided directly by the RIT, which include, technical and financial reporting to meet the standard required by the donor and institutional capacity, resulted in; a total of 105 local civil society organizations, inclusive of Indigenous People's and 11 women-led organizations, with increased capacity, regarding financial, institutional and project management, organizational governance, and fundraising. A Master class was organized for the grantees, which focused on designing project and measuring impacts, stakeholder engagement, mainstreaming gender into project and program and budget and finance. This also contributed to the noted result. The capacity of grantee organizations was also monitored through CSTT at the beginning (baseline) and at the end (final) of the project implementation. The average score of all the 134 CSTTs collected, mostly with local organizations, is 62 (out of 100), ranging from 18 to 93. A total of 38 new networks were formed among civil society, government, and private sector actors to facilitate capacity building, avoid duplication of effort, and maximize impact of conservation activity in the hotspot.

The RIT also worked with a group of students for the MPhil in Conservation Leadership in Cambridge, to develop a regional visual analysis of capacity strengths and gaps in the hotspot, using the CSTTs. The combination of the visual tools with the CSTTs demonstrated to be an interesting way to guide support for capacity in the region, but also to be replicated in other hotspots through the RIT's work.

5. Establish and coordinate a process for large grant (>\$50,000) & 6. Proposal solicitation and review and manage a program of small grants (<\$50,000)

Coordinating and managing the grants making programme, CEPF and the RIT issued 8 calls for proposals, (4 small and 4 large grants). 577 applications (261 for SG & 316 for LG) were received and 79 (49 SG & 30 LG) granted, to 64 grantees. USD 8,738,819.63 was allocated as large grants, inclusive of the grants to the RIT and USD 1,460,150.24 as small grant.

7. Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants

The RIT organised 27 field visits to grantees, in addition, the RIT met with grantees during (CEPF- and non-CEPF-funded) trainings, meetings and events, and/or through on-line meetings. The CEPF portfolio targets/indicators were, monitored against grantees reports/progress. This did not only enable the RIT to fill in identified gaps but overall, the 79 funded projects implemented by 64 CSOs, contributed immensely to the CEPF targets/indicators as follow:

- The global conservation status of 1,057 freshwater species and 119 plants species have been updated on the IUCN Red List.
- 22 globally threatened species have stable or increasing populations.
- Priority actions identified in Conservation Action Plans of 29 Critically Endangered and Endangered species have been implemented across the hotspot.
- 17 KBAs directly benefited from conservation intervention, 16 KBAs with strengthened protection and management and 1 new Marine Protected Area was created.
- Inventories and biodiversity assessment were carried out for all 13 freshwater KBAs.
- 604,659 hectares within production landscapes were managed for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.
- 62 local communities have received training to initiate and advocate for land tenure and forestry reforms in relation to management of community and private reserves and concessions.
- 171 local communities have been targeted by sustainable livelihood/ job creation activities or benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- 8,678 people (4,032 men and 4,646 women) have received structured trainings.
- 4,527 people (1,683 men and 2,844 women) have increased their income or cash benefits.
- 16 conservation-related policies of national governments have been informed by advocacy, and outreach.
- 15 private companies have adopted new management practices consistent with biodiversity conservation at operations in the conservation corridors.

8. Lead the process to develop LTV for CEPF investment

The LTV process was, defined and implemented. Relevant consultation, and final validation was done during the final assessment workshop, in Accra. It is, envisaged that the LTV will guide future investments of CEPF and its partners working on biodiversity conservation in the hotspot.

9. Reporting

Reporting of field monitoring visits, the MTA report, the communications strategy, and the capacity development strategy (also called mentorship program), were all of good standard and promoted an effective delivery of the project. Impact data have been updated, validated, and included in the global/portfolio impact sheets.

Results for each deliverable:

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
1.0	Coordinate CEPF investment in the hotspot	1.1	CEPF represented annually at relevant events with actual and potential donors, partners and networking activities in each of the 11 countries	The RIT represented and disseminated CEPF investment at relevant events that promoted the CEPF investment in the hotspot. Some of the highlighted events and meeting were the Master class for Small Grantees of the Eastern Afromontane hotspots and GWFA RIT exchange in Rwanda, IUCN BIOPAMA programme launch, in Central Africa Douala, Cameroon. Nigeria National Man & Biosphere committee meeting that led to the designation of two of the CEPF KBA, the Okwangwo and Oban division of the Cross River National Park to be designated as Man and Biosphere sites. This created platform for a continuous liaison with the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria. Advance training in good governance with IUCN & MAVA partners in the donor alliance. Meeting on Conservation Agreement organized by Conservation International in Liberia. The Capacity for conservation conference in London where significant developments for networking and fundraising was achieved and networking that ensured contribution to the mid-term assessment. The FAO multi sectorial dialogue and learning event to address the issue of Human-Wildlife-Livestock-Ecosystem interface in Africa, organized in Accra. Meetings with the Donor

Component		Deliverable		
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				Alliance looking at the current and future collaboration in the GFWA.
1.0	Coordinate CEPF investment in the hotspot	1.2	Donors, grantees and conservation and development stakeholders engaged to achieve the objectives of the EP and leverage CEPF funds	The RIT continually promoted engagement with IUCN/PPI and MAVAs, and the GEF, in the scope of overlapping areas. There was also a close collaboration and structuring of common work lines and actions internally with the BLI Africa secretariat, in order to consolidate and leverage CEPF funds and conservation impacts in West Africa. This coordination was focused on the following thematic areas: capacity development, forests, conservation/KBAs. Portfolio and other relevant updates have been communicated regularly to the GEF focal points across the region. The team has also been engaging with AFD and EU local representatives whenever possible, including visits/meetings during country missions in Ghana and Liberia. The RIT collaborated with representative from some of the donor agencies (IUCN NL, PPI/ IUCN Fr, PPI/ IUCN Fr, GEF, Re:Wild, Environmental Foundation Africa, who were on the Advisory Board and instrumental to the development of the long-term vision strategy. Also, the RIT newsletter in 2021 on Covid-19 - Resilience of Local Civil Society Organisations and their supporters in 2020, was in collaboration, with PPI, MAVAs, BIOPAMA Program.

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#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
1.0	Coordinate CEPF investment in the hotspot	1.3	At least US\$ 1 million CEPF funds leveraged from a range of additional donors	In 2017, BirdLife International secured a grant (Euro 2million) from the program Ecosystèmes Forestiers d'Afrique Centrale (ECOFAC) funded by the European Union. The grant was to support the management of the Natural Parks of Sao Tome and Principe. From the inception of the program, the coordination with the CEPF investment was promoted and ensured. All CEPF funded projects in the country contributed towards the implementation of the ECOFAC program, particularly for underfunded priorities like the revision of mangrove management plans, the increase knowledge, protection and education on threatened and endemic species, and the investigation of potential sustainable financing mechanisms from forest resources. In 2021, another funding (\$1.3 million) was secured from the UNDP-GEF Biodiversity, building up on the ECOFAC outcomes. This allowed the position of a part time RIT focal point in Sao Tome to be covered. The role of this position was to provide support to the RIT's Sub-Regional Project Officer for the islands with close on the ground monitoring of projects and coordination among local stakeholders.
2.0	Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices	2.1	A mainstreaming strategy developed to engage, as a RIT, with private sector partners and government officials and to guide the	The RIT and CEPF focused on mainstreaming as a focal theme of the Mid Term Assessment in 2019, including a theory of change exercise and a training workshop with the grantees. This resulted in the development of an

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			grantees in the delivery and implementation of activities	implementation strategy that served as a guide to the RIT's work on its role of supporting local civil society the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices. The mainstreaming strategy was, produced and disseminated via email and newsletter and is, uploaded on the RIT website. The strategy was key to identify the priority actions under the SD2 call, opened in the first quarter of 2020, and to evaluate the prioritization of applications submitted. From the proposals received, reviewed, and granted, as compared to the previous proposals, it was evident that the aim of the training was achieved, as there were better proposals as compared to the previous proposals. This document was, also used to support the Long-Term Vision and donor-engagement.
2.0	Support the mainstreaming of biodiversity into public policies and private sector business practices	2.2	Civil society's empowered to play active role in natural resource governance and influence government and private sector approaches to biodiversity and natural resources management	Twenty-seven partnerships have been, established and strengthened to promote best practices in mining, sustainable forestry, and agriculture by private companies, over the life of the CEPF investment. In addition, through the implementation of sixteen grants, network have been, formed and strengthened among civil society, government, and private sector actors to facilitate capacity building, avoid duplication of effort, and maximize conservation impact. Many of these were

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				between CEPF grantees working in the same country or on the same topic and exist for mutual support, knowledge exchange, and common advocacy.
3.0	Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot	3.1	An Investment Communication Strategy developed.	A communication strategy was developed and approved. The strategy served as a guide for the RIT to communicate and disseminate the outcome and impact of CEPF investment in the GFWA hotspot.
3.0	Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot	3.2	Sub-regional officers (regional contact persons) and other relevant RIT staff ensure open and frequent communication with their regions' stakeholders and the CEPF	The Sub regional Officers fully engaged with various target groups in their respective countries with open communication exchange between the RIT and CEPF as well as between the RIT and other conservation actors in the hotspots. We communicated extensively and continuously with potential applicants, grantees, donors, and the CEPF Secretariat, including through targeted outreach, one-on-one with grantees, mentors and mentees.
3.0	Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot	3.3	Communications products (e.g. newsletters, website, print media, case studies) developed and disseminated via appropriate media (including CEPF website).	The RIT established a regular pattern of good quality communication products and communicated extensively and continuously with potential applicants, grantees, donors, and the CEPF Secretariat, including through targeted outreach, one-on-one with grantees, mentors and mentees, production of articles, 5 newsletter, 3 videos, and various social media publications. The RIT also communicated the CEPF's investment via meetings and events. Grantees were supported to disseminate their project report

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				<p>on the RIT Facebook page. An interactive, project portfolio map (https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1O1zs1k_q9cecCRK6xBgnLB73hL3h12A&ll=8.274420653003057%2C2.481978875000003&z=5) was, developed, and link shared with grantees and key stakeholder in the region. The new interactive platform of BirdLife, the Hatch, was launched and is expected to be a great opportunity to improve the communications of the RIT in the scope of the LTV and wrap up of the investment phase. Participants at the final assessment workshop were introduced to the Hatch platform and were encouraged to sign up to the platform. This fostered the drive for networking among the grantees, mentees, and donors.</p>
3.0	Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot	3.4	Exchange visits with other RITs to share lessons learnt and best practices.	<p>The RIT Team Lead attended 1 in person exchange visits organized in Athens Greece May 2017. After which there were no other RIT exchange activities. However, the RIT coordinated and exchanged with other RIT, lessons learnt during the implementation of the RIT portfolio. This contributed immensely to the successes recorded in the deliverable of the CEPF portfolio in the hotspots. Exchange ranges from best practices about launch events, calls for proposals, LOIs, review and selection of proposals, capacity building, M&E, advisors, leveraging/donors and communications, reporting templates etc.</p>

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#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
4.0	Build the capacity of local civil society	4.1	11 national capacity needs assessment for local civil society conducted	This assessment was initiated with the CSO mapping conducted at the beginning of the activities of the RIT. With the implementation of SD4, targeting capacity development, this map was updated and used in the selection of the mentees for the mentorship program. Baseline and final CSTTs analysis carried out for 25 organizations (19 local organizations and 6 international CSOs), shows that 72% of organizations increased their CSTT scores. The analysis also highlighting some of the gaps and priorities to consider regarding capacity development and support across the 9 funded countries. A complementary tool for visualization/ spatial analysis of capacity in the hotspot was produced to inform the LTV and further investment. Using a CSOs mapping based on the LOI's submitted and CSTTs of a sample of organizations, and their positioning towards main threats and deforestation levels, a gaps and strengths analysis was undertaken by students of the MPhil in Conservation Leadership from the Cambridge University and was presented during the final assessment workshop in Accra. This contributed to the lessons learnt documented as well as the final draft and validation of the LTV document.
4.0	Build the capacity of local civil society	4.2	At least 85 percent of local NGOs receiving grants demonstrate more effective	72% of local organizations supported demonstrated improved capacity in the design and implementation of conservation actions in

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			capacity to design and implement conservation actions	the region, evident from the quality of the proposals received by CEPF/RIT
4.0	Build the capacity of local civil society	4.3	About 80 local NGOs can effectively engage with and influence government agencies and private sector	About 24 local NGOs effectively engaged with and influence government agencies and private sector
5.0	Establish and coordinate a process for large grant (>\$50,000) proposal solicitation and review	5.1	A process for soliciting large grant applications established and well-coordinated	Going by the already established process for soliciting large grants and the coordination of the same, overall, the RIT supported CEPF in coordinating and managing the grants making programme. The CEPF and the RIT, issued 4 calls for proposals for the large grants.
5.0	Establish and coordinate a process for large grant (>\$50,000) proposal solicitation and review	5.2	A process for evaluation of large grant LOIs and proposals established and well-coordinated	The RIT went through training carried out by CEPF team from the secretariat. A process for soliciting large grants application was established following the training, at the start of the programme. Following the 4 calls for application, a total of 316 applications were received out of which 239 were eligible. The submitted application went through a rigorous and transparent review (Eligibility check, 3 reviewers from the RIT and the CEPF Grant Director & 2 or 3 external reviewers where applicable, e.g., if a conflict of interest is declared). Overall, 30 projects were granted inclusive of 2 grants by invitation.
5.0	Establish and coordinate a process for large grant (>\$50,000) proposal solicitation and review	5.3	A total of US\$6.5 million awarded as large grants to civil society organizations, actively participating in	A total sum of \$ 6.9 million was awarded as large grants to civil society organizations, actively participating in conservation actions

Component		Deliverable		
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			conservation actions guided by the ecosystems profile.	guided by the ecosystems profile. This is excluding the \$ 1.8 million to the RIT
6.0	Manage a program of small grants (<\$50,000)	6.1	A process for soliciting small grant propositions established and well-coordinated	Going by the already established process for soliciting small grants and the coordination of the same, overall, the RIT coordinated and managed the small grants components. The RIT, issued 4 calls for proposals for the small grants.
6.0	Manage a program of small grants (<\$50,000)	6.2	A process for evaluation of small grant propositions established and well-coordinated	Like that of the large grant, a process for soliciting small grants application was established at the start of the programme. This was largely supported by lessons learnt from other RITs, BirdLife Secretariat and leveraging on BL internal processes. The RIT was fully invested in managing the small grants mechanism from discussing the focus of the call guided by the ecosystem profile, to drafting, reviewing getting approval from the CEPF Grant Director to publishing, reviewing proposals, and granting. A total of 261 applications were received, out of which 176 were eligible but 49 were granted, (to 40 CSOs), due to the funds available. 4 grants out of the 49 were grants by invitation to fill in identified gaps in the portfolio.
6.0	Manage a program of small grants (<\$50,000)	6.3	US\$1 million awarded as small grants to civil society organizations, including local and indigenous NGOs, actively participating in	A total of \$1.4 million was awarded for the small grant mechanism. 49 projects were granted to 38 CSOs covering nine of the eleven countries, except for Togo and Benin. 2 were suspended and could not continue due to insecurity in the project sites, and 2 were

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			conservation actions guided by the ecosystems profile	terminated because of misappropriation of funds.
7.0	Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants	7.1	Portfolio indicators and CEPF global monitoring indicators collected and reported on an annual basis	Portfolio indicators and CEPF global monitoring indicators were, collected and reported on annually. As at the end of this phase of CEPF investment, the indicator table was updated.
7.0	Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants	7.2	METT, Forest cover change, threats baseline and final Analysis conducted	<p>The final report, reviewed and approved by the RIT, was produced by the WCMC team in 2021. The main findings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management effectiveness: more focus is needed on improving the delivery of conservation objectives in PA (tentative conclusion as METT scores over time highly influenced by external range of factors) - Forest Cover: no substantial difference in forest loss was found when comparing sites that have received CEPF funding in the last 5 years with non-funded sites. - Threats: most threats have either stayed the same or are becoming more significant with time. <p>While the results indicate accelerated degradation of CEPF-funded sites, this is accompanied by the fact that these are the most threatened areas. This reinforces the importance of intervening in these sites, considering the following recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase regular protected area effectiveness assessments through capacity building e.g., IMET. METT

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#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
				<p>2. Invest in coordination mechanism to support data collection and analysis</p> <p>3. Invest in projects to promote sustainable resource use and help to address human-wildlife interactions</p> <p>4. Focus on safeguarding several KBAs that are vulnerable and still maintain significant forest cover, making them a priority for protection.</p>
7.0	Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants	7.3	A Mid-term and Final assessment conducted	<p>The RIT carried out two participatory assessments during and after the investment phase. The Mid-term assessment workshop, held in Monrovia, Liberia, in October 2019 and the final assessment workshop held in Accra, Ghana, in June 2022. The mid-term assessment brought together all past and current grantees of the CEPF GFWA. The workshop focused on the documenting lessons learnt mid-term into the CEPF investment phase, developed peer-to-peer networks and filling in capacity gaps in biodiversity mainstreaming. The final Assessment workshop showcased the impacts of CEPF investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa Biodiversity hotspot (GFWA), 2016-2022. Charted the Long-Term Vision for the hotspot, strengthened conservation knowledge, established a network of civil society organizations and journalists for effective engagement and communication and improving on the approach, principle, and</p>

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				processes of grant making between grant makers and civil society organizations.
7.0	Monitor and evaluate the impact of CEPF's large and small grants	7.4	Regular monitoring visits conducted to all large and small grantees, in particular high risk grantees and those which trigger safeguards	The RIT organised twenty-seven field visits to grantees, in addition, the RIT met with grantees during (CEPF- and non-CEPF-funded) trainings, meetings and events, and/or through on-line meetings (e.g., the capacity building programme with FFI, TBA & WACSI, the master classes organised by the RIT and CEPF). The CEPF portfolio targets/indicators were monitored against grantees reports/progress. This did not only enable the RIT to fill in identified gaps but overall, the 79 funded projects implemented by 64 CSOs, contributed immensely to the CEPF targets/indicators.
8.0	Lead the process to develop, over a three-month period, a long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment	8.1	The stakeholders have been consulted for the elaboration of the Long Term Vision	The LTV process was, defined and implemented. The contacts established with experts and other donors in the region led to the establishment of an advisory group of 9 people. Following a consultation process and a final validation during the final assessment workshop, in Accra, Ghana, the long-term strategic vision for CEPF investment in the region was developed. It is envisaged that the long-Term Vision will guide future investments of CEPF and its partners working on biodiversity conservation in the hotspot.
8.0	Lead the process to develop, over a three-month period, a long-term	8.2	The Long Term Vision is elaborated and approved by the CEPF Donor Council	The Long Term Vision has been developed although it is subject to approval by the CEPF Donor Council and is in the hands of the CEPF.

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
	strategic vision for CEPF investment			
9.0	Reporting	9.1	Implementation of the CEPF programme reviewed on a regular basis	Close communication and connection with CEPF have been essential securing transparency and good articulation of the workplan in function of the investment priorities and needs. Additionally, the objectives and outputs of the programme were analysed in an ongoing basis to adjust its implementation, namely regarding the opening of calls, strategies for capacity development and communication, and collaboration with other donors and stakeholders. Regular calls between the RIT and the Grant Director ensure a good coordination and effective action. The work plan was generally accomplished.
9.0	Reporting	9.2	Grantee project reports submitted and of good quality; results achieved	All small grant reports (financial and technical) and most of the large grant reports (financial and technical) were reviewed by the RIT. All final completion and impact reports have been reviewed and impact data have been validated before inclusion in the global/portfolio impact sheets. The training provided by TBA, WASCI & FFI through the CEPF mentorship program, to grantees and non-grantees (Mentees) over the course of the project and the trainings, provided directly by the RIT & CEPF, which include, technical and financial reporting to meet the standard required by the donor, this contributed to the improvement noted for the

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	#	Description	Results for Deliverable
				reports from the grantees. Most of the grantees kept up with deadlines, with improved report quality throughout the projects' implementation time (and more clearly during the last year). This can also be attributed to increased experience of the RIT to support grantees in these aspects, resulting from a continuous work of the RIT with the grantees on how to address reporting and other identified issues or questions.
9.0	Reporting	9.3	High quality quarterly financial reports and six monthly technical reports	The RIT has submitted all requested reports to CEPF. Issues identified in the online financial reporting of the Small Grants Mechanism were addressed and improved on and reporting schedule has been followed with minimum delays and/or justified, and reports submitted, consistently approved with minor comments/reviews.
9.0	Reporting	9.4	Two supervision missions conducted per annum	CEPF carried out 6 in person and 1 virtual RIT supervision missions to the region, we were externally audited 3 times (1 system audit by CEPF 2016, and 2 financial audit 2018 & 2021)

Tools, products or methodologies that resulted from the project or contributed to the results:

Development of a mainstreaming strategy to support the production of a working draft of a Theory of Change (ToC) for biodiversity mainstreaming in private and public policy and practice across the GFWA hotspot. This assisted with filling in the gaps identified for SD 2 of the CEPF portfolio. This provided the basis and the rationale for actions and partnerships with private sector. Served as a guide that assisted in facilitating partnerships among local communities, private sector, and government to develop models for best practices in mining, sustainable forestry, and sustainable agriculture by private companies. The ToC was a blueprint for the RIT and CSOs/NGOs in delivering on the SD 2.

To help facilitated quality reports both for technical and financial, the RIT developed reporting templates, that were easy to use as well as well aligned with the CEPFs’ requirement for reporting. This was also supported by reviewing templates from other RITs and lessons learnt from their experiences as with regards grantees report.

The RIT leveraged on the experiences and lessons learnt from both active and closed RIT. This assisted immensely in the implementation of the CEPF programme in the hotspot.

The adoption and implementation of the master classes was a contributory factor to the improvement on proposals submitted as well as reports. The first one was conducted as part of the large grants call in December 2020 and the RIT has since then used it for small grantees as part of the LOI process for mentees of the mentorship program. The feedbacks received after both classes were positive.

An interactive, project portfolio map was, developed, and link shared with grantees and key stakeholder in the region. This contributed to Communicate the CEPF investment throughout the hotspot.

PORTFOLIO INDICATORS

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
5.1	At least 60 civil society organizations, including at least 30 local and indigenous NGOs actively participate in conservation actions guided by the ecosystems profile.			72	A total of 72 civil society organizations (out of which 61 are local NGOs inclusive of Indigenous People’s and 11 women-led organizations) are actively participating in conservation action in the hotspots.
5.2	At least 85 percent of local NGOs receiving grants demonstrate more effective capacity to design and implement			72	44 local organizations (Grantees) representing 72% of the total CEPFs’ grantees, were able to access the CEPF fund as a result of improved capacity in designing and

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
	conservation actions.				implementing conservation action in the hotspot. This is also an outcome of the training provided by TBA, WASCI & FFI through the CEPF mentorship program, and the trainings, provided directly by the RIT, which include, financial, institutional and project management, organizational governance, and fundraising.
5.3	At least 5 civil society organizations supported by CEPF secure follow-up funding to promote the sustainability of their CEPF grants.			24	Building on the total of approximately US\$ 10.1 million allocated by CEPF to the region, 24 grantees were able to secure over US\$ 3.4 million through in-cash contributions alone. Additionally, there were approximately US\$ 200,000 worth of additional in-kind contributions, including cash, volunteered labor, and the use of vehicles and equipment.
5.4	At least \$1 million in additional funding is leveraged from other donors towards the priorities set in the ecosystem profile.			7,600,000	BirdLife International leveraged additional funding over the period of the CEPF investment aligned with the priorities set in the ecosystem profile. For instance BirdLife secured USD3.9M for the

Portfolio Indicator Number	Portfolio Indicator Description	Expected Numerical Contribution	Expected Contribution Description	Actual Numerical Contribution	Actual Contribution Description
					protection of the biodiversity and priority forest ecosystems in the Gola-Foya Landscape [EU-PAPFor project] or about USD3.7M for the conservation of the Obô Natural Park of São Tomé and Príncipe [EU-ECOFAC IV, EU-Landscape, UNDP/GEF-Biodiversity, and other trusts & foundations].
5.5	At least 2 participatory assessments are undertaken and documented.			2	A mid-term assessment workshops, held in Monrovia, Liberia, 28th to 31st October 2019 and the final assessment workshop held in Accra, Ghana from 6 to 9 June 2022. Both workshops provided a unique platform for civil society organisations (CSOs), CEPF grantees, mentees, CEPF's donor partners, private sector, and international civil society. working across the hotspot, and with CEPF/RIT, to share their success and lessons learned in conservation from the region.

GLOBAL INDICATORS

Protected Areas

Protected areas that have been created and/or expanded as a result of the project. Protected areas may include private or community reserves, municipal or provincial parks, or other designations where biodiversity conservation is an official management goal.

Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID*	Latitude	Longitude	Country	Original Total Size (Hectares) **	New Protected Hectares ***	Year of Legal Declaration or Expansion
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*World Database of Protected Areas

**If this is a new protected area, 0 should appear in this column

*** This column excludes the original total size of the protected area.

Key Biodiversity Area Management

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) under improved management—where tangible results have been achieved to support conservation—as a result of the project.

KBA Name	KBA Code	Size of KBA	Number of Hectares with Improved Management

Production Landscapes

Production landscapes with strengthened management of biodiversity as a result of the project.

A production landscape is defined as a site outside a protected area where commercial agriculture, forestry or natural product exploitation occurs.

Name of Production Landscape	Latitude	Longitude	Hectares Strengthened	Intervention

Benefits to Individuals

- **Structured Training:**

Number of Men Trained	Number of Women Trained	Topics of Training
71	51	Training of grantees and stakeholders in (i) Sustainable Finances for Biodiversity and Protected Areas and (ii) communications and media (during CEPF Final Assessment Workshop, 2022). Training of local CSOs in project development (sao Tome and Principe, 2017). Training of small grantees in grant management and reporting (Sao Tome and Principe, 2019). Training of Grantees in Biodiversity mainstreaming (liberia, 2019). Master Class in developing project proposals (for shortlisted applicants to the SD2 call) (online, 2021).

- **Cash Benefits:**

Number of Men – Cash Benefits	Number of Women – Cash Benefits	Description of Benefits

Benefits to Communities

View the characteristics column below with the following corresponding codes:	View the benefits column below with the following corresponding codes:
1- Small Landowners	a. Increased Access to Clean Water
2- Subsistence Economy	b. Increased Food Security
3- Indigenous/ Ethnic Peoples	c. Increased Access to Energy
4- Pastoralists / Nomadic Peoples	d. Increased Access to Public Services
5- Recent Migrants	e. Increased Resilience to Climate Change
6- Urban Communities	f. Improved Land Tenure
7- Other	g. Improved Use of Traditional Knowledge
	h. Improved Decision-Making
	i. Improved Access to Ecosystem Services

Community Name	Community Characteristics							Type of Benefit									Country	Number of Males Benefitting	Number of Females Benefitting
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i			

Characteristics of "Other" Communities:

Policies, Laws and Regulations

View the topics column below with the following corresponding codes:			
A- Agriculture	E- Energy	I- Planning/Zoning	M- Tourism
B- Climate	F- Fisheries	J- Pollution	N- Transportation
C- Ecosystem Management	G- Forestry	K- Protected Areas	O- Wildlife Trade
D- Education	H- Mining and Quarrying	L- Species Protection	P- Other

No.	Name of Law	Scope	Topics															
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P

“Other” Topics Addressed by the Policy, Law or Regulation:

No.	Country/ Countries	Date Enacted/ Amended	Expected impact	Action Performed to Achieve the Enactment/ Amendment
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Companies Adopting Biodiversity-friendly Practices

A company is defined as a for-profit business entity. A biodiversity-friendly practice is one that conserves or uses natural resources in a sustainable manner.

Name of Company	Description of Biodiversity-Friendly Practice	Country/Countries where Practice was Adopted
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Networks and Partnerships

Networks/partnerships should have some lasting benefit beyond immediate project implementation. Informal networks/partnerships are acceptable.

Name of Network/Partnership	Year Established	Country/ Countries	Established by Project?	Purpose
Hatch by BirdLife “CEPF Regional Implementation Teams” group	2021	Global	Yes	Hatch by BirdLife is a member-driven community space that supports conservation professionals around the world. The platform aims to improve communication and collaboration across the conservation community. The CEPF group includes

Name of Network/Partnership	Year Established	Country/Countries	Established by Project?	Purpose
				investment information, a live feed, a forum, news and events pages, a media centre and a grant opportunities page. It currently has 35 members.
WhatsApp groups respectively for small grantees and all grantees	2017	Benin; Cameroon; Cote d'Ivoire; Equatorial Guinea; Ghana; Liberia; Nigeria; Sao Tome and Principe; Sierra Leone	Yes	Improve day-to-day cooperation, share success stories, promote dialogue and exchange between grantees and with the Regional Implementation Team. Also includes international partners.
WhatsApp group for grantees and media outfit-journalist	2022	Benin; Cameroon; Cote d'Ivoire; Equatorial Guinea; Ghana; Liberia; Nigeria; Sao Tome and Principe; Sierra Leone	Yes	Promote information exchange between conservation and development organisations and the media.

Sustainable Financing

Sustainable financing mechanisms generate funding for the long-term (generally five or more years). These include, but are not limited to, conservation trust funds, debt-for-nature swaps, payment for ecosystem services (PES) schemes, and other revenue, fee or tax schemes that generate long-term funding for conservation.

Name of Mechanism	Purpose	Date Established	Description	Country/Countries	Project Intervention	Delivery of Funds?
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Globally Threatened Species

Globally threatened species (CR, EN, VU) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, benefitting from the project.

Genus	Species	Common Name (English)	Status	Intervention	Population Trend at Site
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LESSONS LEARNED

Management of the CEPF program: Across the hotspot, very few funding sources exist for local and national CSOs wanting to engage in nature conservation, making CEPF a crucial source of support to these organizations. Within the overall CEPF portfolio, larger, higher capacity organizations have an important role to play as “mentoring structures,” engaging local and grassroots CSOs through sub-grants, providing hands-on capacity building and supporting them to applying to small grant mechanisms.

There were several examples in the CEPF portfolio of “clustered” grant-making, where grants were made to CSOs with complementary skills to address the conservation of the same site. This proved to be an effective approach to leveraging the complementary skills and experience of different CSOs, in contexts where no single organization has the necessary capabilities vertically integrated. Going forwards, CEPF could build on this experience by placing emphasis on forging alliances/partnerships among existing and new grantees, facilitating communication among partners across sectors, and stimulating common areas of work. This should be the focus of the RIT’s role and will require the RIT to take a strategic view of building a mutually reinforcing community of CSOs at local, national, and regional level that, becomes less reliant upon external technical and financial support over time. One way for the RIT to do this is to strategically, continue, with, encouraging collaborative projects involving two or more organizations from the proposal design stage.

Another key lesson was that the continuity of funding over several years proved to be particularly important. This was, achieved in some cases, by extending the timeline of grants, to allow grantees more time to utilize grant funds, or approving cost-extensions to grants, where additional funds were needed to consolidate or build on success. In other cases, it was achieved by supporting consecutive grants to the same institution, to support different phases of a program of work. Ensuring continuity of funding appears to have been very important in allowing grantees to fully achieve their objectives and increase the sustainability of the results. It was also essential for initiatives involving protected area establishment or strengthening, for which three-years appeared to be the minimum implementation period necessary. Extending the duration of CEPF support also allowed grantees to develop new activities related to experience sharing and capitalization of lessons learned.

Capacity Building: Exchange of experience has proven to be important for building the capacities of individual NGOs, as well as for developing a stronger “conservation community”, able to influence policy making and business. While social media and electronic mailing lists proved to be useful means of disseminating reports and diffusing analysis, stakeholder surveys underlined the importance of face-to-face exchanges. CEPF grantees found national regional workshops bringing together all CEPF grantees (and other stakeholders) working on conservation in a country to be particularly useful and suggested that such workshops be organized in each country on an annual basis.

The peer-to-peer learning (or mentoring) has shown great potential as the most efficient experience sharing and capacity building method. It would achieve more impactful results if established at the beginning of an investment phase to maximize CSOs’ capacity to access grants and successfully implement projects. It is necessary to couple organizational strengthening with receiving a grant in a more systematic manner, in order to enable learning-by-doing training as well.

Stakeholder engagement: Livelihoods' development must be at the core of the approach for forest and biodiversity conservation. Working towards increasing the connectivity between KBAs will require substantial incorporation of livelihoods' components across the investments. Local communities must be, empowered to choose their own sustainable economic alternatives from their land rather than resorting to accepting short-term benefits from private companies (ex. mining, logging, or plantations) which are, limited (and sometimes do not materialize) and will likely, have a negative impact on their environment and well-being.

Another clear lesson is the importance of focusing on site-based action first if grantees are to achieve policy impacts. Local CSO need first to demonstrate the efficiency of multi-stakeholder, integrated approaches at the local level. Upscaling these approaches and influencing policymakers to incorporate key aspects into policies and plans happens only when local CSOs have gained the necessary skills and credibility at the local level. Ensuring impacts on policy also requires creative collaboration between local CSOs and experienced organizations, which may come from other development sectors than environment. This calls for innovative partnerships and reaching beyond established audiences of conservation-oriented organizations.

Compared with influencing local and national government, the experience of grantees with the private sector was even more limited. This requires specific attention and efforts in the coming years. Based on the experience from the CEPF portfolio, it appears important to:

- Start at the local scale, with businesses that are rooted in the community and landscape.
- Seek opportunities to promote the image of the industry at the same time as delivering conservation benefits through the development of sustainable value chains whereby producers are, encouraged to adopt sustainable practices.
- Gather data that demonstrate to business the financial benefits of conservation action.
- Be creative in seeking opportunities for in-kind support from the private sector (ex. meeting venues, assistance with transportation, etc.) or co-financing contributions towards conservation interventions using carbon credit, biodiversity offsets and Payment for Ecosystem System scheme, among others.

Monitoring changes over time: From the project design phase, grantees recognized that an intervention needs to be based on data and current fact in order, to provide sound-proof evidence of the effectiveness of conservation actions. As such, adequate time and resources must be, invested at the onset of each project to ensure that the set of indicators to be, monitored are well defined and the baseline level are, quantified for each indicator. Many of the baselines may already be available, starting from globally shared databases, but findings need to stay embedded in the community—something communities own as opposed to information gathered by outsiders who take the information to far-away labs and libraries.

Further, recognizing that impact may be years after project completion, grantees learned of the need for long-term impact evaluations and for relating projects explicitly to UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the Aichi targets on biodiversity conservation.

SUSTAINABILITY/REPLICATION

Strong relations between RIT and CEPF Grant Director/Grants Managers. Throughout the implementation of the programme, the RIT has had an excellent relationship with the Grant Director and the Grants Managers (first two, later one) . The close communication and connection ensured a good coordination and effective action, which was essential in

securing transparency and good articulation of the workplan in function of the investment priorities and needs. It has helped immensely with both the administrative and the programmatic/strategic components of the programme.

Political change, economic uncertainty and instability affected the implementation of the CEPF investment phase in some hotspot countries, and these factors are likely to continue to affect some countries in the next phase. Spreading grant making across multiple eligible countries, with flexibility in terms of timing and scope of calls for proposals, maximized CEPFs' ability to take advantage of opportunities, while minimizing the risk of failure to meet portfolio-level targets due to political or security problems in particular countries. Looking forwards there are likely to be similar opportunities to support CSOs in post-conflict situations over the next five years. Globally, CEPF has an established a track record of supporting CSOs in post-conflict countries (ex. Cameroon, Guinea, Sierra Leone, etc.), where minimal funding can make a major difference to the resurgence of a CSO community and to integrating environmental concerns into plans for reconstruction and social and economic recovery. The risks and merits of any such engagement in the case of post-conflict countries in the Guinean Forests region would need to be, carefully considered.

The complexity of the profile/investment strategy, with specific strategic directions and investment priorities only eligible for certain countries/corridors/KBAs, initially was an issue. This affected to some greater extent the applications process and the applications received. Applicants were confused and the RIT had to invest quite some time pass the allotted time indicated for advisory support to potential applicants across the hotspot to explain exactly what they could apply for, and where. Despite these efforts, there was still the lingering confusion. This was discussed during the Mid-term Assessment in 2019. Although the specification was not removed, the RIT and CEPF, were able to provide a bit more guidance to potential applicants. However, this was noted as possible area to focus on during the review of the Ecosystem profiles.

The size of the hotspot vis-a-viz allocated funding. The gaps between the number of eligible applications received as against the number funded due to the available fund was somewhat discouraging. As quite some good numbers of proposals were not funded. Feedback from some of the CSOs when approached to put in their application for the 3 and 4th call for application was centered on the fact that they were not funded in their first and second attempt. Extra work and attention had to go into the review of proposals on the part of the RIT and CEPF. At the end the proposals selected for funding were those that best met the strategic directions and associated investment priorities.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS/STANDARDS

The RIT ensured a close-up monitoring of grantees to ensure implementation of mitigation plans for identified safeguards. The RIT is ensured that all small grant recipients report on actions taken to mitigate anticipated (environmental and / or social) safeguards, with the Small Grants Manager leading on monitoring and documenting safeguards. There were no safeguard issues with Small Grants during the reporting period.

One grievance process was, raised by a subgrantee of a Large Grant and the due diligence was, conducted to ensure all issues were, mitigated.

To adhere to the Health & Safety measures put in place to curb the spread of the Covid19 each team member of the RIT work remotely form home. Additionally, meetings and/or

trainings were, held online whenever possible to mitigate the impact of the Pandemic on the GFWA-Portfolio and the RIT's general activities.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Total Amount of Additional Funding Actually Secured (USD)	\$7,600,000.00
Breakdown of Additional Funding	USD3.9M for the protection of the biodiversity and priority forest ecosystems in the Gola-Foya Landscape [EU-PAPFor project] USD3.7M for the conservation of the Obô Natural Park of São Tomé and Príncipe [EU-ECOFAC IV, EU-Landscape, UNDP/GEF-Biodiversity, and other trusts & foundations]

INFORMATION SHARING AND CEPF POLICY

CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned and results. For more information about this project, you may contact the organization and/or individual listed below.

BirdLife International Africa Division. Email: birdlife-africa@birdlife.org