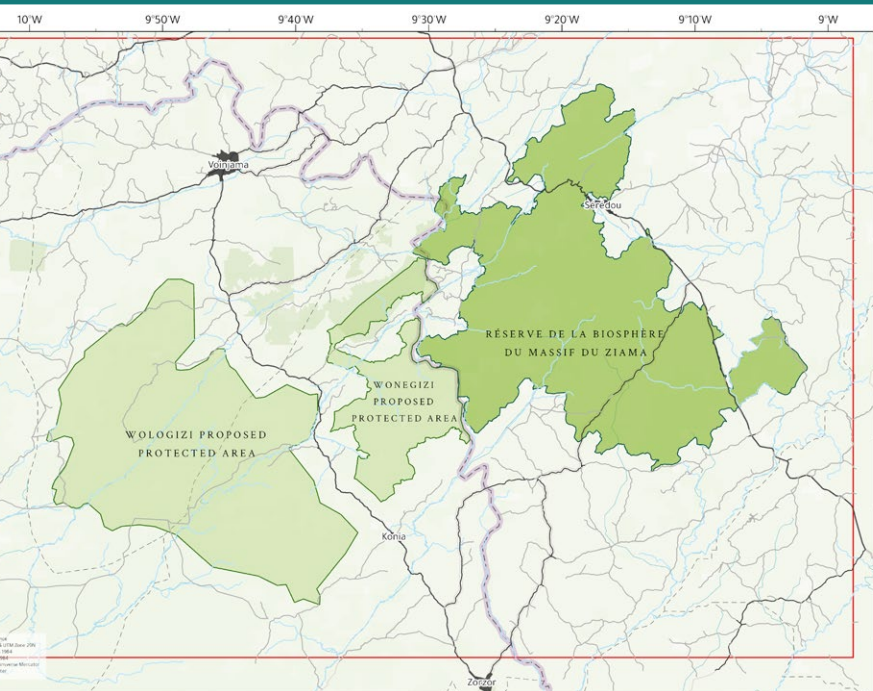
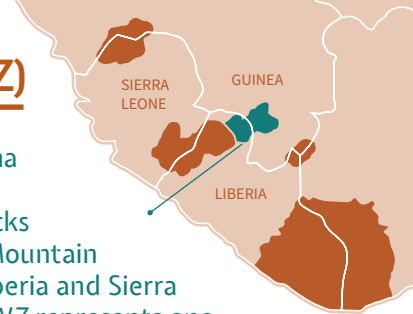


WOLOGIZI-WONEGIZI-ZIAMA (WWZ)

Cutting across Guinea and Liberia, the Wologizi-Wonegizi-Ziama (WWZ) transboundary landscape, a widely recognised global biodiversity hotspot, is part of a series of connected forest blocks extending from Ziama in Guinea through Wonegizi, Wologizi Mountain ranges to Foya and the Gola forest straddling the border of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Due to its unique connectivity as a migratory route, WWZ represents one of the last viable, intact habitats for African forest elephants (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) and the western chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*), both Critically Endangered, the Endangered Pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*) and other flagship species. In addition to the rich biodiversity, the plants and soil biomass hold large stocks of carbon, thereby playing a very important role in climate regulation.

The Support Programme for the Preservation of Forest ecosystems in West Africa (PAPFor) facilitated cross-border collaboration and local communities to develop sustainable livelihoods compatible with maintaining forest cover.



Legend

- Rivers and streams
- Roads
- Tracks

Conservation areas

- Classified forest
- Proposed protected area or OECM (Other effective area-based conservation measures)
- WWZ long-term project area
- Larger settlements

Protected areas or Other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM)

GUI	Ziama Biosphere Reserve	---	119,019 ha
LIB	Wonegizi Proposed Protected Area (PPA) or OECM	---	27,594 ha
LIB	Wologizi Proposed Protected Area (PPA) or OECM	---	99,538 ha

Main habitats

- Primary forest
- Secondary forest
- Shrubland/Fallowed agriculture
- Active agriculture
- Grassland
- Exposed substrate
- Roads and tracks
- Rivers and streams
- Settlements

Main threats

- Subsistence agriculture: traditional slash and burn methods
- Poaching, bushmeat hunting and illegal wildlife trade
- Mining: sand mining in part of Ziama in Guinea; mineral mining in part of Wologizi in Liberia
- Human-wildlife conflict: crop raiding by elephants in Ziama; rodents
- Forest timber extraction: chain-saw logging

Protection targets

- Forest blocks of the Upper Guinean Rainforest of West Africa
- Flagship species: the critically endangered African elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*), and western chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes verus*); the endangered pygmy hippopotamus (*Choeropsis liberiensis*), giant pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*) and white-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tricuspis*); and the vulnerable black-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tetradactyla*)
- Forest habitats and corridors connecting forest blocks between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

PAPFor Programme

Project start date: March 2022

Project end date: February 2025

Initiative of the WAEMU and ECOWAS Commissions funded by the 11th European Development Fund for support to conservation landscapes in West Africa.

Implementation

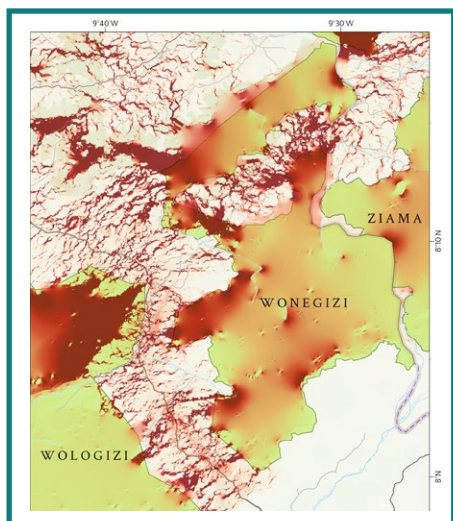
The PAPFor Wologizi-Wonegizi-Ziama programme was implemented by the UK-based FFI and France-based GRET, with various local partners working in Guinea and Liberia. Field teams were based in different parts of the Landscape, close to the local administration and adjacent communities.

Partners

Forestry Development Authority (FDA, Liberia) and Centre Forestier de Nzerekore (CFZ, Guinea): law enforcement and biomonitoring patrols and participating in co-management and governance with communities; and in transboundary initiatives.

Skills and Agricultural Development Services (SADS, Liberia), Association for Community and Agro-Pastoral Development (ADCAP), Maison Guinéenne de l'Entrepreneur (MGE, Guinea) and other state, NGO and community organisations: sustainable livelihoods (cocoa, pepper, coffee and honey, agroforestry, pest management...) and nutrition.

SOME CONSERVATION TARGETS



Crucial connectivity for the whole Upper Guinean forests and a biodiversity hotspot

The WWZ landscape is classified as a key biodiversity area and is an integral part of the entire ecoregion, being the most westerly tropical rainforest block in Africa and crucial for the viability of the whole.

Swamp and riparian forests can be found embedded within the moist evergreen and semi-deciduous forests, providing home to an enormous level of biodiversity: more than 200 endemic plants, 1 000 vertebrates such as the Diana monkey, red colobus, lesser spot-nosed monkey, sooty mangabey, western chimpanzee, 31 species of bats, 38 species of rodents and 347 species of birds. Prolonged human influence has transformed much of the forest from its primary state. Conserving the forest blocks and corridors to keep the landscape intact and connected is vital for the survival of endangered species such as the forest elephant, pygmy hippopotamus and many endemic species.



Forest elephants

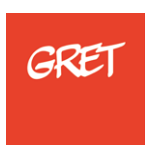
Forest elephant surveys have revealed a population of less than 250 individuals in the Upper Guinean forest of Guinea and Liberia (IUCN, 2016). The species population has been reported to be decreasing and was recently classified as “critically endangered” by the IUCN. Wologizi-Wonegizi-Ziama still contains a significant population of forest elephants that use the structural connectivity of the landscape and beyond such as Foya and Gola forests. Several new calves were recorded by camera traps in 2022. However, habitat loss triggers human-elephant conflict as the cases of crop raiding increase.



Pygmy hippopotamus

Endemic to the Upper Guinean forests of West Africa, the pygmy hippopotamus has lost an estimated 75% of its former range and now occurs in seven remnant fragments across Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia. The species is classified as endangered on the IUCN Red List and the most recent population estimate, of 3 000, was made in the early 1990s but is now believed to be around 2 000 due to habitat loss and fragmentation over the last 30 years.

The PAPFOR programme in the WWZ landscape was implemented by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) with teams based in the UK (Cambridge), Liberia (Monrovia, Zorzor-Lofa County) and Guinea (Seredou), and by GRET with teams based in Guinea (Seredou, Nzerekore) and France. Agreements with the agencies in charge of Protected Areas in both countries were established to ensure optimal ownership of the project.

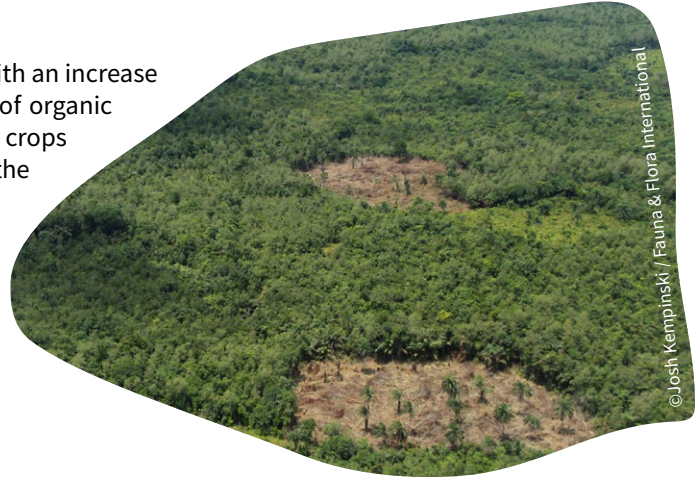


THE CHALLENGES

The major challenges at the landscape level of WWZ are driven by the demand for natural resources to support the inhabitants' livelihoods, recognising that communities and local people are actors both for the conservation and use of natural resources. Some of the key challenges are:

Challenge 1: Shifting agriculture

There is a general perception among farmers that food crops grow well with an increase in yield only on farms made in the high forest with decades of deposit of organic matter in the soil. As a result, intact forest is cut down to be planted with crops for a few years, such as with rice then vegetables, then peanuts, before the land is abandoned or left fallow. This practice is one of the major drivers of deforestation and the loss of critical habitat that was previously partly protected through local customary regulations (sacred forests), leading to the loss of the landscape's connectivity. Another underlying major factor is population growth, which puts increased pressure on forest habitat to be converted to agriculture.



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Challenge 2: Poaching, bushmeat hunting and trade

Although there are national and international laws that prohibit the capture and killing of protected species, traditional regulation has diminished and illegal hunting in the WWZ landscape poses serious challenges. Commercial hunting is prevalent in the landscape as some hunters and marketeers continue to trade in bushmeat, pangolin scales, elephant ivory and pets (chimpanzees). This is a serious threat to protected species as hunters do not distinguish between protected and non-protected species. The project will work with FDA and local authorities to ensure wildlife laws governing the two countries, Liberia and Guinea, are well understood and adhered to.

Challenge 3: Human-wildlife conflict

Human-elephant conflict (HEC) continues to be a threat to the conservation of the last remaining population of forest elephants across the WWZ landscape, estimated to be over 50 with new calves born in 2022. Land conversion for agricultural purposes boosts HEC, as crop raiding events increase around forest blocks. Animals often destroy crop fields close to grazing sites and migratory routes, leading to reprisal by farmers, who trap or gun down the animals.



Challenge 4: Community engagement

Recognising that many community members are aware of and actively aim to manage natural resources, communities can perceive conservation-related projects as a strategy to restrict their access to the natural resources on which they depend. As a result, it becomes difficult in most cases for communities to accept a project as community-owned without tangible benefits. Involvement of the community in project planning and implementation phases, the introduction of genuine livelihood opportunities and the wider provision of basic socio-economic needs (good roads, health facilities, schools, safe drinking water,) would help to increase a sense of community ownership of the project and commitment to mutual goals of sustainable access to and use of natural resources and ecosystem services.



SELECTED RESULTS

Capacity building for local communities

The PAPFor programme supported the capacity-building of management committees in participatory mapping and land-use planning methodologies for areas neighbouring the Zياما Biosphere Reserve (RBZ), with a view to the sustainable management of local natural resources. Participatory maps of the land areas (past, present and desired future) and land-use plans for all 31 villages bordering the RBZ have been drawn up.

Strengthening cross-border governance

Liberia and Guinea signed a bilateral framework agreement in 2019 to formalise their commitment to work together for the effective conservation and sustainable management of the WWZ landscape and its natural resources. Fauna & Flora (FF) facilitated the re-launch of collaboration between the Forestry Administration (FDA) in Liberia and the Centre forestier de N'Zérékoré (CFZ) in Guinea. This facilitation enabled representatives of the two institutions to meet and plan cross-border activities. The terms of reference of the transboundary steering committee were updated, and a detailed plan was drawn up for the first joint transboundary patrols.

Supporting the economic development of local communities

Cocoa and pepper are at the heart of the economic activities of many communities living around the Zياما biosphere reserve. Cocoa is grown in rich and diverse agroforestry systems, and several varieties of cocoa have been identified. Pepper, for its part, is both a non-timber forest product (NTFP) harvested in the forest and a product grown on stakes in areas bordering the protected area. These 2 products are highly prized on the market, particularly for export to neighbouring countries.

Following a study of the cocoa and pepper sectors and their markets, GRET is helping to organise people active in these sectors and to boost their activities. Nine simplified cooperative societies (SCOOPS) were set up, comprising 348 members, who received training in various subjects (cocoa and pepper harvesting and post-harvest techniques, financial education, OHADA uniform act, simplified management). The strategy aims to develop these two sectors while taking account of environmental issues, in particular the preservation of the region's rich biodiversity.

FFI, GRET and their partners also worked with the villages bordering the protected areas to address problems such as falling crop yields through developing an integrated approach that respects the environment. The basis of this approach is to support relay farmers (identified and chosen jointly with the community) in disseminating agroecological/agroforestry techniques and practices in test and demonstration plots, as well as raising community awareness of the harmful effects of synthetic chemical pesticides. A total of 2 909 people, including 775 women, have taken part in successive training courses run by relay farmers.



Different stages in the development of an agro-ecology demonstration plot.

www.papfor.org/-WWZ-



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