Climate change and protected areas in West Africa (CCPAWA) Project

CCPAWA is a full-size GEF project focusing on the issues of climate change and protected areas[1]. It is currently in the preparatory phase, being managed by UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), which will develop the project proposal and secure co-financing. This phase is due to be completed by the end of January 2010.

Once approved, the full project would run from mid 2010 until 2015. The estimated budget is USD 14m, which consists of USD 4m of GEF funding, and partner co-financing of USD 10m. The geographic scope of the project covers 5 pilot countries in West Africa: Chad, Gambia, Mali, Sierra Leone, and Togo. An additional 3 countries will participate in preparatory activities relating to transboundary conservation (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana).

The project represents a significant and important body of work to be undertaken across a wide geographic area. There are potentially huge benefits to the whole West Africa region from using the tools developed to increase the resilience of protected areas to climate change, *at a regional scale*. To achieve these aims, the project will require significant co-financing and support from its partners.

Context, problem and solution

Climate change is becoming increasingly well understood by both the scientific and wider civil communities, and the extent of potential impact is rapidly becoming more widely acknowledged. Protected areas have long been utilised as a robust mechanism for conserving the multi-faceted value of biodiversity. This mechanism is, however, already under heavy and increasing pressure from anthropogenic and other threats, and these threats will be compounded by climate change. Existing capacity to manage resources within protected areas is also often highly limited.

The project will focus on developing science-based national- and regional-scale tools to support improved management of protected area systems in response to climate and other change impacts. Opportunities for transboundary collaboration will play a large part in the project activities, as these are likely to offer some of the most effective solutions.

The main elements of the response will be (a) identifying risks to PAs as a consequence of climate variability and change, (b) planning for adaptive measures that should be undertaken to minimise those risks, and (c) ensuring that the risks are reduced to acceptable levels through long-lasting and environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially acceptable changes. CCPAWA is primarily a targeted research project that will deal with only parts (a) and (b).

A strong project partnership

A strong partnership of stakeholders will be built during the preparation phase, to ensure the best use is made of the wide range of available complementary experience and skills. This partnership will be critical to the development of an effective project. The key partners will include: the national governments of both the core and transboundary countries, UN agencies (UNEP-WCMC, UNEP and UNDP), the EU, international agencies working in the region (particularly IUCN, CI, Birdlife International), and national NGOs and civil society organisations in individual countries.

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[1] The full name of the project is: "*Evolution of Protected Area systems with regard to climatic, institutional, social, and economic conditions in the West Africa Region*"

Preparatory Phase (completed)

The main preparatory activities are:

1. Three baseline studies to: collate relevant GIS data on PAs and climate change threats; collate existing research on links between climate change and protected areas in the region; and assess levels of capacity and awareness, and policy frameworks in the core project countries.
2. A series of national meetings and site visits, to discuss project strategy, co-financing, and pilot sites.
3. A regional meeting to bring together all partners in the project, present and discuss the outputs from the baseline studies and meetings, and to agree on the project design.

Implementation Phase (estimated to start June 2010)

Once funded, the project will deliver 4 components:

COMPONENT 1: VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The extent to which the PAs in the West African region have been affected or could be affected by climate change has not been comprehensively assessed. Component 1 will seek to address this by: (a) assessing the vulnerability of PAs and developing adaptive strategies for those at most risk; (b) assessing future climate change scenarios through appropriate tools and guidelines; (c) determining how to apply adaptive management responses; and (d) developing tools for monitoring the results of adaptation/mitigation strategies.

World Database on Protected Areas

COMPONENT 2: RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR SOLUTIONS PROPOSED

The second component focuses on climate change related studies, assessments, and preparation of maps, all of which are required to inform decision makers and recommend practical interventions they could make for their respective situations. Maps will include the ideal placement of new protected areas (single-country and transboundary), based upon assessments of the status of globally threatened species at national levels, examination of ecosystems and their services, their location and the flow of their benefits (e.g. freshwater, carbon storage, etc.), and assessment of effects of climate change on community activities. At the regional level, information dissemination within existing West African networks will be a key aim.

COMPONENT 3: CAPACITY BUILDING, AWARENESS AND POLICY OPERATIONALISATION

In collaboration with project partners, this component will focus on building capacity and awareness in order to take advantage of the tools, approaches and recommendations developed in the first two components. This will require training at different operational levels, and where appropriate, can include policy drafting and other measures to operationalize recommendations.

COMPONENT 4: M&E SYSTEM

Component 4 will propose a long term monitoring system for the PA systems, and the benefits they deliver, that could be used in the region, including relevant baselines, targets and indicators of success for sustainable management of protected areas that are resilient to the effects of climate and other change factors. This is crucial to the sustainability of the project, to ensure it demonstrates long-term benefits, and can also ensure its outputs are made relevant at regional and global scales.

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