

2022

**Empowering
Grassroots
Conservation
Organisations
in
Cote d'Ivoire,
Guinea &
Sierra Leone**



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List of Acronyms

AFD – Agence Française de Développement

CEM – Conservation des Espèces Marines

CEPF – Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

FID/SL – Foundation for Integrated Development – Sierra Leone

GAC – Guinea Alumina Corporation

IBGRN – Initiative de Base pour la Gestion des Ressources Naturelles

IDEF – Initiative Pour le Développement Communautaire et de la Conservation de la Forêt

IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

PAPBIO – Wetlands International

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

WACSI – West Africa Civil Society Institute



Appreciation

We would like to give our immense gratitude to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank for the partnership and support throughout the duration of this project.



Thank
You



Intervention





Photo by Ron Lach

Project Background

The Upper Guinean Forest of West Africa considered as one of the “global biodiversity hotspot” due to its exceptional concentrations of endemic flora and fauna species. This natural treasure has lost more than eighty-four per cent (84%) of its original forest extent within a half century.

The degradation of West Africa’s biodiversity hotspot is due to subsistence and commercial agricultural expansions, urban, industry and infrastructure expansions, unsustainable logging, and fishing, hunting and trade of bush meat, industrial and artisanal mining, climate change, and pollution.

These threats have increased the destruction and extinction of the terrestrial, freshwater, and other ecological interactions across West Africa. This is linked either directly or indirectly to a high incidence of poverty, political instability and/or civil conflict. It further exacerbates conflicts and undermines peace and stability in West Africa, a region that has only recently emerged from decades of violent conflict.

Though civil society organisations (CSOs) have significantly contributed to addressing a wide array of rights-based topics in West Africa, they still have an essential role to play in complementing governments’ work and raising awareness on the protection of West Africa’s biodiversity hotspots. However, given the broad scope and rapid development of emerging conservation issues like climate change, CSOs, particularly those operating at grassroots and subnational levels, are often under-resourced and face critical capacity constraints to exert influence. Experiences have shown that major CSO’s capacity constraints include challenges with their governance systems and management practices, financial accountability, donor grants reporting and communication.

Other operational challenges that plague civil society include poor documentation, policy advocacy and government engagement as well as the private sector. Therefore, there is a critical need to provide governance and technical support to key local CSOs to aptly promote biodiversity conservation in the hotspot and catalyse climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In response to this situation, the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) was selected by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) to implement a two-year capacity strengthening project titled “Strengthening CSO’s capacities for effective stakeholder engagement in biodiversity conservation”.

The project offered a series of capacity strengthening activities to participating organisations, in four phases including (1) training; (2) mentoring and coaching; (3) support to apply for small grant proposal; and (4) documentation of change stories and lesson learnt.

The project strengthened the institutional and operational capacities of 17 CSOs from Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. Through this programme, the organisations were equipped to effectively engage and advocate for the development and implementation of national frameworks, policies and regulations for climate change mitigation and adaptation, that would meet national needs for development and environmental sustainability.

The project also equipped the participating organisations with relevant knowledge and skills to influence decision-making and policies at the local and national level and improve their capacities to effectively communicate impact and success stories.



About Stories of Change

This success stories magazine showcases the stories of selected participating organisations from Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. The stories highlight institutional and operational achievements, progress and milestones made by the organisations as results of their participation in the two-year capacity development project.

A total of seven (07) worthwhile impact stories have been documented. The stories have been organising per country in alphabetic order.

About Partners

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan. and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

<https://www.cepf.net>

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)

The West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) was established by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) in 2005 to reinforce the capacities of civil society in the sub-region. The Institute became operational in July 2007.

Vision

A peaceful and prosperous West Africa where development is driven by its people

Mission

We strengthen civil society in West Africa to be responsive, collaborative, representative, resilient and influential through knowledge sharing, learning, connecting, and influencing.

<https://wacsi.org>

Acknowledgements

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Conservation
des Espèces
Marines
(CEM)

CEM Optimises its Resource Mobilisation Efforts to save Sea Turtles



Story of Conservation
des Espèces Marines
(CEM)

Sea turtles constitute an endangered species across the world. In the southern coast of Cote d'Ivoire, in the town of Grand Béréby, sea turtles experience a dilemma in life. On the one hand, they constitute a beauty to watch, hence, attract several tourists to this beautiful community. On the other hand, they experience a nightmare in the hands of seaside communities. They are being harvested as a means of livelihood.

Conservation des Espèces Marines (CEM), a non-governmental organisation was established in Grand Béréby by José Gomez and some young nature conservationists in 2015 in response to this threat posed to sea turtles.

Their selfless efforts enabled them to sensitise communities on the need to protect sea turtles. They also recruited some community members to document information on existing sea turtles that stray along the seashores and ensure that these reptiles stay safe as they enjoy their aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

The efforts of CEM contributed towards protecting sea turtles albeit challenging. A major challenge the organisation faced was in its ability to effectively organise and scale up its work. This was partly due to the limited funds the organisation had to implement its bountiful nature conservation activities. However, an encounter between CEM and WACSI in 2020 paved way for a new dawn of opportunities for CEM. Characterised by a needs assessment, online and face to face training sessions and online coaching support, the CEM – WACSI union gave the latter an opportunity to discover the panacea to its resource mobilisation woes.

Gomez attested that the support from WACSI equipped them to have what was required to unlock the challenges they faced. This was a critical need identified by the organisation prior to their participation in the two-year capacity strengthening programme designed by WACSI for CEPF with the



support of the former. The support from WACSI also enabled CEM to master the necessity for a strategic plan and to improve their mode of governance.

“We improved our governance by organising regular meetings with members of the organisation,” Gomez testified.

Between 2020 to date, CEM has emerged into a well-structured organisation focused on the protection of sea turtles.

The regular organisation of meetings among members, their understanding on how to develop logical frameworks based on well thought through and focused organisational orientations enabled CEM to make resounding gains in their resource mobilisation efforts.

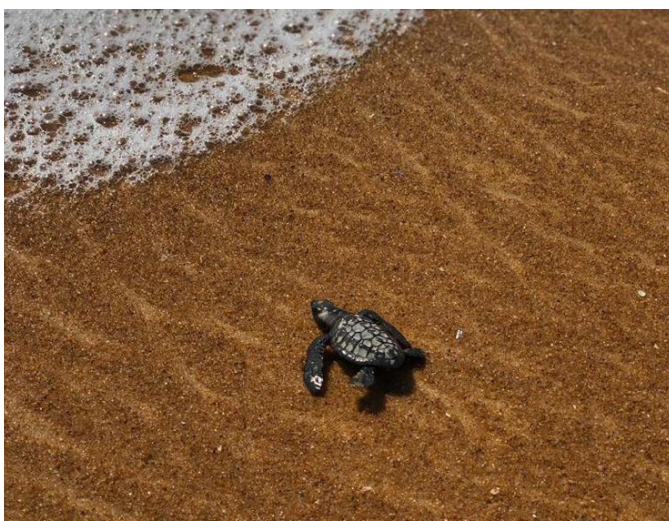
Between 2020 and 2021, they got funding from diverse donors including the United States Embassy in Cote d'Ivoire, SOS - Save our Species, CEPF, Fish and Wildlife Service and Rainforest Trust

“The support from WACSI enabled us to understand how to develop a logical framework with the relevant details,” he said.

The funds raised from these partners pave way for a new horizon for the organisation. These resource mobilisation gains have embedded some residues of hope in the organisation. The accomplishments have made the team to look to the future with hope and optimism. As Alexandre Dah – President of CEM puts it, “we will think of 2025 with much hope, thanks to the support from WACSI”.

Gomez affirms this optimism.

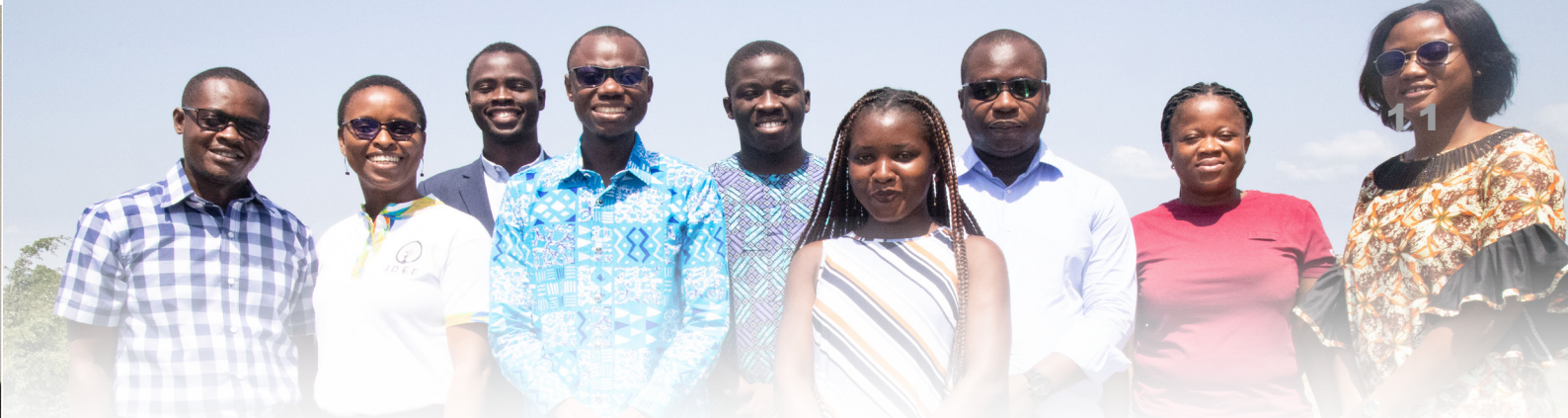
“The support has strengthened the capacity of the organisation for further impacts in the communities. It has also expanded the horizons of the organisation in terms of interventions and readiness to take advantage of any future opportunities,” he said.



Clarity of Roles, Better Functioning Characterises a Young and Vibrant Nature Conservation Organisation in Cote d'Ivoire



Story of Initiative Pour le
Développement
Communautaire et de la
Conservation de la Forêt
(IDEF)



Initiative Pour le Développement Communautaire et de la Conservation de la Forêt (IDEF) has positioned itself on the path of good institutional governance; one that makes the staff, management, and board confident of its course towards achieving its mission.

This, the organisation attributes to the capacity building support they received from WACSI.

“The support from WACSI has enabled the organisation to better reorganise itself in pursuit of its vision,” the Board Chair of the organization, Marc-Anthelme Kouadio said.

The joy expressed by the dynamic board chair emanates from the fact that the institution was guided by WACSI to address a critical problem that plagued its governance and impeded their credibility as a well-governed institution.

“From the beginning, we were a council of founding members and not a board,” he explained.

Created in 2014, this status quo did not facilitate a smooth coordination between the founding members and the Executive Director of the organisation, Bakary Traore. There was lack of clarity on who should do what, especially when it involved engaging partners.

“There was lack of clarity on who should sign a contract with partners, lack of clarity and consistency in this regard which sometimes retarded progress in decision making in line with finalising partnerships,” explained the Executive Director, whom, together with the board and staff of the organisation, found a solution to this governance menace.

The determination of the management and board to address this menace yielded fruits.

IDEF was among 6 civil society organisations from Cote d’Ivoire that work to promote nature conservation that were selected to take part in a capacity building programme organised by WACSI between 2020 and 2021.

Organisational governance was treated as one of the key topics during the online and face to face sessions. These trainings helped IDEF’s team to clearly identify the governance challenge plaguing their organisation. It further helped them to identify key actions they needed to address the menace.

First, a board was established and voted into office during the 2020 general assembly. IDEF’s first ever board is made of 5 members with a 5-year mandate that can be renewed once.

“This is a good step for a forward-looking organisation,” says Leandre Banon, WACSI’s capacity building Programme Officer who facilitated the session on governance and leadership during the trainings.

Second, IDEF has developed a board charter. This clearly outlines the role of the board and its members and establishes the delimitations of the board, the board chair, and the executive director; a veritable panacea to the organisation’s major challenge prior to participating in the capacity development programme.

As a visibly elated Executive Director celebrates this milestone, he recounts the relevance of these actions to the organisation’s overall governance.

“There is a clear separation of duties between the board and the executive team. For example, the board chair signs all contracts with external stakeholders while the executive director signs internal contracts for staff,” he says.

“Also, the board approves (signs) financial engagements above 5 million francs CFA,” he adds.

Traore is overly satisfied with his organisation’s effective participation in this programme, and he could not hide his emotions.

“This programme brought a lot of added value to IDEF. This programme helped us know what we need and based on our available resources, we defined what has to be put in place,” the Executive Director testified.

According to them, as a team, they have the passion to promote nature conservation efforts. However, the training helped them to be more strategic and better organised in the pursuit of their passionate ambition. They are confident that which such improved organisation, they would effectively work to create a sustainable society that is aware of its environment, placing its natural resources at the service of sustainable development in Cote d’Ivoire; an accomplishment they do not take for granted.



**‘This Programme
has helped us to
Improve our Way of
Working’, Says Prof
Egnankou Mathieu,
Board Chair of
SOS-Forêts**

Story of SOS-Forêts



A visit of four personnel from WACSI to SOS-Forêts on Tuesday 16 November 2021 was characterised by high sense of gratitude shown to WACSI by the over 10 members of staff and board of the organisation.

As our team meandered across the clean streets of the beautiful botanical garden seated in the heart of the legendary Houphouët Boigny University in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, we were greeted by the whistling sound of the birds that perched on the densely packed but well organised trees in the garden.

In the heart of the garden is found the office of SOS-Forêts, a 25-year-old organisation that works to protect the environment. As we approached the office, we were welcomed by a jovial and eloquent gentleman whom we later got to know was the board chair of the organisation and award-winning botanist, Professor Wadja Mathieu Egnankou. He charmed us with a brief history of the garden, one that reignites a higher sense of pride in the West African nation.

As we took our seats to commence what would be a very fruitful and instructive coaching session, the board chair of SOS-Forêts, who was visibly happy to welcome our team to their calm, fresh and beautiful working space could not hide his satisfaction for the support his organisation has received from WACSI.

"This programme has helped us to improve our way of working," he said as he took his seat.

This triggered our curiosity to know what inspired such positive

comments. As we later learned from an eight-hour conversation with some board members and staff of SOS-Forêts, WACSI's support to the organisation has led to an amazing organisational rejuvenation.

They've improved their governance structures, improved their financial management practices, put in place a smooth resource generation through improved proposal writing process, and increased their staff capacity from 3 in 2019 to 12 in 2021. Currently, an Executive Director independently leads the team under the supervision of the board; a practice that was far-fetched prior to WACSI's support to SOS-Forêts.

From these, the board chair could not hide his optimism for the future.

"We hope from 2022, we will have greater success with the proposals we will submit," he gladly and confidently stated. The board chair believes that the reorganisation process will lead to an eventual growth in resources for the organisation to continue to pursue its mission.

The organisational rejuvenation has seen them improve their approach to proposal writing, one that has led to an increased number of proposals submitted in 2021.

"We've started developing proposals frequently this year [2021]. So far, we have submitted 11 projects [proposals] in 2021. We hold regular meetings to discuss project opportunities at our disposal," Narcisse Tehe, the young and vibrant Executive Director explained.

This is a significant improvement from previous years wherein the organisation sometimes submitted less than five proposals in a year.

SOS-Forêts is one of six organisations in Cote d'Ivoire working in the biodiversity conservation sector that was supported by WACSI to enhance its institutional

14 Côte d'Ivoire

and operational effectiveness. It is among 17 organisations from three West African countries (Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire) that are mentees of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, participating in a two-year programme dubbed 'Strengthening the Capacities of CSOs for an Effective Engagement of Stakeholders in the Biodiversity and Conservation in West Africa'.

Improved governance system

Prior to its participation in this programme, it experienced challenges in putting in place an effective governance system; one that would aid in the overall strategic positioning of the organisation and ensuring its operational effectiveness.

"Through this programme, we have improved our way of working," attests Prof Wadja Mathieu Egnankou Board Chair of the organisation.

The highly respected botanist alludes to the fact that, as an organisation, they grappled to put in place the relevant institutional organs needed to catalyse the smooth functioning and growth of the organisation.

However, because of this capacity building programme steered by WACSI with support from CEPF, the organisation has been able to deliberately facilitate a smooth transition from an institution that is highly centralised on the executive committee. It has fostered a smooth decentralisation process, one that ensures the establishment of the board and an operational executive and programmes team.

"Through this programme, we saw the need to have a board. Prior to the programme, we had an executive committee," the board chair said.

This realisation came after staff of the organisation took part in online and face to face trainings that addressed subjects related to board governance, proposal writing, project management, resource mobilisation, financial management, advocacy and communication and monitoring and evaluation. Key lessons learned from these trainings triggered the decision makers of SOS-Forêts to prioritise key

issues that needed to be addressed to strengthen their organisation. This led to some strategic reorganisation of the organs of the institution.

"So, we put in place a committee to develop the board charter. From this, we have identified key persons who can join the board. We want to identify persons who will add value to the board," Prof Mathieu stated with optimism.

Instituting appropriate roles for team members

"Thanks to WACSI, we are working on improving our institutional components," he said.

"This support helped us to review our language. For example, we now have the 'terminology' Executive Director [previously referred to as president] who leads the programmatic operations of the organisation under the guidance of the board," he explained.

SOS-Forêts is a leader in the biodiversity conservation sector and in the country. Prior to their participation in this programme, they operated under what they described as 'an archaic governance system' with a president overseeing both strategic oversight, governance, and operational engagements of the organisation. To the team, this wasn't helping them to clearly differentiate responsibilities that would aid in the smooth operations of the organisation.

According to Prof Mathieu, this capacity building support made them to realise this. It enabled them to quickly take actions to improve their governance.

"With this support, we are consolidating our presence in the sector through the utilisation of the appropriate terminologies for our team members that aligns with and reflects the work and or role they have within the organisation," he said.

This has led to several changes within the organisation.

"We are putting in place a board. It has improved our way of working and this has given us a lot of visibility," the highly respected professor of botany proudly explained.

Enhanced financial management practice

In addition to the robust revamping of its governance structures, SOS-Forêts has made strides towards improving its financial management practices.

“Thanks to this support we realised the need to have an accountant who is more rigorous in supporting us to have more appropriate financial accounting processes, which we are utilising to develop, file and share our financial reports,” he said.

Generally, the staff and board of SOS-Forêts are satisfied with the strides they’ve made since WACSI commenced working with them.

According to them, their organisation is becoming more professional, and they are optimistic about the outcome of this process.

“We are growing thanks to support from partners such as Birdlife International and WACSI,” the board chair said. And this expression of optimism is nurtured by the support SOS-Forêts has received from WACSI with funding from CEPF.



Guinea

**Carbone Guinea is
on track towards
Becoming a
Reference
Organisation
in Africa**



Story of Carbone Guinea

Ibrahima Sory Sylla, National Coordinator of Carbone Guinée is happy his organisation took part in a two-year capacity development programme implemented by WACSI with support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF).

"This programme has given us some tools which we have used in our efforts to become more credible," he recounted with utmost satisfaction.



Carbone Guinée is a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) created in 2009 in Guinea with the goal of preserving the environment. The organisation strives to be more efficient in its engagements with beneficiaries, partners, and donors. However, the organisation grappled with some institutional challenges.

Thanks to a capacity development programme for six mentees of the Critical Ecosystem partnership Fund in Guinea, Carbone Guinée stands out as one of the organisations that capitalised on this support from WACSI.

After taking part in trainings, online and face to face coaching sessions, Carbone Guinée focused on revising the organisation's policies (procedures manual, organisational constitution). In addition, they developed a new strategy plan (2022 – 2025), communication strategy, human resource plan.

Also, after the training, Carbone Guinée initiated the process of creating and setting up a Board of Directors (3 potential members already identified) to strengthen its institutional governance with separation of role between the management and the board.

The National Coordinator of the organisation, Ibrahima Sory Sylla recounted that; *"formerly Carbone Guinée en participating in this capacity development project organised by WACSI, there have been some noticeable changes in terms of governance, resource mobilisation, financial management, communication, and advocacy."*

As a result, the organisation has secured funding from four (4) out of five (05) proposals that were submitted in 2021.

This came on the heels of assiduous work to boost the organisation's visibility. *"We also have more visibility, and we are working to attract financial and technical*

partners," Sylla confidently added.

The realm of successes chalked by Carbone Guinée stand to make the organisation glow in a country there is in a dire need of NGOs' interventions to promote nature conservation efforts.

Our team paid a working visit to Carbone Guinée in January 2021. In an interview with our communications team, The Executive Director explains the relevance of this capacity building support to his organisation, adding that his organisation is experiencing some noticeable positive changes because of WACSI's intervention.

WACSI: What led to these changes in your organisation?

Ibrahima Sory Sylla (ISS): *Thanks to WACSI we have acquired practical skills and WACSI has been monitoring our progress for over two years. We now have sound grasp in governance, financial management, advocacy, and communication.*

WACSI: Concretely, what actions have you taken



or set up to ensure that you have more visibility on the local and international level?

ISS: Regarding this, the first thing we did was to review our management tools. We had archaic management tools, but also in terms of communication and visibility, they were really limited. But thanks to WACSI's coaching, we have now improved these tools and our visibility in the field.

WACSI: You stated that your management tools were archaic. Can you give an example of a tool that was archaic and that, thanks to the support you benefited from WACSI, you were able to transform this tool?

ISS: For instance, we noticed many inadequacies in our procedure's manual. But during the training we received from WACSI, many questions were raised internally, and we realise that the best way for us to answer these questions was to change the procedures manual.

We had a communication plan that was not relevant to our organisation's needs. Many crucial elements were missing. But during the training, we understood that we had to completely revise or update the communication plan. We had never thought about making a strategic plan, which means that we were navigating blindly, but now we have a strategic plan which will guide our annual action plan, based on the organisation's needs.

WACSI: And how are these tools helping the organisation to achieve its mission?

ISS: The first thing is that internally, each member of the staff knows what they must do which was not the case before. We used to come together and discuss certain things, but it wasn't as clear as it is now, and as a result, we know that we have a lot of results because many partners are interested in what we are doing and how we are doing it.

WACSI: Two years into this process, how do you see yourself as an organisation?



ISS: Looking back, we can assert that there have been a lot of changes. Our objective is that at the end of this programme or within two- or three-years' time, we will be a reference organisation in the biodiversity sector in Africa.

WACSI: Do you have a message for the partners?

ISS: We thank the partners for the choice they have made, not only by selecting WACSI to train us but also giving the Guinean civil society organisations the necessary support, which improves our operations in the field and help us to contribute in a sustainable way to the community development.





IBGRN Records Ground-breaking Resource Mobilisation Gains in 2021

Story of IBGRN

The Initiative de Base pour la Gestion des Ressources Naturelles (IBGRN) is increasingly gaining recognition as a credible civil society organisation (CSO) that responds to the biodiversity challenges plaguing the country.

However, the availability of resources to respond to the existing biodiversity challenges has been a long-standing challenge faced by the organisation since its creation in the year 2000.

Seeking a sustainable solution to this challenge has been a critical plight of the organisation. Over the years, IBGRN has benefitted from the support of many partners to address this challenge.

According to the Executive Director of IBGRN, Oua Justin Bilivogui, key partners that have supported their work over the years included only the Critical Ecosystem Partnership fund (CEPF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)- Guinea.

However, their encounter with the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) in 2020 has been a key driver in finding a lasting solution to the dire resource challenge that made the organisation to struggle in realising



its goal to protect Guinea's rich biodiversity despite being in existence for close to two decades.

"The encounter with WACSI has been advantageous to the organisation," said Oua Justin Bilivogui.

"We now have more projects thanks to the support of WACSI," he said.

"At the start of this capacity building project with WACSI, the organisation had only 2 partners that provided financial support to its work. These were CEPF and UNDP – Guinea. But, today, we have CEPF, UNDP, International Union for Conservation Nature (IUCN), Guinea Alumina Corporation (GAC), Bafing Falémé of UNDP -Guinea and Gret/Saveur-GF of Kissidougou," the Executive Director happily explained.

IBGRN was among six CSOs from Guinea that work to promote biodiversity conservation in the Guinean Forests of West Africa that were supported by WACSI.

Through a capacity building project designed to enhance the capacities of 17 CSOs from three West African countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and

Guinea Conakry), WACSI trained these organisations in the domain of governance and leadership, resource mobilisation and proposal writing, results-based monitoring & evaluation, project management, financial management and communication and advocacy. This was done to ensure that these organisations are equipped with the requisite skills to effectively manage their organisations and ensure effective delivery of programmes geared towards protecting the rich biodiversity of the Guinean Forests of West Africa.

The project offered a series of capacity strengthening activities to participating organisations including (1) training; (2) mentoring and onsite coaching; (3) support to apply for small grant proposal.

The support enabled IBGRN to address a key challenge that impeded the organisation from mobilising sufficient financial resources.

According to the Executive Director, the organisation has been plagued with a perennial problem of being able to understand and effectively utilise standard proposal development templates from partners.

With support from WACSI, IBGRN has been able to surmount this among other challenges that impeded



the organisation from mobilising sufficient resources for its work.

Surmounting this challenge has enabled the organisation to mobilise more financial resources. In 2021, IBGRN was awarded support by GAC to the tune of half a billion Guinean francs (about fifty thousand dollars).

The board chair attributed this success to the support IBGRN got from WACSI.

“The support from WACSI contributed significantly to this success. With the advocacy and communication tactics gained from the capacity building support from WACSI, the organisation communicated effectively with stakeholders in mining communities. The new partnerships with partners like Guinea Alumina Corporation (GAC) is a key result obtained from the usage of the tools and skills gained from WACSI. The tools helped us to gain visibility and to win the interest of the mining company that provided us with this support which accounts for about 50% of our annual budget in 2022” Bilivogui stated.

Through this support, IBGRN has secured valuable resources that would enable them to expand their

support communities working to protect their environment.

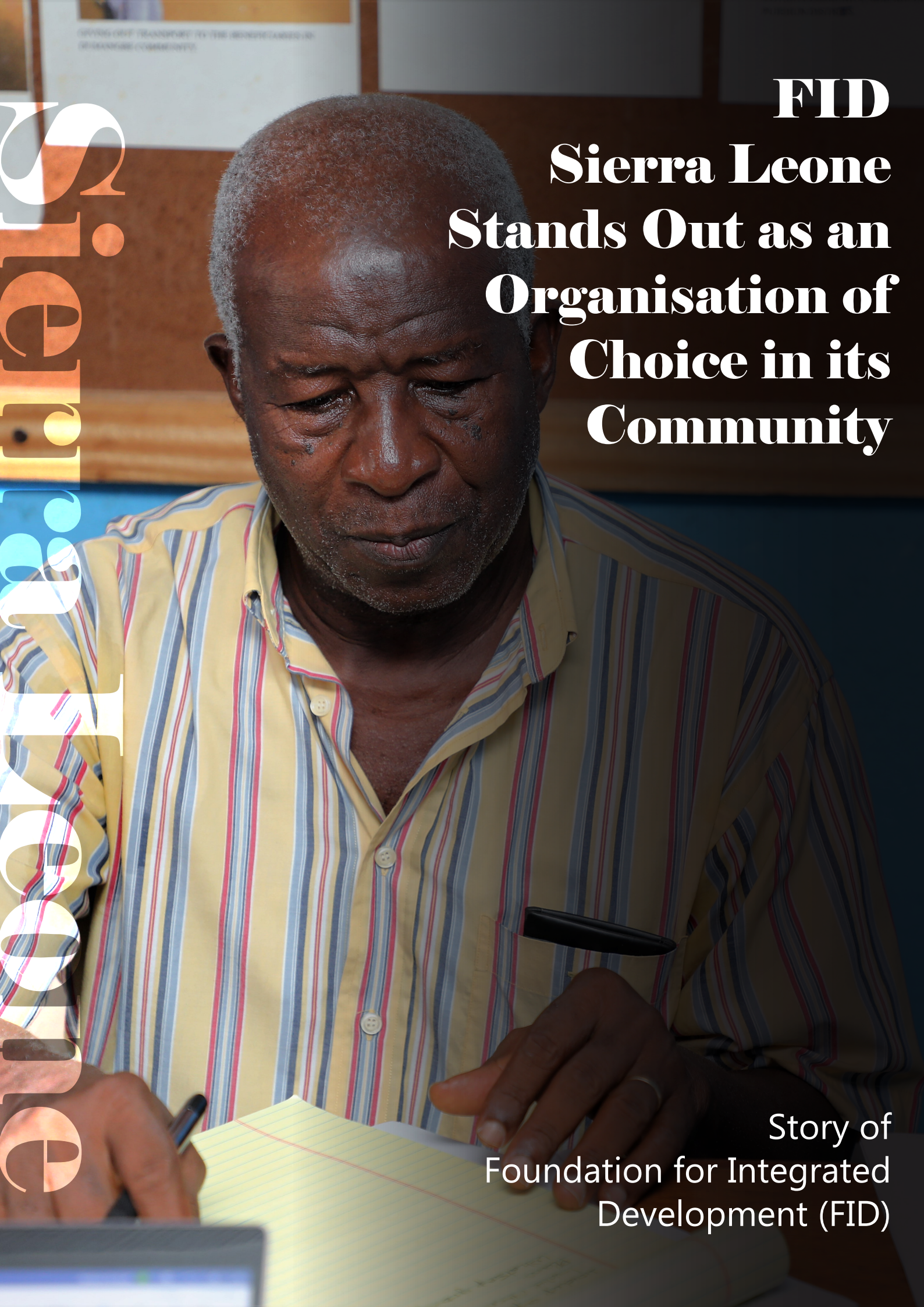
“We are now securing growing projects within a competitive environment based on our improved competences,” the board chair satisfactorily admits.



Sierra Leone

FID
Sierra Leone
Stands Out as an
Organisation of
Choice in its
Community

Story of
Foundation for Integrated
Development (FID)





Ibrahim K. Kawa is the Programme Manager at the Foundation for Integrated Development-Sierra Leone (FID/SL), which focuses on community development, environmental rights and protection, livelihoods, and agricultural support.

Kawa and his colleagues acknowledged the support received from the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI) under the two-year project funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF).

The two-year project was designed to respond to the capacity needs of each of the five organisations in Sierra Leone. This was realised through the following carefully designed phases of the programme; (1) training, (2) mentoring and (3) onsite coaching.

FID/SL's participation in the project has contributed to enhance their ability to achieve their mission.

"Going through the training was a blessing not only to me, but to the organisation, as the participation of staff in programme designing, coordination and implementation has improved and has become a norm in the organisation, and this is helping a lot", said Kawa.

Before the support, project design and writing were only the responsibility of the Programme Manager, with little or no support from field and other management staff.

The Programme Manager is pleased that the capacity strengthening support has also contributed to an

effective coordination of the organisation's operations. Specifically, the one-man planning, and coordination of projects and operations has given way for a more collective effort with clear delineation and delegation of roles and responsibilities.

Particularly, there is a clear shift of approach with respect to project planning as the process has become more participatory (a bottom-up approach).

Staff of FID/SL celebrate the fact that the support helped the organisation to develop their ability to rapidly address certain constraints in some of the communities they work in. In fact, during the outbreak of COVID-19, FID/SL was able to curb the situation and advocate on behalf of the communities to the relevant authorities. The organisation also supported these vulnerable communities with COVID-19 relief items such as, hand washing and sanitation materials in record time. This has made FID/SL to emerge into a reference organisation in its community.

"The communities were so proud that they have an organisation like FID/SL to take their concerns and voices to the right places, and they saw the response," Kawa said.



Journal of
Technology

The Rebirth of **GREENLIFE** West Africa

Story of
GREENLIFE
West Africa





Domestic resource mobilisation is a daunting challenge faced by many civil society organisations (CSOs) in Sierra Leone. GREENLIFE, an organisation that focuses on addressing economic challenges and improving the wellbeing of communities across West Africa in the domains of health, education, environment, and economic development is no exception.

According to Sahuna Bangura, Program Officer of GREENLIFE Sierra Leone, the organisation was facing major challenges in resource mobilisation. Key among these challenges was the limited ability of the organisation to raise funds to run operations. According to him, this was largely due to the organisation's inability to write excellent grant proposals to attract donors' attention.

This situation however began to change for the better due to the two-year capacity strengthening that GREENLIFE benefited from the West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI). The programme was funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) to provide a solid framework for the sustainable conservation of Sierra Leone's biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations. GREENLIFE and four other organisations participated in the programme.

"As a result of the support, we are now well equipped in writing excellent and convincing project proposals than we use to do back in the days. and the reason for this change is honed on the exceptional trainings received from WACSI and this has not only benefited GREENLIFE Sierra Leone but has spanned across our other offices in Liberia and Ghana", Bangura said.

The project offered a series of capacity strengthening activities to participating organisations including (1) training; (2) mentoring and onsite coaching; and (3) technical support to apply for small grant proposals.

One significant change that has occurred since the beginning of the capacity building project is the high level of teamwork and collaboration among staff in the organisation.

Emanating from the support from WACSI and the training on resource mobilisation, GREENLIFE Sierra Leone has been able to secure grants from Wetlands International (PAPBIO) and CEPF.

"One unforgettable moment for us was when we were



informed that we would be awarded CEPF funds. This was memorable because as a team, we put in our best in writing the proposal following keenly the guidelines, procedures and utilising skills gained from WACSI's training and coaching", Bangura happily testified alluding to a grant of \$25,000 won by his organisation.

This success signifies an important milestone for GREENLIFE Sierra Leone.

It crystallises the significant efforts made by the organisation to apply lessons learned from WACSI, being more focused and strategic towards the achievement of its goals. Prior to WACSI's support to GREENLIFE, the organisation was operating with no strategic plan and finding it difficult to align their proposals and activities with their vision and goals.



But now, with the support of WACSI and their active participation in the training on governance, GREENLIFE Sierra Leone have been able to develop an organisational strategy for 2022 - 2027, develop an organogramme and clearly define their roles of personnel in the organisation.

Insights gained from the training on governance enabled the organisation to review its board charter to highlight the duties of the board members and to ensure segregation with management.

The support from WACSI has increased performance, facilitated uniformity of work and improved organisational structure of GREENLIFE Sierra Leone.



Looking at all these successes generated through the support, GREENLIFE Sierra Leone has all the tools to leverage on to become more influential and successfully contribute to conservation of the biodiversity in Sierra Leone and across West Africa.





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