



TROPICAL BIOLOGY ASSOCIATION

# Empowering women in hotspot conservation



component of the *“Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation Capacity of Civil Society Organizations”* project by Tropical Biology Association for CEPF grantees in the Guinea Forest of West Africa Biodiversity Hotspot

December 2021 – June 2022

Funded by



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## Rationale

*“The entire program is an eye opener, very relevant and beneficial to women leaders”*

Gifty Baaba Asmah, Ghana

We can no longer overlook gender issues in conservation. Yet, women remain largely underrepresented in the sector. Globally, women make less than 30% of science and conservation researchers, and only one-third of conservation workers.

Although women have a considerable – often more significant – interaction with natural resources in many developing countries, their inclusion in conservation decisions, and in sharing of benefits remains low. This means we are missing on half of the knowledge and solutions available in the population, that is so critical in safeguarding natural resources.

This project addressed these barriers by building the capacity of women-led organizations, and empowering them to take greater leadership in conserving biodiversity in the Guinean Forests of West Africa (GFWA).

## Empowering women triggers transformative change

TBA believes women are irreplaceable stewards of the environment, and enhancing their capacity and promoting gender equality in conservation enhances sustainability.

CEPF supports women by “Establishing and strengthening women-led conservation and development organizations, associations and networks to foster gender equality in natural resource management and benefit sharing” (CEPF Investment Priority 4.2).

## The program

*“The program was well tailored... It has gone a long way to strengthen our organization. Now we have a gender policy, fundraising plan and communication strategy. Thank you so much TBA and the CEPF.”*

Helvecia Nfombi  
Takwe Embola,  
Cameroon

With CEPF funding, TBA designed and ran an integrated capacity building program for 10 women-led organisations working in conservation in the GFWA hotspot. The program’s focus was on the women leaders, and we tailored capacity development actions to the women’s own experiences, needs and challenges, through:

- ❑ **Mentoring**; 5 national mentors together with TBA staff provided targeted support and guidance to the women-leaders and their staff.
- ❑ **Networking**; this connected the women-leaders with each other, and to professionals and networks relevant for their conservation growth and work. The women hosted in-country networking and advocacy events, and had experience sharing opportunity with other conservation actors from across the hotspot. when they joined 2 delegates workshops, and 1 regional final assessment workshop.
- ❑ **Masterclasses**; 31 participants (30 women and 1 male representing a women-led organisation) joined a virtual masterclass on “empowering women in conservation in Africa”. 10 of the women leaders also attended face-to-face masterclasses on communicating conservation impacts held in Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon.

**This report elaborates the three project components and their impacts on the women**



*Participants of Communicating Conservation Impacts Masterclass in Cameroon*



# Mentoring women for impact

Low capacity is a major obstacle hampering civil society organizations (CSOs) in Africa from delivering conservation impact. The challenge is double for women-led organisations because of traditional responsibilities “given” to women: food growers, water and fuel gatherers, and caregivers.

However, we believe that women need to play more direct roles in safeguarding natural resources, and should be deliberately encouraged and supported to take greater leadership in conservation.



*Women learning hub in Nigeria*

## Mentoring



**Fombu Christel Ya Nicole,**  
Cameroon



**Leton Benita,** Nigeria



**Adjei Betty,** Ghana



**Wongo Ellen Sia,**  
Sierra Leone

**Randa Norah Moore,**



Liberia

We engaged experienced women practitioners to mentor the participating women leaders (or mentees) in each project country. This strategy allowed for face-to-face interactions, which is important in building relationships. Because the mentors were local, they understood better the local context the women work in. This, together with the mentors' regional or international exposure, meant they were better placed to help the women leaders find home-grown, as well as regional solutions to challenges they faced in their work.

The five mentors walked a practical journey with the mentees at a personal level, organisational level, and in implementing the project activities including physical visits, planning and implementing networking events and supporting through the virtual masterclasses

### Mentoring targets

Another important aspect was the **mentoring targets** that the mentees women, together with their mentors, identified as a priority, and to guide the mentoring. These covered the following key areas;

- Strategic planning and management
- Strategic fundraising and proposal writing
- Collaborations and stakeholder engagement
- Gender disparity in conservation leadership
- Networking for conservation

“The mentoring program was an interesting experience. It taught me a lot of patience and opened my eyes to the challenges faced by women led CSOs.”

Nigerian mentor

“Mentoring helped me get a clearer path for my organisation and develop three institutional strategic documents on fundraising, gender and leadership.”

Cameroonian mentee

## Impacts of the mentoring

**100%**

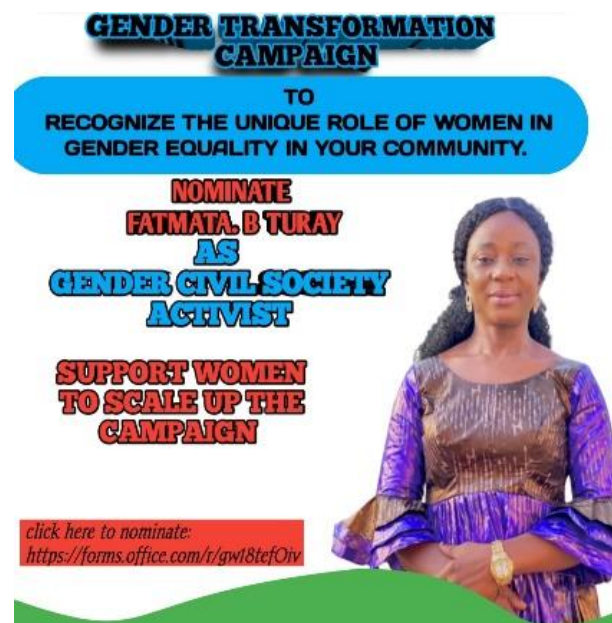
Percentage of women mentees that said the mentoring was useful to them

**85%**

Percentage of mentoring targets achieved over the six months of the mentoring period.

**Taking greater leadership on gender issues**

**Falaba District Women Network (FDWN), Sierra Leone mentee** organised a nationwide campaign to create gender awareness, building on knowledge and lessons from the mentoring program.



© Falaba District Women Network (FDWN)

**Scaling the mentorship and training others**

**WESAD (Cameroon mentee)** launched a local mentoring program for girls building on experience from the program.

**FCI (Liberia mentee)** engaged a consultant to conduct in house training on resource mobilization.

**Accelerated grant writing and collaboration**

**WINCO**, for example, submitted 7 proposals for funding within 3 months after mentoring. They also signed a MOU with the Organization for African Women in Trade.

**Enhanced visibility of the women leaders**

**Itoro Archibong, the director of WINCO (Nigeria)**, was nominated the 2022 Young Women in Conservation Biology awardee by the Society for Conservation Biology.



# Networking

We designed the networking actions to help the women leaders — and their organisations — connect, engage and dialogue with each and with conservation actors from local to international levels. This we delivered through:

## Network subscriptions

We paid two-years institutional memberships for the women-led organisations to networks they identified as a priority, and encouraged to subscribe to free networks.

## Networking and conservation advocacy small grants

The women hosted networking or advocacy events and connected with conservation actors at national levels.

## Participation at regional conservation workshops

The workshops allowed the women leaders to engage and connect with hotspot wide conservation players.

These collective efforts aimed to foster the CSOs' collaborative capacity and ultimately enhance their sustainability.



*The steering team of Women in Conservation Network Nigeria Chapter during its launch at Cross River State, Nigeria.*



## Key results of the project's networking action

6

Number of new women conservation networks formed: a new regional **West Africa Women in Conservation Network** (WAWiCoN), and 5 national networks.

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8

Number of networking and advocacy events organised by the 10 women organisations in the 5 project countries.

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Over 118

Number of women who have joined the 6 women networks as members.

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Over 274

people reached (88% being women) through networking and advocacy events organised by the women-led organisations.

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10

Number of 2-years organisational memberships paid for by the project.

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3

Number of new collaborations catalysed; women-led organisation that did not know each other before came together to deliver local conservation actions.

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33

Total number of networks/associations (15 being free-to-join) that the women had subscribed to by end of project. Of these, 12 national, 7 multinational, and 14 global networks.

15

Number of women (incl. 4 women mentors) who gained regional knowledge-cum-networking exposure at one of the three regional workshops during the project period.

## Networks for impacts and visibility

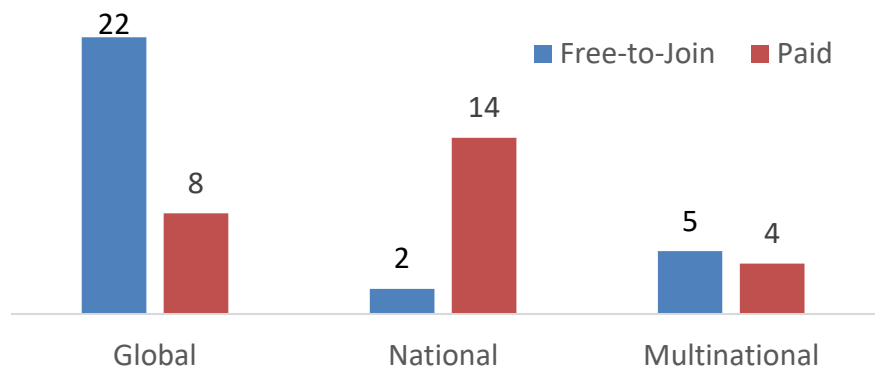
*“The program helped us to build effective networks for visibility”*

Josephine Osei-Mainoo,  
Ghana

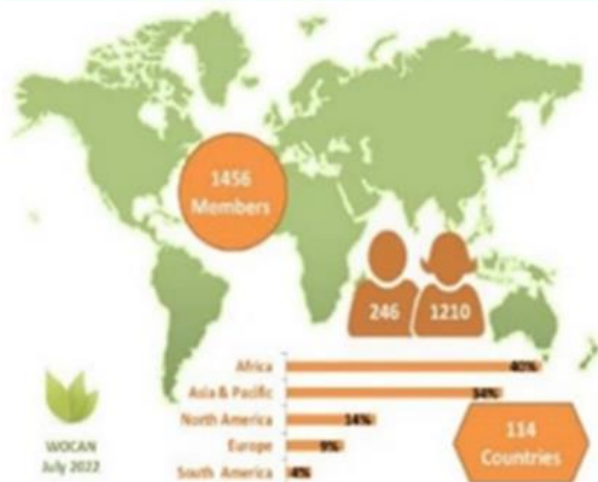
### Power of networks

Lack of access to relevant networks greatly hampers women contribution to conservation decisions. This limitation is exacerbated by a lack of funds to pay for network fees, and of awareness on existing networks. In response, the project

- **Connected and encouraged the women leaders to join established conservation networks in the region.** Emphasis was on pro-women (e.g., Women in Nature Network, a global network) and free-to-join networks. **By project end, the women had joined 33 (15 being free-to-join) networks;** 12 were national, 7 multinational, and 14 global networks as shown in the figure below.
- **Sponsored the women-led organisations to join 10 networks** of their choice over a 2-year period; 2 were renewals, and 8 were new memberships.



### WOCAN Membership



©WOCAN <https://www.wocan.org/>

### Increased visibility

Joining established networks e.g. the Women Organising for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, WOCAN, enhanced the visibility of the women, and their work.

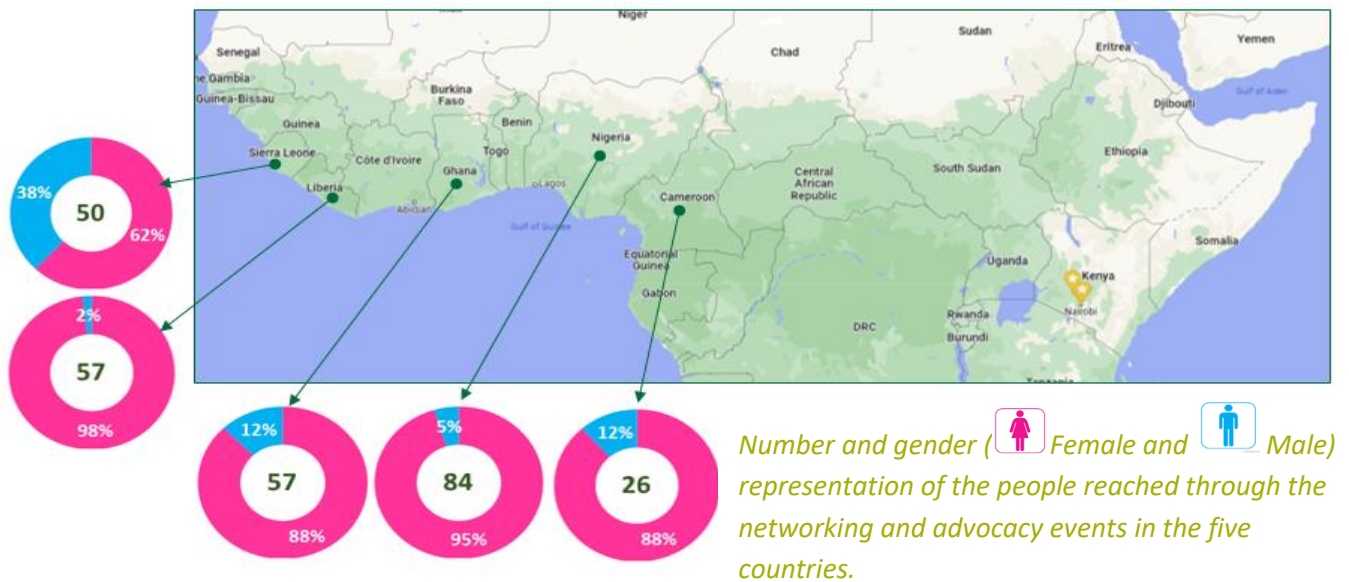
**4 women joined WOCAN as a result of this project. Of these, 3 were heads of women organisations** (World Economy Skills and Agro Development; Rights and Advocacy Initiatives Network; and Women in Nature Conservation Organization), and one, a lecturer at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.

## Connecting the women leaders at local and regional conservation levels

### Small grant events

The eight events were designed and hosted by the 10 women organisations, focusing on networking and advocacy actions, the women in each country identified as a priority. WESAD and DAREM of Cameroon, and MUWODA and FDWN of Sierra Leone held joint events. Organisers used the events to recruit members to national networks and to WAWiCoN, the regional network.

The over 274 people (88% being women) reached were representatives of conservation organisations, community assemblies and associations, community forestry management bodies, local authorities and government officials, media and farmers working in the hotspot.



### New collaboration catalysed

The coming together of the women leaders in different fora, proved valuable in catalysing new partnerships, and in scaling best practices. For example:

- ❑ DAREM and WESAD, are now working together to deliver local conservation actions for communities in Cameroon.
- ❑ FCI are discussing a new partnerships with two organisations met at the final assessment workshop for conservation actions in Liberia.
- ❑ AGE foundation is scaling “conservation evangelism” from Ghana, and to Nigeria to create conservation awareness.

## Women leaders: going regional

### Delegates workshops

#### Cameroon, Feb 2022

2 women leaders, &  
1 women mentor  
15 conservation organisations

#### Ghana, Mar 2022

8 women leaders, &  
3 women mentors  
11 conservation organisations

### Final workshop

#### Ghana, Jun 2022

5 women leaders, &  
40+ conservation organisations

### Regional experience sharing workshops

The 15 women leaders (4 being women mentors) who attended one of the 3 regional workshops in Cameroon and Ghana, including a final hotspot assessment workshop gained exposure to hotspot-wide conservation issues. The women, as reported by Lawrentia Tah Ofre (Nigeria), were grateful for the opportunity provided through the workshops “to share and exchange knowledge, and experiences in conservation”.

The workshops were a valuable opportunity for the women to engage, and make contacts with like-minded conservation players working across the hotspot.

The women used the regional workshops to launch the regional “West Africa Women in Conservation Network”, as well as national chapters of the same.



*Members of the Cameroon Women in Conservation Network, at the launch during the regional workshop in Douala*



# Masterclasses for women

The women leaders in the five hotspot countries joined the last of four masterclasses we organised for the hotspot.

Three of the masterclasses were on **communicating conservation impact**. These happened in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Ghana, each involving mixed-gender classes of staff of mentee organisations including the women leaders from the host countries. The Ghana masterclass, involved women leaders from Liberia and Sierra Leone

The final masterclass was on **women in conservation**; designed exclusively for the women leaders. This virtual course happened on the TBA Moodle learning platform. However, we integrated zoom teaching sessions, and hosted face-to-face learning hubs in each of the five target countries to maximise knowledge transfer.

We designed the masterclasses to be interactive, and practical building on Tropical Biology Association's experience of how effective learning happens.



*Participants of the communicating conservation impacts masterclass in Calabar Nigeria*

## The learning modules

### Face-to-face trainings

Nigeria: 18-22 Jan 2022  
26 individuals including  
2 women leaders from 2  
women led CSOs

Cameroon: 1-5 Feb 2022  
31 individuals including  
2 women leaders from 2  
women led CSOs

Ghana: 9-12 Mar 2022  
28 individuals including  
6 women leaders from 6  
women led CSOs

### Virtual Masterclass

TBA Moodle platform:  
30 May - 28 Jun 2022

31 Individuals from  
10 women-led CSOs and 5  
women mentors  
5 two-day learning hubs

## Communicating conservation impacts masterclass

The 10 women leaders attended one of the three face-to-face mixed gender masterclasses on communicating conservation impacts. The training's key learning topics were on:

- ❑ **Principles of Communication.** Focus was on the importance of strategically thinking about **audience, messaging, and tools** for effective communication. Participants tested their new skills by developing impactful messages, and a simple communication strategy for their organisation.
- ❑ **Sharing conservation impacts.** Using real-life examples, to show how to describe conservation impacts. Emphasis was on integrating evidence, and on using visual communication and social media to maximise impact.
- ❑ **Communication for advocacy.** This showed how skills in communication can be applied in influencing decisions, practice and policy.

## Empowering women in conservation in Africa (EWiCA) masterclass

This women-only masterclass trained 31 participants from west Africa, (30 women and 1 male representing MUWODA- a women-led organisation in Sierra Leone). This include staff of the 10 women-led organisations, the 5 women mentors, and 3 women from other mentee organisations in the larger capacity building project. The masterclass covered the following key topics:

- ❑ **Strategic fundraising.** Being strategic in fund-raising, requires both skills and practice, so does writing winning proposals. The women leaders need these skills to help their organization achieve sustainability.
- ❑ **Gender issues in conservation.** The module taught about, and highlighted the women's role in promoting gender equality and equity (plus women empowerment), as priority in achieving sustainable development goals. Related, was gender policy's role in integrating gender in conservation.
- ❑ **Leadership in conservation.** Helped the women understand leadership, and the steps they need to take to becoming effective leaders. This is key in increasing women's effective participation in conservation and management decisions.

## Impacts of the Masterclasses

*“Developing a strategic fundraising plan for my organization was very important as we strive to become sustainable”, Ngwa Angeline Asoh, Cameroon*

### 10

Number of organisational strategic documents developed, i.e., each of,

- Gender policy
- Fundraising plan
- communication strategy

### 30

Number of women that benefitted from the masterclasses. This includes the 10 women leaders.

### 60%

Proportion of trainee organizations that created new or activated dormant social media accounts (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) on the communication masterclass.

### 60%

Percentage of participating organizations that said they sensitized their staff on gender issues after the women in conservation masterclass.

### 100%

Percentage of trainees (n=22) who

- submitted **personal leadership growth plan**
- participated in zoom sessions and shared their gender related challenges and how to overcome them.

### 100%

Percentage of women (n=22; excluding mentors) who said their confidence to perform their duties increased, and that the skills gained were beneficial to their organizations.

## Participants' feedback

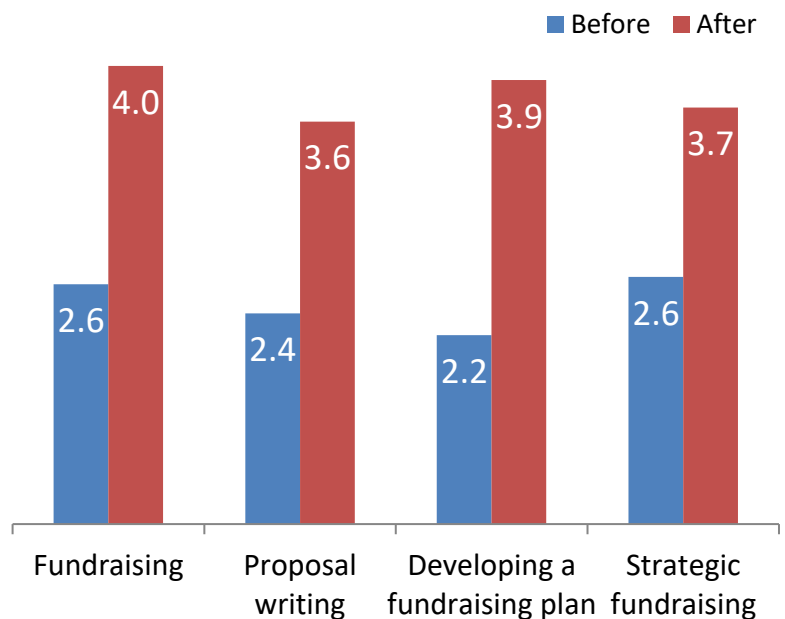
*"A key impact that we got from this capacity building program is visibility of our organization MUWODA"*

Jenneba Nyalley, Sierra Leone

## Success of the masterclass: - the competence levels before and after

All the women said that the masterclass increased their level of competence in the four training topics of **women in conservation masterclass** as shown in the figure below (based on a scale of one (lowest competence) to five (highest competence)).

### Participants' level of competence before and after the course



The shift from low to high competence is evident, comparing before and after scores for each competence stream. They shifted from below average to above average. By the end of the masterclass, majority of the participants competence was distributed from level 3, level 4 and level 5



*The masterclass gave us new skills on presentation and public speaking"*

Doreen Asumang-Yeboah, Ghana



## Looking ahead

*“The duration of the project was short, we wanted more time with our mentors”*

Doreen Asumang-Yeboah, Ghana

*“Developing a strategic fundraising plan for my organization was very important as we strive to become sustainable”*

Ngwa Angeline Asoh,

### *What more can be done?*

The women in conservation in west Africa are very promising. We achieved desirable impact in only six months. With support, the emerging network can make significant contribution in conservation of biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods. Among the support they need;

- ❑ Women CSOs need longer mentoring programs to allow mentors walk with the mentee CSOs through their leadership growth plans
- ❑ The established networks in the countries and in the region have planned virtual activities. They need support e.g. access to zoom, sourcing guests, publishing their outputs, and funds to implement tangible projects for conservation.
- ❑ Face to face networking activities are impactful and the women would like to hold them regularly. This includes the in-country networking events and hubs.
- ❑ Localizing SDG 5 on women empowerment was very informative to the women mentees. They would like to increase the voice of GFWA women in the statistics as they grow locally for global impacts.



*Some of women leaders and their women mentors at a delegates’ workshop organised by the project in Ghana in March 2022*

## Beneficiary CSOs

*“We benefited a lot, I learnt about online gender equality campaign and I am now running one for Sierra Leone in collaboration with Plan International.”*

Fatmata B Turay, Sierra Leone

The following CSOs benefitted from the project and participated in all the project’s activities i.e. mentoring, networking, experience sharing and masterclasses.

Country	Organization
<b>Cameroon</b>	Daraja Reube Mbororo Development Association
	World Economy Skills and Agro Development
<b>Ghana</b>	Daasgift Quality Foundation
	Rights and Advocacy Initiatives Network
<b>Nigeria</b>	Agriculture Gender and Environment foundation
	Women in Nature Conservation Organization
<b>Liberia</b>	Foundation for Community Initiatives
	Rural Integrated Centre for Community Empowerment
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	Falaba District Women's Network
	Muloma Women's Development Association

## Beneficiaries of empowering women in conservation in Africa masterclass

In addition to the 10 mentee CSOs, this masterclass brought in additional women as listed in the table below.

Name of Organization/ Country	Cameroon	Ghana	Liberia	Nigeria	Sierra Leone	Total
Agriculture Gender and Environment foundation				3		3
Ajemalebu self help	1					1
Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch	1					1
Daasgift Quality Foundation		4				4
Daraja Reube Mbororo Development Association	3					3
Falaba District Women's Network					2	2
Foundation for Community Initiatives			1			1
Green Globe Consultancy			1			1
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology		1				1
Muloma Women's Development Association*					2	2
Resource Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development	1					1
Rights and Advocacy Initiatives Network		2				2
Rural integrated centre for community Empowerment			1			1
Sustainable Actions for Nature				1		1
Twahnto Mixed Farming Common Initiative Group	1					1
United Nations secretariat Liberia					1	1
Women in Nature Conservation Organization				2		2
World Economy Skills and Agro Development	3					3
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>31</b>

\*one male representative of the women led organisation

## Acknowledgements

*“I learnt useful tips for developing messages and choosing tools for different audience e.g. a brief captivating message packaged for the different audience. Thank you”*

Helvecia Takwe, Cameroon

We thank the 5 mentors, and their organisations, for the invaluable mentoring and support they offered to the women - led CSOs through the project.

Women Mentors	Institution of affiliation
Fombu Christel Ya Nicole	Resource Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development, Cameroon
Adjei Betty	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana
Randa Norah Moore	Green Globe Consultancy, Liberia
Leton Benita	Sustainable Actions for Nature, Nigeria
Wongo Ellen Sia	United Nations Liberia Secretariat, Sierra Leone

The mentoring program was a partnership lead by the **Tropical Biology Association**, and involving:



And with support from the CEPF Regional Implementing Team for the hotspot – Birdlife Ghana.

## Funding

The **Women Empowerment Program** - activity of the TBA-grant “Enhancing Biodiversity Conservation Capacity of Civil Society Organizations” - was funded by the:



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. Their shared interest and objective is the conservation of biodiversity hotspots – Earth’s most biologically rich yet threatened areas. CEPF’s fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

For more information, visit [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net)

## About TBA

The Tropical Biology Association helps safeguard natural resources in Africa and other tropical regions by delivering innovative training and support to the people responsible for conserving nature.

We run practical field, and tailor-made courses in Africa and south-east Asia. By sharing expert knowledge across different cultures, we help ensure that the conservation community has the essential skills and capacity to manage resources sustainably.

To make sure our training has maximum impact, we provide on-going support for our trainees. This helps cement relations and build confidence as well as ensures our trainees apply skills learned effectively, afterwards.

Our growing network of over 2600 alumni spans over 60 countries and is creating a potent international force for conserving precious habitats and threatened species.

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