



# Observatory for Biodiversity and Protected Areas in West Africa

Terms of Reference for the Development of a capacity building strategy and Action plan under CEBio-Eco/AO

December 2024



## 1. Context and Justification

West Africa hosts significant biodiversity, with diverse ecosystems such as tropical forests, savannas, wetlands, and marine and coastal ecosystems. These ecosystems provide essential ecosystem services on which millions of people depend for their survival, while playing a key role in resilience to the impacts of climate change. However, biodiversity in West Africa is currently severely threatened by deforestation, overfishing, rapid urbanization, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, and the effects of climate change, which have accelerated the rapid degradation of habitats and populations of several endangered species. These pressures, combined with poorly coordinated ecosystem management and limited institutional capacities, severely compromise the sustainability of the region's ecosystem services.

The sustainable management of ecosystem resources requires conservation and biodiversity enhancement policies based on knowledge, consultation, and coordination at the regional level. The development of coherent and appropriate national and sub-regional policies depends on the availability of reliable, comprehensive, and accurate information to facilitate decision-making and contribute to transparency and accountability.

However, the production and use of scientific information on African ecosystems still suffer from the following limitations:

- (I) Research is still primarily conducted in the Global North, with no significant capacity-building for research centers in the Global South.
- (ii) The few existing African centers of excellence are fragile and require material and human investments to produce better information.
- (iii) The knowledge produced is not sufficiently shared within the scientific community, practitioners, and policymakers.

Thus, the main challenges for preserving biodiversity and forest ecosystems are developing skills, collecting, networking, and accessing data to facilitate decision-making, as well as raising awareness and disseminating scientific information to the public and policymakers.

This is the ambition of the West Africa Biodiversity and Protected Areas Observatory (OBAPAO) initiative, established under the BIOPAMA/IUCN Program in collaboration with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and UNEP-WCMC. The institutional host of OBAPAO is the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), while its technical host is the “Centre de Suivi Ecologique (CSE)”, the lead organization of the hosting consortium. Other consortium members include the Network of Marine Protected Areas in West Africa (RAMPAO), the University of Ghana's Regional Marine Center (RMC), and the Regional AGRHYMET Center (CRA).

To sustain OBAPAO's achievements, the European Union supports the establishment of the Center of Excellence for Biodiversity and Ecosystems in West Africa (CEBio-Eco/WA), implemented by the consortium from 2024 to 2027. The overall objective of the project is to ensure that forests, biodiversity, and marine ecosystems in West Africa are sustainably managed

and continue to provide ecosystem services and contribute to human well-being by delivering improved, regular, and updated information for informed decision-making. The project covers the entire West African region (ECOWAS member states and Mauritania).

The main implementation partners include the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) (coordinator for the three biodiversity centers of excellence in Sub-Saharan Africa), the implementation consortium for West Africa, and the African Network of Coaches for Effective Management of Protected Areas (RACEGAP), which supports the assessment of protected area management effectiveness.

Following the 2023 call for applications from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to select institutions to host sub-regional centers for scientific and technical cooperation under COP15/8, the OBAPAO consortium, through the CSE, was chosen to host the West African center. The mandate is to support the 15 West African countries in scientific and technical cooperation for implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF-KM). The general objective of the mechanism is to promote and facilitate, upon request, technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer between Parties and to enable them and relevant organizations to effectively use science, technology, and innovation to support the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The CEBio-Eco/WA project is structured around several key areas to strengthen the capacities of local, national, and regional actors and improve long-term ecosystem management. It aligns with international commitments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. It ensures coherence and harmonization of management tools, best practices, legal/institutional frameworks, and national and regional policies.

To achieve the expected outcomes, the project is structured into several components, with Component 3 implemented by the Secretariat of the West African Marine Protected Areas Network (RAMPAO). This component focuses specifically on capacity-building, aiming to equip regional stakeholders with the tools and knowledge needed for informed decision-making, better coordination of efforts, and the promotion of sustainable biodiversity and natural resource management.

Capacity-building activities will cover a broad range of areas, including:

- Implementation of international biodiversity conventions, including the CBD, and regional agreements.
- Use of tools to assess the effectiveness of protected area management and governance.
- Collection, processing, and valorization of data and information, as well as the use of OBAPAO platforms.
- Production of decision-making support information.
- Strengthening institutional and technical capacities.
- Combating environmental crime.

This broad spectrum of activities aims to target key stakeholders across various biodiversity sectors, including biodiversity conservation practitioners, researchers, local communities, protected area managers, forestry and fisheries professionals, and policymakers. The goal is to provide them with the tools and skills needed to ensure sustainable and resilient ecosystem management in the region.

The resulting strategic document will serve as an operational roadmap for the next five years (2025–2029).

## **2. Aim of the study**

The main objective of this study is to develop a capacity-building strategy and an action plan for the next five years, considering the specific needs of stakeholders involved in biodiversity conservation and the management of natural ecosystems in West Africa. Specifically, this study aims to:

- Assess capacity-building needs of key stakeholders (protected area managers, forestry professionals, researchers, policymakers, local communities) for the sustainable management of natural resources, biodiversity conservation, and resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- Propose a strategy to address the identified gaps, integrating training initiatives, strategic and operational capacity-building, institutional strengthening, and the establishment of governance and coordination mechanisms among regional actors, in line with international conventions (CBD, Ramsar, CITES, SDGs) and regional institutional agreements.
- Develop a detailed action plan with concrete interventions, outlining priorities, key steps, and necessary resources to strengthen the human, institutional, and technical capacities of stakeholders in biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management in West Africa.
- Ensure participatory validation of the strategy with stakeholders to guarantee that the proposed recommendations are tailored to local and regional needs and contribute effectively to sustainable and inclusive ecosystem management.

## **3. Expected results**

The following outcomes are expected from this study:

- A comprehensive diagnostic of capacity-building needs, detailing specific gaps in the technical and strategic capacities of institutions involved in managing protected areas, biodiversity, forests, and natural ecosystems in West Africa. This diagnostic will clearly highlight the specific needs of protected area managers, policymakers, researchers, and local communities.
- A capacity-building strategy document, structured around the identified needs and proposing precise interventions such as training programs, improved governance mechanisms, and tailored management tools. This strategy will consider regional and international commitments, including key international conventions (CBD, Ramsar,

CITES) and frameworks such as the SDGs and the Abidjan Convention, to ensure alignment with global conservation and sustainable development objectives.

- A detailed and operational action plan, including a timeline for implementing interventions, identification of necessary human, technical, and financial resources, as well as clear monitoring and evaluation indicators to measure the impact and sustainability of the proposed actions.
- A participatory validation process, involving local, regional, and international stakeholders through consultations and workshops. This process will ensure the buy-in and ownership of the results by stakeholders, thereby facilitating the effective implementation of the recommendations and the sustainability of field interventions.

#### **4. Technical specifications**

The mission will involve developing a capacity-building strategy and an operational action plan as part of the CEBio-Eco/WA project. The objective is to provide a detailed five-year roadmap to enhance the skills and resources of key stakeholders involved in ecosystem and biodiversity management in West Africa. This mission will build on existing regional mechanisms and frameworks to facilitate the mobilization of data from relevant stakeholders engaged in biodiversity conservation, ecosystem management, protected areas, and forests. The methodology will include a clear and robust framework for conducting an in-depth assessment of capacity-building needs for protected area managers, policymakers, researchers, and local communities, aligned with international commitments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The consultant will be responsible for conducting a needs analysis through stakeholder consultations and a review of existing strategies and reports. This gap assessment will map the required skills and identify barriers to effective biodiversity management. Particular attention will be given to identifying the specific needs of each stakeholder group and formulating tailored solutions to address these gaps.

Based on the findings of the analysis, the consultant will develop a capacity-building strategy aligned with international and regional priorities while proposing concrete actions. The strategy should include targeted interventions to enhance technical skills, strengthen inter-institutional coordination, and promote the use of modern tools for biodiversity assessment.

The consultant will also prepare a detailed action plan, complete with an implementation timeline and resource estimation for each activity. This plan should outline priority interventions, key partners, short- and medium-term capacity-building objectives, and monitoring and evaluation indicators to track progress.

Finally, the consultant will facilitate a participatory validation process by organizing regional workshops involving stakeholders to review and adjust the strategy and action plan. This process will ensure local and regional ownership of the recommendations and guarantee that the real needs of stakeholders are addressed in the final strategy.

The primary deliverable will be a validated strategy document accompanied by an operational action plan, ready for implementation to support the sustainable management of ecosystems in West Africa.

## **5. Consultation steps**

The consultation process for developing the capacity-building strategy and action plan within the framework of the CEBio-Eco/WA project and the CBD Scientific and Technical Cooperation Center (CST-CBD) will proceed in a progressive and coordinated manner:

- **Step 1: Comprehensive Literature Review:** the first step involves conducting an in-depth review of existing reports, studies, and policies related to ecosystem management and capacity building in West Africa. This preliminary analysis will lay the methodological groundwork and guide the development of necessary tools (e.g., questionnaires, interview guides) for stakeholder consultations.
- **Step 2: Stakeholder Consultations:** the second step involves organizing consultations with key stakeholders, including protected area managers, policymakers, researchers, and local communities. These consultations, conducted through individual interviews, focus groups, and participatory workshops, will gather direct information on gaps in skills, tools, and resources. At this stage, it is crucial to identify the specific short- and long-term needs of the stakeholders.
- **Step 3: Analysis and Synthesis of Findings:** in the third step, the results of the consultations will be analyzed to synthesize the identified needs and formulate concrete recommendations. A diagnostic report will be prepared, highlighting the priorities for skill enhancement and tool deployment.
- **Step 4: Development and Validation of the Strategy and Action Plan:** the final step involves developing the capacity-building strategy and a detailed action plan. This plan will include an implementation timeline, required resources, and monitoring indicators. The draft strategy and action plan will then be validated during a workshop with stakeholders to ensure that the recommendations are aligned with local and regional realities.

This phased and inclusive approach ensures that the strategy and action plan are robust, actionable, and responsive to the actual needs of the target stakeholders in West Africa.

## **6. Deliverables**

The deliverables expected from the mission to develop the capacity-building strategy and action plan under the CEBio-Eco/WA project and the CST-CBD are as follows:

- **Diagnostic Report on Capacity-Building Needs:** This report will detail the findings from the needs analysis conducted with stakeholders. It will identify gaps in skills, tools, and resources among protected area managers, policymakers, researchers, and local communities.
- **Capacity-Building Strategy:** a document outlining the overarching strategy to address the identified capacity-building gaps. The strategy will align with regional and

international commitments (CBD, SDGs) and propose concrete actions to develop the technical and institutional capacities of stakeholders.

- **Detailed Action Plan:** practical and operational action plan, including intervention priorities, an implementation timeline, required resources, and monitoring indicators to evaluate the impact of the proposed actions. This plan will detail the steps necessary to strengthen the capacities of stakeholders over the next five years.
- **Reports from Stakeholder Consultations:** documentation of the consultations conducted with key stakeholders (interviews, workshops, focus groups), including the findings and recommendations gathered from protected area managers, policymakers, researchers, and local communities.
- **Final Validation Report:** this document will present feedback from stakeholders following the validation workshop for the strategy and action plan, as well as the adjustments made to the final document. It will also include the report from the validation workshop.

These deliverables will form a comprehensive and actionable framework to support sustainable ecosystem and biodiversity management in West Africa.

## **7. Main tasks**

The main tasks of the consultation for developing the capacity-building strategy and action plan under the CEBio-Eco/WA project and the CST-CBD include the following key steps:

- **Comprehensive Literature Review:** a thorough analysis of existing reports, studies, and policies on ecosystem and biodiversity management in West Africa will be conducted. This review will help understand current initiatives and collect secondary data to establish a baseline reference.
- **Development of Consultation Tools:** consultation tools, such as questionnaires and interview guides, will be designed to facilitate effective engagement with stakeholders. These consultations will include individual interviews and participatory workshops with protected area managers, policymakers, researchers, and representatives of local communities. The results of these consultations will then be analyzed to identify capacity-building needs, gaps, and priorities. A diagnostic report will be prepared to summarize these findings.
- **Development of the Capacity-Building Strategy and Action Plan:** a capacity-building strategy will be formulated, aligned with regional priorities and international commitments such as the CBD and the SDGs. This strategy will propose specific actions to address the identified gaps. Additionally, a detailed action plan will be developed, including clear recommendations, an implementation timeline, required resources, and monitoring indicators to measure the impact of the proposed actions.
- **Validation Workshop:** a validation workshop will be organized to discuss and refine the strategy and action plan with stakeholders. Stakeholder feedback will be incorporated to ensure that the strategy and plan address local and regional realities effectively.

**Production of the Final Document:** the final document, including the capacity-building strategy and the operational action plan, will be produced and delivered, ready for implementation.

## **8. Consultant / or firm profile**

The selected consultancy firm or consultant for this mission must meet the following criteria to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the capacity-building strategy and action plan development under the CEBio-Eco/WA project and the CST-CBD:

- Expertise in Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management: at least 10 years of intensive experience in managing natural resources, forestry, biodiversity, and protected areas, preferably in West Africa. A deep understanding of the various ecoregions in West Africa is essential.
- Experience in Capacity-Building: proven experience in designing and implementing capacity-building strategies, including training local actors, developing institutional capacities, and transferring knowledge within environmental projects.
- Knowledge of International and Regional Biodiversity Frameworks: strong familiarity with international commitments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.
- Experience in Facilitating Multi-Stakeholder Consultations: demonstrated skills in managing participatory processes and facilitating consultations with diverse stakeholders (protected area managers, policymakers, researchers, and local communities).
- Skills in Analysis and Strategy Development: ability to collect and analyze complex data from various sources (documents, consultations, interviews) and synthesize it to develop a coherent strategy and realistic action plan.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Competence: capability to define performance indicators and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of the implemented capacity-building actions.
- Strong Written and Oral Communication Skills: the consultant must produce high-quality reports and lead validation workshops effectively. Proficiency in both French and English is mandatory.
- Ability to Work in a Multicultural Context: experience working with diverse teams and partners in multicultural settings, particularly in Africa.

## **9. Financial Offer and Payment Conditions**

The financial offer for the mission to develop the capacity-building strategy and action plan under the CEBio-Eco/WA project is structured as follows:

- Consultant Fees: the fees for the lead consultant cover all activities, including preparation, consultations, needs analysis, drafting the strategy, and final validation with stakeholders. The daily rate and the number of working days will be specified based on the scope of the mission.
- Logistical Costs: this includes travel expenses for consultations and regional workshops, accommodation, per diems if required, and venue rentals for validation workshops. The corresponding amounts will be estimated based on the travel locations and the duration of events.



- **Deliverable Production Costs:** costs for drafting, designing, and submitting final reports, including the strategy and action plan.
- **Management and Miscellaneous Costs:** this covers communication, coordination, and administrative aspects of the mission.

The total amount of the financial offer will combine these different elements and will be adjusted according to the specific needs of the project. About payment terms, the following is proposed:

- 30% of the total amount upon signing the contract.
- 40% upon submission of the diagnostic report on capacity-building needs.
- 30% upon delivery and validation of final deliverables, including the strategy and action plan in French and English.

## **10. Mission Duration**

The mission duration is estimated at 45 working days (WD) from the contract signature date. This period includes the needs assessment phase, stakeholder consultations, document review, strategy and action plan development, and validation workshop organization. The detailed schedule will be adjusted based on the project's specific requirements and stakeholder feedback.

## **11. Submission of Applications**

To apply for the mission to develop the capacity-building strategy and action plan under the CEBio-Eco/WA project, you must prepare two main documents:

- **Technical proposal.** The technical offer should include a clear presentation of your understanding of the project, the methodology you intend to adopt, a detailed work plan with milestones, a schedule of deliverables, and the qualifications of your team members or yourself as lead consultant.
- **Financial offer.** The financial offer should detail fees (daily rate and expected number of days), logistical costs (such as travel and accommodation) and the cost of producing deliverables, while including payment terms.
- **References:** You will also need to provide additional documents such as consultants' CVs and examples of similar projects.

Once these documents are ready, you must submit them:

- PDF format
- Make sure your documents are well structured, by submitting the technical and financial offers in separate files.
- Documents should be sent electronically to: [secretariat@rampao.org](mailto:secretariat@rampao.org)
- Use a clear e-mail subject, such as “Application - Mission CEBio-Eco/AO - Capacity Building Strategy + Action Plan”, to facilitate identification of your file.
- Respect the submission deadline of December 31, 2024, at 12:00 GMT.