



# Small grants for conservation

Technical  
Brief

Inventory of small grants to bio-diversity projects in Central and West Africa with analysis of the funding model

**In Central and West Africa there are several programmes which each give many large and small grants to individual projects for promoting biodiversity.**

**Are these programmes effective and efficient?**

**Do they really have a positive impact on biodiversity?**

**Are large grant programmes more or less effective than small ones?**

**Can they be combined?**

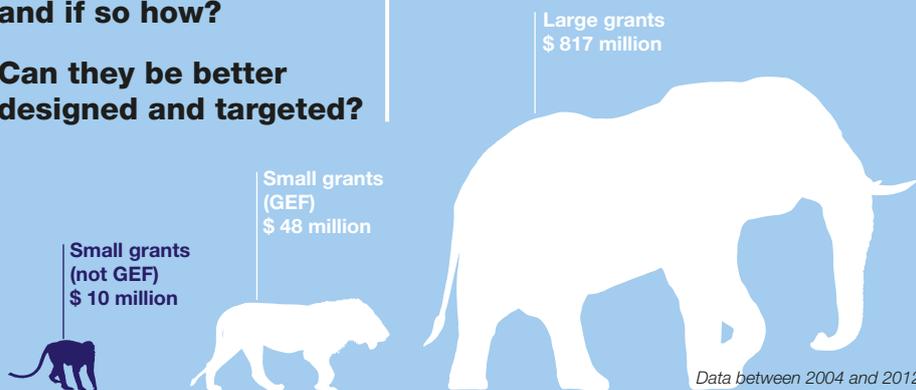
**Can they be scaled up, and if so how?**

**Can they be better designed and targeted?**

In late 2014, **IUCN Programme Aires Protégées - UICN-PACO** commissioned a study to look more closely at small grant programmes; this brief summarises the results and provides indications on a similar study on large grants.

## Scale of small grants programmes

The study identified about 15 small-grants programmes in WCA. Small grants totalled around 80 million USD, which is approx. 5% of the total funds dedicated to biodiversity conservation and 1% of total environmental funding. The programme providing by far the largest number and amount of small grants is UNDP's GEF, providing nearly five times the value of all the other small grants programmes combined.



## What else does the study provide?

- ◆ A list of programmes providing funding for small grants in the region, which should be useful for NGOs or others seeking grants.
- ◆ A web application displaying the graphic results of the study  
<https://stevepowell.shinyapps.io/IUCN/>
- ◆ 150 graphics showing the quantitative data, the correlation models and interview results
- ◆ Database of projects
- ◆ Results from a survey of small grant recipients
- ◆ Country profiles for each country showing small and large funding as well as environmental scores since 2004

## How were the small-grant programmes identified?

The grants included in the study are those valued at under 50,000 USD since the 1st of January, 2004, made available to any recipient, including civil society organizations, private individuals, academic institutions and the public sector, i.e. national / local government in Central and West Africa. Programmes were included if they provided 5 or more such grants.

Data was gathered from public databases, donor databases, donor reports and global surveys and also compared with existing global databases. 18 interviews with partners and site inspections were conducted along with a short web survey answered by 30 organisations.

Etude PAPACO n° 16 and 22

## The most important small grants programmes in Central and West Africa totalled over \$ 75 Million 2004-2014

Program	Number of projects in Central and West Africa	Total USD	Number of countries included
CARPE Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment	129	2,460,000	11
CEPF Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund	2	27,000	2
CFH The Conservation, Food & Health Foundation	22	468,000	8
CLP Conservation Leadership Programme	18	280,000	8
Darwin Initiative	13	105,000	9
Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial-FFEM : Petits Projets PPI	130	5,595,000	21
Fondation Ensemble	18	356,000	9
GEF SGP : UNDP Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Programme	2,218	65,270,000	22
GEF - other small grants not part of SGP	32	930,000	18
Fondation MAVA pour la nature	9	544,000	2
The Mohamed Bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund	71	766,000	20
Rufford Foundation	219	1,765,000	18
SOS : Save Our Species Fund	18	1,020,000	12
The Veolia Foundation	8	277,000	4
Whitley Award	8	392,000	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,915</b>	<b>80,255,000</b>	

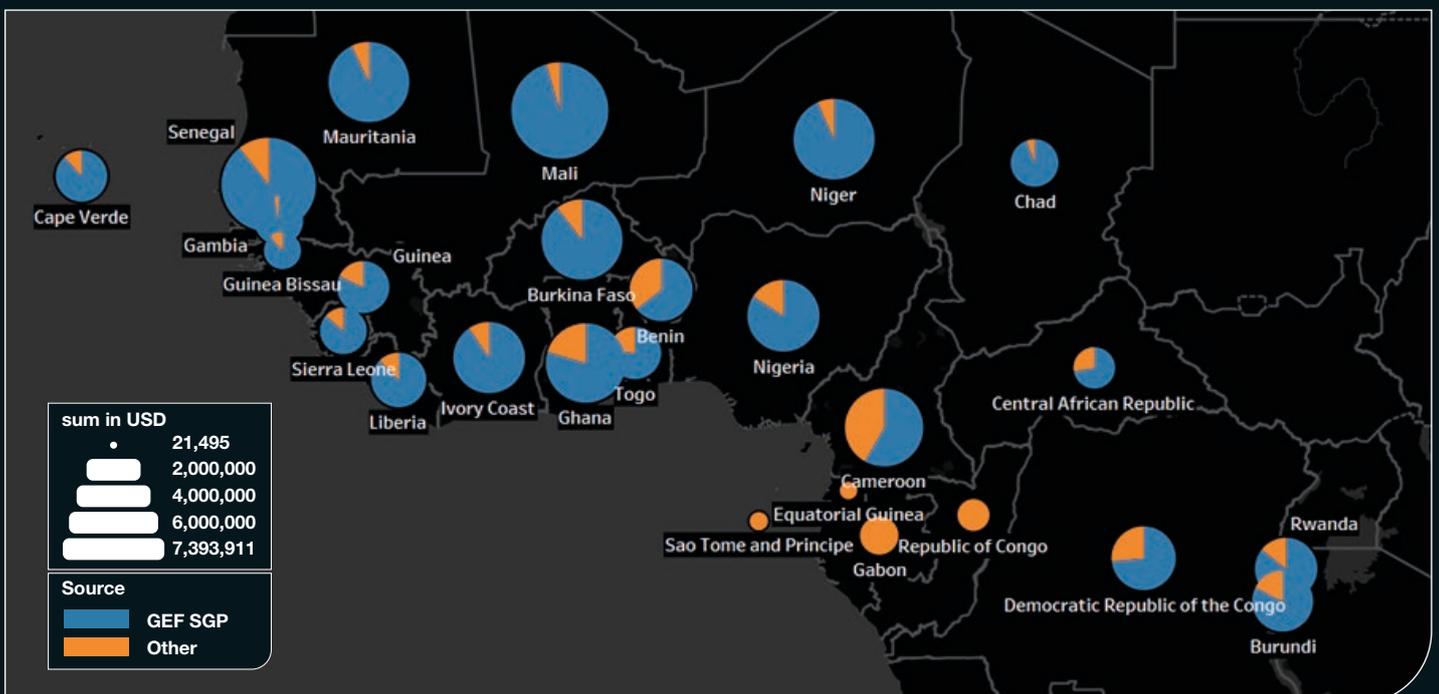
**Small grants programmes** are remarkably diverse and complementary in terms of grant sizes and implementation models. A couple of countries like Ghana, Senegal, Cameroon and Togo have been covered well by different small grants programmes. Even some

small countries like Cape Verde have received many small grants. Other countries (in some years) have only had projects from one programme, in most cases GEF. The proportion of GEF SGPs is very high across the Sahel.

Small grants tend to go to countries with better environmental scores, which tend to be those judged with better government transparency. Annual small grant funding has increased to nearly 500 projects in 2012, though this increase was mainly due to GEF.

## Countries received differing numbers and amounts of small grants 2004-2014

Larger circles mean higher total grant amount



## Impact - Evidence lacking

The database produced for this study includes information on outputs and impact where available for over SGP 2800 projects matched with data on project size, type, region, and donor. The database also includes some data on intermediate results (“external outputs”) which can be plausibly linked to conservation outcomes and that are relatively easy to directly attribute to a project. Such indicators were only collected by two programmes (GEF and CEPF).

Examples for external outputs are numbers of CSOs achieving an external certification in project management, or the number of hectares protected to an internationally acknowledged standard. Some are already highlighted in the 2013 CEPF M&E guidelines.

Evidence for impact on ultimate bio-diversity indicators is very thin. The study shows that most programmes did not have any way to demonstrate impact of the individual projects on ultimate indicators of biodiversity. At the level of individual projects, reporting mostly does not go beyond the level of listing some successes at the output level, e.g. number of hectares protected. Some monitoring and evaluation frameworks at the global and programme scale are available, however there is no accepted standard. There is a growing need for SGPs to be able to demonstrate and monitor their impacts and their effect on society and on conservation, and also to develop a culture of learning from both successful and failed projects. Showing impact would be a challenging research project beyond the means and responsibility of most programmes, and would at least require better cooperation between projects and programmes, using a shared catalogue of indicators.

IUCN is ideally placed to help identify and encourage the use of these kinds of shared “external output” indicators and the project database could provide a starting-off point. This could include support to a mechanism for sharing project models, experiences with them, and ways to monitor their progress. This would encourage real innovation rather than constantly “re-inventing the wheel”. For example, there are 105 projects in the database related to mangroves. In many cases a project which is presented as a pilot or experiment in one place by one programme is very similar to another older project in another place supported by a different programme or even the same programme. IUCN could also support projects to report results in comparison with original targets, not just “the successes”.

## How to improve small-grants programmes

- Small-grant funding could try harder to fill in the gaps in countries and during years in which full-scale funding is weaker.
- Larger programmes can benefit from including one or more smaller projects, or alternatively, SGP could seek synergies with large programs.
- Projects explicitly appealing to youth are rare, and projects generally focus on traditional lifestyles rather than on shaping new ones. Thus, approaching conservation from the point of view of young people, or through innovative projects could make small projects more relevant and effective.
- Programmes should keep their partner CSOs in focus and help them to mature and develop, engage in long-term partnerships or alliances with peers and technical partners. Programmes should explore longer-term relationships (over 18 months) with implementing partners with contracts renewable on the basis of good performance.
- Funders should ease the administrative burden, through for instance two-stage application procedures.
- Programmes could take more risks with their small grants to address emerging threats, include the private sector, address underlying causes of environmental degradation, take political stances and engage in advocacy.

## Efficiency & Effectiveness

### The evidence

There is substantial evidence that Small Grants Programmes in Central and West Africa are an efficient and effective use of donor funds. They represent a very small proportion of overall funds for biodiversity but even very small grants around 5000 USD can be effective. However, the financial efficiency for small grants programmes was probably not better than that for large grants programs.

Our inquiries and interviews suggested that small grants programmes can be effective when they:

- ◆ Function as incubators for the development of new ideas.
- ◆ Identify and support a few high-performing “star” individuals, CSOs and CSO networks who are good at engaging local people and communities in actions that are meaningful to them (and which are therefore more likely to be sustainable) and have a disproportional influence on biodiversity protection locally, nationally and internationally.
- ◆ Facilitate peer support between projects and participating organisations
- ◆ Provide technical support with applications, administration and measuring & demonstrating impact
- ◆ Provide clear objectives and transparent values
- ◆ Work within specific niches such as science-focussed actions, emergencies, nurturing future leaders and innovation or investing in best practices.

# Summary of the PAPACO study n°16: Results and effects of large conservation projects on protected areas in Central and West Africa

**The objective of the study commissioned by the PAPACO program and IUCN was to evaluate the results achieved by large grants projects implemented in Central and West Africa in recent years and to measure their impact on the conservation of protected areas and their sustainability once project funding is completed.**

**Six major projects for West Africa and three for Central Africa were evaluated. Many positive factors of large projects were identified, especially their ability to:**

- ♥ Catalyse innovative models of working and engage a variety of stakeholders
- ♥ Strengthen the capacities of stakeholders involved
- ♥ Generate and share knowledge at institutional and individual levels
- ♥ Enhance the protection of conservation sites
- ♥ Provide sustained support, funding volume and appropriate spatial scales
- ♥ Provide a significant contribution to the conservation of protected areas

Some negative factors of large projects have been identified including constraints to design, relevance, consistency, project effectiveness and efficiency, as well as impact and sustainability.

**Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:**

- ♥ More attention should be given to the identification and design phase with an in-depth analysis of the territory, complementing the actual actions planned for conserving protected areas
- ♥ Pursue coordination and efforts to build synergies for conservation
- ♥ Pragmatism in planning for implementation
- ♥ Develop a tempo and rhythm suited to the sector and then try to maintain it
- ♥ Improve the sustainability of learning
- ♥ Improve communication to the public and political authorities on the importance of biodiversity
- ♥ Share responsibilities by clarifying the role of each stakeholder
- ♥ Improve the quality of governance

To conclude, compared to small and medium-sized projects, large projects in principle offer the advantage of a longer presence, although often many activities are abandoned between two phases of the project lifetime. The sustainability of achievements made by the activities is greatly limited by the cumbersome nature of the decision-making chains of command, the persistence of procedures that are ill-suited to conservation and communities, and a lack of political commitment.



**Small grants studies** - Inventory of small grants to bio-diversity projects in Central and West Africa with analysis of the funding model  
Authors S. Powell and L. Mesbah  
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<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/45861>

**Major Projects Study** - Results and effects of large conservation projects on protected areas in Central and West Africa  
IUCN/PAPACO : Nairobi, Kenya  
Author F. Lauginie 2015 (Africa Nature International)  
supervised by G. Mauvais (IUCN-PAPACO). [papaco.org](http://papaco.org)

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