



Celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity with Success Stories from the Field

Maintaining coastal biodiversity and natural resources as mainstays of Guinea Bissau's economy

Guinea Bissau houses a wealth of biodiversity that is of local, national, and global significance, particularly its vibrant coastal zone. The coastal zone is very rich in organic materials and plankton, and is a regionally important breeding and nursery zone for fish and crustaceans. Mangroves cover almost a third of its area, and provide a natural buffer system against extreme weather and sea level rise. The archipelago is the second most important wintering ground for Palearctic shorebirds in West Africa. The coastal zone shelters regionally important stocks of five turtle species; marine mammals such as the bottlenose and the Atlantic humpback dolphin, sharks, crocodiles, the largest population of manatee in West Africa, and a population of sea going hippopotami. One of the archipelago's islands, Ilha de Poilão, is the largest breeding ground for the green turtle in West and Central Africa, and the third largest in the Atlantic.

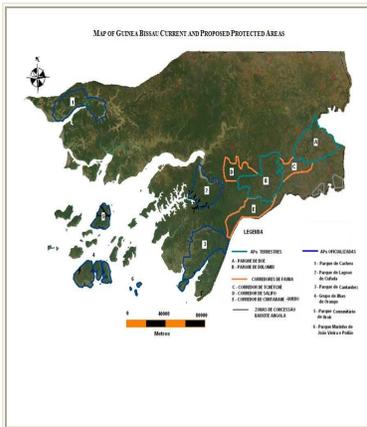
Approximately 80% of the population is concentrated in the coastal zone, where most economic activity occurs. Guinea Bissau's current and future economic development is highly dependent on its natural resources: the sale of cashew nuts and fisheries licenses are currently the country's two highest income earners and represent two-thirds of the GDP and 90% of the country's export earnings. Increasing population pressure on coastal and marine resources is a primary cause of biodiversity loss. Shifting agriculture, rice production, artisanal fishing and the extraction of fuelwood from forests and mangroves for the production of charcoal and the smoking of fish are the major threats to biodiversity.



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The government of Guinea Bissau recognized the importance of natural resources and biodiversity in the early 1990s and developed a vision to build a protected areas network. Various governmental and non-governmental agencies have been working towards the achievement of this goal. GEF, along with other partners such as International Union for Conservation of Nature, Fondation Internationale pour le Banc d'Arguin, World Wildlife Foundation, MAVA Foundation for Nature, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, has been pivotal in consolidating, sustaining and promoting these efforts.

The GEF, World Bank and European Commission initiated the Coastal and Biodiversity Management Project (CBMP) in March 2005. The CBMP promotes a two-pronged, balanced approach to park management. First, the project has consolidated management responsibility for protected areas under a single institutional umbrella, the Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP), which was legally established in 2004 with the specific mandate to oversee and promote the participatory management of the protected areas network.



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Second, the project supported a Fund for Local Environmental Initiatives (FIAL) which provides block grants for environmentally friendly development in communities in and around the parks. IBAP and FIAL, working together, have assisted communities to develop and implement these biodiversity-friendly initiatives.

Under the project, IBAP developed a long term strategy for protected areas and biodiversity conservation, consolidated its presence in the terrestrial Lagoas de Cufada National Park and the three national marine protected areas of Cacheu, Joao Vieira & Poilão, and Orango; and further expanded the protected area network to include Cantanhez National Park. In parallel, donor partners helped establish a community marine protected area at Urok. Participatory Park Management Councils have been established, and park

management plans and specific endangered species action plans for chimpanzees, marine turtles and mangroves have been prepared and are being implemented. A Community Reserved Fishing Zone has been established on the Buba River. As a result of these efforts management effectiveness has been improved in at least 3,500 square kilometers of terrestrial and marine protected areas. The government passed a protected area law in 2008 consolidating the protected area network under the leadership of IBAP.

In addition, more than 70,000 people who live in and around the 5 national parks benefit directly from CBMP investments. Approximately \$1 million in grants have been disbursed through FIAL, of which 78% have satisfactorily achieved their grant objectives. Community income-generating activities such as sustainable wetland rice production and fish processing have generated an internal rate of return of more than 20%. Jointly IBAP and FIAL efforts have improved relationships with local

communities and enhanced their commitment to conservation. For example, since 2006, the number of infractions in the community reserved fishing zones has decreased by 10% per year in comparison to the baseline.

Based on these promising results, the GEF is looking to upscale the approaches employed by the CBMP to terrestrial protected areas, and in particular the Dulombe-Boe forest complex. Moreover, in line with the national vision for protected areas, the GEF is supporting the establishment of the BioGuiné Foundation to provide sustainable financing for managing the country's parks and biodiversity. Income generation opportunities from a REDD program to protect carbon stores in coastal and marine national parks is also being explored.

Guinea Bissau has demonstrated that combining conservation and poverty alleviation can be an effective strategy in making protected area networks effective. This approach was made possible thanks to the cultivation of long term partnerships among the national government, donors, and technical partners and has provided a valuable lesson for the entire continent.

Project facts: Coastal and Biodiversity Management Project - GEF project grant \$4.8 million – co-financing: \$6.31 million - Duration: 2005-2010. For more information, please contact: Alfredo Simão da Silva, Director, Instituto da Biodiversidade e das Areas Protegidas (IBAP) – asdasilva@eguitel.com;

Editor's note: To celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity, every two weeks we will highlight a GEF project that is creatively addressing the challenges to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. These examples of good practice in conservation and sustainable use will demonstrate the contributions that biodiversity makes to local and national economies and that halting the loss of biodiversity is indeed possible.