



# PACO NEWS

MAY 2025

Welcome to the latest edition of PACO NEWS

Read about the latest news, initiatives and developments in conservation and sustainable management of natural resources in the region. At IUCN, we are committed to promoting innovative solutions to strengthen ecosystem resilience and support local communities.

Follow our projects, our partners' stories and the concrete results on the ground that illustrate our commitment to a more sustainable future.

**VOICES OF NATURE: SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA**

## West Africa: Protected Marine Areas join IUCN Green List to boost biodiversity

With the inclusion of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the IUCN Green List, West Africa is strengthening its commitment to protecting biodiversity. This programme recognises and promotes protected areas that meet best practice standards in terms of management and governance.

With the support of the IUCN, through its WACA ResIP 1 programme, and in collaboration with RAMP AO, six countries in the region (Senegal, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania and Gambia) have been targeted to contribute actively to the global framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The launch of this regional initiative took place in Bissau, under the impetus of several key players in the WACA programme and IUCN's national offices. Learn more: <https://www.wacaprogram.org/>



## Strengthening Mauritania's coastal resilience in the face of environmental challenges

On March 10, 2025, an important step was taken by Mauritania to protect its coastline, with the opening of works to seal three critical breaches in the dune barrier protecting Nouakchott. This effort, supported by the WACA (West Africa Coastal Areas Management Program) project, is part of a wider strategy to strengthen coastal resilience throughout the country.

On the Nouakchott coast, 21 breaches had been identified, threatening neighbouring communities, infrastructure and ecosystems. This initiative marks a crucial step towards stabilising the coast, reducing the risk of flooding and protecting livelihoods.

The event also highlighted the importance of community mobilisation and rewarded journalists for their contribution to raising awareness of environmental issues.

Learn more: <https://www.wacaprogram.org/>



Photo credit: IUCN

Inauguration of the sealing works in Nouakchott by the Minister of Environment and WACA partners.

## Tannou crocodile pond: a new tourist attraction in Benin with the support of IUCN

Located in the Kissamey district of Aplahoué, Tannou crocodile pond is becoming a major tourist destination as a result of WACA Benin's project. The project has enabled this unique natural site to be developed, with the construction of a management building for the Community Biodiversity Conservation Area (CBCA), the development of two ponds and the creation of a footbridge and two watchtowers for observing crocodiles. This infrastructure will help to restore the crocodiles' natural biotope while stimulating local tourism.

The impact on communities is considerable, thanks in particular to the involvement of local people in the sustainable management of natural resources via five village committees. The development of tourism around the waterhole also offers new economic opportunities, particularly in terms of welcoming visitors, catering, accommodation and local crafts.

Learn more: <https://www.wacaprogram.org/>



*Crocodile pond at Tannou, Benin*

## Strengthening agricultural capacity for landscape restoration in Guinea

A joint mission by IUCN and CECI took place in Guinea in the Kounounkan and Madina-Oula landscapes. The aim was to strengthen the agricultural capacities of local communities to support landscape restoration. A total of 480 community members, including 343 women, were trained in market garden and community nursery production techniques. Among them, 100 nurserymen and 387 market gardeners have strengthened their skills in managing vegetable and market garden production sites.

Nine nursery sites and nine market gardening sites were installed and protected. Beneficiaries received forest seeds, including 45 kg of *Azalia africana*, 50 kg of *Detarium senegalensis* and 10 kg of *Prosopis africana*, as well as vegetable seeds such as aubergine, chilli, okra and cucumber. The aim of this initiative is to guarantee the production of plant material for reforestation, while promoting community autonomy in the management of natural resources.

Find out more: [richard.sagno@iucn.org](mailto:richard.sagno@iucn.org)



*Cow dung treatment at Bas-Simbalaya*

## Natur'ELLES: restoring mangroves and empowering women

IUCN-PACO's Natur'ELLES initiative, in partnership with the Direction of Community Marine Protected Areas, the CLPAs and the MPA/APAC management committees, is promoting Nature-based Solutions (NBS) in the mangroves of the Sine-Saloum and Casamance regions. In the last quarter, more than 100 women took part in the restoration of degraded ecosystems, with the planting of 5,000 mangrove trees in priority areas, in accordance with the Ecological Restoration and Development Plans (PRAE).

Capacity-building workshops provided participants with training in the sustainable management of mangroves and the promotion of local products. These initiatives combine environmental conservation and economic empowerment. In 2025, Natur'ELLES is strengthening its commitment by further integrating the gender and inclusion dimensions into the management of natural resources.

Learn more: [Natur'ELLES : Les femmes au cœur de la résilience environnementale en Afrique de l'Ouest - Article | IUCN](#)



*Women mobilized to restore ecosystems in Casamance*

## Ecological monitoring of the CNP: Measuring the flight distances of large mammals for adapted tourism

From 8 to 13 March 2025, the Ecological Monitoring (EM) department carried out a study in a park to analyse the reaction of large antelopes to human presence, an essential parameter for wildlife-friendly tourism. The data collected using laser rangefinders on the park's tracks revealed significant variations between species: the Buffon's Cobus is more tolerant with a short flight distance, while the Hippotrague keeps its distance. The hartebeest, for its part, adopts an intermediate attitude.

These preliminary results provide a basis for adjusting conservation and tourist development strategies, reconciling wildlife conservation and ethical observation. A more detailed analysis, planned after three months of data collection, will add to these initial conclusions.

Find out more : [OIPR-CI.ORG](http://OIPR-CI.ORG)



Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast

## Strengthening women's climate resilience in Benin

The NGO IDID (' Sustainable Integrated Development Initiative'), with the support of the International Study and Cooperation Centre (CECI-Benin) and funding from Global Affairs Canada (MAC), is running the CLIMATE-IN project: 'Women and climate, what future? The project aims to reduce the impact of climate change on women farmers by using digital platforms and art to raise awareness of rural women's adaptation strategies.

By integrating women's traditional knowledge into local climate policies, this initiative promotes inclusive community action. With an ambitious target of reaching 250,000 internet users, the campaign also aims to increase the involvement of local decision-makers.

Learn more: [www.ididong.org](http://www.ididong.org)



Photo credit: IDID

Raising awareness among a group of women farmers

## Capacity building for nature-based climate adaptation in West Africa

Aln the first quarter of 2025, IUCN stepped up its efforts as part of the Nature-based Climate Adaptation in the Guinean Forests of West Africa project. This three-year project (2023-2026), funded by World Affairs Canada, aims to build the capacity of local and regional stakeholders to promote nature-based solutions (NBS) to climate change. In collaboration with partners such as WUSC, CECI, A Rocha Ghana and Codesult Network, IUCN has carried out a series of capacity-building activities.

Two community nurseries were established in the Wassa Amenfi landscape (Ghana), enabling the production of more than 20,000 seedlings of native species adapted to local conditions. A total of 47 local operators, 79% of them women, have been trained in advanced nursery management techniques, including seed collection, species propagation and sustainable plant maintenance.

[Learn more](#)



Photo credit: IUCN

Transplanting seedlings into polypots at Nkrankrom and Pensanom

## In Guinea-Bissau, women process salt... without damaging mangroves

In Ilha de Infanda, a small village nestled in the rich ecosystems of Guinea-Bissau, 85 women are blazing an inspiring trail every day towards a more sustainable future. Thanks to the 'Mangrove for the climate and the oceans' project, supported by the PRCM, they have turned their backs on traditional techniques that involved the massive felling of mangrove wood to produce salt.

Today, they use solar energy to crystallise the salt, a method that is gentle on nature and creates economic opportunities. By April 2025, these pioneers of the ecological transition had produced more than 1,500 kg of solar salt for sale on local markets.

This initiative not only preserves the mangrove - an ecosystem that is vital for the climate and biodiversity. It also relieves women of heavy physical work, while improving household incomes. A double victory for families... and for the environment. Learn more : [nicolaumendes@hotmail.com](mailto:nicolaumendes@hotmail.com)



*Salt production using solar energy*

## Burkina Faso: AGEREF Comoé-Léraba successfully restores life to 250 hectares of degraded land

The Comoé-Léraba Natural Resources and Wildlife Management Association (AGEREF/CL) has once again demonstrated the transformative impact of ecological restoration on local communities.

Thanks to an ambitious reforestation campaign, 250 hectares of degraded land have been recovered in the municipalities of Bérégadougou and Banfora, in western Burkina Faso.

At the heart of this success are 81,500 seedlings produced and distributed, including a majority of cashew trees, but also baobabs and moringa trees, local species with multiple uses. More than 250 producers from the villages of Bérégadougou, Fabédougou, Séréfédougou, Takalékoko, Diarabakoko and Siniéna actively participated in this reforestation project, thereby strengthening the resilience of their land and the local economy.

This initiative is part of the 'Project to restore degraded land on the outskirts of the Comoé-Léraba Classified Forest and Partial Wildlife Reserve', with support from WRI, One Tree Planted and the AFR100 initiative. It is a concrete example of how local, community-led actions can reverse land degradation while promoting sustainable development.

[Learn more](#)



*Thousands of seedlings produced by AGEREF Comoé-Léraba have helped restore 250 hectares of degraded land in Burkina Faso, reviving local ecosystems.*

## The Mabi-Yaya Nature Reserve: a sanctuary once again recognised for West African chimpanzees

Good news for primate conservation in Côte d'Ivoire: the Mabi-Yaya Nature Reserve has just been reinstated in the global database of critical habitats for chimpanzees. This international recognition is a tribute to the efforts made by the Ivorian Office of Parks and Reserves (OIPR) to protect the endangered species *Pan troglodytes verus*.

Thanks to a series of rigorous ecological monitoring campaigns, including camera traps and field observations, OIPR teams were able to confirm the presence of an active group of chimpanzees in the reserve. 'We have documented tracks, nests and social behaviour typical of chimpanzees, which confirms their presence,' said Lieutenant YAPO Yves-Eric, Head of Ecological Monitoring and GIS at the South-East Zone Directorate.

Beyond scientific recognition, this listing opens up new opportunities for the reserve, including the development of responsible ecotourism that could involve local communities while strengthening ecosystem protection.

Learn more : [WWW.OIPR-CI.ORG](http://WWW.OIPR-CI.ORG)



*Photo credit: OIPR*

*A West African chimpanzee captured by a camera trap in the Mabi-Yaya Nature Reserve.*

## BIODEV2030 en Guinée : Vers des politiques publiques plus durables pour préserver la biodiversité

On 4 and 5 March 2025, Conakry hosted the second and third sessions of the multi-stakeholder national dialogue on sectoral public policy reform for better integration of biodiversity in the agriculture, forestry and gold mining sectors. Organised as part of the BIODEV2030 project, supported by AFD and implemented by Expertise France and IUCN, the workshop brought together 42 participants from key ministries, research, the private sector, civil society and technical partners.

The two days of discussions identified productive practices with a high impact on biodiversity and the Sectoral Public Policy Instruments (SPPIs) that need to be reformed. Several concrete recommendations emerged, including the promotion of agroecological practices, the updating of obsolete regulations and the formalisation of the artisanal mining sector. Participants also emphasised the importance of a more coherent legislative framework that is sensitive to biodiversity and climate issues, while taking into account local specificities.

Learn more: <https://www.biodev2030.org>



Photo credit: IUCN

Participants in the BIODEV2030 national dialogue in Conakry

## Niger: In Kouré, a mission to restore the habitat of West Africa's last giraffes

On the Kouré plateau, east of Niamey, hope is growing for the last giraffes in West Africa. It is here, in the heart of their natural habitat, that the NGO ATPF (Aménagement des Terroirs et Productions Forestières) has carried out a capitalisation mission as part of the project 'Support for sustainable natural resource management on the outskirts of the W Park and the Giraffe Zone in Niger (PAGD/RN/PW/ZG)'.

This initiative is part of a large-scale programme led by GIZ, with support from BMZ and the European Union, for better natural resource management in the W-Arly-Pendjari transboundary complex. It aims not only to strengthen giraffe conservation, but also to restore the ecosystems that surround them.

At the heart of this approach is an inclusive approach involving municipal authorities, traditional chiefdoms, local populations and environmental technical services. Together, they have helped to rehabilitate degraded land, creating favourable conditions for the return of small wildlife, birds, reptiles and insects that make up the biological richness of this exceptional area. This project demonstrates that giraffe protection can go hand in hand with strong community dynamics, promoting biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

Contact : ONG ATPF – [atpf0073@gmail.com](mailto:atpf0073@gmail.com)



## Whale watching in Benin: ecotourism for conservation

At the 69th session of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in September 2024, the majority of African coastal states rejected the creation of a whale sanctuary in the South Atlantic, citing food security concerns. In response to this position, Nature Tropicale NGO, an active member of the 'Africa for Whales' coalition, is stepping up its efforts to change commitments in favour of cetaceans between now and the 70th session scheduled for 2026.

The NGO is focusing in particular on whale watching, or whale ecotourism, as a tool for raising awareness and promoting sustainable economic alternatives. As a leader in West Africa in this practice, Nature Tropicale is preparing the next edition in Benin from 26 July to 9 November 2025, with the aim of mobilising communities and decision-makers around whale conservation.

Learn more: <https://naturetropicale.org/>



Photo credit: Nature Tropicale

# Success stories

## **In Agbanakin, Abla DONSI transforms plants into compost to revive the Gbaga channel An example of female resilience supported by the WACA Togo project**

Originally from Agbanakin, a village in the municipality of Lakes 2 located about 30 kilometres away, Abla DONSI, a young seamstress in her thirties, is now one of the female faces of the promotion of plants from the Gbaga channel clean-up. Since the launch of the mechanical cleaning work, carried out by the company TC MARINES ZILLA GROUP, 291 people from local communities, including many women like Abla, have been recruited to participate in this transformative initiative.

Every morning at 7 a.m., Abla puts on her protective gear, vest, helmet, boots, face mask, pads and gloves and heads to the storage site for the cut vegetation. Armed with her shovel and wheelbarrow, she works alongside her male and female colleagues to pile up the shredded vegetation. These are then placed on pallets to dry before being turned into compost. Abla is proud of her contribution to this activity, which is essential for the rehabilitation of the channel.

***“We are children of Agbanakin and have been made aware of the importance of this work. Bringing our waterway back to life and enabling us to rejoin our loved ones in Benin is a real relief. I've been working here for three weeks, and at the end of the month, I'll be able to support my family. When the work is finished, fishing will also be able to resume. I am grateful to the government for this opportunity.”***

And when asked if this work should not be reserved for men, her answer is clear:

***“There are no longer any jobs exclusively for men. My colleagues and I are involved in every stage of the process. And our bosses encourage us, which proves that we are doing a good job.”***

According to Dr Kossi ADJONOU, from the monitoring mission, the company in charge of the work is complying with all environmental, social and gender safeguards:

***“All employees are equipped with PPE, fed at their workplace and covered by insurance. Local labour is prioritised, gender parity is respected, and the communities' drinking water supply is also ensured.”***



*Dame Abla DONSI, a female pioneer in plant utilisation in Agbanakin, transforms plants collected from the Gbaga canal into compost, thereby contributing to the rehabilitation of the local ecosystem and the empowerment of women in the community.*

# UPCOMING EVENTS

May 21–23, 2025: COP14 of the Abidjan Convention – Ivory Coast

May 26–30, 2025: National capacity-building workshop on nature-based solutions for urban resilience – Serrekunda, Gambia

May 27-28, 2025: LOGMe II project launch workshop - Dakar, Senegal

June 9–13, 2025: Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) – Nice, France

October 9–15, 2025: IUCN World Conservation Congress – Abu Dhabi



[www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)