

2025 is coming to an end, but the commitment continues

As 2025 draws to a close, I would first like to commend the remarkable commitment of the IUCN teams in West and Central Africa, our partners, and the communities with whom we work every day. This year has been marked by an intensification of actions on the ground, often in complex contexts, but ones that offer solutions and hope.

In 2025, our interventions continued to strengthen the resilience of territories and populations to climate change through ecosystem restoration, inclusive biodiversity governance, sustainable natural resource management, and the promotion of the central role of women and young people. These advances are the result of collective work based on multi-stakeholder dialogue, innovation, and locally rooted nature-based solutions.

Many challenges remain: increasing pressure on ecosystems, persistent social vulnerabilities, and greater demands for coordination and funding. But these challenges reinforce our conviction that concerted action, based on science, local knowledge, and strong partnerships, remains the most effective path forward.

As we approach 2026, I encourage each and every one of you to pursue this commitment with determination and creativity. Together, let us continue to make nature conservation a lever for resilience, social justice, and sustainable development in our region.

To all of you, my sincere thanks and best wishes for the coming year.



Dr. NIANOGO Aimé Joseph

In Burkina Faso, the baobab tree is becoming a driver of sustainable local development

In Boromo, in the Bankui region of Burkina Faso, the processing of baobab fruit illustrates how a local resource can become a lever for sustainable development and environmental preservation.

Through sub-component 3.2 of the Communal Landscape Management Project for REDD+ (PGPC-REDD+), IUCN has been supporting the Association Solidarité et Développement Communautaire (ASDC) for several years in promoting non-timber forest products. The NAFA juice production unit is a concrete example of this, driven by local entrepreneurship rooted in sustainability.

This dynamic was highlighted during the official visit of the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Roger Baro, to the production site in Boromo, alongside the IUCN Program Manager in Burkina Faso, Dr. Jacques Somda. The discussions provided an opportunity to discover the facilities and equipment acquired thanks to PGPC-REDD+ funding.

Produced locally, NAFA juice now generates income for ASDC while promoting the sustainable exploitation of baobab. For IUCN, this initiative demonstrates the potential of local investments to reconcile nature conservation, community resilience, and economic development.



Minister Roger Baro presents a bottle of NAFA juice during a visit to the production site in Boromo.

In Saponé, the moringa industry is being structured to promote sustainable local development.

In the municipality of Saponé, in south-central Burkina Faso, the moringa industry is growing thanks to targeted support for local entrepreneurship. Through the PGPC/REDD+ project, IUCN is supporting promoters involved in the production and processing of *Moringa oleifera*, a plant recognized for its nutritional and environmental benefits.

A day of sharing and networking, organized by IUCN in collaboration with AGRODEV and CBI, enabled beneficiaries to discuss investment opportunities, technical innovations, and strategies for promoting moringa.

In Saponé, Paul Sawadogo strengthened his processing and marketing skills while expanding his professional network. These exchanges open up new opportunities to structure his business and improve the competitiveness of his products.

By supporting these initiatives, IUCN is contributing to the professionalization of the moringa sector, a promising sector for food security, income generation, and landscape restoration.



Paul Sawadogo, promoter of the moringa industry in the municipality of Saponé.

Ivory Coast: improving the quality of SPANB for more effective biodiversity action

Committed to updating its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (SPANB), Côte d'Ivoire is taking an important step towards implementation that is more aligned with the Global Biodiversity Framework. In this context, IUCN, with the support of GIZ, has assisted with a qualitative review aimed at enhancing the clarity, consistency, and operability of the SPANB for the period 2025-2030.

The results of this review were shared at a feedback workshop organized in Yamoussoukro under the authority of the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development, and Ecological Transition. The discussions brought together members of the Technical Committee, the coordination team, consultants, and representatives of civil society and the private sector.

The discussions enabled the validation of key recommendations on governance, financing, and monitoring and evaluation, and the definition of the next steps towards national validation and operational implementation of the SPANB.



Attendees at the workshop to present the findings of the SPANB qualitative review in Yamoussoukro.

São Tomé and Príncipe: citizens mobilize for a future free of plastic waste

In São Tomé, the Zero Plastic Waste campaign is driving a new dynamic in the fight against plastic pollution and the promotion of sustainable practices. Implemented as part of the IslandPlas project, this initiative brings together national authorities, youth organizations, NGOs, and local startups around a common goal: reducing plastic waste and encouraging sorting and recycling.

The campaign includes regular actions in municipalities, combining collection operations and public awareness campaigns. For its launch, several sites heavily affected by plastic pollution were targeted, mobilizing citizens committed to protecting their environment.

The first activities resulted in the collection of bottles and other plastic waste, which was sent to the treatment center for recycling. A participatory and fun approach, including a friendly competition between teams, reinforced collective commitment.

By supporting the implementation of a structured collection and recovery system, IslandPlas is helping to make communities key players in the transition to cleaner and more sustainable islands.



Young volunteers engaged in a plastic waste collection initiative on the coast of São Tomé

Benin: Strengthening participatory biomonitoring in the Mono Biosphere Reserve and Bouche du Roy MPA

The municipalities of Houéyogbé and Athiémé hosted a training session on monitoring habitats and wildlife using camera traps, for the benefit of site managers at the Mono Delta Biosphere Reserve and the Bouche du Roy Marine Protected Area (MPA). Organized in the districts of Doutou and Atchanou, the initiative brought together monitoring officials, local NGOs, and administrative authorities.

The training targeted members of the Community Biodiversity Conservation Area Associations (ACCB) of Lake Toho 2, Lake Ahémé, the Naglanou Forest, and the Adjamè Hippopotamus Pond, with the aim of strengthening their skills in participatory ecological monitoring.

This activity is part of a project funded by the European Union under the Team Europe Initiative, implemented by IUCN with Eco-Bénin and IUCN Netherlands, with scientific support from the Laboratory of Applied Ecology. It contributes to improving the sustainable management and protection of these key ecosystems.



Training site managers on biomonitoring tools in Athiémé/Atchanou

Protecting biodiversity differently: AMCEZs being trialed in Côte d'Ivoire

In Côte d'Ivoire, IUCN PACO supported a key step towards strengthening recognition of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OEACMs) in relation to achieving the global 30x30 target. On November 24 and 25, 2025, a workshop to present the findings of the pilot study on AMCEZ was held in Yamoussoukro, focusing on the Tai-Nzo and Comoé areas.

This meeting brought together administrative authorities, local communities, civil society, and the coordination team around a common goal : to analyze the results of the study, exchange views on the characteristics of eight candidate pilot sites, and discuss the conditions necessary for their official recognition. The discussions also identified existing gaps and formulated concrete recommendations for technical, legal, and financial support.

The workshop's conclusions highlight the potential of AMCEZs as a lever for inclusive conservation, promoting the role of local communities while strengthening the national contribution to biodiversity protection. Through this approach, IUCN PACO supports Côte d'Ivoire in integrating solutions adapted to local realities, in line with international commitments and national priorities for sustainable conservation.



Workshop to present the findings of the pilot study to identify AMCEZs in the Tai-Nzo and Comoé areas in Yamoussoukro (Abidjan)

IUCN-PACO and Conservation Allies: strengthening membership at the regional level

A series of strategic meetings was held in Dakar between the President of Conservation Allies, Dr. Paul Salaman, and the Regional Director of IUCN-PACO, accompanied by members of his team, including the Regional Program Coordinator, the Program Manager, and the Regional Membership Officer.

These exchanges provided an opportunity for in-depth reflection on the future of IUCN membership in the West and Central Africa region. Discussions focused on prospects for restructuring and revitalizing the membership network, with a particular emphasis on recruitment and retention strategies. The parties also addressed the challenges of strengthening the organizational, technical, and financial capacities of members, as well as opportunities for mobilizing resources for the implementation of high-impact integrated projects.

These initial discussions pave the way for concrete and coordinated action, heralding promising prospects for strengthening and enhancing IUCN-PACO membership in the region.



Dr. Paul SALAMAN & Dr Youssouph DIEDHIU

Solar infrastructure to strengthen livelihoods near Bénoué National Park

Around Bénoué National Park, solar-powered productive infrastructure is gradually strengthening the livelihoods of local communities. From November 30 to December 4, 2025, a provisional handover ceremony was held in the towns of Sacdjé and Guidjiba for equipment intended for a fish market, a sewing workshop, and an eco-friendly charcoal production unit.

This infrastructure was built as part of the ACREGIR project, financed by IFAD and the Adaptation Fund, with the support of the Bénoué National Park Conservator. The provisional acceptance allowed for an assessment of the quality of the equipment and buildings, while identifying any adjustments needed before final acceptance.

The beneficiaries, approximately 90% of whom are women and 10% young people, expressed their satisfaction with these initial deliverables. The fish market and eco-friendly charcoal production unit, the first of their kind in the park, will help improve access to fresh fish and a more sustainable energy source for the entire area.



Delivery of productive solar equipment to communities living near Bénoué National Park,

Senegal's forests: when dialogue paves the way for biodiversity

Representatives from government, the private sector, civil society, and professional organizations gathered in Saly as part of the BIODEV2030 – Phase 2 project to participate in a national multi-stakeholder dialogue workshop on forest environments. The goal was to work together to identify concrete solutions for better reconciling biodiversity conservation and economic development.

Over three days, participants explored issues related to the country's inland forests, using the serious game TerriStories®. This interactive tool enabled them to project themselves into real-life situations, compare points of view, and identify shared priorities for action.

The discussions led to the joint development of cross-sector commitments and the creation of an action sheet to support the revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (SPANB). This is a key step in strengthening dialogue, promoting coordination between stakeholders, and anchoring solutions in local realities.



BIODEV2030 national workshop in Saly: multiple stakeholders come together to strengthen forest governance.

BIODEV2030 in Benin: validated results for better integration of biodiversity into development

National stakeholders gathered in Cotonou for a workshop dedicated to presenting and validating the main results of phase 2 of the BIODEV2030 project in Benin. Coordinated by the IUCN, the project aims to better integrate biodiversity into key development sectors, particularly agriculture and forestry.

The workshop provided an opportunity to share several major deliverables, including a policy brief on sectoral public policy instruments influencing biodiversity, as well as a concept note for a territorial project at the level of Agricultural Development Pole 4. The participatory discussions focused on possible reforms, priorities for action, governance, and funding prospects.

The group work resulted in concrete recommendations, which were incorporated into a joint roadmap. This step marks an important step forward towards a more coherent implementation of Benin's commitments to biodiversity, in line with international frameworks.



BIODEV2030 national workshop in Cotonou: validation of phase 2 results to strengthen biodiversity integration in Benin

Ghana: Strengthening community management of the Duase tree gene bank

In collaboration with the CSIR-Plant Genetics Resource Research Institute (PGRI) and the Ghana Forestry Commission, IUCN organized a community awareness session in Duase on the management of the Duase Community Tree Gene Bank. Covering an area of two hectares, it is the first tree gene bank integrated into the landscape in Ghana.

Established as part of the Nature-based Solutions (NbS) project, the bank conserves ten native and threatened tree species from different ecological zones of the country, including Odum, Wawa, Mahogany, Baku, and African Rosewood, for a total of 36 accessions.

Discussions highlighted the ecological and scientific importance of this infrastructure for long-term conservation, research, and future restoration efforts, while emphasizing the threats posed by deforestation and overexploitation. The meeting also paved the way for the establishment of an inclusive community management committee and strengthened site security, positioning Duase as a model for community conservation in the Lake Bosomtwe landscape.



The Duase community is actively involved in protecting the Community Tree Gene Bank.

WASOP: a new regional dynamic for the ocean and the blue economy

The West Africa Sustainable Ocean Program (WASOP) was officially launched in early November 2025 in Mindelo, Cape Verde, on the sidelines of the 8th edition of Cabo Verde Ocean Week. Funded by the European Union to the tune of €59 million over five years, the program aims to strengthen ocean governance and promote a sustainable blue economy in West Africa.

The launch brought together 95 participants from 13 West African coastal countries, regional institutions, development banks, civil society, and the private sector. Together, they laid the foundations for coordinated action around three priorities: sustainable fisheries, protection of marine and coastal ecosystems, and the development of environmentally friendly economic activities.

Highlights included the first steering committee meeting for the program and several major announcements in the area of blue finance, including partnerships with regional financial institutions. Field visits also provided concrete examples of the challenges and opportunities associated with the blue economy.



Launch of the WASOP program during Cabo Verde Ocean Week

Training farmers in biochar for more fertile soils in Ghana

In collaboration with Kwadaso College of Agriculture and its local partner Codesult Network, IUCN conducted extensive community training on the production and use of biochar in the Wassa Amenfi and Lake Bosomtwe landscapes in Ghana. This initiative is part of the nature-based climate adaptation project in the Guinean forests of West Africa.

A total of 1,000 farmers from 26 communities were trained, the majority of whom were women, reflecting the project's inclusive approach. Participants acquired practical skills to produce biochar locally from agricultural residues, wood waste, or manure, and to apply it effectively to improve soil fertility.

Presented as a sustainable and inexpensive alternative to chemical fertilizers, biochar helps improve soil structure, water retention, and nutrient availability. Trained farmers now say they are better equipped to restore degraded land, boost agricultural productivity, and increase the resilience of their livelihoods in the face of climate change.



Farmers participating in biochar training sessions

Three monitoring platforms to strengthen mangrove governance in Bignona

In Thiobon, in the department of Bignona, the IUCN officially accepted three floating surveillance platforms for the Kalone Bliss-Kassa and Kaalolaal Blouf Fogny Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), as well as the Kawawana APAC. This action is part of the Natur'ELLES project, which aims to strengthen the adaptation of women and coastal communities to climate change through mangrove conservation.

The ceremony brought together administrative and territorial authorities, technical services, management committees, partners, and local communities. It provided an opportunity to present the project's achievements, visit the platforms, and officially hand them over to the relevant management committees.

Designed to support ecological monitoring and participatory follow-up, these platforms are a key tool for improving the inclusive governance of MPAs and APACs. They also contribute to the implementation of management plans, the marking of protected areas, and local capacity building.

Through this initiative, IUCN and its partners are consolidating a harmonized framework for sustainable mangrove management, placing communities—and particularly women—at the heart of conservation strategies.



Official reception of monitoring platforms in Thiobon to strengthen mangrove management.

Nature-based solutions: creation of community forests and mangrove restoration

Beyond the protective structures currently under construction, the WACA project focuses on sustainable solutions supported by local communities. In several coastal villages, five hectares of community forests have been created to preserve mangroves, protect ecosystems, and strengthen resilience to the effects of climate change.

This innovative approach links ecology and local governance. By offering an alternative to the direct exploitation of mangroves—particularly for fish smoking in Grand-Lahou—community forests reduce pressure on these sensitive ecosystems while supporting livelihoods. However, their success depends on clear rules, shared monitoring, and ongoing awareness-raising. At the same time, fourteen hectares of mangroves have been restored thanks to strong collective mobilization.

Each plant put in the ground embodies a shared commitment and a long-term vision. In Lipkilassié, Groguida, Braffedon, and Lahou-Kpanda, these initiatives have become a source of local pride and a concrete symbol of shared resilience.



Community mobilization for mangrove restoration as part of the WACA project.

Gambia launches its first national land policy with support from the WACA project

Gambia has taken a major step forward with the official launch of its first-ever National Land Policy, under the chairmanship of His Excellency President Adama Barrow. This historic breakthrough marks a turning point in land management and lays the foundation for more equitable and sustainable development.

The new policy establishes a clear framework for the management, protection, and sharing of land resources. It aims to secure land access rights, prevent land conflicts, and strengthen land governance in a context of increasing pressure on land and natural resources. It also contributes to better spatial planning in the collective interest.

The WACA project supported the development and adoption of this policy, in line with its actions to strengthen the country's institutional frameworks and environmental resilience. This support is particularly strategic in areas such as the Kotu Stream basin, where land security and integrated planning are essential to reduce flood risks and support sustainable solutions.



Official launch of The Gambia's first National Land Policy, chaired by His Excellency President Adama Barrow.

Success stories

Farming differently for a better life: when peer learning transforms agriculture around Lake Bosomtwe.

Around Lake Bosomtwe in Ghana, farmers have discovered that it is possible to produce more while respecting the land. Thanks to the Nature-Based Solutions (NbS) project implemented by IUCN in Ghana, five demonstration farms have been set up to test climate-smart and organic farming practices adapted to local conditions.

On these plots, corn, okra, cowpeas, plantains, and cabbage were grown using a combination of mulching, organic fertilization, and natural pest control methods. These fields quickly became open-air learning spaces. During an exchange between producers, farmers from several villages visited the sites, observed the results, and shared their experiences in a peer-to-peer learning dynamic. The effects are concrete. On the okra plots, women producers harvested more than twelve baskets of organic vegetables in just three months. Sold at local markets, this production generated immediate income for households while improving soil health.

This experience shows that simple, inexpensive, community-led solutions can strengthen livelihoods while building more climate-resilient agriculture.



Field learning exchanges between farmers on the five demonstration farms in the Lake Bosomtwe landscape and harvest from okra demonstration plots



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