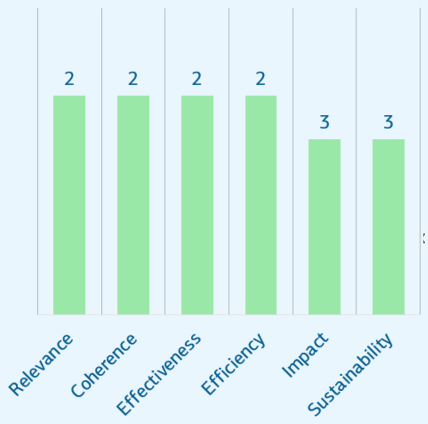
Ex-post evaluation
FSOA Trust Fund, Benin

Title	FSOA Trust Fund, Benin		
Sector and CRS code	Biodiversity/ 41030		
BMZ number	2010 657 62		
Commissioned by	BMZ		
Recipient/ Programme executing agency	FSOA		
FZ financing volume and instrument	EUR 41.9 million		
Project duration	2013-21	**Year of report** 2025	**Year of random sample** 2025

Overall rating
successful (2)



1: very successful – **6:** highly unsuccessful

Objectives and project outline

The project's objective (outcome) was to contribute to securing the operation and effective management of protected areas in northern Benin, mainly the Pendjari National Park (PNP). At a higher level, the objective was to conserve protected areas and biodiversity and improve the livelihoods of the local population (impact). To do so, the project provided the West African Savannah Foundation (L*a Fondation des Savanes Ouest-Africaine*s, FSOA) with capital and technical support, enabling it to build capacities and reliably co-fund management and operations of the PNP.

Key findings

The project contributed substantially to the capitalisation of the FSOA and was successful regarding biodiversity conversation. However, the impacts on the livelihoods of local communities have been limited. Overall, the project is rated as successful:

- The project design was generally coherent and suitable for addressing the existing core problem of irregular funding and was largely able to adapt to a challenging and evolving context.
- It showed strong coordination and coherence with international norms, national and international biodiversity and development policies, and donor initiatives.
- The project was effective in achieving key outcome objectives: FSOA became a reliable financing partner and supported the implementation of management plans. Yet, community participation and gender considerations remained limited, and both external factors and some negative effects impacted the overall project effectiveness.
- The project contributed to stable wildlife numbers and forest cover. Impacts on the local population remained limited and were not monitored adequately. The project had positive impacts beyond Benin, as it facilitated the entry of new partners into the foundation's capital and the regionalisation of the FSOA (Burkina Faso and Niger).
- It strengthened institutional and financial capacities; however, community resilience remains limited, and strong security threats make long-term sustainability uncertain.

Conclusions

- The capitalisation of a foundation, combined with technical support and solid governance structures enables stable long-term financing and thereby successfully masters one of the biggest challenges to protected area management and biodiversity conservation.
- To achieve impacts at the level of local populations, small-scale socio-economic development activities are insufficient: funding and attention dedicated to local community engagement needs to be substantial.
- A lack of systematic socio-economic monitoring limits a project's ability to demonstrate its benefits to the target group and restricts adaptive management.
- The adaptation of environmental and social management systems during project implementation helps to address new emerging risks; yet continuous adjustment is required.

Contents

Abbreviations

AFD	French Development Agency (*Agence Française de Développement)*
AK	Final inspection
APN	African Park Network
AVIGREF	Village Wildlife Reserve Management Associations (*Associations Villageoises de Gestion des Réserves de Faune*
GDP	Gross domestic product
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CENAGREF	National Centre for Wildlife Reserves Management (*Centre National de Gestion des Réserves de Faune)*
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DC	Development Cooperation
EPE	Ex-post evaluation
EUR	Euro
E&S	Environmental and Social
ESS	Environmental and Social Standards
ESMS	Environmental and Social Management System
FSOA	West African Savannah Foundation (*Fondation des Savannes Ouest Africaines*
FZ	Financial cooperation
FZ E	FZ Evaluation
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOI	Module Objective Indicator
MV	Module proposal
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNP	Pendjari National Park
PAGAP	National Protected Area Management Project
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ToC	Theory of Change
TZ	Technical cooperation
RBT	Transboundary Biosphere Reserve WAP-Region
USD	US dollar
WAP	W-Arly-Pendjari
WNP	WAP National Park Complex
ZOC	Controlled Use Zone (*Zone d'Occupation Contrôlée)*

Overview

General conditions and classification of the project

In 2013, at the time the project was conceived, Benin's political context was marked by a stable national government pursuing policies aligned with international strategies for biodiversity conservation, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The government had adopted a National Strategy for the Conservation and Management of Wildlife Reserves (2011–2020) and later integrated protected area management into its Government Action Program (2016–2021). At the sub-regional level, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger later demonstrated a commitment to joint management of the W-Arly-Pendjari (WAP) national park complex, as evidenced by their 2019 tripartite agreement. The ex-post evaluation (EPE) focuses on the Pendjari National Park (PNP)

The (PNP) was created in 1961. Since the creation, the park was underfinanced due to little income generation from tourism and trophy hunting, as well as unpredictable Government financing. Additionally, there were low technical capacities of the National Centre for Wildlife Reserves Management (CENAGREF). This resulted in limited implementation of management activities. Nevertheless, park resource management involved local communities, and a revenue-sharing mechanism for trophy hunting was in place and supervised by the Village Wildlife Reserve Management Associations (*Associations Villageoises de Gestion des Réserves de Faune*, AVIGREF). In 2017, management was transferred to the African Parks Network (APN), leading to significant changes in the PNP's management approach.

The security situation deteriorated notably in northern Benin from 2021 onwards. Incursions by armed groups in border regions and peripheral villages increased, causing instability that aggravated local livelihoods and park management operations.

The project's risk classification was raised from FI/B to FI/B+ in 2018, following tensions between APN and the local communities.

At the time of the (EPE), the project had been complemented by two other BMZ-funded FC measures allocated to the FSOA, which provided additional EUR 10 million to the Burkina Faso window of the Foundation (PN 2019.6916.1), EUR 20 million to capitalize its Niger window, and EUR 5 million in project funds for priority measures in Park W-Niger (PN 2021.6935.7). An additional EUR 10 million had also been committed and disbursed to capitalize the Benin window. Although the FSOA also supported the Niger and Burkina Faso window, this EPE focuses on PNP only.

In addition, a regional financing window for the FSOA had been opened with support from the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD) in 2023. The following table gives an overview on the financial support from the German Financial Cooperation to the North Benin Sustainable Reserves Management Project (PGDRB). According to this table a total of EUR 41.9 million were spent to support the FSOA and institutional support. EUR 4 million was spent for institutional support and three funding increases plus one note verbal was allocated to the FSOA Benin Agreement (see table2 below).

Brief description of the project

This Financial Cooperation (FC) project was implemented from 2013 to 2021. It aimed at securing the operations and efficient management of the protected areas of Northern Benin, mainly PNP[1] (outcome level). The expected impacts were the conservation of biodiversity within the PNP and the improvement of the livelihoods of the local population (impact level). To achieve these results, the project supported the establishment of the West African Savannah Foundation (*Fondation des Savannes Ouest Africaines,* FSOA) in 2012. More concretely, the project provided the foundation with capital and technical support, enabling it to build capacities and become a reliable financing partner for sustainable protected area management in northern Benin. The FSOA provided PNP with annual financing, aiming to support the implementation of PNP's management plan and encourage the participation of the local population. The main partner in the project design was CENAGREF (*Centre National de Gestion des Réserves de Faune*).

The project's target group was the poor population living in the peripheral areas of the protected areas, whose livelihoods depend mainly on natural resources, including resources from the national park territory. The original project proposal envisaged that the target group would participate in the project by being involved in the planning and implementation of protected area co-management through village committees, and benefit from the income generated through tourism, trophy hunting and village development funds. However, trophy hunting was banned in 2017 and income from tourism declined.

[1] The project objective at outcome level was reformulated during the ex-post evaluation (EPE), see section 7.

Breakdown of total costs

	Phase 1 (plan)	Phase 1 (actual)
Investment costs (total) in million EUR	12.0	41.9
Own contribution in million EUR	0	1.5 as capitalization and 1.0 per year (total: 6.5)
External financing in EUR million	0	0
of which BMZ funds in EUR million	12.0	48.4

Table 1 : *Breakdown of costs- overview*

The following table shows a detailed breakdown of the costs, including the contract increases, institutional support funds to FSAO, North Benin subsidy funds and capitalization of the endowment fund.

Contracts	Dates	Capitalization of the Endowment Fund (EUR)	Institutional support for the FSOA (EUR)	North-Benin PA subsidy fund (EUR)
1st KfW-FSOA Benin Agreement for 5 years with 3 years TA	07/2013	10 000 000	2 000 000	
Increase 1	12/2014	3 000 000	2 000 000	
Increase 2	12/2014	8 900 000		
Increase 3	04/2018			6 000 000
Total funds raised		**21 900 000**	**4 000 000**	**6 000 000**
Note verbale	12/2021	10 000 000		
Total funds committed				**41 900 000**

Table 2: *Detailed Breakdown of costs*

Map of the WAP Complex

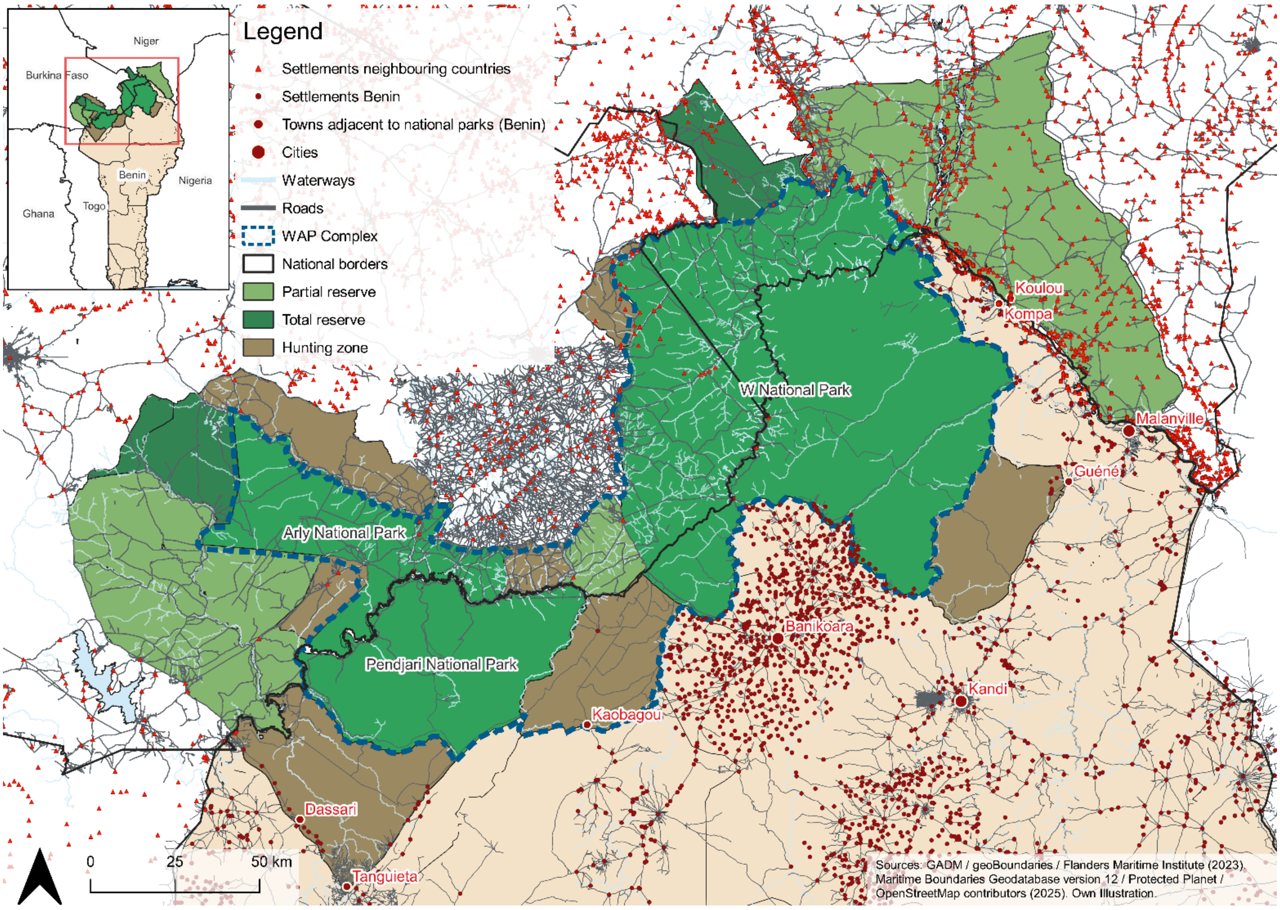


Figure 1 *: Map of the WAP Complex, including settlements, waterways and rivers*
Source*: Own representation*
Note: *The map shows the Pendjari National Park in the centre and the adjacent Arly National Park and W National Park (forming altogether the WAP Complex) as well as the road network, hunting zone and inhabited buffer zone with main villages.*

Strengths and weaknesses of the project

The strengths include in particular:

- The level of capitalisation and technical support provided to the FSOA were appropriate to establish FSOA as a dedicated trust fund.
- The project provided a reliable, predictable, regular and transparent financing mechanism for the management of the PNP, including effective park management and biodiversity monitoring, in turn contributing to the stability of key large mammal populations.
- The project's technical assistance built strong governance and financial management systems within FSOA, supporting its operation as a model scaled in Benin and on a regional level.
- Coordination with government and international donors allowed for efficient project implementation and the scaling up of funding mechanisms to the regional level (Burkina Faso and Niger windows).
- FSOA has established quotas for subsidies benefitting the local population.
- Collaboration with local institutions, such as AVIGREFs, and advocacy to strengthen their role in park management ensured a certain level of community participation in PNP planning.

The weaknesses include in particular:

- The project's assumptions about livelihood improvements were overestimated, as direct economic benefits to the local population and disadvantaged groups remained modest.
- Socio-economic impacts and gender outcomes were not systematically monitored, limiting understanding of broader project effects on local communities.
- APN's management approach generated high costs, reducing the proportion of FSOA's financing in the park's operational management budget. By increasing the management costs, the park's financial sustainability is at a risk, if the government and other donors reduce their financial contributions.
- Security issues have resulted in access restrictions and negative socio-economic impacts on the target group, calling the overall sustainability of the project results into question.

General lessons learned

- The creation and capitalisation of an independent trust fund, combined with technical support and solid governance structures, enables stable long-term financing for biodiversity conservation and supports the expansion of similar approaches to other protected areas. It thus mitigates a high sustainability risk that frequently arises in biodiversity projects.
- Adjusting funding windows and partnership models in response to evolving national policies, local circumstances, and management changes ensures flexibility and continuity in achieving project objectives.
- The absence of systematic socio-economic monitoring limits the project's ability to demonstrate and enhance its benefits to the target group. It also restricts the scope for adaptive management when the project's framework conditions change.
- The adaptation of environmental and social management systems during project implementation helps to address new emerging risks, but continuous adjustment is required in contexts of increasing insecurity.

Rating according to OECD DAC criteria

Relevance

1. Alignment with policies and priorities

The project's objective was well aligned with the priorities of the BMZ's Biodiversity concept (2012-2022), as well as those of German development cooperation in Benin and the region. It was furthermore consistent with the multi-donor National Protected Area Management Project (PAGAP) of the World Bank (WB).
The project's objective was also well aligned with Benin's policy framework on nature conservation, the National Strategy for the Conservation and Management of Wildlife Reserves 2011-2020 (*Stratégie Nationale de Conservation et de Gestion des Réserves de Faune)* and the Government Action Program 2016-2021 (*Programme d'Actions du Gouvernement)*). It took into account the institutional framework conditions, by placing the CENAGREF as a key national partner that was responsible for the management of the PNP when the project was designed. In addition, the project was attuned to the national implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Benin and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular to MDG 7 ('Ensure environmental sustainability', which now corresponds to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 'Climate action' and 15 'Life on land') and MDG 1 ('Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger' which now corresponds to SDG1 'No poverty', and SDG2 'Zero hunger').

At sub-regional level, the project objective was aligned with the intentions of the governments of Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger to work together to manage the WAP complex, as reflected in multilateral agreements such as the 2019 tripartite agreement on the harmonised management of protected areas in the WAP complex 9).

2. Alignment with the needs and capacities of beneficiaries and the stakeholders

The livelihood of communities living in the vicinity of the PNP relies heavily on natural resources, including those from within the park's territory. This includes income from trophy hunting and tourism, involving local guides and meat distribution. The communities also benefit from collecting firewood and non-timber forest products, grazing as well as from hunting and fishing in ponds and, in some cases, from limited agricultural production within the park and in the Controlled Use Zone (*Zone d'Occupation Contrôlée*, ZOC), a 30,000 hectares strip of land on the outskirts of the park and inhabited by local people. The park administration tolerates some of these activities (firewood, collection, grazing), while others (hunting) are fully illegal. To prevent these activities from having a negative impact on the park's biodiversity and resources, the PNP engaged in cooperation and co-management mechanisms with these communities since 2011, with the support of GIZ. AVIGREFs (village associations), were created and supported to facilitate this process. They were already operational in 2012 when the project started.

The project's strategy of establishing the FSOA as a financing vehicle to provide sustainable funding for the implementation of PNP's management plans, and of earmarking part of the allocated funding for development activities in the buffer zone in cooperation with AVIGREFs, met the target group's need to maintain their livelihoods from the resources of the park and adjacent hunting reserves. At that time, the AVIGREFs had a local presence and were the most suitable partners for working directly with beneficiaries. In sum, the needs of the local population were addressed insufficiently and there was no specific strategy to attend the target groups differentiated by gender, ethnic, age and income. There was no specific percentage envisaged for funding rural population support. Such a percentage was only defined in 2018.

As the PNP had suffered from insufficient and unpredictable funding for the implementation of the protected area's annual management plan, the project objective was a good response to the needs of the PNP in particular and of the biodiversity conservation sector in general. Generally, the budget of EUR 10 million was spent in seven years instead of the planned three years. The main reason for this was the annual level of financing for the PNP which was lower than expected. Based on an evaluation of the parks' financing needs, the PNP required EUR 677,000 per year (2016 - 2021) to cover operational costs and basic infrastructure improvement. This resulted in an extended implementation period until the project funds were exhausted.

3. **Appropriateness of design**

There were multiple **weaknesses in the formulation of indicators and objectives**. The theory of change (ToC), as formulated at the project development stage, was insufficiently articulated. The outcome indicators were not all SMART and did not necessarily monitor outcome objectives. During the inception phase of this EPE, the ToC was updated, and the indicators reformulated for more consistency (see Figure 2). The ToC outlines how investments into financing of PA management and into park conversation activities (Outputs) is expected to secure operation and efficient management of the park, improve monitoring and induce effective participation of the population (Outcomes), thereby keeping wildlife populations and vegetation cover stable and benefiting the population (intermediary impacts). The final expected impacts are conversation of protected areas and their biodiversity and improved livelihoods of the local population.

The project design was generally coherent and suitable for addressing the core problem of a lack of sustainable financing and efficient management of the PNP. The approach to tackle these problems was appropriate: the support from FC to establish a sustainable financing system would provide the PNP with the predictable and sufficient funding needed to manage the park's resources sustainably and efficient. In particular, the decision to cooperate with the FSOA, a lightweight structure with a clear strategy and an investment manual that enables it to fulfil its missions fully and effectively, was relevant within the institutional framework of Benin and of the wider sub-region. The initial level of capitalisation was sufficient to meet the PNP's funding needs at that time.

The registration of the FSOA under British law as a charity with the Charity Commission in London was a suitable status. This status granted the FSOA international tax exemption and greater flexibility in the composition of its supervisory board. Regular audits by the Charity Commission promoted transparency and accountability, making the FSOA an attractive fund for donors and financiers looking to minimise risk.

Yet, the updated project objective from 2020 was "Financial participation in the FSOA as a sustainable financing mechanism enables secure operation and efficient management of the protected areas in northern Benin, particularly the Pendjari Biosphere Reserve". The design did not have a sufficient link with the expected positive impacts on the target group "Local Population benefits financially from PA management, nor did the project activities." The assumption that good management of the park would positively impact the livelihood of the local population in the peripheral area appears too optimistic from today's perspective. From 2017 onwards, when the management of the PNP was handed over to APN, an updated project design promoting direct funding from the FSOA to the Union of AVIGREFs, or other local partners such as communes or NGOs, would have ensured their financial stability and enabled the needs of local communities to be considered more directly. This change was made only in 2022, when direct funding of NGOs by the FSOA (in a volume of EUR 150,000 per grant) was introduced in the frame of the project's second phase (not evaluated here).

The objective of the development cooperation (DC) program in which the project was embedded until 2017, was "the efficiency of Beninese agriculture has been strengthened, considering environmental and climate aspects and reducing poverty among the population". **There is a weak logical link between the DC objective and the project objective**. Indeed, a secure operation and efficient management of the protected areas in northern Benin, particularly the PNP, does not necessarily strengthen the efficiency of Beninese agriculture. Although the original project concept from 2011 saw GIZ providing most of the support for sustainable agriculture to increase income and productivity, while KfW focused on managing the park itself so that communities could benefit from the resources within the buffer zone and the PNP, the link between the two remained weak.

The park managers (CENAGREF and APN) monitored the impacts on biodiversity following standard protocols. However, only the number of some wildlife species were monitored, but no other biodiversity parameters. While the FSOA lacked the technical capacity to evaluate the quality of the biodiversity monitoring, it can be considered adequate given APN's experience. **The socio-economic results and impacts of the project on communities were not systematically measured,** as the FSOA and the technical assistance provided by the project through the Implementation consultant did not allocate human resources to do so. In this respect, the composition of the technical project team in the project design documents was not adequate for monitoring and evaluating the project's impact. The results on wildlife were monitored by the park administration, partly through FSOA financing.

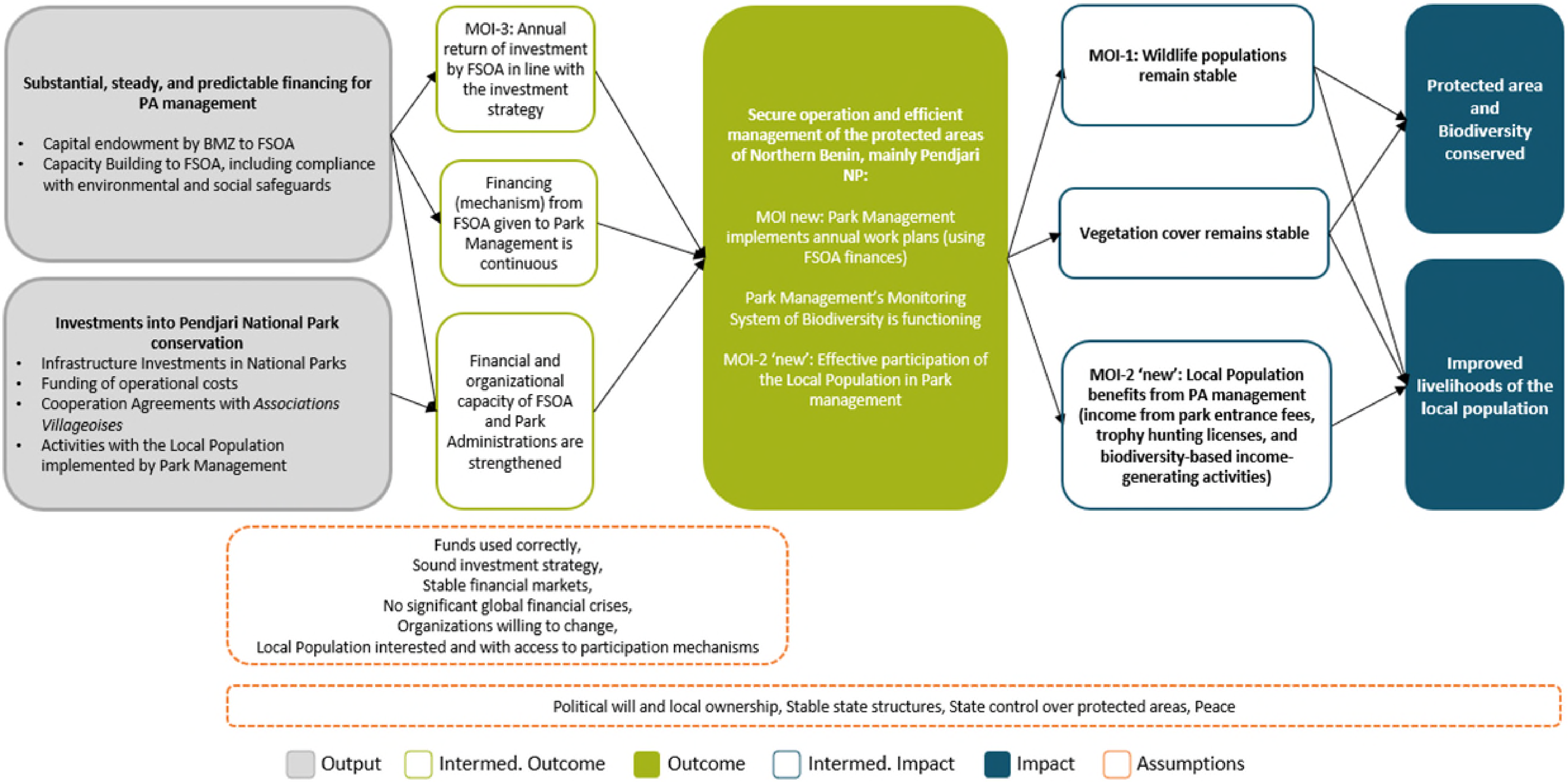


Figure 2 *: Theory of Change*
Source*: Own representation*
Notes*: MOI = Module Indicator*

4. Adaptability - response to change

The project was largely able to adapt to changes in the implementation context. A first key change was the delegation of the management of the PNP from CENAGREF to APN in 2017 following a decision by the President of Benin to improve the efficiency of the Park Management. In the same year, APN erected a fence around the park to fully protect and control its territory. Due to ongoing tensions between the park administration and local communities, the project recommended reverting to the system used during the CENAGREF era, which involved strong AVIGREF participation as an interface between communities and the park. APN accepted to adapt its approach towards stronger community involvement. Until the tensions were resolved and APN committed to support the participation of the local communities in park management, the FSOA stopped to fund APN. The funding was resumed a year later, in 2018. In view of APN's weak capacity to implement development activities in the peripheral zone during the evaluation period, the FSOA reacted by opening a financing window for NGOs in 2022. In the opinion of the evaluation team, the delegation of the park management from CENAGREF to APN was a necessary decision, since without professional management, the park would not have been managed adequately. The response to the conflict situation due to the fence, looks adequate to the evaluation team as well as the decision to resume funding after APN committed to working with local communities.

The deterioration of the security situation from 2021 onwards constituted the second important change in the implementation context. According to a limited number of interview partners, FSOA's Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) that was in place in 2021 may not have been commensurate with the deteriorating security context, in particular with funding made available to NGOs. Nevertheless, the FSOA fulfilled its legal obligations in terms of having an operational environmental and social management system, and gradually added additional safeguard measures, such as regular on-site visits by the operation officer, audits of grant recipients and online report of their activities.

Rating summary of relevance: successful (2)

The project's objective **aligned well with relevant political and institutional frameworks**, matching both national and international policies on biodiversity and development cooperation. It was consistent with collaborative efforts at the sub-regional level.

The design of the project established sustainable financing for protected areas and ensured predictable funding for the PNP. The FSOA's structure promoted transparency and donor confidence.

The project adapted to major changes, such as new park management and a worsening security situation, by updating funding arrangements and safeguards.

The objectives of the measures geared to the development needs and capacities of the target group and the core problem was identified. It was also geared towards sustainable development. Initially, the design addressed the needs of local communities whose livelihoods depended on PNP resources, with AVIGREFs supporting benefit sharing in cooperation with the park administration.

Monitoring of socio-economic impacts on communities was not systematically established, and the connection with broader development cooperation objectives was weak, focusing more on conservation than on poverty reduction or agriculture. The contribution of the project's objectives to local livelihoods was overestimated. The needs of particularly disadvantaged, vulnerable groups and women were not addressed in the design.

In summary, initial policy alignment and financing design were strong, and the relevance to local beneficiaries was and remains high. In terms of relevance, the project is rated as successful.

Coherence

5. Internal coherence

The project is in line with BMZ and the countries' policies and strategies (see Relevance) At its start in 2012, the project was incorporated into the German development cooperation programme 'Promotion of Agriculture in Benin', which aimed to improve agricultural performance in Benin while taking environmental aspects and climate change into account, and to reduce poverty among the population. The DC program ended in 2017. The GIZ implemented the technical cooperation (TC) module 'ProAgri' (PN 2009 67 521) and subsequently the module 'Transboundary Biosphere Reserve WAP-Region' (RBT-WAP), that contributed to four of the five DC program's indicators. The project contributed to the 5th program indicator "The FSOA Environmental Foundation has been set up and uses its investment income (incl. the binational own contribution) to finance the annual activity plans of the protected areas, at least 90 % of which are implemented". The results hypothesis between the module objective of the project and the target system of the DC program was logically weak (see chapter Relevance). There were also strong synergies between the Benin funding window (objective of this EPE) and the Niger financing window (EUR 5 million) since some of the budget for institutional support (EUR 4 million) has supported the initiation and development of the Burkina and Niger financing windows and FSOA managed to fund the entire WAP region.

Nevertheless, the coordination between FC and TC projects during their implementation was strong. At the national level, FC and TC projects coordinated their initiatives with the Ministry of Agriculture via the structures set up for this purpose, a Supervising and Monitoring Committee (*Comité d'Orientation et de Suivi*, COS) and a Steering Committee, with regular meetings convened as required. At the local level, close cooperation was established and maintained with the TC ProAgri project and RBT WAP. The co-operation focused on strengthening the socio-economic development and resilience of local populations. TC supported agricultural and economic development in the peripheral area. At the same time, FC, through FSOA, focused on protected area management, including the cooperation with the local population and the livelihood benefits they could derive from the PNP and buffer zone. This fruitful cooperation took the form of joint annual planning, joint missions, the shared organisation and funding of activities, studies and infrastructure. As a concrete example, ProAgri financed a study to strengthen CENGAREF's internal reporting capacities. The three projects also cooperated with the same local partners and used a joint monitoring and evaluation system. From 2023 onwards, the I-Know platform developed by TC is also used by the FSOA to monitor its activities and results in peripheral areas.

The project was consistent with international norms and standards to which German development cooperation is committed.

6. External coherence

The project appropriately supported the efforts of the government of Benin. Before 2017, the project funded CENAGREF to implement its management plan in the PNP. This particularly contributed to Benin's efforts to develop the tourism sector in the PNP, as set out in the 2016 Government Action Plan. Since 2018, the FSOA has continued its funding, this time for implementing AP-N's annual action plan for the PNP. The project thus supported the Beninese government's decision and efforts to delegate protected area management to APN.

At the design stage, the project was aligned with the WB multi-donor National PAGAP project (2012-2016). During its implementation period, the project cooperated with various technical and financial cooperation projects run by several donors.

The FSOA was initially set up with technical support from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The project built upon these initial efforts, although a large part of the internal documentation had to be updated when the project's technical assistance started.

Cooperation with the WB took different forms. Firstly, in 2014, the bank contributed USD 1 million to the foundation's capitalisation through the Global Environment Facility. Secondly, the WB PAGAP project developed the accounting procedure manual of the FSOA in close coordination with the evaluated project.

The project also collaborated on border security issues with the EU-funded Sahel emergency program, a topic of high relevance in the context of increasing border crossing by armed groups in the WAP complex. Cooperation took place on cross-border protected area management with the EU-funded Support Program for the "Entente" Parks (*Programme d'Appui aux Parcs de l'Entente*).

KfW had been discussing with AFD since 2012 a potential equity stake in the FSOA. These discussions concluded in 2022 as part of the establishment of a regional financing window (the entire WAP complex), marking a significant milestone in the Foundation's regionalization and sustainability.

At the subregional level, the project also regularly communicated with Sahel Alliance partners and initiatives to identify synergies on aspects of transboundary cooperation and security.

The project established consistency with international norms and standards, setting up the FSOA Environmental and Social Management System in line with World Bank Environmental and Social Standards (ESS), making explicit ESS commitments, and excluding investments in controversial sectors. Through the FSOA, coordination among donors was also enhanced.

These collaborations at strategic and implementation levels supported the project's successful integration into the broader technical and financial cooperation landscape. They also helped to reinforce the project's results, impacts and sustainability. The foundation was and remains a good vehicle for ensuring strong external coherence, since other donors decided to capitalize the Foundation, use the monitoring system and the same implementation structures.

Rating summary of coherence: successful (2)

The project was integrated into a German development cooperation program, but there was a weak logical link between the project's objectives and the program. Cooperation between FC and TC projects was strong, supported by national and local structures, with joint missions, shared infrastructure, and capacity development.

The project established consistency with international norms and standards, making explicit ESG commitments, and excluding investments in controversial sectors.

The project supported the government of Benin's efforts by contributing to sustainable protected area management through CENAGREF and later APN, following government direction. It was aligned with the World Bank multi-donor project at the design stage and maintained partnerships with a range of development actors during implementation, including technical and financial contributions from the World Bank, IUCN, EU, and AFD. The project also collaborated with Sahel Alliance partners on cross-border protected area management and regional security issues.

In summary, the project demonstrated strong internal coordination and was generally coherent with international norms and external donor initiatives, supporting integration and sustainability.

Overall, the evaluation team concludes that in terms of internal and external coherence, the project has been successful.

Effectiveness

7. Achievement of objectives

The projects' objective at outcome level was adjusted under the EPE as following: "Securing the operation and effective management of protected areas in northern Benin, mainly Pendjari National Park". The achievement of this objective is as follows:

Indicator	Value during project design	Target value at EPE	Actual value at AK	Actual value at EPE
(1) Proportion of PNP operating costs (management plans) covered by FSOA funds	N/A, the FSOA did not exist yet.	2020: At least 90% of the work plans are fully financed and implemented.	In 2021, the FSOA provided EUR 676,560 to APN for the management of the PNP. This corresponded to 27 % of the operational costs reported by APN. With additional financing from the government of Benin and philanthropy, most of the activities in the action plan could be carried out.	In 2025, the FSOA provided EUR 750,000 in funding to APN for the management of the PNP. This corresponded to approximately 19 % of the financing requirements reported by APN. These funds are predictable and received in time to implement part of the park's work plan. The remaining part of the PNP budget is financed by the Beninese government (EUR 1 million per year) and by APN sponsors. ☒Target value partially achieved
(2) The park management's biodiversity monitoring system is functioning.	N/A, new indicator at EPE.	Functioning biodiversity monitoring system in the PNP.	N/A, new indicator at EPE	Standardized data collection system across the 23 Parks managed by APN, supported by technical expertise based at APN headquarters and standardized data collection tools, including aerial inventories and camera-trap monitoring. Large mammals are monitored species, but indicators for birdlife and flora also exist. Other biodiversity parameters, like forest cover, were not monitored. ☒Target value achieved

Indicator	Value during project design	Target value at EPE	Actual value at AK	Actual value at EPE
(3) The local population and communities of the peripheral area participate effectively in the management of the national park.	N/A, this indicator was formulated in 2021.	Participation increasing	2020: FSOA financed APN for multiple activities[2]	The AVIGREFs are represented by their union on the PNP's management committee and the CENAGREF's board of directors. ☒Target value partially achieved
(4) By investing its capital, the FSOA obtains a financial return in line with the planned investment strategy.	2015 according to the first version of the investment strategy: Target return 4.93%	2020 according to current investment strategy: Target return 5%	Actual return 2021: average of 6.06% since the FSOA was established	Actual return 2024: average of 7.5% since the FSOA was established ☒Target value achieved
(5) Financial and organisational capacity of FSOA secures its adequate functioning.	N/A, the FSOA did not exist yet.	By 2019, the FSOA has the financial resources, organizational capacities and procedures for allocating funds and monitoring established with the recipients to ensure its core function.	The FSOA is fully operational in Benin and has all the necessary processes and instruments to ensure its core function. An environmental and social management system was introduced in 2021 and ensures the environmental and social compatibility of FSOA financings.	In 2025, the FSOA will have the financial reserves to be able to finance PNP management for the Benin window for two subsequent years without additional income. The FSOA team has been strengthened with the arrival of two additional employees in 2024 and 2025. The Foundation has the organisational resources and procedures necessary to perform its main function for the Benin window. Strengthening of the ESMS might be required to ensure transparency of NGO funding in the currently difficult security situation. ☒Target value achieved

Table 3 : Outcome target achievement
Source: *Various Project documents used as sources*
Note: *The data shown here is based on data from project documents, and sources from FSOA mainly*

8. Contribution to the achievement of objectives

Outcome indicator 1: Proportion of PNP operating costs (management plans) covered by FSOA funds

The capitalisation of the FSOA and the technical assistance provided by the project to FSOA have greatly contributed to creating and strengthening the FSOA's financial standing, and to introducing the administrative and financial procedures necessary for financing the PNP's management costs. At 31/12/2021, FSOA's overall portfolio under management exceeded EUR 52.6m, with an average annual nominal return of +7.9 %, and a total gross gain of EUR 17.9m, fully reinvested. When inflation in the Eurozone and Benin is taken into account, the average annual return remains at 6.6 % per annum, with net gains of almost EUR 15 million. At the end of the project, the FC contribution to the capital stock of the Benin window alone was 56 %. The Capitalized interests represented 33 %, the contribution from Benin State 4 %, GEF/WB 2 % and available cash 6 %.

Through this support, it is evident that the project has enabled the Foundation to become a reliable partner of APN for the annual funding of the management of the PNP. At the end of the project period, FSOA's funding covered 27 % of the annual operational costs for managing the park. This share is approximately 19 % at the time of the EPE. This decrease in the share from

- Community development plans for both Beninese national parks
- Results planned by FSOA in 2021: By 2023, the fringes of the protected areas of the WAP Complex are zoned with the formal consent of the population
- By 2024, at least 1,000 ha of rehabilitated land will be sustainably managed by local residents organised in farmers' groups
- Land use plan for the ZOC
- Reduction of conflicts between local communities and wildlife by strengthening the capacities of the AVIGREFs
- Environmental education and Teaching materials
- 10 "environmental clubs" for reforestation
- Municipal community waste disposal organization (Umuganda village)

FSOA funding reflects an increase of the total budget, while the annual contribution in nominal terms remained relatively stable from 2019 through 2021. This means that the FSOA's contribution to the operational costs is a minority compared to other public and private funds. Nevertheless, FSOA's funding is predictable and secure, which APN acknowledges as a significant contribution to its business model of managing protected areas as a private organisation. Along with the Beninese government's contribution, FSOA funding represents the most stable funding for the sustainable management of the PNP. In addition, the project financed key infrastructure development through one-time investments (e.g., EUR 717,730 disbursed in 2016 for most urgent infrastructure improvements). In this sense, the project's contribution to financing the implementation of the annual work plans can be considered significant. According to the FSOA, which refers to the APN's annual reports, the level of implementation of the work plans is generally high (yet not quantified). Only a few activities require re-planning or postponement to the following year.

The indicator was partially achieved.

Outcome indicator 2: Functioning biodiversity monitoring system in the PNP

Before delegating park management to APN, the FSOA funded aerial monitoring campaigns for large mammal populations in collaboration with the CENAGREF. From 2017 onwards, APN has introduced its own standard data collection and monitoring system to the PNP, which is deployed across the 23 African protected areas managed by APN. This system incorporates standardised field monitoring tools, such as transects and camera traps, and regular aerial surveys of large mammals. Park staff and visiting experts also collect data on birds and flora. Monitoring activities are included in the share of the PNP management plan financed through FSOA. For instance, in 2019, it covered the costs of aerial monitoring. However, most of the monitoring costs were covered by other APN funders and the initiative of improving the monitoring system resulted from APNs take-over of park management. We conclude that the project made an essential contribution to the PNP's biodiversity monitoring system while CENAGREF oversaw park management. This contribution has decreased since the APN has been responsible for park management, as APN independently ensured that a functioning monitoring system – the project's target – was in place. The indicator was achieved. However, the monitoring system was reduced to wildlife population and did not include other para meters on a regular basis like invasive species, maintenance of high value forests, monitoring of endangered species or others. Conservation of protected areas and biodiversity (wildlife) and forest cover were achieved (see also impact section). The FSOA indicated that data on forest cover change is available, yet despite repeated requests, no data was made available. The indicator was achieved.

Outcome indicator 3: Participation of the local population in park management

Before 2017, the project supported CENAGREF which followed a co-management approach together with the AVRIGREFs established in all villages in the peripheral area. However, these village associations lost most of their ability to act in 2017, when responsibility for managing the park was transferred to APN and the hunting licenses were no longer issued. APN limited its activities in the peripheral area to communication, awareness raising, and small-scale income generation activities rather than supporting broader economic development. Other forms of co management were not practised, apart from hiring local population as park rangers.

Recognising the important role that the AVIGREFs had to play in ensuring the participation of local communities in park management, the FSOA played a key advocacy and de-escalation role alongside other national and international partners in convincing the APN of the importance of resuming cooperation with the AVIGREFs and of engaging the local population in daily park management activities wherever possible. This led to the signing of a tripartite agreement between APN, the FSOA, and the government of Benin that redefined the criteria by which the FSOA could finance APN's activities. Transparency and the involvement of local communities and AVIGREF and a fixed quota for community development activities were notably set as requirements by the FSOA for them to resume funding park management. Following this agreement, the FSOA stringently screened APN's activities at the planning stage and conducted on-the-ground monitoring after implementation. From that point onwards, APN has been recruiting park rangers, community members and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the villages in the peripheral area, resulting in EUR 6,089,794 of direct benefits in 2024 (see impact chapter).

In terms of representation, the AVIGREFs are represented by the Union of AVIGREF at the park's management committee, partly thanks to the advocacy work of the FSOA. The Union of AVIGREF is also a member of CENAGREF's board, enabling it to participate in the definition of conservation policies in the country. In this sense, the local community participates in the park management through the AVIGREFs.

Over time, the local communities in the peripheral area benefited less from the funding allocated by FSOA to the park from 2017 onwards because the income from hunting fees ended and the park management changed to APN which lacked the expertise on development issues in the peripheral zone. While the participation of local communities in terms of financial benefits decreased during project implementation - once APN took over park management –, the project (FSOA) played a vital role in reducing that decrease through improving the participation of community representatives in the park's governance system, and through constant pressure on APN to improve the effectiveness of their activities in the peripheral zone. The indicator is therefore rated as partially achieved.

Outcome indicator 4: Alignment of FSOA's financial returns with its investment strategy

The technical and financial support provided by the project to the FSOA enabled the selection of a qualified investment portfolio manager. The implementation consultant's effective guidance on the investment strategy produced financial returns of more than the target. Notably, the strategy of using project resources to finance the APN in the initial years and then the financial returns accumulated by the FSOA from 2022 onwards enabled the Foundation to reinvest its annual interest for several years, thereby generating additional revenue. Information on the share of FC and revenue contribution to the Foundation's capital is provided under Outcome indicator 1 above. In conclusion, the project made a key contribution to the financial sustainability of FSOA at the end of the evaluation period, which has continued to the present day. The indicator was achieved.

Outcome indicator 5: FSOA's capacities to carry out its main function

When the project started, the FSOA had been established and received short-term expert support through a World Bank project. However, the investment strategy and manual were not suited to the status of the Foundation. Governance structures, in particular, FSOA's board did not yet have the capacities to play an active role. Since the start of the project's technical support in 2014, the implementation consultant, through its core team and external experts, played a leading role in developing the Foundation's operational manual, investment strategy, fundraising strategy and communication strategy. The executive secretariat developed an internal manual for allocating FSOA funds, and the team of hired consultants played an essential role in making it operational.

Project support for the FSOA has therefore been instrumental in the continuous development of the Foundation. At the end of the evaluation period, the Foundation was fully operational. It had the administrative and financial capacities to fulfil its mission. An ESMS was introduced in 2021 and ensured the environmental and social compatibility of FSOA financing. After the evaluation period, the FSOA team has been strengthened with the arrival of two additional employees in 2024 and 2025.

Looking into the future, it may be necessary to strengthen the ESMS to further mitigate the risk of misuse of funds by the recipient NGOs in the current highly challenging security situation. The indicator was achieved.

External factors:

There was one main positive factor and several negative factors that directly impacted the project's ability to achieve its objectives.

Regarding positive external factors, the strong performance of the markets enabled the FSOA to generate EUR 12.7 million as of December 2021 for the Benin window. This directly contributed to the Foundation reaching its investment targets and providing the PNP with sufficient and predictable funding.

The first negative external factor is consecutive to the transfer of park management to APN as described under Relevance (adaptability of the project). APN pursued a restrictive protected area management approach, terminated trophy hunting activities and ceased cooperating with the AVRIGREFs, resulting in reduced benefits for the local population from the parks and in sharp tensions with the population in turn leading to the local people damaging park infrastructure. However, this factor can also be viewed positively, as APN achieved better conservation results than CENAGREF did previously (see the Efficiency section).

Secondly, the main external factor that could have affected the project's results was the deterioration in the security situation. APN's income from wildlife tourism collapsed. Attacks from armed groups in the villages of the peripheral zone led to a deterioration in the economic situation of the local population. The gradual reinforcement of the Benin army's presence within the PNP has, for the time being, limited jihadist incursions into the area. A 10 km-wide strip along the border with Burkina Faso, as well as key infrastructure located within the park (e.g. communication antennas), is now solely the army's responsibility. In this context, APNs' professionalism, an increase in the number of rangers and strict enforcement of the law on protected area management have limited the negative impact of insecurity to date.

9. Quality of implementation

Most stakeholders attributed the FSOA's rapid development and effective governance to **high-quality implementation and proactive technical support from the implementation consultant**, which also improved funding allocation. The selection of a qualified investment portfolio manager and consultant guidance produced strong financial results. Using project funds to finance APN in early years and reinvesting FSOA returns from 2022 enabled multi-year reinvestment and revenue growth.

A significant weakness was the **absence of a monitoring and evaluation officer** (even part-time), which meant regular monitoring of beneficiary participation and of impacts on livelihoods could not be carried out.

In 2018 KfW upgraded the project risk from FI/B to FI/B+ after tensions following the transfer of park management to APN, prompting the requirement for an ESMS. The ESMS was launched in 2021 based on World Bank ESS 9 for financial intermediaries. The ESMS manual mandates a grievance and conflict resolution mechanism, nomination of an Environmental and Social E&S officer, ESMS training, emergency preparedness/response plans, and a stakeholder engagement plan.

In practice some safeguards were only partially implemented: the grievance mechanism was not available on the FSOA website during the evaluation and could be better adapted for non-digital users. A KfW-commissioned assessment also found weak documentation of how sustainability is embedded in investment processes (no binding criteria, KPIs, methodology or risk handling) and recommended adding sustainability and mission-relevant metrics (e.g., biodiversity, Greenhouse Gases) to reporting. Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and women were not particularly addresses during implementation and in the design.

Implementation and financial strategy were strong and well-coordinated, but FSOA could not entirely address Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and E&S capacity gaps, fully operationalize accessible grievance channels, and formalize sustainability metrics and documentation while keeping measures operationally and financially feasible. The ESMS still needs to be filled with life and be applied in the day-to-day implementation.

10. Unintended effects (positive or negative)

No unintended effects have been observed at the outcome level.

Rating summary of effectiveness: successful (2)

Outcome indicators 2, 4 and 5 were fully achieved while indicators 1 and 3 were partially achieved. The main focus of the project, namely establishing sustainable financing for the PNP management plans, conservation of protected areas and biodiversity (wildlife) and forest cover were achieved. The outputs and capacities created are used. The establishment of sustainable funding in a difficult context is rated highly here, compensating for some weaknesses in other areas.

Annual work plans were partly implemented through predictable funding, the functioning biodiversity monitoring system of APN was supported, and financial returns exceeded targets. The FSOA became fully operational, capable of managing and allocating funds transparently. Community participation in park management increased, but direct benefits to the local population were limited. The presence of AVIGREFs in management structures improved due to sustained advocacy.

The internal factor of strengthening FSOA to finance the park management and support livelihood were decisive for the achievements of the objectives.

External factors influenced effectiveness: Favourable market conditions aided financial results, while the transfer of park management to APN and the deteriorating security situation created tensions and restricted local participation and benefits.

The project's technical support and management were generally of high quality, contributing to rapid institutional development and effective financial strategies. In 2021, an ESMS was introduced to ensure the environmental and social compatibility of FSOA financing. However, there was limited impact monitoring, and gender outcomes were not specifically addressed or tracked.

Efficiency

11. Production efficiency

The total volume of the project was EUR 41.9 million. It was invested into capitalisation (1) and technical support activities (2).

Financing of capitalisation (1):

In total, EUR 41.9 million were invested into capitalisation, of which EUR 31.9 million were for the Benin window (four capitalisation stages by KfW) and EUR 10 million for the Burkina Faso window (see table 1 for the detailed funding allocation). The FSOA itself is a small organisation with few staff and low operational costs and lean FSOA's management with low overhead costs.

The foundation's capital has generated a capital gain of EUR 12.7 million during the project period evaluated for the Benin window (and EUR 20 million all windows taken together at the time of the EPE), or EUR 10.6 million when inflation in the Euro zone is considered. This was possible, first, thanks to an average return of 6.06 % during the implementation period instead of the expected 5 %. Second, thanks to the use of KfW funds for the investments until 2022, the date on which the first financing with APN with the FSOA's own funds was carried out. The project's inputs dedicated to the capitalization of the FSOA have therefore produced high financial outputs.

Moreover, registering the FSOA under British law granted it tax exemption. This means that 100 % of funds transferred from the Foundation's bank accounts were received by the intended recipients, thereby ensuring efficient funding.

It is also important to note that, when the FSOA was established, the Beninese government contributed EUR 1.5 million to its capital. This increased the efficiency of the project's contribution to the foundation's capital. Additionally, since 2017, the government of Benin has financed the management of the PNP by providing the APN with annual funding of EUR 1,000,000.

The co-financing of specific capacity-building activities, studies and infrastructure by other GIZ projects (ProAgri and RBT WAP) and donors, such as the World Bank, has enabled the project to achieve the expected results at reduced cost.

The costs associated with APN's management of the park are much higher than those of CENAGREF, increasing from around EUR 1 million in 2016 to EUR 2.5 million in 2021. Yet, APN has achieved positive outcomes regarding park conservation and increased wildlife populations, justifying the substantial additional costs occurring for example due to infrastructure development, such as fences, expensive lodges and new park headquarters. However, the FSOA does not consider it financially viable to continue managing the park with such a high budget in the long term. The Foundation believes that there is significant scope for improving efficiency, and that the current level of protection could be maintained with an annual budget of EUR 2 million.

Financing of technical support (2):

Additional, EUR 10 million were invested into technical support for the Benin window. Table 3 summarizes the cost distribution of the main financing items and assesses their efficiency. Generally, the budget of EUR 10 million was spent in seven years instead of the planned three years. The main reason for this was the annual level of financing for the PNP which was lower than expected. Based on an evaluation of the parks' financing needs, the PNP required EUR 677,000 per year (2016-2021). This resulted in a extended implementation period until the project funds were exhausted.

Technical support item	Share of funding (total EUR 10 million)	Assessment
Conservation of the PNP (and the WNP from 2019 onwards)	70.7 %	70.7% of the budget was used to finance PNP infrastructure and operating costs, a key factor in the effective management of the park. From that, we conclude that these investments, taken from the technical support budget, were allocated efficiently, since wildlife numbers remained stable, forest cover was maintained and management plans were financed and implemented.
Technical assistance by Implementation consultant	17.3 %	The extended implementation period resulted in higher costs for identical outputs, leading to lower efficiency. Nevertheless, the 17.3% share allocated to consultant costs is within the expected range relative to the project's total cost. This cost represents an annual cost of around EUR 200,000 per year with an exception in 2018, where the costs increased to EUR 455,826. The reason for the peak in 2018 is not known to the evaluation team. In addition, the quality of the technical assistance provided is recognised as one of the factors contributing to the project's success. We therefore conclude that the technical inputs provided by the project resulted in high-quality outputs.
FSOA's overheads	8.4 %	The FSOA was managed by a small team and the overhead costs of 8% of the total project costs can be considered as efficient. Nowadays these overhead costs correspond to less than 20% of the annual interests on the foundation's investments which is the level of cost expected for this type of foundation

*Table **4** : Main financing items for technical support*
***Note:** Additionally, 1.4% were spent on investments, 1.3% on other FSOA costs and contingent funds and 0.8% on capacity development.*

Overall production efficiency is assessed as good since the inputs were used adequately to achieve the outputs. Through project support, funding for the PNP management was secured and additional funds were leveraged from other donors.

12. Allocation efficiency

In 2021, FSOA's share of PNP management funding covered 27 % of management costs. Even though only about one third of the total costs are covered through FSOA, the APN recognises the importance of this regular funding for long-term park management. Around 50 % of the PNP's funding depends on fundraising activities, which are less secure. If park management soon became more efficient and decreased to EUR 2 million, as assumed by the FSOA, its share would account for around 40 % of PNP's annual financing needs.

If the project would have supported the implementation of the PNP management through CENAGREF, the costs most likely would have been lower, but without achieving the intended results of biodiversity and wildlife conservation.

From an ex-post perspective, no alternative ways would have allowed the FSOA to be better equipped, either financially or technically. In particular, the project's capitalisation, combined with a suitable investment strategy and cost-efficient technical support, led to stable financing for the PNP. This was instrumental in achieving the positive changes observed in biodiversity conservation in the park.

Regarding the impact of the project on the target group, the delegation of park management to APN disrupted the previous benefit-sharing mechanism. After funding APN for several years and realising that its impact on the population of the peripheral area was limited, the FSOA required APN to allocate 20 % of its budget to development actions in the peripheral zone and 5 % to governance. However, APN allocated only 5-10 % to development actions, and this funding was not used effectively as it made only a marginal contribution to improving the living conditions of the local population. Better results could potentially have been achieved in terms of improving the living conditions of local people if direct funding had been made available to AVIGREF, other civil society organizations, or the communes. The FSOA realized this too, and in 2022 opened a new window to provide direct financing to Non-Government Organisation(NGOs) (with the first payments made in 2024).

In addition, part of the funding allocated by the FSOA for PNP management benefits local communities through the salaries paid to local rangers and service contracts with local small and medium enterprises for maintenance and construction works. However, data on these benefits is only available from 2022 onwards. In 2022, these benefits amounted to EUR 3.4 million for the PNP and WNP taken together.

Rating summary of efficiency: successful (2)

The project's funds were mainly distributed to capitalization and technical support to FSOA. The FSAO investment **then resulted in conservation and effective management of the PNP**. The budget was spent over a longer period than planned, but the budget share for the implementation consultants stayed within expected levels, and most funds went to park management, reflecting efficient production of outputs.

Importantly, FSOA's management was lean with low overhead costs, and **the investment approach generated high returns, enabling stable financing and reserves**. Tax exemption and co-financing from the Beninese government and other donors further increased production efficiency.

On allocation efficiency, transferring park management to APN led to substantially higher management costs, which reduced the share of FSOA funding in the PNP annual budget. Nevertheless, this contribution remained critical. Although conservation outcomes improved, there is scope for greater efficiency in park management.

If the project would have supported the implementation of the PNP management through CENAGREF, the costs most likely would have been lower, but without achieving the intended results of biodiversity and wildlife conservation.

Project funding provided stable support for management, but APN's approach weakened benefit-sharing with local communities. Only a small share of funding went to development actions, limiting the impact on the target group. Some benefits through local jobs and contracts were tracked only recently.

In summary, we conclude that in terms of efficiency, the project was successful.

Impact

13. Overarching developmental changes

The DC program objective was "the efficiency of Beninese agriculture has been strengthened, considering environmental and climate aspects and reducing poverty among the population". The project objective thus has only a very weak link with the program objective. Because of that, the project objective was adjusted under this EPE as follows: "Preservation of the protected area and biodiversity, and improvement of the livelihoods of the local population in and around the PNP".

The achievement of the program objective at impact level can be summarized via the following impact indicators:

Indicator	Value during project design	Target value at EPE (review)	Actual value at AK	Actual value at EPE
(1) Wildlife populations in the Pendjari Biosphere Reserve remain stable.	Wildlife population Increasing Trophy hunting brought in around EUR 300,000 a year for AVIGREF before 2017.	Stable	Stable - Animal census in Pendjari in spring 2022 confirmed the stability of 'endangered' animal species (including 2,930 elephants, 5,323 buffalos and 718 hippos). - Lion density trend 2014-2019: +69 %. - Hyena density trend 2014-2019: +44 %. - Some species are declining, for example the roan antelope: 2,320 individuals in 2019 - 977 individuals in 2024 Source: FSOA, WAP large carnivore inventory	2024 census in Pendjari: 4,641 elephants, 8,464 buffalo (high inter-annual variability), hippos - no data. ☒Target value achieved
(2) Forest cover in the PNP remains stable.	2010: 7.58kha within protected areas of Tanguiéta	Stable	Relatively stable	Relatively stable ☒Target value achieved
(3) The local population benefits financially from PA management (income from park entrance fees, trophy hunting licenses, and biodiversity-based income-generating activities)	Increasing	Stable	See data from MOI-3 (New) for 2020 - By 2024, the FSOA will support income-generating activities for the benefit of the local population with at least EUR 1.5 million, including at least EUR 225.000 specifically for women.	APN involves local communities in the following ways: Recruitment of park rangers, recruitment of community members and SMEs for maintenance and development work on park infrastructure. The total value generated from these benefits (for PNP and WNP taken together) is: 2022: EUR 3,412,812; 2023: EUR 5,703,590; 2024: EUR 6,089,794. - Benefits from tourism and trophy hunting (licenses and meat) stopped (not a project decision) - Construction of water points for livestock - Provision of 670 beehives and training - Shea butter and fish farming production, vegetable cultivation - Cash for work for the construction of park infrastructure Indicator partially achieved. See data from MOI-3 (New) ☒Target value partially achieved

Table 5 *: Impact target achievement*
Source: *Various project documents*
Note: *Forest Cover is defined as a canopy density of <15% to include the typical less dense forests of Northern Benin.*

14. Contribution to overarching intended developmental changes

This EPE looks at the project’s contribution to wildlife populations, forest cover and the local communities’ financial wellbeing. Indicators for bird and plant diversity were included and according to APN monitored; however, no data was provided during the evaluation.

The project started in 2012. The DC program was closed in 2017. Positive changes in biodiversity within the PNP and in the quality of life of the local communities living in the park’s peripheral area are used as a basis for assessing the impacts.

We conclude that the project's contribution to the sustainable protection of the protected area and its biodiversity can be considered significant.

Impact indicator 1: Wildlife populations in the Pendjari Biosphere Reserve

The project supported the implementation of the annual management plans, which included anti-poaching measures, habitat protection and regular monitoring of key large mammal populations. It was thereby expected to stabilize wildlife populations. Moreover, the project also fostered better cooperation between the APN and the surrounding communities, thereby averting potential damage to the park's wildlife and biodiversity that would likely have resulted from ongoing conflict.

The data on wildlife population since 2017 comes from APN’s standardized data collection system, which is applied across the 23 protected areas in 13 African countries managed by APN. The monitoring is supported by technical expertise based at APN headquarters and standardized field monitoring tools, including the use of transects, regular aerial surveys of large mammals and camera-trap monitoring. Park staff and visiting experts also collect data on birds and flora.

The data indicates that the populations of most large mammals and carnivores have increased. Meanwhile, a decline in one species has been observed, showing that improved park management may not have a positive impact on all species, as there are other factors such as diseases and prey-predator relationship which drive population trends over time. Table 6 summarizes the data available. It is not specified if these data relate to PNP only (subject of this EPE) or the entire W complex.

Specie	Time frame	%-change (absolute numbers)	Comment
Elephants	2003 2019-2024	1,131 +63 % (from 1,729 to 2,811)	
Buffalos	2003 2019-2024	4,090 + 75 % (from 3,702 to 6,495)	Buffalos exhibit significant interannual variability. Over a longer period (2003–2024), buffalo populations have increased.
Lions	2014 – 2019	+ 69 % (estimation of 79 lions in 2019 (48-110), +32 lions since 2014)	
Hyenas	2014 – 2019	+44 % (estimation of 164 hyenas in 2019 (114-258), +50 hyenas since 2014)	
Roan antelopes	2003 2019 – 2024	2,605 - 58 % (2,320 to 977)	

Table 6 *: Change in wildlife populations, over time and by species*
Source: *Monitoring data provided by APN*
Note: *Most wildlife species remained stable, while the population of roan antelopes went down. The reason for the decrease is not known to the consultants.*

In addition to these flagship species, APN stated that other biodiversity indicators, such as bird and plant diversity, were monitored; however, no data was provided during the evaluation.

It is plausible that the project played a pivotal role in stabilising and increasing wildlife populations in the PNP. Aside from generally financing implementation of management plans, it more concretely also funded infrastructure (e.g., access roads) and partially funded ground-based and aerial monitoring systems.

The project contributed positively to institutions and development policy. As a government institution, CENAGREF has lost the responsibility and, to some extent, the capacity to manage a park such as Pendjari early in the project. The weaknesses identified at the start of the project, such as the absence of an annual management plan, justified the decision to support the APN as the semi-private manager of the park rather than attempting to build the capacity of failing institutions.

The positive experiences gained, and challenges solved during the project implementation in the PNP enabled the approach of a private company to manage the PNP to be successfully scaled up in W National Park. For instance, following the conflict between the APN and the local population in the PNP, the FSOA ensured that all local WNP rangers were trained to APN standards, enabling them to be employed by APN. The FSOA also advocated establishing a framework for consultation with local populations and AVIGREFs in the WNP at an early stage.

The positive results the FSOA achieved in the PNP have also anchored the legitimacy of the Foundation as a stable, effective and reliable entity for funding protected areas in the WAP complex. It was on this basis that the regionalisation of the FSOA was initiated in Burkina Faso and Niger. The solid governance and management structures put in place within the FSOA have moreover facilitated the entry of new partners into the foundation's capital, notably the AFD.

Impact indicator 2: Forest cover

Although not formulated as an indicator or objective in the original project design, the project was expected to stabilize forest cover in the parks through improved park management, which has the potential to reduce forest degradation from firewood and charcoal production, encroachments by farmers and herders, and uncontrolled forest fires.

First, we look at forest cover in entire Benin, using Global Forest Watch (GFW) data and including all forests with a canopy density >30 %. From 2000 to 2020, Benin experienced a net change of -358 kha (-7.1 %) in tree cover.[3] From 2021to 2024, 93% of forest cover loss in the country occurred within natural forest, yet only <0.1% concerned humid primary forests (32 ha), thereby decreasing the total area of humid primary forest in Benin by 1.7 %. The by far most important driver of losses was permanent agriculture, and to a much smaller extent settlements/infrastructure and logging.

Figure 3 displays forest cover gains (blue) and losses (pink) in Benin and surrounding areas since 2000. However, the forest gains in the South are the result of palm oil plantations or shea plantations and not forests. The right-side displays forest cover loss with a canopy density >30 %, thereby applying a stricter definition to include only denser forests. The left side displays forest cover loss with >15 % canopy density, hence including also less dense "forests", thereby including for example typical savanna woodlands, which are common in Northern Benin.

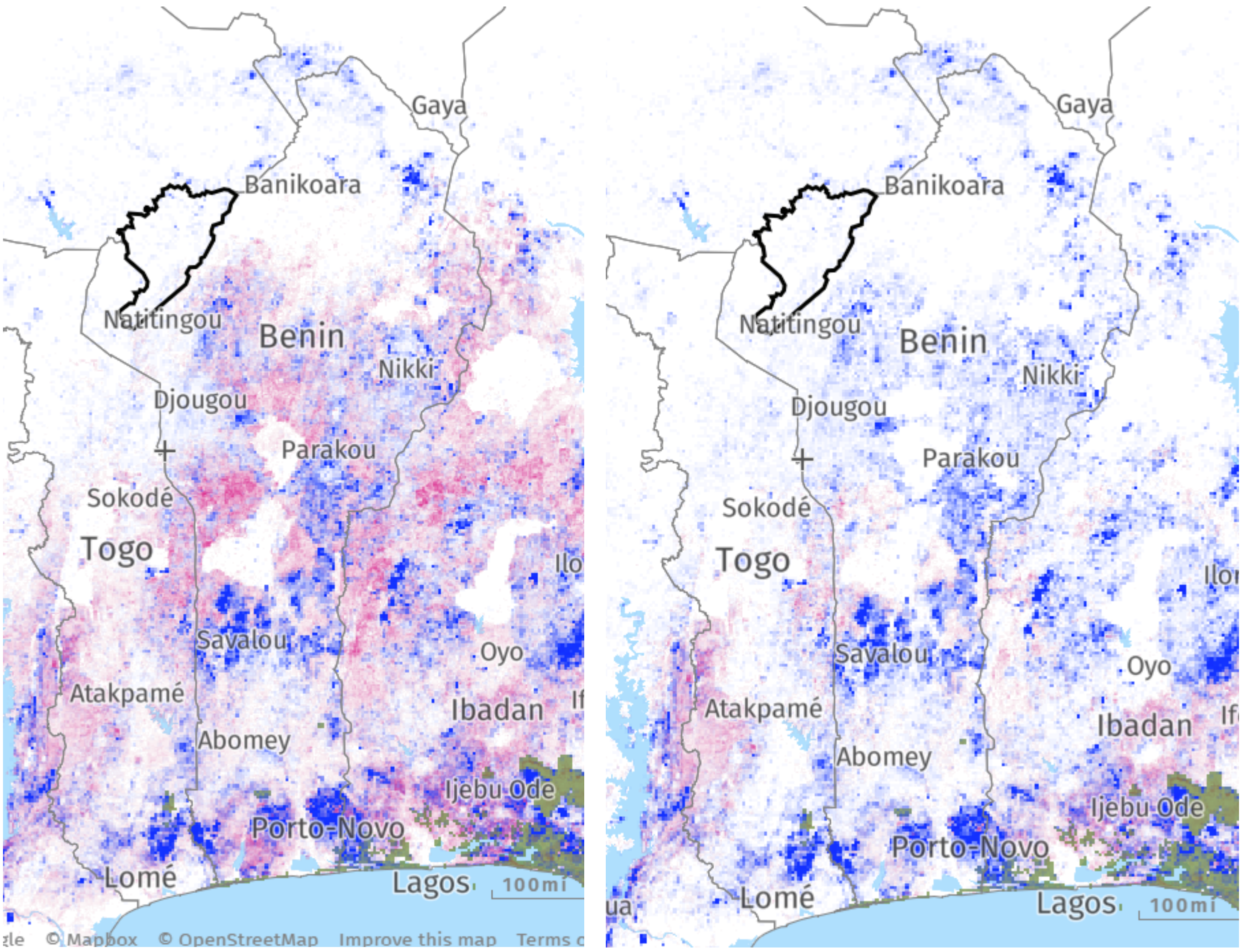


Figure 3 *: Forest cover gains (blue from 2001-2020) and forest cover losses (pink, from 2000-2024) in Benin and neighbouring areas.*
Source*: Global Forest Watch.*
Notes*: The left side displays forest cover loss with >15% canopy density, the right side with >30% canopy density. Tanguiéta is thickly outlined. The indicated forest gains in the south are mainly oil palm plantations or shea plantations. Therefore, we do not consider them as forest gains.*

Second, we look only at protected areas of the municipality Tanguiéta, which includes the PNP. As of 2000, only 57 % of land cover of protected areas of Tanguiéta was non-natural tree cover and 11 % was natural forest. Both maps above visually

[3] Overall, 4,300 kha were classified as stable forest, 539 kha as losses, 181 kha as gains, and 188 kha were classified as disturbed.

suggest relatively stable forest covers in the PNP since 2001 (Tanguiéta is thickly outlined). Also, the rest of the WAP-complex and other gazetted forests in central Benin (not displayed), are characterized by white areas on the maps (hence little changes in forest cover).

Figure 4 moreover shows yearly losses in forest cover in protected areas of Tanguiéta from 2001 to 2024, relative to 2000. The project was implemented from 2013 to 2021, a next phase followed directly. The figure descriptively suggests some (most likely statistically non-significant) reduction of forest cover losses during these years with an exception in 2022. Yet, importantly, these changes should not be given too much emphasis, as the dataset has its limitations in terms of accuracy and as absolute numbers are very low: from 2001 to 2024, Tanguiéta lost 5 ha of natural forest tree cover in protected areas, equivalent to a 0.20% of the 2000 tree cover area.

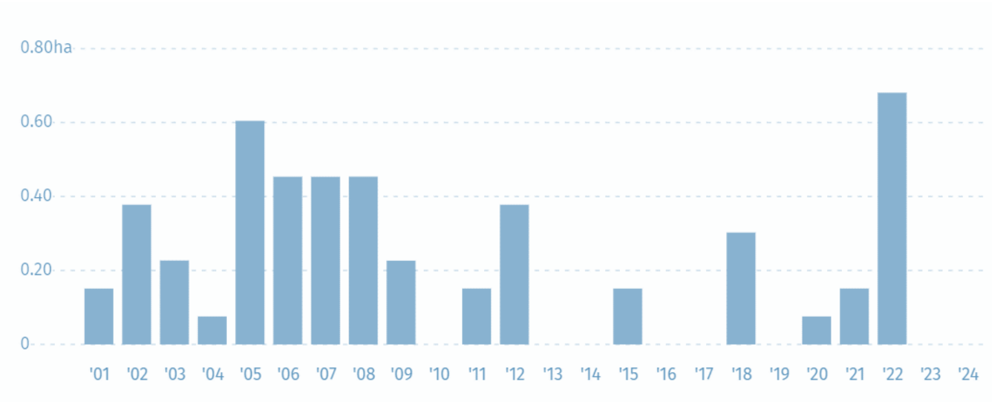


Figure 4 *: Tree cover losses over time in protected areas of Tanguiéta; relative to 2000, applying a canopy density > 15%.*
Source*: Global Forest Watch.*

Third, as part of the EPE, we conducted a quasi-experimental analysis to answer the question: "How would the protected areas that received funding have developed without this funding, i.e., how have similar protected areas that did not receive funding developed (known as the counterfactual)?". To this end, the development of forest cover in the subsidized protected areas was compared with the developments in comparable forest areas, i.e., a "statistical twin." This analysis (not shown here) supports the abovementioned: forest cover losses are very low in Beninese parks in general 4.

We conclude that the indicator (which was introduced during this EPE) of stable forest cover is met. The project likely supported a system, which functioned well (with regards to forest cover), but did not induce significance improvements to forest cover or prevent significant deterioration of forest cover. This is plausible, as the project did not mainly focus on forest cover, and is considered as a success under difficult governance environment, armed conflicts and generally increase of deforestation and forest degradation in the region.

Impact indicator 3: Benefits for the local population

Before 2017, the project supported CENAGREF which followed a co-management approach together with the AVRIGREFs established in all villages in the peripheral area. This included a **benefit-sharing mechanisms from hunting revenues**. The AVIGREFs had a strong local presence and a key role in redistributing benefits from trophy hunting, including around EUR 300,000 per year from hunting licenses, as well as meat. This income constituted an important source of funding for local infrastructure development (e.g., schools, hospitals). However, after APN took over management and security in the park deteriorated, **hunting activities ceased, and park entrance fees were no longer redistributed**.

There is **no reliable baseline data on changes to the income or living conditions of the local population as no specific monitoring system was established by the project.** Furthermore, of the few AVIGREFs who mentioned the benefits their members received from APN's activities during the interviews, many found it difficult to differentiate the contribution of the evaluated project from that of the numerous other projects in the area carried out by local and international NGOs, GIZ, etc. Therefore, the changes observed and reported by beneficiaries and the AVIGREFs cannot always be attributed to the project itself, due to the presence of other projects in the area, such as the GIZ ProAgri and RBT-WAP projects, which focused on

[4] Lastly, a 2025 Deforestation study analysis for investment decision support, carried out by Unique land use and sponsored by eco.business Fund's Development Facility (managed by Finance in Motion), shows that Tanguiéta also has a low risk[4] to be affected by deforestation in the future.

agricultural and value chain development. Furthermore, changes in the security situation have had a and substantial impact on the regional economy.

The only reliable source of income is the income which is generated by the contracting of local park rangers through APN (see table 4 above). This equates to an average of EUR 145 per person per year, assuming it is divided among the 42,000 people living near the PNP. There is no data from other income generating activities, like beekeeping, improved livestock water access, shea butte, fish farming etc (see table 4 above).

The FSOA demanded that 20 % of its annual funding for the management of the PNP be earmarked for development activities in the peripheral zone. However, this percentage remained at 5–10 %. In addition, APN allocated 5-10 % of the funds it receives from the FSOA to peripheral development, and a further 5 % to governance. However, this funding had a limited impact, benefiting only a few. APN lacked expertise in rural development, resulting in a marginal impact on the local population. Through these development actions, **the project only provided limited benefits to a small number of people** who received beehives, aquaculture equipment or support for shea butter processing. Additionally, APN incorporated income-generating activities into its business plan and purchased the entire output of the value chains it supported, such as beekeeping. This created a monopoly for the park management and prevented local producers from entering the market. It also excluded AVIGREF from their supervisory role in economic development activities.

There is no visible impact on women and minorities or gender-based monitoring system. The principle of "leaving no one behind" was not met.

15. Contribution to overarching unintended developmental changes

No unintended positive contribution to overarching development policy changes has been reported during the evaluation.

Two **unintended negative changes** were reported.

Firstly, some representatives from AVIGREF indicated that the new fence erected by APN in 2017 and strict law enforcement in the park had negatively affected the population by restricting access to natural resources such as firewood, grazing grounds and non-timber forest products. Certain traditional rights, such as the right to hunt or fish (particularly in one of the park's ponds), have been reduced or lost. However, there is no evidence that livelihoods have worsened. This potential negative impact was only mentioned during the interviews.

Secondly, the increase in large mammal populations in the park has led to increased crop damage in the peripheral zone, particularly by elephants. The compensation paid by APN to farmers in such situations does not come close to covering the cost of the damage caused. This results in significant economic and livelihood losses for those affected.

Moreover, it must be mentioned that the FSOA has made environmental, social and governance commitments in its investment policy, with an important proportion of its portfolio (60%) invested in assets rated 1 or 2 in the ESS classification. This means that 60% of assets are expected to have positive or low negative social and environmental impacts, yet for 40% there is a risk that investments might not comply with the standards. Investments in fossil fuels, alcohol and gambling have been excluded since the creation of the Foundation. After the end of the evaluated project, FSOA has been investing in term deposits in Beninese banks. The Foundation has been working with these banks to improve their social and environmental policies. Nevertheless, an assessment on the sustainability of foundations on behalf of KfW pointed out that the FSOA should require from its asset manager to prepare transparent documentation describing how sustainability is considered in the investment process.

Rating summary of impact: moderately successful (3)

The project made an essential contribution to the sustainable protection of the PNP and the stability of its wildlife populations. Monitoring data confirmed stable or increasing populations of key species such as elephants, buffalo, and large carnivores over the evaluation period. Additionally, very low rates of deforestation further indicate that efficient management and effective conservation measures materialize on an impact level. The contribution of the project to this is evident: regular funding from the FSOA enabled the effective implementation of park management activities, such as anti-poaching, habitat conservation and biodiversity monitoring initiatives.

However, the project's impact on the livelihoods of the local population has been limited. While some community members benefited from employment and service provision linked to park management, changes in benefit-sharing arrangements and the end of trophy hunting reduced direct financial benefits for most residents and limited the role of the AVIGREFs. Funds allocated for local development remained below target, and the overall effect on economic development and poverty reduction was not measured and perceived as modest. There was no visible improvement in the situation of women and minorities.

Institutionally, the project strengthened the position and legitimacy of the FSOA as a regional actor in protected area financing and enabled the scaling up of its approach to other areas. Governance and management capacities improved, and positive experiences in stakeholder engagement informed approaches in other sites.

In summary, the project achieved good impact on conservation, its main objective. Yet, it delivered only limited socio-economic benefits to the local population, the secondary project objective. The overarching developmental impact is rated as partially successful.

Sustainability

16. Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders

In 2021, the FSOA had the human, institutional and financial capacities to ensure the continuity of funding for the management of the PNP through the Benin window. From 2022 onwards, the introduction of a less risky investment strategy, focusing on risk diversification, reduced the risk of capital loss and reduced returns). However, as is the case for every such Foundation, market fluctuations will continue to pose a risk to sustainable financial viability.

At the end of the project, APN had the technical and financial resources to ensure the proper management of the PNP and, the conservation of biodiversity in the park can be assumed to be sustainable. It is likely that contract with APN will be extended beyond 2027. An alternative operator is not likely to be found, and capacities within CENAGREF have not been built up to secure sustainable management in case APN's contract would be terminated. The FSOA covered 27 % of the PNP's operating costs, for an annual budget of EUR 2.5 million in 2021. This funding was permanent and provided budgetary stability for the management of the PNP. In addition, the government of Benin allocated an annual grant of EUR 1 million to APN for the management of the PNP. But the main part of APN's funding depended on private philanthropy, which raises the question of the stability of this funding in the future. APN also invested in tourist lodges, game-watching activities, and eco-tourism to increase future incomes from tourism.

The AVIGREFs and their union, the key local players, were permanent structures at the end of the project. However, a majority of AVIGREFs consider that they did not have (and still do not have today) the technical and financial capacity to ensure the sustainability of their activities. This is a consequence of the reduction in their funding following the takeover of the management of the PNP by APN and the cessation of sport hunting activities, which limits their capacity for action at the local level.

17. Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities

Based on discussions with the FSOA and international partners, we conclude that the solid and sustainable institutional and financial capacities of the Foundation have been mainly acquired thanks to the technical and financial support provided by the project.

The FSOA contributed to APN's ability to establish and maintain good, peaceful relations with local communities, which was essential for ensuring the sustainability of project results. This is evidenced by the Foundation's active role in advocating greater transparency and the involvement of local communities and AVIGREF in the PNP. The FSOA also played a key role in preventing possible conflicts within the WNP by training rangers and raising awareness among AVIGREF. The project's support made it possible to strengthen the internal governance and technical planning and implementation capacities of the union and the AVIGREFs themselves.

Nevertheless, the majority of AVIGREFs indicate that they lack the technical and financial capacity to ensure the sustainability of project results. We conclude that the project has only marginally contributed to establishing sustainable capacities at the level of the target group. Similarly, its contribution to strengthening the resilience of the target group is mainly limited to local rangers and service providers working in the park, through regular incomes.

No specific strengthening of the resilience of particularly disadvantaged groups could be reported during the evaluation.

18. Durability of impacts

Above all, the **deterioration in the security situation represents a major risk** both for the continuity of the management of the protected area and for the sustainability of the limited results obtained in terms of improving the conditions of some community members. Due to the strong commitment of Benin's armed forces to securing the border area and key communication infrastructure, APN has been able to continue managing the park despite losing several rangers. However, the situation remains unstable, and there are regular attacks from terrorist groups on the infrastructure of the park. Attacks in peripheral villages have also become more frequent, with at least three occurring during the evaluation period. Financial sustainability and lower dependence on FSOA are currently unrealistic due to the security situation in Benin. Overall, there is a need to reduce the park's expenditures and make efficiency gains.

In this context, the conclusions below should be drawn with caution. They are based on the information gathered during the evaluation and assume a stable security situation. We have adopted this approach as we are not able to make assumptions regarding an improvement or worsening of the security situation.

The FSOA executive team's experience and expertise acquired during the project's implementation lies mainly with the Executive Director and the technical advisor from the implementation consultant. Both individuals will reach the end of their careers in a few years which raised a risk of knowledge continuity if they left the organisation. This concern was already raised by the project's final inspection in 2023 and has been mentioned by several partners. Despite the recent expansion of the team through the recruitment of administrative, financial and operations managers, there is no guarantee that the likely departure of these two knowledge carriers in the coming years will not disrupt the smooth running of the foundation in the future. The balanced composition of the Board of Directors and the clear internal governance rules, which balance the roles of the board and the Executive Director, are intended to minimise this risk and ensure the smooth continuation of operations.

The FSOA has built up financial reserves that would enable it to finance the Benin window for two years, even if the capital gain from the foundation's investments were to be zero over the same period. Combined with its good technical capacities, the FSOA will likely remain a stable financing partner if the political and security contexts do not significantly worsen. After the evaluation period, the continued KfW funding for the projects "Transboundary biosphere reserve of the WAP region: biodiversity in the Arly and W national parks in Burkina Faso (FSOA)" (PN 2019.6916.1) and FSOA, Niger window" (PN 2021.6935.7), as well as the additional capitalization of the Benin window and the AFD funding for the regional window contributed (and still contribute) to the sustainability and the expansion of the FSOA as an institution, and to the capacity of the Benin window to provide stable funding to the PNP.

Annual government funding to APN has not yet been questioned, providing APN with a relatively stable additional funding source, given its otherwise heavy reliance on private philanthropy. If this funding were to shrink, it could have negative consequences for the conservation of the PNP, unless efficiency gains were to be achieved in order to maintain the same level of protection at a lower cost.

At the political level, Burkina Faso and Niger's withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States in early 2025 could compromise their commitment alongside Benin within the FSOA. While this would call into question the Foundation's regional expansion, it would not necessarily affect the sustainable functioning of the Benin window or the government of Benin's commitment to supporting the FSOA. Such a situation had not arisen at the time of the evaluation.

Considering all these factors, we conclude that APN is likely to be able to maintain the current level of protection in the park, or at least a sufficient level to avoid significant degradation of the park's resources, given the stable PNP financing from the FSOA and the Beninese government. However, the dependency on external resources will remain, which is common for protected areas, unless huge tourist or hunting activities generate sustainable financing.

The sustainability of the AVIFREFs is not secured. Interviewees assessed the AVIGREF structure as non-sustainable. The rapid deterioration in the security situation from 2021 onwards poses a serious risk to the continuity of their activities. The introduction of a funding line for NGOs in 2024 (outside the evaluation period) offers a new funding perspective for AVIGREFs and other NGOS but the dependency of external resources will remain.

The introduction of a funding line for local NGOs with long-term experience in rural development in 2022 (outside the evaluated project) is a positive development. This should enable the continuation and expansion of the – so far limited – socio-economic development initiatives in the peripheral area. Nevertheless, it will be important that NGO support be geared towards sustainable projects such as value chain development, private sector support, efficient and resilient agriculture and agroforestry, improved herding, village saving groups, agroforestry and other activities that can increase the resilience of the local population.

Overall and provisionally, sustainability is assessed as uncertain. Despite the institutional and financial solidity of the FSOA, which ensures the sustainability of PNP funding, and despite the presence of sustainable community structures, the deteriorating security situation could, if it continues, wipe out these results in a short space of time.

Rating summary of sustainability: moderately successful (3)

The FSOA built strong institutional and financial capacities to ensure consistent funding for protected area management, helped by project technical support and effective governance. This provided stable financing for the PNP, supported further by government funding. However, future sustainability partly depends on market conditions, continued philanthropy, and increased efficiency.

AVIGREFs improved their governance with project support but still face limited technical and financial capacities due to funding changes and security risks and cannot be considered as sustainable structures. A new NGO funding line aims to address some of these challenges in future in the new project phase.

The project strengthened the institutional capacity of the FSOA and APN but made only a limited contribution to building resilience among local communities. Most benefits were limited to local employment and services, with anecdotal evidence of increased empowerment for disadvantaged groups.

Security deterioration remains a major threat to sustaining project outcomes. While FSOA's stable funding and technical capacity are positive, external risks could disrupt long-term results. Community-level sustainability is uncertain, as benefits are limited and depend on ongoing support.

Overall, sustainability is uncertain. Foundations for financial continuity exist, but security risks and limited community resilience could undermine long-term results.

Overall rating: successful (2)

The project was implemented in a challenging and evolving context. Its overall approach was closely aligned with national, sub-regional, and international policy frameworks on biodiversity and was successful in terms of **relevance**, particularly in establishing a robust and transparent financing system for conservation.

The project demonstrated strong internal and external coherence through effective integration with German development cooperation and donor alignment, supporting sustainable funding, economic development, and regional collaboration. It successfully enhanced FSOA's operational capacity, ensuring stable management funding and conservation outcomes, though local population participation was only partially achieved. Efficiency was high with lean management and good resource allocation, despite rising park management costs and underfunded local development. Biodiversity impacts were positive, with stable or increasing key wildlife populations and institutional strengthening, but socio-economic benefits for marginalized communities were limited, resulting in modest overall impact. The sustainability of the project is rated as moderately successful; sustainability is secured by financial and institutional capacities but challenged by security risks, external funding dependence, and local community vulnerabilities.

Given the strong performance in conservation outcomes but the persistent limitations regarding sustainable local benefit and resilience, as well as the uncertain security outlook, we conclude that the project was **successful (level 2)**.

Contribution to the 2030 Agenda

Based on an ex-post identification of relevant global *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) based on project documentation, the project contributed to achieving SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 ('Zero hunger'), SDG 13 (climate action) through forest protection and SDG 15 ('Life on land'). In the project design, contributions to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1 ('Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger') and 7 ('Ensure environmental sustainability') were expected.

Universal validity, shared responsibility and accountability:

During the planning phase, the project was aligned with MDG 1 ('Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger') and MDG 7 (Ensure 'Environmental Sustainability'). It also contributed to the BMZ's Biodiversity Concept 2012–2022. Regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the project contributed to SDG 1 No Poverty. This was theoretically achieved by allocating a share of the annual funding granted by the FSOA to APN for economic development initiatives in the outskirts of the PNP. The project also contributed to SDG 2 Zero Hunger by improving the livelihoods of local communities through the benefits they would receive from sustainable park management. However, the project could not clearly demonstrate this contribution to poverty reduction and reducing hunger. The project also contributed to SDG 13, Climate Action. Through providing APN with sustainable and predictable financial support from the FSOA, the project contributed to the sustainable management of the PNP. Strict law enforcement within the park meant that forest degradation resulting from wood energy extraction and deforestation due to agricultural encroachment almost ceased. This is evidenced by remote sensing analysis of deforestation trends in the commune containing the park compared to neighbouring communes. Finally, the project made a significant contribution to SDG 15: 'Life on Land'. The sustainable management of the PNP resulted in stable or increasing populations of large mammal species within the park, as evidenced by regular wildlife monitoring campaigns.

Interplay of economic, ecological and social development:

The project also aligns with the three objectives of the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity: conserving biological diversity, sustainably using its components, and fairly and equitably sharing the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. The annual financing provided by the FSOA is primarily targeted at the first goal. Regarding the third objective, the project supported community involvement through the AVIGREFs in the park's management planning processes.

Inclusiveness:

The project took disadvantaged groups into account in the project design, using the benefit-sharing mechanism that was in place until 2017, and after that through the allocation of funding from FSOA to APN for community development actions. Disadvantaged groups were not targeted specifically in the design or implementation, and they were not monitored.

Methods

Evaluation methodology

The ex-post evaluation follows the methodology of a rapid appraisal, i.e. a data-based, qualitative contribution analysis, and represents an expert judgement. This involves attributing impacts to the project through plausibility considerations based on the careful analysis of documents, data, facts and impressions. Where possible, this also includes the use of digital data sources and modern techniques (e.g. satellite data, online surveys, geocoding). Causes of any contradictory information are investigated, attempts are made to eliminate them, and the assessment is based on statements that are confirmed by several sources of information (triangulation) where possible.

Key evaluation questions

1. How did forest areas in the PNP develop before and during module implementation (Use of FZ-E analyses on forest area development)?
2. How did wildlife populations develop over time (depending on data availability)?
3. Assessment of impacts on the livelihoods and quality of life of the local population and on gender issues (GG1). Including consideration of sources of income (beehives, shea butter, cash-for-work), land use plans, community development plans, water points for livestock, environmental clubs and reforestation measures.
4. A critical review of social and environmental standards (KfW standards) as well as compliance with these standards and the ESFM framework.

Type of evaluation:

Remote with national experts

Internal documents

Report on the promotion of agriculture in Benin, 2012;
German Cooperation Development and Benin: Joint report on the development cooperation program „Promotion of Agriculture", 2013;
Program Proposal FC Module: FSOA, 2011;
Financial Proposal, 2014; *Financial proposal for the third extension of 6 Mio. EUR, 2017*;
Environmental and social risk evaluation, 2018.;
Report FC Modules: Trust Fund FSOA, Investment Agriculture III in Benin, 2020;
Annual Report on FC Module Trust Fund FSOA, 2021;
Final Report, FZ Module: Trust fund FSOA, Benin, 2022;
Financial Proposal for the fourth extension of 10 Mio. EUR, 2022;
Cross-section evaluation of charities in the framework of financial cooperation, 2023;
Final Inspection Report of „Trust fund FSOA" in Benin, 2023.
Final report on the implementation of the PGDRB-FSOA, 2022.
Half-year report to July 31, 2024, 2024. Final evaluation and outlook for the regional program Park W / ECOPAS, 2008.
Annual Report 2023 Synthesis, 2024. Système de Gestion Environnementale et Sociale (SGES),
2021. Memorandum of Understanding: GIZ, APN & ANPT, 2018.
Strategic Plan for Priority Development of WAP Parks Phase 1, 2018.

External documents

Deforestation study analysis for investment decision support, carried out by Unique land use sponsored by eco.business Fund's Development Facility managed by Finance in Motion (2025)

Data sources and analysis tools

For the deforestation risk map:
Deforestation classes: Modified map based
Jurisdictional Nested Redd++ (JNR) py model
Administrative areas: Runfola, D. et al. (2020)
geoBoundaries: A global database of political
administrative boundaries. PLoS ONE 15(4): e0231866.
https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0231866
Base map: OpenStreetMap, ODbL
CRS: EPSG:4326

Project sites visited

Natitingou, Tanguiéta. The security situation did not make it possible to visit Pendjari national Park nor the villages located in the peripheral area.

Interview partners

18 interviews with AFD, APN (PNP management), AVIGREFs (4 bilateral interviews, one group interview with 12 AVIGREFs), CENAGREF, Implementation consultant (consultancy firm supporting implementation), FSOA, GIZ, KfW, Natitingou Forestry Inspectorate, NGO Paas Ti Gnamb, NGO platform La maison des tortues, Union of AVIGREFs

The analysis of impacts is based on assumed cause-and-effect relationships documented in the impact matrix developed during the project appraisal and, if necessary, updated during the ex-post evaluation. The evaluation report presents arguments as to why certain influencing factors were identified for the effects observed and why the project examined is likely to have made a particular contribution (contribution analysis). The context of the development project is taken into account with regard to its influence on the results. The conclusions are put into relation to the availability and quality of the data basis. An evaluation design is the reference framework for the evaluation.

For project evaluations, the method offers a - on average - balanced cost-benefit ratio, in with the knowledge gained and the evaluation effort are in equilibrium and allows for a systematic assessment of the effectiveness of FZ projects across all project evaluations. The individual ex-post evaluations can therefore not fulfil the requirements of a scientific assessment in the sense of a clear causal analysis.

The following aspects limited the evaluation

- The security situation, which saw several villages attacked during the evaluation period, prevented the national consultant from visiting the outlying areas to conduct group interviews with the beneficiaries in person. Instead, interviews were conducted in Tanguiéta with representatives of the AVIGREFs.
- Lack of baseline and monitoring data on the economic situation of the local communities in the peripheral area of the PNP.
- The need to create new indicators based on the reformulated ToC, and the limited availability of data with which to document their level of achievement.

Methodology of the performance evaluation

A six-point scale is used to assess the programme according to the OECD DAC criteria, with the exception of the sustainability criterion. The scale values are assigned as follows:

Stufe 1 Very successful: results significantly above expectations

Stufe 2 Successful: results fully in line with expectations, without significant deficiencies

Stufe 3 Moderately successful: below expectations, but positive results predominate

Stufe 4 Moderately unsuccessful: significantly below expectations and negative results dominate despite recognisable positive results

Stufe 5 Unsuccessful: despite some positive partial results, the negative results clearly dominate

Stufe 6 Highly unsuccessful: the project is useless or the situation has deteriorated

The overall rating on the six-point scale is based on a project-specific weighting of the six individual criteria. Levels 1–3 of the overall rating indicate a "successful" project, while levels 4–6 indicate an "unsuccessful" project. It should be noted that a project can generally only be classified as "successful" in terms of development policy if both the achievement of objectives at the outcome level (effectiveness) and impact level and the sustainability are rated as at least "Moderately successful" (level 3).

The annex to this report is available upon request (German only).

Imprint

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