

NaturAfrica West Africa – Regional Coordination

Coordination of the NaturAfrica regional programme in West Africa (NAAO)

Comparative analysis of collaborative and cross-border management approaches within NaturAfrica landscapes in West Africa



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List of acronyms

AGN	Guardian Angel for Nature
AP	Protected Areas
APN	African Parks Network
BSB	Bi-national Sena Oura Bouba-Ndjida
CBP	Bilateral Steering Committee
CONS	Conservation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DEVCO	Community Development
DUE	European Union Delegations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States

EU	European Union
FDA	Forestry Development Authority
FDS	Defence and Security Forces
FSOA	West African Savannah Foundation
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LAB	Anti-Poaching
MRU	Mano River Union
NA	NaturAfrica
NAAO	NaturAfrica West Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPAA	National Protected Area Authority
OGPNRF	Office Guinéen des Parcs Nationaux et Réserves de Faune
OKKPS	Outamba-Kilimi-Kuru Hills-Pinselli-Soya
PAG	Development and Management Plan
POS	Standard Operating Procedure
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RBT	Transboundary Biosphere Reserve
RBW	W Biosphere Reserve
TDR	Terms of Reference
TGKS	Tai-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WA	WhatsApp
WAP	W-Arly-Pendjari
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
WWZ	Wologizi-Wonegizi-Ziama
ZOVIC	Village Hunting Zone

1. Background

Through its NaturAfrica (NA) initiative, the European Union supports a network of key landscapes for conservation and development in Africa, with the aim of protecting wildlife and stimulating economic growth by supporting ecosystems and ensuring their resilience in the face of increasing external pressure.

This initiative is organised around three main and interdependent pillars: Conservation, Green Economy and Governance.

NaturAfrica is supported by three types of funding: 'national' funding mobilised through the budgets of each of the European Union Delegations (EUD), programmes funded directly by the Member States of the European Union (EU) and, finally, the continental NaturAfrica programme, which covers four sub-Saharan regions, including West Africa (NAAO).

The NAAO regional programme complements national programmes, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. Cross-border governance is one of the programme's objectives, as most of the landscapes are cross-border, covering two or even three countries (Niokolo Koba - Badiar - Boé; Mts Nimba; WAP; PoMoCo).

One of the roles assigned to the NAAO Regional Coordination is to connect the different landscapes, share lessons learned and provide technical support for certain themes, in particular cross-border collaboration.

Among the lessons and knowledge to be shared are the different approaches implemented at the landscape level for their transboundary governance. For some landscapes, such as Niokolo Koba – Badiar – Boé and Fazao-Kyabobo, the programmes will start from scratch, so to speak, and will benefit from the analysis of successes and failures in other landscapes. The same applies to landscapes where the cross-border dimension is emerging; even in landscapes where this collaboration is more established, there are important lessons to be shared.

2. Objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to carry out a comparative analysis of the different experiences of cross-border collaboration and management in the various NAAO landscapes – with the development of a typology of the different levels of collaboration – and to draw lessons and recommendations for establishing or improving cross-border collaboration, or even cross-border management of protected areas (PAs), distinguishing between institutional aspects and aspects of effective collaboration in the field.

This analysis focused on two complementary angles:

- A legal analysis of the texts, agreements and regulations developed within the framework of cross-border collaboration; and
- A technical analysis determining the impact of existing agreements on the management of protected areas in the field.

Of the 10 priority landscapes included in the NAAO programme, 7 were selected for this study (including 6 forest landscapes and 1 savannah landscape – the other 3 landscapes do not benefit from cross-border collaboration, or have very old collaboration, and therefore cannot contribute to this analysis) for which collaboration on management should exist, even at very disparate levels. These are:

- **Cross River:** shared between two countries (Cameroon and Nigeria), the Cross River landscape consists mainly of Cross River National Park (3,640 km², Nigeria), adjacent to Korup National Park

(1,259 km², Cameroon) and Takamanda National Park (675 km², Cameroon). It also includes several forest reserves and community forests.

- **Gola-Foya:** spread between Sierra Leone and Liberia, this landscape consists mainly of Gola Rainforest National Park (710 km², Sierra Leone) and Gola Forest National Park (979 km², Liberia), the Kambui Hills Forest Reserve (143 km², Sierra Leone) and the Foya Protected Area (1,646 km², currently being created, Liberia).
- **The Nimba Mountains:** shared between three countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia), this landscape consists of the Nimba Mountains Integral Nature Reserve (221 km², straddling Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site¹), the East Nimba Nature Reserve (135 km², Liberia) and the Nimba West protected area (104 km², currently being created, Liberia).
- **Outamba-Kilimi-Kuru Hills-Pinselli-Soyah (OKKPS):** spread across two countries (Guinea and Sierra Leone), this landscape mainly consists of the Outamba National Park (738 km², Sierra Leone), Kilimi National Park (388 km², Sierra Leone), Pinselli-Soyah-Sabouyah National Park (3,0258 km², Guinea), and the Kuru Hills Forest Reserve (69 km², Sierra Leone).
- **Tai-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo (TGKS):** covering an area of approximately 50,000 km² and spread across two countries (Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia), this landscape mainly consists of the national parks of Tai (5,081 km², Ivory Coast), Grebo-Krahn (971 km², Liberia) and Sapo (1,803 km², Liberia). It also includes several classified forests (Goin-Débé, Cavally and Haute Dodo in Côte d'Ivoire), community forests (Konobo, Chedepo and Kiteabo in Liberia) and protected areas currently being created (mainly in Liberia, including Grand Kru-River Gee, Krahn Bassa, Zwedru and Cestos-Senkwehn).
- **W-Arly-Pendjari (WAP):** covering approximately 32,000 km² and spread across three countries (Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger), this landscape mainly comprises the W National Parks (10,720 km² with 5,020 km² in Benin, 3,500 km² in Burkina Faso and 2,200 km² in Niger), Pendjari National Park (2,755 km², Benin) and Arly National Park (2,179 km², Burkina Faso), and numerous wildlife and hunting reserves. Together, these areas form the WAP Complex (17,148 km²), a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **Wologizi-Wonegizi-Ziama (WWZ):** covering approximately 5,000 km² and shared between two countries (Guinea and Liberia), this landscape includes the Ziama Classified Forest (1,161 km², Guinea) and the conservation areas (currently being created) of Wonegizi (275 km², Liberia) and Wologizi (995 km², Liberia).

3. Study methodology

3.1. Methodological framework and efforts

The methodology used to conduct this study was based on a complementary approach of literature review and semi-structured interviews with key resource persons from each landscape.

Bibliographic analysis

An effort was therefore made to collect and centralize existing documentation on cross-border collaboration and management from partners in each landscape. This documentation focused on the following documents:

- Grant/funding activity reports (NAAO in particular, but also USAID, etc.);
- Activity and/or technical and/or annual reports;

¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

- Minutes and/or reports of meetings, workshops, bi/tri-national meetings, recommendations, etc.;
- Strategic and/or sectoral plans, action plans, etc.;
- Technical and/or political cross-border agreements (at state, ministerial and protected area administration levels);
- Documents establishing the various bodies/structures/mechanisms governing collaboration;
- Regulations of the various monitoring committees and equivalent bodies;
- Documents establishing/governing the various cross-border platforms, including at the local community level.

Semi-structured interviews

For the semi-structured interviews (estimated at 1-1.5 hours per person), an interview grid was developed based on the study's Terms of Reference (TOR). Given the number of landscapes and associated resource persons, prioritization work had to be carried out in order to target key interlocutors.

The size, history, ecosystem of actors and stage of development of the landscapes were factors that influenced the number of key interlocutors identified. This prioritization work was carried out with the regional coordination of NAAO, based on three levels of priority, resulting in the identification of 81 resource persons to be interviewed, including 31 priority 1 and 25 priority 2 and 3 respectively.

Given the duration of the study and the availability of interviewees, it was agreed with the regional coordination team to focus interview efforts on priority 1 resource persons, then 2 and 3 (if time permits).

Table 1 . Distribution of key individuals to be interviewed by priority and landscape.

Landscapes	Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Total	%
Cross River	2	1	5	8	63
Gola-Foya	3	1	4	8	38
Nimba Mountains	3	2	3	8	13
OKKPS	2	7	1	10	40
TGKS	5	3	4	12	17
WAP	13	10	7	30	37
WWZ	1	1	1	3	33
Other	2	0	0	2	100
Total	31	25	25	81	36
	71	12	16	36	

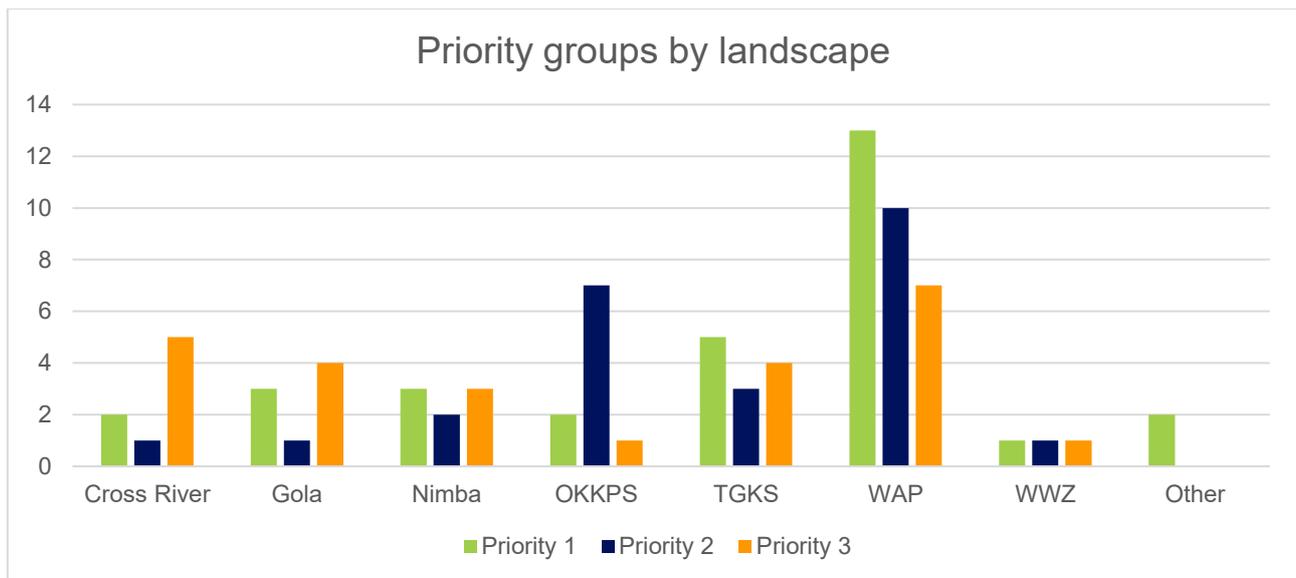


Figure 1. Representation of the number of resource persons interviewed by priority level and landscape.

In terms of the effort required to complete the study, out of the 81 key individuals identified, including all priority levels, a total of 29 individuals were interviewed, representing 36% of the initial sample. With regard to priority level 1, 22 out of 31 individuals were interviewed, representing 71% of the total. The two landscapes with the most level 1 resource persons are WAP (13) and TGKS (5), while the best sampled are Cross River (63%) and OKKPS (40%).

3.2. Limitations of the analysis

This comparative study faced certain limitations, which are important to list below, including:

- Sparse and uneven documentation available between landscapes. Some landscapes have a satisfactory level of reporting (OKKPS, for example), while others have much less, making bibliographic analysis and comparison between landscapes difficult. Multiple follow-ups with interviewees did not always make it possible to fill certain gaps.
- The unavailability of certain key individuals and/or the cancellation of several planned interviews meant that it was not always possible to obtain feedback from practitioners in the field and key players in these landscapes.
- Low number of respondents for certain sites, resulting in conclusions about the site that may be less robust.
- Difficulty in accessing resource persons in the administration or in certain countries (in particular, the lack of responsiveness of Ivorian interlocutors, despite our multiple follow-ups). There may be a form of "bias" in the recommendations, given that the "partners" of the protected areas (NGOs and CSOs) responded more favorably to the study overall.
- A diversity of contexts and conservation histories between landscapes, making the work of comparison sometimes delicate and "relative". Added to this are the security issues affecting certain geographical areas of the study (WAP, Cross River, etc.), which qualify the comparison.

4. Analytical framework of the study

4.1. Concepts, definitions and principles for comparative analysis

Here we present the key concepts and definitions used to frame the comparative analysis of cross-border collaboration experiences in the NAAO's intervention landscapes.

Inter-state cooperation: the starting point for cross-border conservation

The terms of reference for the comparative analysis use several terms that need to be defined for the purposes of this comparative analysis. These include cross-border collaboration, cross-border management and cross-border governance, to which cross-border cooperation should also be added.

When it comes to inter-state relations, we believe it is important to start from the principle of cooperation. This fundamental principle of general international law has also become established in the sphere of international environmental law through numerous conventions and agreements to which most of the states covered by this study are parties (Article 5 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 2 of the Convention on Migratory Species, Article 6 of the World Heritage Convention).

Cross-border cooperation is an application of the principle of cooperation at the level of neighboring States, which imposes obligations in relation to ecosystems and resources shared on both sides of the border (obligation of fair and reasonable use, obligation to provide information, consultation, prevention of damage, ecosystem approach, etc.). Thus, as the United Nations Assembly recalled in 2021, "Nature knows no borders²" and "cross-border cooperation [is a] key factor in the preservation, restoration and sustainable use of biodiversity".

Analyzing cross-border approaches to cooperation therefore requires an understanding of the central role played by borders, with each state being sovereign over its own territory, despite the presence of shared ecosystems or resources. Furthermore, environmental issues are exacerbated at borders, due to the fact that borders are subject to multiple challenges (immigration, legal and illegal trade, resource exploitation, etc.). This is where cross-border cooperation comes in, enabling us to transcend territorial boundaries in an attempt to find solutions to this fictitious separation of "cross-border nature"³.

In addition, these states are also members of regional integration and cooperation organizations, such as WAEMU⁴, ECOWAS⁵ and MRU (Mano River Union). These regional organizations have various mandates and competences and play a major role in the environmental field, whether in terms of harmonizing texts, such as WAEMU (WAEMU Common Policy for Environmental Improvement⁶ and its Regional Strategy for the Management of Protected and Conserved Areas in West Africa by 2050) or ECOWAS (Convergence Plan for the Sustainable Management and Use of Forest Ecosystems in West Africa) or facilitating the adoption of cooperation agreements (Mano River Union). A comparative analysis of the different landscapes will also make it possible to assess their contribution to the various cross-border cooperation experiences.

Collaboration versus cross-border cooperation

Cross-border cooperation refers to coordinated actions between entities (states, regions, institutions, organizations) on either side of a border, with the aim of solving common problems or carrying out projects of mutual interest. Each party retains its autonomy and responsibilities while working towards a shared goal.

Characteristics:

² Formulated by the Council of Europe in the 2000s during the first symposium on the pan-European cross-border ecological network.

³ A concept that would encompass both static natural elements such as ecosystems and mobile natural elements such as wildlife, JOLIVET S., *La conservation de la nature transfrontalière (Cross-border nature conservation)*, public law thesis, University of Limoges, 2014, p.20.

⁴ West African Economic and Monetary Union.

⁵ Economic Community of West African States.

⁶ Additional Act 01/2008/CCEG/UEMOA.

- Formal structure: often governed by agreements, treaties or protocols.
- Division of roles: each actor (country, region, institution) has clear and distinct responsibilities.
- Common objectives but preserved autonomy: the parties collaborate without merging their structures or methods.

Cross-border collaboration involves closer and more integrated interaction between cross-border actors. It involves sharing resources, knowledge and decisions, with greater interdependence and collective creation of solutions.

Characteristics:

- Integration and flexibility: actors work side by side, often in informal or innovative ways, to co-construct appropriate responses.
- Shared responsibilities: decisions and results are the fruit of a collective process, without a rigid hierarchy.
- Creativity and adaptation: collaboration enables innovation and adaptation to complex or emerging challenges.

Cooperation models

Cooperation within the framework of a transboundary conservation agreement can take different forms, with varying results and benefits. The IUCN distinguishes four models of cooperation: communication or information sharing, consultation, coordinated action and joint implementation of decisions.

Table 2. Summary of the different models of cooperation in transboundary conservation.

Cooperation models	Examples
Communication or information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular communication on actions, problems, opportunities or other relevant issues - Regular sharing of information, e.g. notification of different management measures taken at a particular site
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seeking the opinions, comments or advice of others, for example on how to solve a problem, improve a management action, etc. - Cooperative process aimed at harmonizing management
Coordinated action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated management actions jointly implemented in each party's sovereign areas that contribute to the conservation objectives of the entire transboundary ecosystem, e.g. monitoring of species and ecological processes is a regular activity in each party's territory, but the results contribute to the conservation of species or ecosystems in the entire shared ecosystem - This model is considered a form of cooperative management
Joint implementation of decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated management actions implemented jointly across sovereign borders, e.g. joint law enforcement patrols, fundraising and implementation of joint projects, production of marketing materials presenting the transboundary conservation area as a single entity, etc. - This model is considered a form of cooperative management.

4.2. Transboundary conservation

4.2.1. Typology of transboundary conservation

Transboundary conservation is not a legal concept but a doctrinal one, supported by the IUCN Protected Areas Working Group. For the IUCN and its specialist group, it is a practical means of overcoming

differences (legal, institutional, economic, social, cultural, etc.) and establishing forms of cooperation with a view to achieving conservation objectives across borders.

In 2001, the IUCN began to consider this cross-border conservation through the medium of peace by proposing several categories. Since 2015, three categories have been created: transboundary protected areas (already in place since 2001), transboundary conservation landscapes, transboundary conservation and migration areas – plus the specific category of "*Park for Peace*".

4.2.2. Governance of transboundary conservation

Here we draw on the principles, definitions and lessons learned by the IUCN, which have been a source of inspiration for this comparative analysis and for defining the analytical framework.

According to the IUCN, transboundary conservation governance is a flexible and collaborative framework, where the key to success lies in striking a balance between formalization (for stability) and adaptability (to respond to changing challenges). It is based on inclusive processes, shared legitimacy and sustainable financing mechanisms.

Transboundary conservation governance makes it possible to protect ecosystems fragmented by borders (migration corridors), strengthen peace and cooperation between countries (parks for peace), optimize resources (sharing of equipment, reduced costs) and integrate local knowledge for more sustainable management.

It is therefore a form of shared governance involving actors from two or more countries. It is characterized by (i) a collaborative approach based on cooperation between various stakeholders (governments, local communities, indigenous peoples, NGOs, private landowners, etc.) to manage ecological, social or economic issues that transcend national borders, (ii) formal or informal arrangements, and (iii) adaptability, as governance models must evolve to adapt to changing political, social and environmental contexts.

Thus, for the IUCN, transboundary conservation governance must be based on key principles, which are:

- No "one-size-fits-all" approach: each initiative must be adapted to its context (ecological, political, social).
- Difference between governance and management: governance concerns decision-making processes (who decides? how?), while management concerns concrete actions (joint patrols, restoration projects).
- Importance of legitimacy: governance that is perceived as fair and inclusive is more likely to be sustainable.
- Role of local actors: indigenous communities and border populations must be involved to avoid conflicts and strengthen resilience.

4.2.3. Connectivity

Although ecological connectivity is not new on the international stage, its growing international recognition has been successively confirmed by the Aichi Targets in 2010 (Target 11), then by Target A of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework⁷, which aims to "preserve, enhance or restore the integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems, in order to substantially increase the area of natural ecosystems by 2050", as well as in several targets of the framework (2, 3, 12). In 2024, at the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species, connectivity was defined as "the

⁷ CBD/COP/DEC/15/4, 19 December 2022.

unimpeded movement of species, the unimpeded connection of habitats, and the flow of natural processes that sustain life on earth⁸.

In this study, the connectivity factor was explored during interviews with key landscape resource persons. However, it was not included as a specific criterion in the analytical framework but was integrated into the assessment of cross-border collaboration.

4.3. Analytical framework adopted

4.3.1. Legal modalities of cross-border landscape cooperation NAAO

The objective of the study includes a comparative analysis of the different cooperation arrangements established by states within the framework of their inter-state relations. This study will attempt to take stock of and conduct a comparative analysis of the legal structure of cross-border cooperation for the seven landscapes covered by the study.

It will be important to bear in mind the definitions and context presented above (inter-state cooperation, resulting principles, transboundary protected areas, issues of transboundary governance and conservation, membership of regional integration organizations, etc.) in order to put the texts into perspective. Indeed, it is worth asking whether the various cooperation agreements enable states to fulfil their cooperation obligations under regional and international conventions/agreements.

Even if the analysis focuses on inter-state relations, it will also be necessary at certain points to understand the national and international legal framework within which protected areas operate.

Preliminary remarks

- This analysis will be based mainly on texts, most of which are recent or draft and have not been implemented, and their effectiveness will not be assessed (in terms of effectiveness or implementation).
- In addition, two landscapes have been designated as transboundary World Heritage Sites (Mount Nimba and WAP), one landscape intends to extend its national status beyond its borders (Gola-Foya), and another proposal is also under consideration (Cross River). This criterion of status recognized at the level of an international convention and the implications for cooperation that it requires will also be taken into account.
- Although each landscape is at a very different stage of cooperation, they all have in common the fact that they have adopted (or are in the process of adopting) agreements and/or established institutions to formalize this cooperation. Of the seven NAAO landscapes selected, several states are engaged in strong cooperation on protected areas. Liberia has four transboundary landscapes, including at least one with each of its three neighboring states: Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Guinea also has four transboundary cooperation agreements with its four neighbors (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal). Senegal can be added in relation to the Niokolo Koba (Senegal) and Badiar (Guinea) national parks. In fact, as early as 1994, this transboundary ecosystem received EU funding from the 6th FED for the implementation of the Niokolo-Badiar project. This enabled joint activities (patrols, ecological monitoring) to be initiated and cross-border infrastructure (tracks, bridges) to be built. A Niokolo Badiar Ecological Research Centre (CRENB) was even operational. This cross-border dynamic came to an end with the conclusion of the project.

4.3.2. Analysis grid for legal collaboration arrangements

⁸ UNEP/CMS/Resolution 14.16, February 2024.

A distinction can be made between formal and substantive elements, even though they are linked, in order to facilitate the comparative analysis that follows. The grid below has been defined and will be detailed for each landscape.

Table 3. Common analysis grid used to compare legal modalities of collaboration.

Reminder/history of legal cooperation Pre-existing agreements and projects	
Formal aspects	
The different names of the agreements and dates	Depending on the name of the agreements, it is possible to establish their legal scope, i.e. the degree of obligations that may bind each State to the others. Notwithstanding this name, it is necessary to analyse the provisions of the agreements in order to determine their legal value more precisely, because even if the name of an agreement might suggest a formal commitment, its provisions will only have political value and will not be binding on the States.
Types of agreements	Agreement, MoU,
Signatories to the texts	Ministry on behalf of governments; States,
Geographical scope	National level, regional level, protected area level,
Duration of the agreement	Limited or indefinite duration
Substantive aspects	
Scope	What does the agreement aim to achieve through cooperation? What are the common issues requiring this cooperation? What form of cooperation is sought by the agreement? Do the agreements mention aspects related to the principles of cooperation derived from international environmental law (procedural obligations such as information, consultation, transboundary assessment, shared natural resources, fair and reasonable use of resources; equitable sharing of benefits)?
Objectives pursued	What are the specific objectives of the agreement? (supervising, collaborating, creating an institutional framework, etc.)
Obligations arising from the agreement (degree of constraint)	What commitments have the States made in these agreements?
Institutional mechanisms (and actors involved) and decision-making powers	Governance bodies, their composition, members, decision-making powers
Operational provisions/means of implementation	Joint or separate activities, planned/proposed practical arrangements
Financing of implementation	Planned financing mechanisms, commitment to seek funding
Points to monitor/aspects to be taken into account	

4.3.3. Analysis criteria used for the study

In order to compare the different experiences of cross-border collaboration within and between NAAO landscapes, criteria were defined based on the documentation and interviews conducted. Eight main criteria emerged and were defined, with different levels (six levels allowing a weighting of 0 to 10 to be assigned). The criteria are as follows:

Informal collaboration

The main objective of this criterion is to capture exchanges and coordinated actions between actors within a landscape (individuals, organizations, communities) that are not governed by official agreements, protocols or formal structures, but which emerge spontaneously or out of necessity to achieve common objectives.

It is interesting to take this into account because informal aspects have characteristics that are particularly useful for cross-border collaboration: flexibility and responsiveness (enabling a rapid response to needs or crises, without administrative burdens), based on trust and personal relationships (interpersonal links, local networks, or common culture) and complementary to formal collaboration.

In cross-border landscapes, informal collaboration is often the glue that holds concrete actions together, especially when formal frameworks are slow or ineffective. It can serve as a lever for subsequently formalizing partnerships (an effective WhatsApp group can lead to the creation of an official committee).

Informal collaboration can take several forms, including direct communication (telephone calls, informal discussion groups), joint actions (unplanned patrols, sharing of resources such as equipment and vehicles) and/or community networks (local associations or interest groups acting without an institutional mandate).

This criterion is difficult to measure both qualitatively and quantitatively, particularly given the duration of the study. As such, its assessment for this analysis is based primarily on (i) the feelings and/or subjective assessment of the resource persons interviewed (is informal collaboration considered satisfactory, fluid, etc.), (ii) direct communication and the use of tools (WhatsApp, social networks such as Facebook, meetings, etc.).

Formal collaboration

Formal collaboration refers to structured and formalized cooperation between actors (institutions, organizations, states, communities) that is governed by written agreements, protocols, institutional structures or legal mechanisms. It is based on clearly defined rules, roles and responsibilities, and aims to achieve common objectives in a coordinated and sustainable manner.

The main characteristics of formal collaboration are that it is generally based on a legal and institutional framework (signed agreements – memoranda of understanding, conventions, treaties – laws, or administrative decisions), dedicated structures (establishment of committees, permanent secretariats, or working groups to steer collaboration), planned processes (scheduled activities – meetings, patrols, training – with budgets, timetables, and monitoring indicators), stakeholder involvement (integrating institutional actors – states, government agencies – technical actors – NGOs, experts – and community actors – local representatives, within a structured framework), clear and measurable objectives (definition of strategic objectives – reduction of poaching, conservation of biodiversity – and indicators of success), and funding and accountability mechanisms (often supported by dedicated budgets – projects, public/private funds – and subject to reporting and evaluation mechanisms).

For this comparative analysis, we categorized the formal collaborations in each landscape primarily based on the legal and institutional framework for inter-state cooperation (existence of cooperation agreements, implementation of international conventions at the landscape level), between states and partners or between partners. The existence of dedicated structures was the subject of a specific criterion (see below).

Table 4. Differences between formal and informal collaboration.

Criterion	Formal collaboration	Informal collaboration
Framework	Written agreements, institutional structures	Personal networks, spontaneous exchanges

Flexibility	Rigid (defined processes but implementation dependent on politics)	Agile (rapid adaptation)
Sustainability	Sustainable (institutions, stable funding), dependent on the political and administrative context	Fragile (depends on individuals)
Visibility	Recognizable (follow-up meetings, implementation meetings, reports, budgets)	Not very visible (difficult to document)
Examples	Intergovernmental agreements, MoUs, steering committees, funded projects	WhatsApp groups, impromptu meetings

Scale of collaboration

The main purpose of this criterion is to take into account the spatial dimension of collaboration within the landscape. The landscapes covered by the study have very diverse geographical configurations, with protected areas that are contiguous with one or more countries, or not connected to each other, with very varied land use patterns (different land uses), and also very different surface areas (50,000 km² for TGKS compared to 460 km² for the Nimba Mountains). Added to this is the diversity of actors involved in the management of these protected areas (PAs) and landscapes.

The aim was therefore to identify the spatial scope of the collaboration (local, national, regional). For example, whether the collaboration concerned all or part of the protected areas (at least priority areas) within the same landscape, whether it applied mainly at local level (do the major management actors within the same PA collaborate with each other?), national (does one PA collaborate with another in the same country within the same landscape?) or regional (does a PA collaborate with one or more other PAs beyond national borders?).

This assessment was based primarily on feedback from key resource persons in each landscape and shared documentation showing the effectiveness of collaboration between PAs (joint patrols, inventories, etc.).

Political commitment

Political support or commitment is often considered an essential element of cross-border collaboration. In order to crystallize this aspect in this comparative analysis, a specific criterion was devoted to characterizing the political commitment enjoyed by each landscape.

To assess this factor, the work consisted of assigning a spatial character to political commitment (the landscape or PAs benefit from political support only at the local level – Prefects, Sub-Prefects, Governors, etc. – or also at the national level – the relevant minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister or even the President – or at the regional level (the relevant ministers in each country concerned, other landscape ministers, the presidents of the countries, etc.) or even at the international level (for example, through a system of sponsorship by international political figures).

Financial commitment

The financing of protected areas (and conservation) is almost always a major concern for actors in the field. It was therefore essential to address this issue in the context of this comparative analysis.

To characterize the financial capacity of each landscape, a specific criterion was defined based on both (i) sources of funding (from governments, donors, technical partners, sustainable and/or innovative mechanisms, etc.) and (ii) the volume of funding and its level of satisfaction. The latter point can be tricky, as practitioners very often consider that financial resources are "never sufficient". The approach

therefore taken was to consider a level of "financial comfort" for a PA and/or landscape based on the financial volumes mobilized.

The main limitation of this criterion is that we did not have access to the PAs' annual budgets (even provisional ones) or five-year business plans (when they exist, mainly for PAs under delegated management) and did not have enough time to trace the history of grants awarded by donors.

Consequently, this analysis was based on a very superficial assessment of the financial volumes through the type of donors mobilized (if EU/USAID/GEF⁹, etc., we can estimate that the amounts are in the order of several million euros), the number of donors involved in a landscape and/or PA (if there are several donors such as the EU/USAID, etc., then the financial volume committed is higher), and the existence of sustainable mechanisms (the presence of the West African Savannah Foundation, FSOA, for example, suggests a higher volume and greater financial security than for a landscape that does not have one).

Institutionalization

An important feature of formal collaboration, the establishment of dedicated structures served as a specific criterion in this comparative analysis. The objective was to specify the institutionalization of formal collaboration within each landscape by listing the instruments/tools put in place and their spatial and institutional dimensions.

A distinction was made between the nature or type of dedicated structures for each landscape (steering committee mainly linked to the existence of a project, cross-border committee, executive secretariat, technical monitoring committee, scientific committee, etc.). Less value was assigned to project steering committees (although they are important and can facilitate collaboration) due to their ephemeral nature (they disappear de facto after the project) as opposed to structures that are resilient over time and not linked to project cycles (cross-border committees, for example).

A positive value was assigned to landscapes with collaborative structures at high institutional and political levels (e.g. council of ministers), demonstrating political commitment. Finally, the vitality of these instruments was taken into account in order to distinguish between landscapes with functional and dysfunctional structures.

Community participation

A key factor in the conservation and management of protected areas, the participation and involvement of local communities was taken into account in this comparative analysis. A specific criterion was developed to characterize, first and foremost, the level of involvement of local populations in the governance of the protected area and also in its management, with regard to the direct benefits they derive from it (jobs, activities, etc.).

With regard to their involvement in the governance of PAs, the key factor was whether they participated or sat on the various structures dedicated to formal collaboration. The spatial and institutional factors of these structures were used to differentiate between the various levels of community involvement – communities participating in a cross-border committee will have more "weight" than if their participation is limited to a local consultation committee.

With regard to the involvement of local communities in the management of landscape PAs, the aim was to identify which activities were carried out with or by communities (surveillance patrols, wildlife inventories, etc.) and what benefits communities perceived (direct employment through the PA, community infrastructure, supply chains and/or value chains, improved living conditions, etc.).

⁹ Global Environment Facility.

Given that it was difficult to assign a qualitative value to the involvement of local communities in PA management, their involvement in PA governance was the main factor used for weighting and comparing landscapes.

Operationalization

Finally, the last criterion defined for the analytical framework of this comparative study is everything related to the technical aspects of cross-border collaboration. Difficult to define because it depends heavily on a protected area's monitoring, evaluation and reporting capacities, the objective here was to characterize the operational capacities of PAs within a landscape.

As with financial commitment, operational needs are never fully met, as actors in the field very often want "more and more". Similarly, the level of information shared for this study did not allow for a more detailed assessment of the operational needs of each PA in each landscape and their level of satisfaction.

Consequently, the assessment of this criterion was based on feedback from key individuals and shared documentation. Emphasis was placed on the "level of comfort" of operational capacities – between a PA with only one vehicle and a few eco-guardians vs. one with a fleet of vehicles, aerial equipment, several equipped and trained eco-guardian units, etc. All of this must be put into perspective in relation to the level of threats affecting the protected area and its conservation objectives.

The other aspect that was taken into account was whether these operational capacities are geographically limited within a landscape – for example, a single PA with strong capacities compared to other priority PAs vs. priority PAs with strong operational capacities across the entire landscape. This can help identify levels of operational disparity within and between landscapes.

Finally, the existence of joint operational cross-border management activities (joint patrols, inventories, etc.) was also taken into account, as were efforts to pool resources, intervention strategies and/or long-term planning (strategic plans, thematic plans, land use plans, etc.) applying to the entire landscape.

4.3.4. Matrix for comparing cross-border collaboration experiences

This work of identifying and defining the criteria for analysis and comparison made it possible to design a matrix (table below) to characterize the experiences of cross-border collaboration for the NAAO landscapes in this study.

As explained above, a weighting factor was applied to the six levels defined for each criterion. A weighting of 10 was chosen in order to make the comparison between landscapes more "precise" and also to make the graphical representation of this work (radars, graphs, etc.) more "legible".

With regard to the criterion of operationalization of landscape management, a summary and description of the operational capacities of each landscape targeted by this study is presented in a specific matrix in Annex 2 of this report.

It is important to note that differences in levels within the same criterion can sometimes be "relative", as can subjective weighting levels. Consequently, the purpose of this exercise is more to capture the broad outlines and trends in cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes. NaturAfrica will always be able to continue this analysis work with a more precise level of granularity.

Table 5. Comparison matrix of cross-border collaboration experiences in NAAO landscapes.

Levels of collaboration						
Weighting	0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
Informal collaboration	No informal exchanges between interlocutors – working in silos	Very limited informal exchanges (in terms of volume, confined to one protected area)	Limited informal exchanges (mainly within the same protected area)	Informal exchanges between actors from several protected areas, at the local level and between "technicians"	Informal exchanges between actors from several protected areas, at local/national level and between "managers/decision-makers"	Informal exchanges between stakeholders at local/national/regional level
Formal collaboration	No formal collaboration	Existence of bilateral agreements (MoU type) between technical partners	Existence of multilateral agreements between partners and the government of the same country	Existence of multilateral agreements between governments and partners	Existence of multilateral agreements between governments of different countries	Existence of multilateral agreements between governments, partners and involvement of international bodies (such as UNESCO)
Level of collaboration	No collaboration	Collaboration at the local level within a single protected area	Collaboration at the local level between several protected areas in the same country	Collaboration at the local/national level within the same country	Local/national/regional collaboration between several countries	Collaboration at the international level (beyond the boundaries of the conservation area)
Political commitment	No political support/commitment	Local political support (for a protected area or in silos)	National political support (within a country or in silos)	Regional political support (political bodies in collaborating countries)	Regional political support (including regional bodies such as UEMOA, MRV, etc.)	International political support
Financial commitment	No financial resources	Financial resources dependent on insufficient national budgets	Financial resources dependent on national budgets +	Financial resources dependent on States + partners + donors (e.g. EU-	Addition of contributions from sustainable financing mechanisms (e.g. trust funds) – very comfortable	Diversified and sustainable financial resources, needs met

			technical partner budgets (e.g. NGOs/CSOs) - still insufficient) - more comfortable		
Institutionalization	No institution	Steering committee (usually linked to a project)	Steering committee and technical commissions	Cross-border coordination committee with regular meetings	Governance bodies that meet regularly (Council of Ministers, Scientific Council – often institutionalized by law)	Permanent secretariat and governance bodies/functional institutions (Council of Ministers, Scientific Council)
Community participation	No participation	Communities benefit very little from protected area management activities (community development, patrolling, etc.)	Communities benefit from or are involved in protected area management activities (community development, patrolling, etc.)	Communities participate in governance bodies at the local/national level	Communities participate in governance bodies at the regional level	Communities sit on high-level landscape governance bodies
Operationalization	No operational capacity in the field	Very limited operational capacity (1 PA in the landscape) or significant disparities between PAs in the landscape + lack of joint cross-border actions (joint patrols, etc.).	Operational capacities limited to a few PAs but not all PAs in the landscape + very limited joint cross-border actions (joint patrols, etc.).	Moderate operational capacity across all priority PAs in the landscape + limited joint cross-border management actions (LAB ¹⁰ and/or CONS ¹¹ and/or DEVCO ¹² , etc.).	Strong operational capacities across all priority conservation areas in the landscape + joint cross-border management actions (LAB, biomonitoring/research, DEVCO, etc.).	Very strong operational capacities across the entire landscape + long-term planning tools, pooling of intervention strategies, resources, etc.

¹⁰ Anti-Poaching.

¹¹ Conservation.

¹² Community Development.

5. Overview of cross-border collaboration for each NAAO landscape

5.1. Cross River

5.1.1. Collaboration framework

The Cross River landscape involves two states, namely Cameroon and Nigeria.

Historical overview of legal cooperation	
Inter-state cooperation has existed for several years (cooperation agreement in place since 1963). Development of this agreement with the support of the PSNMR project (German cooperation) and WCS ¹³ (strong external and dependent support). First bilateral agreement in over 30 years.	
Formal aspects	
The different names of the agreements and dates	Framework Agreement on Cooperation for the Conservation of Transboundary Ecosystems and the Sustainable Management of Forestry and Wildlife Resources. Signed on 19 April 2024, ratified by Cameroon on 2 May 2025, not yet ratified by Nigeria.
Type of agreement	Cooperation framework agreement.
Signatories	Government of the Republic of Cameroon and Government of the Republic of Nigeria (signed by the respective ministers in charge of the environment).
Geographical scope	Several protected area complexes (beyond the landscape covered by the study), including Takamanda and Korup National Parks in Cameroon and Cross River National Park in Nigeria (Art. 5.1).
Duration of the agreement	3 years, renewable for 3 years (Art. 11) – duration adjusted to the duration of the support project.
Substantive aspects	
Scope/common challenges to be overcome through this cooperation	Integrated management of transboundary ecosystems for biodiversity conservation. Sustainable management and marketing of forest products.
Objectives pursued	The purpose of the agreement is to establish a general framework for cooperation (Art. 1). Objectives include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To supervise and coordinate the areas of cooperation identified. - Ensuring that special protocols are consistent with the areas of cooperation. - Collaborate on the implementation of joint cross-border programmes. - Develop institutions and mobilize funding.
Obligations arising from the agreement (degree of constraint)	No binding obligations for States, which undertake to cooperate in four areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated management of transboundary ecosystems - Sustainable management of forest resources and trade in forest products - Combating poaching and illegal exploitation of forest resources

¹³ Wildlife Conservation Society.

	<p>- Site-specific programmes</p> <p>The terms of this cooperation include, for example, the development of joint strategies.</p>
Institutional mechanisms (and actors involved) and decision-making powers, clarity of mandates	<p>The States undertake to set up an Evaluation and Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the agreement, coordinated by the authorities of both States and composed of experts from the relevant institutions and strategic partners appointed by the Parties (Art. 9).</p> <p>This committee may be accompanied by thematic working groups to reflect on areas of cooperation and the development of specific protocols for the agreement.</p> <p>The committee shall meet at least once a year, alternately in Cameroon and Nigeria.</p>
Operational provisions/means of implementation	<p>This cooperation involves the development of joint strategies, projects and partnerships, information-sharing platforms, joint actions, collaboration in research, the implementation of a joint platform for prosecuting offences, etc. (Art. 5).</p>
Financing of implementation (sustainable or project-based)	<p>No financing mechanism is provided for in the agreement.</p> <p>The Parties merely undertake to seek sources of funding and develop sustainable financing mechanisms (Art. 6).</p>
<p>Points to monitor and/or aspects to consider/prospects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This cooperation should enable the development of a joint management strategy through a landscape approach that takes into account connectivity between protected areas and the creation and management of biosphere reserves and World Heritage sites covering areas that are strategic for biodiversity conservation. - Ensuring the agreement's sustainability beyond its planned duration. 	

Two international agreements also help to strengthen cooperation efforts between States: the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas¹⁴ and their habitats on the one hand, and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and the Man and Biosphere Programme on the other.

The Oban and Okwangwo divisions of Cross River National Park (Nigeria) constitute a Biosphere Reserve. ¹⁵In 2020, Nigeria proposed them as a World Heritage Site jointly with Cameroon for the Korup and Takamanda sections, with a view to making them a transboundary World Heritage Site. Obtaining such status would strengthen inter-state cooperation as embodied in the framework agreement, leading States to collaborate regularly to maintain the outstanding universal value of the site that led to its recognition. However, there are still many challenges to be overcome before this status can be obtained¹⁶. And the process is on hold. At the same time, the project for two transboundary biosphere reserves is more advanced and would also provide additional support for the UNESCO nomination.

¹⁴ Adopted under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Nigeria has been a party to the agreement since 2008; Cameroon appears to have ratified the agreement in 2020 (but this is yet to be confirmed) and is one of the species' range states. For a comparative legal analysis of the national implementation of the CMS and the Gorilla Agreement, particularly for gorilla and chimpanzee species, see: Legal Atlas, *Legal Study - Legal Assessment of the implementation of the Convention on Migratory Species and the Gorilla Agreement in Cameroon and Nigeria, Special Focus: Nigeria-Cameroon Chimpanzee and Cross River Gorillas*, 2021.

¹⁵ Cross River – Korup – Takamanda (CRIKOT). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6204/>

¹⁶ Hatchwell A., *Cameroon-Nigeria Transboundary Natural World Heritage Site Nomination Planning*, Report to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), 2021.

On the Cameroonian side, it is interesting to note that in 2016, MINOF signed a MoU with the Cameroonian Ministry of Defense¹⁷ to ensure better conservation of wildlife and protected areas, in particular through the pooling of joint actions and resources. This synergy will also strengthen actions in and around transboundary protected areas.

5.1.2. Effectiveness of collaboration

Following the maintenance and documentation work, we present here the main strengths/weaknesses of cross-border collaboration and its impact on the Cross River landscape.

Advantages/Strengths	Disadvantages/Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of collaboration. More than 20 years of exchanges between the two countries, with a foundation of trust already established. • Good momentum underway that needs to be harnessed/built upon. Project document to operationalize the agreement currently being developed (by PSNMR/Julien Dupuy). • Increased awareness. Greater awareness of the issues among managers, donors and ministries. • Community engagement. Communities are already mobilized and connected on both sides of the border. • Legal and formal framework. The cross-border agreement (signed in 2025) provides a formal framework for structuring collaboration, although it has yet to be implemented. The prospect of a cross-border Biosphere Reserve provides an additional formal basis for collaboration. The MINFOF-Defense MoU provides tools for deploying joint actions. • Synergies between NGOs. The complementary nature of the actions (WCS/WWF) allows for broader coverage of the landscape. • Potential of the transboundary Biosphere Reserve. This status could harmonize management approaches and strengthen cooperation. • International interest. The presence of key species (e.g. Cross River gorillas) facilitates the mobilization of donors and partners. • Donor support. Funding (Arcus) enables key activities (censuses, workshops) to be maintained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security context. The crisis paralysed activities for years, despite a gradual recovery. • Dependence on NGOs and donors. Collaboration relies almost exclusively on NGOs and their funding, making it vulnerable to changes in priorities or the political context. • Lack of operational coordination. There are few joint patrols, intelligence sharing or long-term strategic planning. • Language and administrative barriers. Differences between French and English systems and administrative structures create misunderstandings. • Legislative differences. Differences in legislation between the two countries are not a major obstacle, but enforcement remains weak without external support. • Landscape fragmentation. Two distinct sub-landscapes (north/south) with little ecological or operational connectivity. • Complexity of enclaves. The presence of unauthorized villages in the parks requires complex legal and social solutions. • Cameroonian resistance to the World Heritage process due to negative international community opinion (regarding the Dja site).

¹⁷ Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife and the Ministry of Defence, Cameroon, 2016.

The main results and impacts of cross-border collaboration in the Cross River landscape are characterized by:

- **Political dimension.** Cross-border collaboration gives the landscape international visibility, facilitating advocacy and fundraising (European funds). The Development and Management Plan (PAG) validated by the ministry gives legitimacy to cross-border projects.
- **Legal and political framework.** The signing of a transboundary agreement (even if limited to three years) is a major step forward after 30 years without a formal framework. However, its short duration is perceived as an obstacle to sustainability (as it is linked to the duration of a project).
- **Stability of great ape populations.** Gorilla poaching has decreased on the Nigerian side, suggesting stability (or even a slight improvement) in their populations.
- **Sharing of best practices.** Exchanges between Cameroon (more advanced on community forests) and Nigeria to improve local approaches.
- **Revival of exchanges and political enthusiasm.** The agreement has revitalized discussions and information exchanges (seizures of parrots). Recent workshops have revived both countries' interest in collaboration, with a roadmap in preparation.

The main limitations encountered by stakeholders in the Cross River landscape are as follows:

- **Low impact on biodiversity.** Little tangible improvement in ecological connectivity or biodiversity due to a lack of concrete action on the ground. Low ecological connectivity with few links between the northern (Takamanda) and southern (Korup/Oban) areas, which are separated by more than 100 km.
- **Reduced activities.** Joint patrols, ecological monitoring and workshops have been limited by insecurity and lack of funding, especially on the Cameroonian side.
- **Lack of resources.** The absence of dedicated funding prevents the effective implementation of plans.
- **Administrative delays.** The designation processes (World Heritage, Biosphere Reserves) are slowed down by scheduling conflicts and divergent priorities.
- **Lack of operational coordination.** Few joint actions between WCS and WWF, despite their complementarity.
- **Legislative differences.** The differences between *common law* (Nigeria) and French legal tradition (Cameroon) pose challenges for joint management.

5.1.3. Key lessons learned & recommendations

The main lessons learned from the Cross River landscape's cross-border collaboration experiences are as follows:

- **Importance of local actors and networks.** The presence of NGOs on both sides of the border, as well as personal ties between key individuals, are essential for successful collaboration and have been instrumental in reviving momentum.
Traditional communities and authorities are key actors, already involved and supportive of collaboration. Their commitment is crucial for World Heritage designation, but the crisis has prevented their involvement so far.
- **Role of donors.** Funding (notably from the EU, KfW, USFWS and Arcus Foundation) is crucial to support initiatives, but dependence on it can also undermine the sustainability of actions. Stable and diversified sources of funding are necessary.
- **Political and security context.** Political and security crises (e.g. insecurity in Cameroon) can paralyze activities on the ground, despite good intentions. The separatist crisis in Cameroon and

the presence of Boko Haram in the north are hampering actions on the ground, despite progress in bureaucratic discussions.

- **Legal and community issues.** Illegal enclaves in the parks (Korup) and disagreements over the boundaries of the Nigerian park complicate the designation as a World Heritage Site. Legal regularization of the communities' presence is essential.
- **Uneven dynamics between countries.** Nigeria is more motivated than Cameroon to engage in cross-border collaboration, partly due to historical tensions (e.g. Cameroon's resistance to the inclusion of Dja on the List of World Heritage in Danger).
- **International supervision.** World Heritage status requires strict monitoring (annual reports, IUCN assessments), which can improve coordination but also create tensions (pressure on Cameroon).
- **Strong political commitment.** Active involvement of governments to overcome administrative barriers. Despite the security crisis, the historical collaboration between Cameroon and Nigeria remains strong, with political and technical will to restart activities.
- **Complexity of statuses.** Initiatives such as the Biosphere Reserve or World Heritage (UNESCO) can structure collaboration, but their implementation is slowed down by disagreements (inclusion of Mount Cameroon). The World Heritage label is perceived as more mobilizing than that of Biosphere Reserve, as it offers greater international visibility.
- **Importance of legal frameworks.** Legislative differences are not a major obstacle, but linguistic and administrative misunderstandings can complicate cooperation.

The main recommendations from interviews with stakeholders in the Cross River landscape can be summarized as follows:

- **Strengthen management capacities in the field.** Improve communication and coordination of conservation efforts through an annual joint planning meeting between Nigeria and Cameroon. Clarify the role of WCS as coordinator, especially after the crisis in Cameroon.
Encourage joint patrols between contiguous protected areas and target illegal timber trade and the sale of endangered species (bush meat trade). Conduct an awareness campaign targeting all cross-border law enforcement, customs and immigration services.
Facilitate exchange visits and capacity building for protected area staff.
Coordinate joint biological studies and data exchange.
- **Resolve conflicts of use.** Negotiate agreements with communities living in parks to regularize their status, in particular to define clear buffer zones.
- **Integrated approach.** Expand collaboration beyond conservation (community development, fire management, anti-trafficking) to maximize impact.
- **Strengthen institutional cooperation.** Develop subsidiary agreements for specific issues (law enforcement, buffer zone management).
Establish clear agreements between NGOs (e.g. WCS/WWF) and with the Defense and Security Forces (FDS) for joint actions, as in the BSB¹⁸.
Define an operational roadmap for 2026, with measurable objectives within three years (duration of the cross-border agreement). Rely on local operators to implement this roadmap with deployment capabilities in the field.
- **Rely on local actors.** Involve local operators (NGOs, communities, traditional authorities) more closely in deploying an operational roadmap.

¹⁸ Sena Oura Bouba-Ndjida Binational Complex, between Cameroon and Chad.

- **Involve local communities.** Organize transparent and inclusive consultations to obtain their support and integrate their needs into management plans. It is necessary to establish functional mechanisms for delegating and involving traditional authorities and communities. Ensure that local communities benefit economically from conservation (eco-development, carbon funds).
- **Harmonize legislation.** Resolve inconsistencies between Cameroonian and Nigerian legislation, particularly with regard to park boundaries and authorized activities.
- **Harmonize data.** Fill the documentation gap on the Nigerian side to facilitate joint planning.
- **Coordinate with Biosphere Reserves.** Align buffer zone boundaries and management plans with those of proposed transboundary biosphere reserves to avoid duplication and maximize synergies. Use Biosphere Reserve processes as intermediate steps towards World Heritage status, capitalizing on the experience of Gola (Sierra Leone/Liberia).
- **Continuous and sustainable financial support.** Mobilize funds and maintain stable financing, particularly from the EU, to ensure project continuity and support management activities, park manager training, and community development initiatives. Secure funding to operationalize the recently signed Framework Agreement. Need to develop protocols, procedures, etc.
- **Government involvement to operationalize the framework agreement.** Strengthen the commitment of governments (Cameroon and Nigeria) to implement the framework agreement in practice, harmonize actions and promote a common and sustainable vision for the landscape. Develop protocols and procedures to make the cross-border agreement a reality, with dedicated funding (e.g. EU, KfW).
- **Integration of peacebuilding.** Add *peacebuilding* and human rights components to projects to reduce the risk of future conflicts.

5.2. Gola-Foya

5.2.1. Framework for collaboration

Historical overview of legal cooperation	
In 2009, agreement to establish a Peace Park.	
Formal aspects	
The various names of the agreements and dates	Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under the auspices of the Mano River Union on cooperation in the management, research, protection and conservation of the Greater Gola Transboundary Peace Park (2011 Amended in 2020).
Type of agreements	MoU: memorandum of understanding
Signatories to the texts	The Government of Liberia and the Government of Sierra Leone (supported by the Mano River Union (MRU) - signed by FDA (Forestry Development Authority) and NPAA (National Protected Area Authority).
Geographical scope	Gola Foya
Duration of the agreement	Not specified
Substantive aspects:	
Scope/common challenges to be overcome through this cooperation	Reminder of the mutual interest in continuing and strengthening joint management and conservation of border parks to ensure the conservation of shared resources and ecosystems.
Objectives pursued/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition of the Gola Forest Transboundary Peace Park - Ensure its conservation as a global ("undivided") ecosystem

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guarantee long-term protection - Share and pool expertise and experience. - Realize the full economic potential of the parks and their surrounding areas (tourism, PES, etc.) to bring benefits to States and local communities. - Respect national, regional and international environmental law. - Harmonize approaches between FDA and NPAA with regard to Peace Parks - Establish ecological corridors. - Facilitate the free movement of forestry workers.
Obligations arising from the agreement (degree of constraint)	The States undertake to declare that, while retaining their own identity and management plan, the protected areas (Gola Rainforest National Park and Gola Forest National Park) will be managed in accordance with the management objectives contained in the MoU.
Institutional mechanisms (and actors involved) and decision-making powers	Intergovernmental Peace Park Management Committee. Members: maximum 10 people, including 2 representatives from local communities. Decision-making by consensus.
Operational provisions/means of implementation	Harmonize respective legislation and remove all barriers to facilitate cooperation. Ensure equitable distribution of revenues generated by the Peace Park.
Financing of implementation	NPAA and FDA must seek funding.

Since July 2025, the Gola-Tiwaï complex on the Sierra Leonean side has enjoyed World Heritage status. Although the nomination only concerns Sierra Leone, Liberia also proposed the nomination of Gola Forest National Park in 2023. Benefiting from a shared ecosystem, the possibility of proposing the addition of this site as a "serial site" in the coming months could ultimately lead to the nomination of the Liberian part and thus contribute to strengthening cross-border management and collaboration.

5.2.2. Effectiveness of collaboration

Following the maintenance and documentation work, we present here the main strengths/weaknesses of cross-border collaboration and its impact on the Gola-Foya landscape.

Advantages/Strengths	Disadvantages/Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared governance. The MRU platform and "Peace Parks" status facilitate coordination between official institutions (NPAA, FDA) and civil society. • Formal framework. Existence of an MoU and a joint action plan, updated regularly (2024 meeting in Monrovia). • Operational tools. Annual action plans, joint patrols, joint training (via PAPFOR), and use of tools such as SMART for monitoring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow political processes. Difficulties in quickly organizing bilateral meetings at the political level, which slows down decision-making. • Capacity asymmetries. Marked differences between the two countries (16 eco-guards in Liberia vs. 54 in Sierra Leone) and limited resources for protected area management. • Limited capacities. Insufficient numbers of eco-guards, especially in Liberia, and inadequate infrastructure. Porous and difficult-to-control borders, exacerbating illegal activities (poaching, trafficking).

- Informal exchanges. Fluid communication between key actors (eco-guards, traditional leaders) via WhatsApp groups and regular meetings.
- Integrated approach. Combination of conservation, community development, and the search for sustainable funding. Willingness to develop a joint Land Use Plan (LUP) and a business plan for the landscape, with a long-term vision.
- Research and biomonitoring. Similar use of camera traps, although methodologies still need to be harmonized.
- Habitat fragmentation. Expansion of communities and agricultural frontiers threaten ecological connectivity, particularly between parks and gallery forests.
- Land use conflicts. Tensions between conservation and mining/logging, with risks to biodiversity.
- Dependence on donors. Precarious funding and dependence on external projects (USAID, EU), limiting the sustainability of actions (lack of sustainable financing mechanisms).
- Legal gaps. Lack of a unified legal framework for prosecution and dispute management (light penalties for wildlife offences). Difficulty in organizing joint patrols without formal agreement between security agencies.
- Administrative fragmentation. No joint Management and Development Plan (PAG); each country manages its park separately. Research and biomonitoring conducted independently, without common protocols.

The main results and impacts of cross-border collaboration in the Gola-Foya landscape are characterized by:

- **Peace and cooperation.** Cross-border collaboration (MoU signed in 2011 and renewed in 2019, and initiatives such as the ARTP) has helped to ease historical tensions between Sierra Leone and Liberia, using protected areas as a lever for peace.
- **Structured coordination.** Good informal communication (WhatsApp groups, technical meetings) and formal collaboration (bilateral meetings, workshops).
- **Biodiversity conservation.** The Gola-Foya landscape is home to iconic species (picathartes, forest elephants, chimpanzees) and unique ecosystems (wetlands, forests). The Gola-Foya parks are connected, promoting biodiversity conservation despite fragmented areas (towards Kambui).
- **Community development.** Opportunities created for local communities (tourism, cocoa, agroforestry, honey) and strengthening of cultural and economic exchanges. Cross-border communities, sharing the same culture and language, benefit from coordinated interventions.
- **Reduction in deforestation.** Lower deforestation rates in protected areas, particularly in Liberia.

Cross-border collaboration has led to significant advances in peace and conservation. The Gola-Foya model shows that cross-border collaboration can be a driver of peace, conservation and development. However, its effectiveness and success now depend on legal harmonization, capacity building, sustainable financing, political will and a balance between the needs of communities and those of biodiversity.

5.2.3. Key lessons learned & recommendations

The main lessons learned from the cross-border collaboration experiences of the Gola-Foya landscape are as follows:

- **Gradual collaboration.** Initially, the two countries worked in isolation, with limited results. The involvement of the MRU and institutions has improved coordination and results.
- **Importance of the regional framework.** The MRU has given a regional dimension to landscape management, particularly on climate and peace issues.

- **Sustainable financing.** The main challenge remains the financing of collaboration and activities in the field, which often depends on donors and the limited resources of the states.
- **Legal harmonization.** There is a need to assess and harmonize legal frameworks and practices between the two countries to strengthen the coherence of actions. This includes common legal frameworks to facilitate cross-border interventions (protocols for eco-guards). Support the nomination of the Liberian side for World Heritage status.
- **Community involvement.** Integration of local knowledge and socio-economic needs to ensure buy-in and sustainability of actions.
- **Awareness-raising and combating trafficking.** Weakness in the fight against wildlife trafficking, particularly in Sierra Leone. Need to mobilize more resources for awareness-raising and understanding of local dynamics.
- **Political commitment.** Clear support from governments to align conservation and development priorities.

The main recommendations from interviews with stakeholders in the Gola-Foya landscape can be summarized as follows:

- **Political will.** Strengthen political commitment to support conservation, especially in the face of pressure to exploit natural resources (timber, minerals).
- **Institutional strengthening.** Improve institutional mechanisms for forest protection in Liberia. Involve security agencies (police, defense forces) more closely to support eco-guards, who are unarmed. Recruit a legal consultant to harmonize legislation between the two countries.
- **Capacity and funding.** Secure long-term funding (REDD+, dedicated funds) to reduce dependence on donors and fluctuating resources (forestry, mining).
- **Standardization.** Develop common methodologies for monitoring wildlife and habitats, and harmonize cross-border interventions. Finalize and sign a joint MoU/SOP for joint patrols and dispute management (e.g. penalties for illegal activities). Develop joint protocols for biomonitoring and research to unify methodologies and data.
- **Capitalize on peace.** Use cross-border collaboration as a lever to strengthen peace and attract additional funding (biodiversity, development).
- **Support from the MRU.** Strengthen MRU support to mobilize funding and improve integrated landscape management.

5.3. Nimba Mountains

5.3.1. Framework for collaboration

Historical overview of legal cooperation	
Pre-existing project agreements.	
Formal aspects	
The different names of the agreements and dates	Framework agreement on the tri-national and sustainable conservation of the Nimba Mountains, dated 8 December 2012.
Type of agreements	Framework agreement (tri-national).
Signatories to the texts	Governments of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the Republic of Guinea and the Republic of Liberia for the integrated and sustainable conservation of the Nimba Mountains – signed by the Ministers of the Environment of Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and the FDA (Liberia).
Geographical scope	Nimba Mountains.

Duration of the agreement	Not specified.
Substantive aspects	
Scope/common challenges to be overcome through this cooperation	Consolidate/strengthen peaceful relations and understanding between countries. Importance of protecting the biodiversity of the Nimba Mountains for present and future generations.
Objectives	Recognition of the Nimba Mountains as a joint biosphere reserve, enjoying a cross-border statutory framework belonging to the Afri-MAB network and the World Network of Biosphere Reserves.
Obligations arising from the agreement (degree of constraint)	The parties undertake to apply the principles of biodiversity conservation contained in certain texts and programmes (this is only a reminder of the obligations that may arise from their participation in certain agreements, the Seville Strategy (MAB) and the Maputo Convention).
Institutional mechanisms (and actors involved) and decision-making powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishment of a tripartite annual consultation framework (to examine issues). - Creation of a technical committee to monitor and implement the agreement.
Operational provisions/means of implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular contact with the various institutions in the Nimba Mountains. - Establishment of legal frameworks for the implementation of the actions selected harmonization of management policies and strategic objectives. - Harmonization of management policies and strategic objectives. - Coordination of management and protection actions.
Financing of implementation	No sustainable financing mechanism planned. The parties are only committed to strengthening their cooperation with international institutions and organizations for technical and financial assistance.
Points to monitor/aspects to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political crises, wars, Ebola. - Collaboration ends when projects end. 	

The countries' commitment to implementing this agreement is reaffirmed in the management plan for the East Nimba Nature Reserve (Liberia)¹⁹, the Management Plan for the Nimba Mountains Biosphere Reserve (Guinea)²⁰ and by the joint UNESCO-IUCN mission in 2019, which recommended the reactivation of the 2012 framework agreement, accompanied by sustainable funding²¹.

The landscape benefits from several international statuses: although the 2012 agreement recognized the Nimba Mountains as a joint Biosphere Reserve, only the Guinean part has enjoyed this status since 1980.

The transboundary UNESCO World Heritage Site (natural site since 1981) between Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea for the integral nature reserve (since 1992, listed as a site in danger) is not currently extended to Liberia, which may slow down cooperation with this third country.

¹⁹ East Nimba Nature Reserve, Updated Management Plan, 2024-2029, p.99.

²⁰ PAG of the Monts Nimba Biosphere Reserve, 2025-2034, p.81.

²¹ IUCN, UNESCO, *Report of the Joint Reactive Monitoring Mission (9-20 January 2019), Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve*, p.53.

Cooperation linked to World Heritage status means that Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire must redouble their efforts to remove the site from the list of endangered properties²².

5.3.2. Effectiveness of collaboration

Following the maintenance and documentation work, we present here the main strengths/weaknesses of cross-border collaboration and its impact on the Nimba Mountains landscape.

Advantages/Strengths	Disadvantages/Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective informal exchanges. WhatsApp groups between managers enable rapid coordination (fire alerts, mobilization of teams). • Existing institutional framework. Bodies such as CEGENS and the Houphouët Foundation facilitate coordination between Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. • Technical harmonization. The PAPFOR project has helped to standardize certain practices (joint patrols, ecological monitoring, common frameworks). • Economic opportunities. Identification of promising sectors such as ecotourism, with studies and action plans by country. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of joint funding. Absence of joint fundraising and dependence on projects led by international NGOs. • Administrative difficulties. Different administrative divisions between countries, complicating law enforcement and the fight against poaching. • Data sharing issues. Some partners (particularly in Liberia) do not share their data, limiting the quality of inventories and monitoring. • Instability of collaboration frameworks. The platforms put in place (2012 framework agreement) are not functional or depend on specific projects. • Mining pressure. Mining threatens conservation, with a lack of coordination and information sharing between countries.

The main results and impacts of cross-border collaboration in the Nimba Mountains landscape are characterized by:

- **Securing the core of the Nimba Mountains.** Thanks to collaboration, the central core is well protected and home to nearly 80% of the emblematic fauna.
- **Strengthened political will.** Increased awareness between Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, particularly with regard to removing the site from the List of World Heritage in Danger.
- **Restoration of peace.** Local conflicts in the Nimba Mountains region have disappeared, promoting a more stable environment.
- **Improvement of technical tools.** Harmonization of practices (use of SMART, IMET training, shared database) and development of common frameworks for management plans.

The main limitations encountered by stakeholders in the Nimba Mountains landscape are as follows:

- **Lack of legal and administrative harmonization.** Differences in content, law enforcement, administrative divisions and equipment between countries complicate the fight against poaching and trafficking.
- **Exclusion of Liberia.** Liberia is less involved in information exchanges and joint initiatives, particularly due to its absence from World Heritage status.
- **Economic pressure.** Mining and the arrival of new permits threaten conservation, with a lack of transparency and coordination between countries.

²² Bilateral collaboration strengthened since 2019 through the development of common indicators for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and joint annual reports. CEGENS, SMFG, *Report on Cross-Border Collaboration for the Conservation of the Nimba Mountains Area: Guinea's Experience*, August 2021.

- **Low community involvement.** Community development initiatives (PDL) are not harmonized and lack sustainability.

5.3.3. Key lessons learned & recommendations

The main lessons learned from the cross-border collaboration experiences in the Nimba Mountains landscape are as follows:

- **Lack of sustainability of initiatives.** Cross-border collaboration projects and platforms (initiated by FAO, MRU) are often abandoned after launch due to a lack of follow-up or continuation by subsequent projects.
- **Importance of consolidation.** Cross-border cooperation efforts exist, but they are not sufficiently consolidated or institutionalized to ensure their sustainability.
- **Need for harmonization.** Differences in development plans, laws and methodologies between the three countries (Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia) make collaboration complex.
- **Key role of local actors.** Local communities and economic actors (such as large agricultural producers) play a central role in the sustainability of initiatives, but their involvement remains limited or poorly targeted.

The main recommendations from the interviews conducted with stakeholders in the Nimba Mountains landscape can be summarized as follows:

- **Strengthen institutions and frameworks for collaboration.** Revitalize existing platforms (tripartite framework agreement) and ensure their sustainability. Create a long-term strategic planning document for the entire landscape.
- **Harmonize technical capacities.** Continue and strengthen joint training (SMART, IMET) and shared databases. Standardize inventory and ecological monitoring methodologies.
- **Rethink the community approach.** Target large local producers (pineapple, palm oil) for sustainable projects, rather than supporting villages as a whole. Develop promising economic sectors (ecotourism) to involve communities in conservation.
- **Improve transparency and coordination.** Establish a mechanism for sharing information on mining projects and operating permits. Further integrate Liberia into joint initiatives, particularly through biosphere reserve status.
- **Secure funding.** Explore joint financing mechanisms and involve mining stakeholders in collaborative management.

5.4. Outamba-Kilimi-Kuru Hills-Pinselli-Soyah

5.4.1. Framework for collaboration

Historical overview of legal cooperation	
Formal aspects	
The various names of the agreements and dates	Memorandum of understanding for the conservation and sustainable management of the transboundary forest landscape of OKKPSS (18 May 2023).
Type of agreements	MoU: memorandum of understanding.
Signatories to the texts	Guinea's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, represented by OGP NRF (Guinean Office of National Parks and Wildlife)

	Reserves), and Sierra Leone's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, represented by NPAA.
Geographical scope	OKKPSS transboundary forest landscape.
Duration of the agreement	5 years, tacitly renewable.
Substantive aspects	
Scope/common challenges to be overcome through this cooperation	MoU based on the principles of cooperation and coordination in order to protect shared biodiversity and the landscape.
Objectives	The objective is to define the terms of cooperation and collaboration between Guinea's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development through the OGPNR and Sierra Leone's Ministry of Environment and Climate through the NPAA in the implementation of certain activities related to the sustainable management of the OKKPSS landscape.
Obligations arising from the agreement (degree of constraint)	The specific objectives of the MoU are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To invite all Parties and, if necessary, local communities, NGOs and border surveillance authorities to participate in the planning, research, implementation and evaluation of joint activities. - Create synergies for action. - Support community participation in the landscape and harmonize their interventions (joint patrols, common strategy for managing human/wildlife conflicts).
Institutional mechanisms (and actors involved) and decision-making powers	The mandates of the OGPNR and the NPAA are specified. The two administrations must work closely together to develop programmes and activities, a budget for landscape management, and share information. Both countries have adopted texts to appoint the members of their respective national steering committees.
Operational provisions/means of implementation	List of activities to be implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of joint fundraising. - Joint patrols and anti-poaching activities. - Promotion of standard tools for planning, evaluation and data collection. - Awareness raising and communication. - Development of a joint strategy to manage human/wildlife conflicts. - Contribution to the development of the landscape management plan. - Rotation of meetings at least once a year. Priority given to concrete activities in the field (primarily joint management and protection of border conservation areas).
Funding for implementation	Not planned, apart from the need to seek funding jointly as a collaborative activity.
Points to watch out for/aspects to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The status of protected areas differs. On the Guinean side, these are classified forests that do not yet have national park status. This could be affected by the construction of the railway line that crosses it. On the Sierra Leone side, the protected area has national park status. - Construction of the railway line through the classified forests on the Guinean side: work began even though the impact assessment had not been completed. Furthermore, considering the cross-border impact of the construction of this infrastructure and the environmental 	

consequences it could have, it would have been necessary to assess its impact on the national park on the Sierra Leone side (Art. 3 CBD: States "have a duty to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment in other States").

This agreement between ministries via their public institution does not fall within an international legal framework. Not only is it an agreement concluded between ministries, via their public institutions (which do not have the capacity to legally bind the State to conclude international agreements), but it is also a MoU (memorandum of understanding), which has no binding legal value for States. Therefore, it should be referred to as an administrative arrangement, but one that cannot include obligations that are binding on states.

Nevertheless, this agreement has advantages in that it gives concrete expression to the willingness of administrations to collaborate with each other, to implement joint activities and to seek synergies for the conservation and management of a shared ecosystem.

5.4.2. Effectiveness of collaboration

Following the maintenance and documentation work, we present here the main strengths/weaknesses of cross-border collaboration and its impact on the OKKPS landscape.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete collaboration: Joint patrols and awareness-raising activities appreciated in the field. Effective, information sharing between countries, and community involvement. • Gradual harmonization: Shared methodologies (e.g. PAG in Guinea replicated in Sierra Leone). • Tangible results: Reduction in poaching and improved fire management. • Community engagement: Prohibited areas and agricultural zones validated by local populations. • Openness to the private sector: Discussions with actors such as Winning Construction to integrate environmental standards. • Political commitment: Willingness of ministries to step up efforts (invitation of the Sierra Leonean Prime Minister to a symposium). Willingness to create four national parks. • Cultural flexibility: Communities on both sides of the border share the same language/culture, facilitating communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barriers: Communication difficulties between French-speaking and English-speaking stakeholders in both countries, despite the use of interpreters. • Excessive centralization: In Sierra Leone, park management is too centralized in Freetown, limiting local autonomy. • Lack of resources and underfunding: Understaffing in Guinea (11 agents) and limited capacity of operators. Lack of resources for management on the Sierra Leone side (e.g. logistics, staffing) compared to Guinea or Gola. • Institutional weakness: Delays in signing decrees and lack of ministerial coordination. • Administrative barriers: Travel procedures between countries complicate joint missions (e.g. unarmed rangers, cumbersome formalities). • Dependence on external projects: Collaboration relies on ad hoc funding (e.g. EU, WCF), with no long-term mechanism. Cooperation ceases when funding ends. • Lack of economic alternatives: Communities depend on natural resources due to a lack of alternative projects (e.g. agroecology, carbon revenues). • Persistent threats: Pressure from mining activities, poaching and bush fires, exacerbated by a lack of resources.

The main results and impacts of cross-border collaboration in the OKKPPS landscape are characterized by:

- **Improved anti-poaching efforts.** Four joint patrols in 2024, with concrete results (arrests of gold miners, seizure of timber) and a reduction in illegal activities (artisanal mining, logging), but still limited by funding and local capacity.
- **Strengthening institutional ties.** Adoption of a MoU between NPAA and OGPNR, and development of unprecedented relations between WCF, OGPNR and Guinea's MEDD. Creation of cross-border steering committees, with a clear political commitment (symposium in March 2025 in Sierra Leone).
- **Increased awareness.** Better understanding of conservation issues by communities, with feedback on illegal activities. Involvement of communities in governance (e.g. management committees) and awareness of the importance of conservation.
- **Operational coordination.** Establishment of joint patrols, common terms of reference, and post-mission meetings to share results.
- **Improved ecological connectivity.** Adaptation of infrastructure (e.g. bridge for elephants) and monitoring of the impact of the railway.

5.4.3. Key lessons learned & recommendations

The main lessons learned from the OKKPS landscape's cross-border collaboration experiences are as follows:

- Cross-border cooperation is effective but fragile. It has led to unprecedented advances (e.g. joint patrols, conviction of an offender). Cross-border cooperation is highly dependent on external funding and requires a long-term commitment, but remains fragile without sustainable funding and political support.
- The importance of local autonomy. Teams on the ground must be strengthened and given autonomy to ensure sustainable management.
- Need for a common legal framework. Differences in legal status (national park vs. classified forests) complicate collaboration.
- Role of communities. Communities are key allies for conservation (network of informants, awareness raising), but their involvement requires tangible benefits (economic alternatives).
- Importance of formal agreements. The MoU between Guinea and Sierra Leone has been a catalyst for collaboration, but its implementation depends on funding and political will.
- Cross-border threats. Infrastructure (e.g. railways) and illegal activities (gold mining, timber trafficking) require coordinated management to preserve ecological connectivity.

The main recommendations from interviews with stakeholders in the OKKPS landscape can be summarized as follows:

- **Long-term funding.** Ensure financial support from projects initially, then gradually involve states to ensure sustainability. Landscape biodiversity (e.g. chimpanzee corridors) offers opportunities for carbon or conservation projects, but requires enhanced management to attract investors. Involve mining companies in financing the management of protected areas through dedicated funds.
- **Policy strengthening.** Expand cooperation beyond technical services (OGPNR/NPAA) to include ministries, in order to facilitate the adoption of joint texts.
- **Improved communication.** Provide interpreters to overcome language barriers and strengthen communication between stakeholders.

- **Operational strengthening.** In Sierra Leone, improve the autonomy of local teams, field presence, management infrastructure and logistical resources (equipment for rangers, local offices). In Guinea, increase staff numbers and capacities.
- **Creation of a culture of cooperation.** Develop a long-term process with ongoing dialogue and linked projects (3-4 cycles) to structure collaboration.
- **Develop alternatives for communities.** Set up alternative livelihood projects (agroecology, ecotourism) to reduce dependence on and pressure on natural resources, as in Gola.
- **Increase joint patrols.** Strengthen anti-poaching and law enforcement actions, with dedicated funding for logistics and human resources.
- **Create a network of partners.** Draw inspiration from the Gola model by mobilising actors such as the RSPB or BirdLife to raise funds and provide technical support.
- **Clarify governance.** Integrate the NPAA into decision-making bodies (board) to ensure effective oversight, in accordance with the 2012 law (establishing the NPAA and giving it oversight of parks).
- **Gola model to be replicated.** Gola benefits from better management thanks to a dedicated structure, a Peace Park status recognized for several years, and strong partnerships — elements to be adapted for OKKPS.
- **Strengthen institutional capacities.** Train state services (OGPNRF/NPAA) and improve their working conditions for sustainable management.
- **Replicate good practices.** Extend successful initiatives in Guinea (agroecology, market gardening, fish farming) to Sierra Leone and other cross-border landscapes (Badiar, Mali/Guinea).
- **Strengthen cross-border governance.** Organize annual meetings between the ministries of both countries and operationalize steering committees for political and technical coordination.

5.5. Tai-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo

5.5.1. Framework for collaboration

Historical overview of legal cooperation	
Pre-existing cooperation agreements (around ten) between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, including a cooperation agreement in the field of forestry and wildlife resources (2017), a new general cooperation agreement was adopted in 2024. The TGKS landscape does not currently benefit from a specific bilateral cooperation agreement adopted by the States (at the draft stage).	
Formal aspects	
The different names of the agreements and dates	Bilateral framework agreement on cross-border cooperation, 17 May 2024 (agreement covering natural resources in particular). Draft "Agreement on the sustainable conservation of the Tai-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo Transboundary Forest Complex" between the Government of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and the Government of the Republic of Liberia (2022 version), not yet signed.
Type of agreements	Framework agreement (which should facilitate the adoption of specific agreements, including the TGKS agreement).
Signatories to the texts	Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia (signed by their Ministers of Foreign Affairs).
Geographical scope	The entire border area between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.
Duration of the agreement	10 years, renewable
Substantive aspects	

Common scope/challenges to be overcome through this cooperation	Facilitation of decentralized cooperation (between local authorities) and cooperation between non-state and state actors. General framework for cross-border cooperation covering several areas (peace, security, conflict prevention, transhumance, land use planning, natural resource management, land tenure, etc.).
Objectives	The agreement aims to facilitate and promote cross-border cooperation between local/territorial authorities, groups of local/territorial authorities and public bodies, as well as non-state actors in border areas within their areas of competence. In particular, it aims to "promote initiatives for the shared management of cross-border resources and combat the dumping of toxic waste and the illegal fishing and exploitation of these resources". It also targets cross-cutting areas related to cross-border cooperation (peace, growth, defense, migration, shared governance with CL).
	TGKS draft agreement: the objective is to establish a legal framework for the sustainable and concerted management of the shared cross-border area in CI and Liberia known as the "TGKS complex".
Obligations arising from the agreement (degree of constraint)	The parties (the States) undertake, within the framework of promoting cross-border cooperation, to support development initiatives led by stakeholders, but are not bound by any legal instruments that may be adopted by stakeholders (decentralized, non-state).
	Draft TGKS agreement: consultative framework for discussing issues related to the bilateral management of TGKS.
Institutional mechanisms (and actors involved) and decision-making powers	National border commissions responsible for overseeing the implementation of the agreement.
	Draft TGKS agreement: creation of a joint steering committee for the implementation of the agreement (this agreement would thus provide a legal basis for this steering committee, which has existed since 2009) + national committee in each State + bilateral technical committees.
Operational provisions/means of implementation	Formalization of cooperation relations between local communities, public bodies, non-state organizations, etc. through the conclusion of legal instruments (agreements, protocols or arrangements) within their respective areas of competence.
Financing of implementation	Contributions from signatories, taxes, contributions from development partners, subsidies, donations, bequests.
Points to watch - The security situation is very sensitive, with fears of destabilization during the October 2025 presidential election in Côte d'Ivoire.	

5.5.2. Effectiveness of collaboration

Following our interviews and documentation work, we present here the main strengths/weaknesses of cross-border collaboration and its impact on the TGKS landscape.

Advantages/Strengths	Disadvantages/Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared technical tools. IMET and SMART training, support for demarcating protected area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of sustainability. Projects are often dependent on donors and do not guarantee the sustainability of actions (staff salaries, implementation of PAGs).

- boundaries, and development of ecological corridors.
- Technical approach. The creation of a legal officer position at WCF to organize technical committees and ensure follow-up between meetings is a step forward.
 - Relaying by committed NGOs. WCF and FFI ensure continuity in facilitating and steering collaboration. WCF plays a key role in restarting meetings and defining priorities, despite limited resources.
 - Economic opportunities. Development of AGR (makoré fruits, vegetable oils) for local communities.
 - Support from donors. Grants (KfW, GIZ) have enabled progress, such as the transformation of Grebo-Krahn into a protected area.
 - Favorable village terroirs. Family and cultural ties between border villages facilitate exchanges and joint management.
 - Existing legal basis for cooperation. The general framework agreement of May 2024 provides a framework for strengthening cooperation on natural resources.
 - Conflicts of interest. Divergent priorities (forest production vs. conservation) within institutions (FDA) complicate collaboration.
 - Withdrawal of partners. The gradual withdrawal of GIZ from Liberia has left a void, despite partial takeover by NaturAfrica. CBP²³ meetings depend on external funding (GIZ, USAID, EU), and their withdrawal or change disrupts the dynamic.
 - Administrative delays. Decentralization is limited, and prefects/sub-prefects still control a large part of rural areas.
 - Political barriers. National border commissions (supported by the AU) are struggling to get off the ground on the Liberian side.
 - Problems with free movement. The open borders between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia facilitate illegal activities (poaching, gold panning, logging), but the authorities avoid collaborating on these sensitive issues.
 - Politicization of committees. The inclusion of senior officials (ministries of foreign affairs) and the exclusion of donors reduce technical expertise and decision-making.
 - Lack of government interest. Cross-border collaboration is mainly driven by international cooperation, not national political will.
 - Legal issues. Outdated legislation and legal uncertainty surrounding border demarcation complicate joint monitoring and management.
 - Pressure on resources. Gold mining, poaching and illegal logging persist, with perpetrators escaping justice by crossing the border.

The main results and impacts of cross-border collaboration in the TGKS landscape are characterized by:

- **A sense of shared pride.** The two countries are developing a common identity around the "forest heritage of West Africa", despite the difficulties.
- **Improved local governance.** The creation of management committees (Taï corridor) and support for agroforestry (makoré butter) show concrete progress.
- **Creation of technical committees.** Despite difficulties, technical committees (strengthening law enforcement) have been set up to address specific issues.
- **Informal collaboration in the field.** Field agents collaborate better than hierarchies, particularly on anti-poaching and fire management. Local communities and security forces collaborate well at the local level, particularly south of the Cavally River.
- **Formal progress.** The 2024 framework agreement and the draft agreement on the sustainable conservation of the Taï-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo transboundary forest complex are important steps, even if their implementation remains slow. They provide a legal basis for cooperation.

²³ Bilateral Steering Committee.

- **Awareness of cross-border issues.** Local authorities collaborate on issues such as migration (related to cocoa) but only when social peace is at stake.

The main limitations encountered by actors in the TGKS landscape are as follows:

- **Lack of high-level coordination.** Bilateral committees exist, but they have no decision-making power and struggle to follow up on recommendations. Meetings are often organized at the last minute, without preparation or follow-up, which limits their usefulness.
- **Unfinalised agreements.** The bilateral framework agreement on the TGKS complex has still not been signed, due to administrative obstacles (Liberia's request to add the word "carbon") and changes in government.
- **Lack of legitimacy of the CBP.** The CBP has no clear textual basis, which limits its authority and impact.
- **Poorly targeted funding.** The substantial funds allocated to the Tai-Sapo corridor (€5-10 million) have been used for overburdened national committees, to the detriment of actors on the ground.
- **Environmental damage and agricultural pressure.** Cocoa farming is destroying forests and threatening ecological connectivity, especially in Liberia. Illegal gold mining continues, with a lack of coordinated monitoring of the Cavally River and protected areas.
- **Imbalance in capacities.** Côte d'Ivoire is more advanced in terms of governance and resources, creating an imbalance with Liberia, which lags behind structurally (education, governance, experience).
- **Failure of trust funds.** The conservation fund in Liberia is not working, unlike in Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Implementation problems.** Action plans (Grebo-Krahn PAG) are validated but not funded, and recruitment depends on donors.

5.5.3. Key lessons learned & recommendations

The main lessons learned from the TGKS landscape's cross-border collaboration experiences are as follows:

- **Key role of external partners.** Actors such as GIZ, NaturAfrica, WCF and FFI have been essential in initiating and facilitating cross-border collaboration, but their withdrawal or reduced engagement is undermining progress.
- **Loss of committee effectiveness.** The Bilateral Steering Committee (BSC) has changed in size and composition, evolving from a technical group to an overburdened political committee (60 members, including 40 observers), which has undermined its effectiveness and decision-making.
- **Importance of institutional continuity.** Frequent changes in leadership (at the FDA in Liberia) and a lack of hierarchical support undermine the sustainability of initiatives. This also applies to the BSC, with frequent changes in participants (particularly on the Liberian side), which means that the issues have to be re-explained at each meeting, slowing down progress.
- **Power dynamics and jealousy.** Tensions between institutions (Côte d'Ivoire's sense of superiority, jealousy between OIPR, SODEFOR and the Ministry of Water and Forests) hinder collaboration.
- **Language barrier.** The lack of effort to learn the other country's language limits exchanges, especially at the hierarchical level.
- **Local success vs. national obstacles.** Relations between field agents are often better than those between management. Local communities and security forces collaborate spontaneously.

But national institutions struggle to agree, and decisions depend on hierarchical mandates and budgets.

- **Disconnect between the field and decision-making.** Committees focus on administrative or political discussions, to the detriment of concrete issues (e.g. illegal gold mining, poaching).
- **Need for a formal framework.** Framework agreements (May 2024 agreement) and specific conventions are crucial for formalizing cooperation (joint patrols, pursuit rights).
- **Ecological connectivity.** Efforts to restore connectivity between protected areas (Tai-GK-Sapo corridor) are hampered by local disagreements and agricultural pressure (cocoa).
- **Community management.** Community and sacred forests play a key role in connectivity, but their exploitation (especially in Liberia) needs to be better regulated.
- **Funding and salaries.** Projects finance operational costs, but long-term salaries for agents remain a challenge, particularly in Liberia.

The main recommendations from interviews with TGKS stakeholders can be summarized as follows:

- **Strengthen formal frameworks.** Finalize and sign agreements (draft agreement on the sustainable conservation of the Tai-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo transboundary forest complex) to formalize joint patrols and prosecution rights. Create a bilateral committee with real decision-making power and a mechanism for following up on recommendations. Sign the bilateral framework agreement on the TGKS complex quickly, avoiding minor obstacles (terminology). Disseminate and implement existing agreements, involving the National Boundary Commission.
- **Reform the CBP.** Limit its size to 11 members (7 governments, 2 NGOs, 2 financial partners) to restore technical efficiency. Clarify its role: the CBP must be directive and guide decisions, not just a forum for discussion. Organize preparatory meetings and ensure ongoing coordination between meetings. Systematically draft and disseminate reports to capitalize on decisions.
- **Strengthen technical collaboration.** Rely on technical committees (law enforcement) to move forward with concrete actions. Study the experiences of other countries in cross-border prosecution of offences.
- **Harmonize institutional capacities.** Support the FDA in Liberia to improve its governance and effectiveness, drawing inspiration from the Ivorian model (OIPR). Train agents from both countries in common language and tools (SMART, IMET).
- **Secure long-term funding.** Explore sustainable financing mechanisms (functional trust fund, long-term involvement of donors). Prioritize the recruitment and remuneration of local agents, especially in Liberia.
- **Involve local stakeholders, including communities.** Give a voice back to technicians and local communities, who are already collaborating effectively in the field. Capitalize on spontaneous initiatives (security forces, local authorities). Raise awareness of sustainable management of community and sacred forests by diversifying uses (NTFPs, ecotourism). Develop local economic sectors (processing of makoré fruits) to reduce pressure on protected areas.
- **Combat agricultural pressure.** Implement strong measures to limit the expansion of cocoa, in collaboration with local authorities. Compensate for usage rights for the creation of ecological corridors, as initially planned by KfW.
- **Capitalize on local ties.** Use family and cultural ties between border villages to strengthen cross-border management. Encourage the exchange of good practices (sustainable cocoa cultivation techniques).
- **Amplify ecological connectivity.** Revive corridor projects (Tai-GK-Sapo) with enhanced technical and financial support. Integrate the protection of riverbanks and watercourses into management plans.

Cross-border collaboration in the TGKS landscape has a solid foundation thanks to the commitment of NGOs (particularly WCF) and local communities. However, it is hampered by administrative, financial and political/institutional obstacles. Reform of the CBP, a refocusing on issues on the ground, and better preparation for meetings could revive the momentum. The signing of the bilateral framework agreement and ongoing facilitation are essential to move from discussion to action.

5.6. W-Arly-Pendjari

5.6.1. Framework for collaboration

Historical overview of legal cooperation	
<p>The WAP complex benefits from long-standing cooperation. The first cross-border agreement dates back to 1984 and was aimed at combating poaching. This agreement established the right to pursue offenders across borders in cases of flagrante delicto (while remaining within contiguous wildlife areas). This agreement is still in force but its application has been suspended due to the security situation.</p> <p>A tripartite agreement was also adopted in 2003 to manage transhumance in the W Transboundary Biosphere Reserve.</p> <p>In 2008, the three states adopted an agreement on the joint management of the W Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (RBTW). The main objectives of this agreement are "the protection and enhancement of the natural, archaeological and cultural heritage of the WCTBR, the harmonization of policies [...], the promotion and decentralized management of the WCTBR, and the equitable sharing of benefits among those involved in its management". It establishes joint management structures.</p> <p>Another example is the Framework Agreement on Cooperation for the Promotion of Political Dialogue in the Mekrou Transboundary Basin, shared between the three countries and crossing the WAP complex (2015).</p> <p>The latest cooperation agreement signed by the three States in 2019 completes the legal framework with the historic commitment of these States to protect this ecosystem (including all protected areas, WAP complex) in the long term and to find common solutions to cross-border problems.</p>	
Formal aspects	
The different names of the agreements and dates	Tripartite agreement between the Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso and the Republic of Niger on the harmonized management of protected areas in the W-Arly-Pendjari transboundary complex (W-Arly-Pendjari agreement).
Type of agreements	Tripartite agreement.
Signatories to the texts	The States (through their Ministers of Foreign Affairs).
Geographical scope	All protected areas in W-Arly-Pendjari (the agreement defines the WAP complex as "the continuum formed by national and transboundary protected areas, as well as the peripheral areas known as buffer zones and transition zones of these protected areas"). This agreement thus extends the cooperation that was previously limited to the W transboundary biosphere reserve (with the 2008 agreement and the 2003 agreement on transhumance).
Duration of the agreement	Indefinite
Substantive aspects	

Scope/common challenges to be overcome through this cooperation	The preamble to this agreement recalls the context and reasons that led the States to adopt this text (recalling the States' commitments under international conventions, existing cooperation agreements, regional initiatives (ECOWAS, UEMOA), the States' willingness to commit to effectively combating common threats to national security, the States' responsibility to protect their environment, the desire to have the site recognized as a World Heritage Site, and to extend cooperation beyond the RBT of W.
Objectives	<p>The main objective of the agreement is to promote and facilitate cooperation between the States Parties based on coordinated and concerted solidarity for the harmonized and sustainable management of the natural resources of the protected areas of the WAP complex. This objective is broken down into a list of actions, which gives prominence to the legal, political and institutional framework as a necessary basis for the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems (harmonizing policies, legislation, etc.; adopting standards at the sub-regional level; implementing actions to address specific or common issues). The agreement also aims to promote decentralized management, co-management and benefit sharing.</p> <p>The agreement reiterates a series of principles that will guide its implementation, thereby recalling the key principles contained in international agreements and declarations: integration, subsidiarity, prevention, precaution, participation and equitable sharing of benefits.</p>
Obligations arising from the agreement (degree of constraint)	<p>The agreement establishes tools for its implementation relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term planning with the development of a master plan for the WAP complex (20 years), - Medium-term planning with the complex's PAG (Annual Development Plan), - Short term (business plan).
Institutional mechanisms (and actors involved) and decision-making powers	<p>The agreement establishes regional management structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Council of Ministers (decision-making and supervisory body). - Technical and Monitoring Committee (TMC). - Scientific Council (research activities). - Executive Secretariat (ES, as administrative body).
Operational provisions/means of implementation	<p>The States undertake to implement a number of sub-regional, and therefore joint, activities (LAB, control and enforcement system, ecotourism strategy, regional conservation strategies, harmonized ecological monitoring, etc.) (Art. 14).</p> <p>They also commit to a process of harmonizing legislation (Art. 16) in many areas (LAB, fishing, illegal logging, transhumance, sport hunting, categories of protected areas, zoning, offences and penalties relating to protected areas).</p> <p>The agreement also governs the legal regime applicable in the different areas of the complex (Articles 17-18).</p>
Financing of implementation	The budget is set out in Article 19 and consists of financial contributions from the States, subsidies, donations and external financial aid.

	It also provides for the establishment of a permanent financial structure to ensure greater financial autonomy in the management of the complex, as well as access to the FSOA.
Points to watch/aspects to consider <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WAP complex: triple cross-border status: World Heritage Site, biosphere reserve and Ramsar site. - Insecurity 	

The historic cooperation between the three States for the conservation of the WAP complex, as well as the continued support of PTFs, has resulted not only in the recognition of World Heritage status as a transboundary property (in 2017, extending the status enjoyed by the W National Park in Niger to other protected areas in Benin and Burkina Faso), but also in a series of cooperation agreements that have demonstrated the States' willingness to make a long-term commitment to the entire landscape. The W-Arly-Pendjari complex was also designated a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (TBR) in 2020 and declared a transboundary Ramsar site in 2018.

The W Transboundary Park was recognized as a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (TBR) in 2002, then as a transboundary Ramsar site in 2006. The 2008 agreement thus provided a formal framework for cooperation by setting up joint management structures and establishing joint activities.

5.6.2. Effectiveness of collaboration

Following maintenance and documentation work, we present here the main strengths/weaknesses of cross-border collaboration and its impact on the WAP landscape.

Advantages/Strengths	Disadvantages/Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical synergy. Sharing of expertise and resources (anti-poaching intelligence, inventory protocols) when collaboration works. Annual meetings of the monitoring committee (RBT-WAP) and exchanges via social networks enable rapid sharing of information and best practices. Regional workshops and meetings (UEMOA) enable all stakeholders to be involved. Ability to develop strategies adapted to common challenges (climate resilience, fire management). Harmonization of techniques (beekeeping, land management) and adaptation to local specificities (melons in Niger, stone cordons). • Synergy between actors. Collaboration between managers, communities and PTFs maximizes the impact of projects (roads, firebreaks, tourism). • Landscape approach. Regional inventories and joint planning (PAG of the RBT W, SDAT) promote an integrated vision of conservation and coherent management of contiguous ecosystems. • Community resilience. Local communities and managers remain motivated to protect the WAP complex, despite obstacles. Projects target the concrete needs of populations (drilling, training) and improve their ability to cope with crises (insecurity, climate change). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and security barriers. Geopolitical tensions (withdrawal from ECOWAS, coups d'état) and insecurity block formal exchanges and joint activities. Differences in priorities between states (military approach vs. conservation) hinder harmonization. • Institutional complexity. The proliferation of actors (states, NGOs, donors) makes coordination difficult and requires strong governance bodies. Decision-making processes are often slow, with a gap between political commitments and their operationalization. • Lack of a unifying regional programme (such as ECOPAS) to coordinate stakeholders. • Lack of resources and coordination. Eco-guards and managers lack the resources for cross-border actions (equipment, training, per diem). The scarcity of public funding makes it necessary to rationalize resources

- Innovation and adaptation. Despite the challenges, managers are adjusting their methods to respond to security and financial crises. Development of local, low-cost solutions (concrete beehives, resilient legumes) that can be replicated in other contexts.
 - Institutional resilience. Governance bodies (Council of Ministers, SE) and tools such as the FSOA ensure continuity despite crises by rationalizing resources and coordinating actors.
 - International recognition. International labels (World Heritage, Biosphere Reserve, Ramsar) facilitate access to funding and strengthen the commitment of States and PTFs (GIZ, GEF). They reinforce the legitimacy and resources of the WAP. Regular meetings (UNESCO national committees) and periodic reports (IMET) maintain positive pressure for conservation.
 - Legitimacy and funding The inter-state agreement and the presence of UEMOA as the lead agency strengthen coordination and credibility with donors. The FSOA and PTFs provide a stable financial framework for sustainable actions.
 - Economic potential. The WAP complex is a source of jobs and wealth for communities, with opportunities for development (ecotourism, NTFPs).
 - Informal frameworks (exchanges via WhatsApp, technical meetings) allow dialogue to continue despite crises.
- and rely on external partnerships (APN²⁴, foundations).
 - Funding and sustainability. Projects are often limited by short funding cycles and changing donor priorities. Local CSOs have limited capacity and struggle to maintain activities without ongoing support.
 - Governance challenges. Coordination between governance bodies (Council of Ministers, SE) remains uneven, with meetings sometimes spaced out or postponed.
 - The absence of a single operator for the three parks limits the pooling of resources.
 - Existing legal agreements (airspace use) are not aligned with current military realities.
 - Misinformation and mistrust. Poor communication on the APN model on the Burkina/Niger side, which hinders collaboration.
 - Governance and equity. Bias or collusion among managers can create tensions and undermine community trust. The involvement of local authorities (governors) must be balanced so as not to hinder the work of CSOs.

The main results and impacts of cross-border collaboration in the WAP landscape are characterized by:

- **Unified legal framework and institutional strengthening.** The WAP tripartite agreement has made it possible to create a consensus text with governance bodies (Council of Ministers, Executive Secretariat, CTS and Scientific Committee), strengthening political legitimacy and providing a clear structure for cross-border management. The Council of Ministers has met three times (fourth meeting in preparation), with concrete resolutions for the management of the WAP. The FSOA and PTFs have provided funding for joint activities (PAG, developments).
- **Joint strategies and enhanced cooperation.** Development of regional action plans (WAP master plan, giraffe strategy) and operationalization through programmes such as PAPBIO. World Heritage status and regular assessments stimulate donor interest and pressure to maintain standards. Replication of good practices between countries (ecological monitoring, developments) and mutual learning.
- **Resilience of APN and stakeholders.** Despite crises and regional insecurity, Benin's parks (managed by APN) continue to be managed effectively and continue to make progress, with

²⁴ African Parks Network.

regular censuses (2024), ongoing developments, and a trained and integrated corps of eco-guards. Managers and NGOs maintain informal exchanges and a willingness to collaborate.

- **Human relations.** Informal exchanges between managers in the three countries remain open and supportive, despite political tensions. The Executive Secretariat (ES) of the WAP and stakeholders (such as Benjamin Bassono of AGN²⁵, Burkina Faso) are attempting to restart dialogue. There is a willingness to cooperate, particularly to avoid the WAP being classified as "in danger" by UNESCO.
- **Reduction in poaching.** Cross-border agreements (LAB prosecutions, joint patrols) have improved the fight against poaching and trafficking. The involvement of communities (village committees, trackers employed by environmental services) and awareness-raising among livestock farmers (marked transhumance corridors) have also played a role.
- **Development of livelihoods.** Creation of income through the processing of NTFPs (shea, néré), beekeeping (concrete hives) and agroecology (household gardens, soybeans processed into cheese). Local initiatives (tourist camps, revenue sharing) have improved living conditions and strengthened community engagement in conservation. In Benin, more than 80% of park staff (rangers, technical directors) come from local communities, which strengthens the local economy.
- **Participatory management.** Communities are involved in management committees and benefit from concrete projects (school latrines, boreholes, canteens).
- **Improved conservation and ecological restoration.** Benin's parks have seen their wildlife populations double, becoming a regional refuge thanks to effective management (APN support). Projects to recover degraded land (half-moons, stone barriers) and plant multifunctional groves have been implemented in all three countries.
- **Resource mobilization.** The FSOA and PTFs (GIZ, EU, GEF, etc.) have raised significant funds (88+ billion XAF), mobilized sustainable resources for joint projects (inventories, roads, tourism) and coordinated stakeholders. The FSOA provides a common vision and a one-stop shop for the three countries, facilitating the mobilization of resources.
- **Training and awareness-raising.** Regional programmes (Wabilab) have trained various stakeholders (customs, transporters, magistrates) in the fight against wildlife crime and legal provisions (CITES). Exchange missions between countries to share good practices (NTFP processing, organic farming) and strengthen local capacities.

The main limitations encountered by actors in the WAP landscape are as follows:

- **Formal collaboration has been put on hold.** There is little dialogue between Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger at the operational level due to political and security crises.
- **Imbalance between countries.** Insecurity in Burkina Faso and Niger has led to the partial abandonment of the Arly, W-Burkina Faso and W-Niger parks, limiting collaboration on the ground. Cross-border activities have been greatly reduced due to security crises, with a refocusing on aid to displaced persons. Local communities, which were once integrated, are now displaced or marginalized. Benin is carrying out most of the activities on its own, while the other two countries are struggling to maintain their commitments due to the crises.
- **Limited activities.** Wildlife inventories, joint patrols and anti-poaching strategies have been reduced or cancelled (aerial inventory limited to Benin in 2024). Insecurity has halted ground inventories and joint patrols, especially in Burkina Faso and Niger.

²⁵ Guardian Angel for Nature.

- **Lack of harmonization.** Management plans (PIP in Niger) and funding are not aligned between countries. Differences in management (public-private partnerships, PPP, in Benin vs. state management elsewhere) and administrative barriers are hindering a truly cross-border approach.
- **Room for improvement in communication.** Lack of information sharing between local associations and states, and risk of duplication between PTFs.
- **Logistical challenges.** The security situation restricts joint patrols and comprehensive wildlife inventories.
- **Partiality of managers.** Certain conflicts of interest or individual preferences may undermine fairness and transparency.
- **Dependence on donors.** Although the FSOA covers a large part of the costs, the sustainability of actions still depends heavily on external funding (EU, World Bank, Norwegian cooperation, etc.).

5.6.3. Key lessons learned & recommendations

The main lessons learned from the WAP landscape's cross-border collaboration experiences are as follows:

- **Political will as a foundation.** Cross-border collaboration depends above all on the political will of states, especially to overcome crises (insecurity, political deadlocks). Formal agreements (2019 tripartite agreement) must be backed up by concrete actions. Managers naturally develop informal cooperation, but this must be formalized to be sustainable.
- **Historical collaboration as a basis.** The WAP already benefited from a tradition of informal cooperation between managers and NGOs, which facilitated the implementation of regional projects (ECOPAS, GEF-WAP, PAPE, PABIO, RBT-WAP, etc.). Cross-border cooperation in the WAP dates back to the 1980s (LAB agreements, transhumance), with gradual institutionalization (tripartite agreement in 2019, SE in 2022). Crises (insecurity, border closures) have slowed down activities, but informal relations and the "WAP family" (WhatsApp groups, meetings) have kept the dialogue going.
- **Community involvement is key to success.** The support and involvement of local populations in conservation (Community Interest Areas, ZIC, Village Hunting Areas, ZOVIC, management committees, socio-economic benefits – 80% of staff from local communities in Benin) is essential for reducing conflicts (poaching, sabotage) and promotes sustainable resource management. Exchange trips between countries raise awareness of shared cultural and ecological ties (same practices, cross-border families).
- **Importance of legal and political frameworks.** Agreements signed at the highest level (Foreign Ministers) and tools such as the SDAT give legitimacy and a common vision to actions. International labels (Biosphere Reserve, World Heritage and Ramsar site) have strengthened cooperation (joint reports, avoidance of "endangered" status) and give legitimacy and clear direction to actions.
- **Impact of insecurity on governance.** The security situation has weakened shared governance, with displaced communities and inaccessible sites (Niger, Burkina Faso). The reintegration of populations and the liberation of territories are priorities for restoring balanced management. Field activities (inventories, patrols) are now limited to Benin, where management by the APN allows for relative stability.
- **Importance of a resilient model.** The APN model has proven its resilience in the face of political and security crises, unlike more vulnerable state models. Cross-border management must transcend political contexts to remain effective. It must adapt to changing contexts (e.g. insecurity, population displacement) by refocusing activities on local and resilient solutions.

- **Resilience in the face of crises.** Despite insecurity (abandonment of Arly and W-Niger/Burkina parks), Benin's parks remain well managed and serve as a refuge for wildlife, demonstrating the importance of adaptive management. Governance bodies (Council of Ministers, CTS, SE) and tools (WhatsApp groups, regional meetings) help maintain a minimum level of collaboration and dialogue between managers.
- **Impact of the security situation.** Since 2019, coups and insecurity (border closures, bans on transhumance) have put formal collaboration on hold, but informal relations between managers remain positive. Existing agreements are no longer being updated due to the security and political crisis, which limits joint actions (patrols, inventories).
- **Need for a holistic vision and a concerted approach.** Strategies must be adapted to the landscape scale (priority intervention plans) rather than the national scale, with enhanced coordination between actors. Contiguous protected areas share common resources (wildlife, ecological corridors), making collaboration essential.

Decisions must be taken collectively (Council of Ministers) and implemented in a coordinated manner by administrations and partners. The Scientific Committee and the SE play a key role in translating policy guidelines into concrete actions.

- **Key role of regional stakeholders.** UEMOA and ECOWAS play a central role in harmonizing policies and removing constraints (biannual meeting of ministers). Regional programmes (PAPBIO, PAPFOR) make it possible to transcend national boundaries and pool expertise.
- **Key role of sustainable financing.** The creation of the FSOA has partially solved the financing problem by covering 75% of the costs of actions. However, dependence on external donors (EU, BMZ, KFW, Norwegian cooperation) requires diversification of revenue sources. PTF round tables are crucial for mobilizing strong commitments, especially in the face of security challenges that exceed the capacities of WAP states.

The main recommendations from the interviews with stakeholders in the WAP landscape can be summarized as follows:

- **Harmonization of management.** Develop a common strategy at the landscape level, integrating the three countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger) to pool resources and avoid simple "border protection".

Rely on resilient actors (APN, AGN in Burkina Faso) to revive multilateral governance. Ideally, entrust the management of the three parks to a single delegatee (such as APN in Benin) to pool resources and expertise, despite political and security challenges.

Standardize practices (firewall dimensions, inventory protocols) for consistent landscape management.

Replicate Benin's successes (community involvement in management, local employment) in other countries, with the support of international cooperation (Germany, etc.). Indeed, this community involvement formally exists in other countries, such as Burkina Faso, where village wildlife management committees in neighboring villages were heavily involved in various park management activities. However, all this is undermined by the lack of park management due to the security crisis.

- **Strengthen governance bodies.** Ensure that the Council of Ministers, the WAP Executive Secretariat (ES) and the Scientific Council operate in a coordinated and regular manner (biannual meetings, etc.).

Accelerate the creation and funding of the WAP secretariat (initially planned to be tripartite, but based in Niger, where its installation is to be finalized) so that it can fully play its role in coordination, planning and seeking sustainable funding. Ensure its funding (25 million XAF per country plus support from the FSOA) and its operation with a small team (ES, secretary-

accountant, driver). The ES must be the driving force behind harmonized management between the three countries.

Activate the Technical Monitoring Committee (TMC) and the Scientific Committee by appointing members and organizing regular meetings (costs covered by the FSOA, either in person or via videoconference) to support technical decisions, address management issues, avoid duplication (scientific research) and validate action plans.

Develop a clear roadmap, incorporating the aspirations of all stakeholders (communities, CSOs, local authorities, managers). Organize round tables to define concrete actions (opening up trails, creating "bouli" water points) and ensure equity in access to funding.

- **Political support.** Organize regular ministerial meetings (every two years) to validate guidelines and remove obstacles (insecurity, funding).
- **Political mediation and communication.** Involve NGOs as intermediaries to "warm up" political relations and overcome geopolitical tensions. Improve communication between actors to combat misinformation and clarify management models (APN).
- **Institutional resilience.** Strengthen the capacities of local managers and draw on positive energies (AGN in Burkina Faso) to maintain collaboration despite crises. Ensure that regional programmes (such as ECOPAS, PAPE, PAPBIO, etc.) promote unified governance.
- **Funding and coordination.** Use the FSOA (88+ billion XAF mobilized, covering 75% of actions) to fund cross-border projects and attract other donors. Leverage the status of cross-border World Heritage to mobilize resources and strengthen cooperation.

Leverage the status of Transboundary Biosphere Reserve and use this label and the joint PAG (updated in 2021/2022) to mobilize resources and strengthen cooperation between the five sites included.

Establish post-project monitoring mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of activities, despite short funding cycles.

Coordinate donors (FSOA, EU/GIZ) to streamline funding and activities, based on joint action plans (SDAT 2023-2033). Organize a donor round table to mobilize the EU and other PTFs to finance the emergency plan (currently being validated), and to address security issues and free up sites in Niger and Burkina Faso.

- **Involvement of communities, civil society and administrations.** Integrate local administrations into public-private partnerships (PPPs), ensure that supervisory authorities (OFINAP, DG Eaux et Forêts) are involved in monitoring contracts and projects.

Develop socio-economic activities and involve local communities in the management of protected areas (HIMO programmes, ecotourism) to strengthen their sense of ownership and ensure their commitment to conservation. Target vulnerable groups (women, disabled people, displaced persons) in projects, with appropriate activities (e.g. beekeeping, agroecology, NTFP processing). Develop resilient local initiatives (e.g. boreholes, nurseries, multifunctional groves) for displaced populations or those affected by insecurity in order to prepare for the future.

Actively involve civil society organizations (CSOs), village associations (CVGF in Burkina Faso, AVIGREF in Benin) and NGOs in planning and conservation, and better communicate their results to governments for greater synergy. Work to reintegrate displaced communities into the management of protected areas, guaranteeing them concrete benefits (income, access to resources).

Encourage the creation of a regional confederation of communities to defend their interests and harmonize their participation in decision-making.

- **Legal and operational framework.** Align legal standards and regulations (fishing, hunting quotas, transhumance, sanctions) between the three countries to combat wildlife crime, avoid

contradictions, facilitate joint actions and enable cross-border interventions. Facilitate the mobility of eco-guards and managers between countries for joint patrols and actions.

In Niger, formalize the status of eco-guards and accelerate their legal recognition (as in Benin and Burkina Faso), drawing on their knowledge of the terrain and their legitimacy within the community.

- **Pool resources.** Develop common strategies (WAP master plan, plans for giraffes, carnivores, tourism) and pool funding (FSOA, PAPBIO, PAPFOR). Align national PAGs with the SDAT by ensuring that the action plans of the three countries comply with the WAP landscape vision and the criteria for conserving outstanding universal value (OUV). Ensure the spatial balance of developments (water points) so as not to create ecological imbalances between countries.
- **Improve communication and collaborative tools.** Maintain and strengthen informal groups (e.g. WhatsApp "Baobab" with 278 members) and technical platforms (e.g. LAB information sharing) for fluid exchange between managers, communities and PTFs. Digital tools (Iknow) and regular meetings (quarterly workshops) improve coordination and information sharing between countries.

5.7. Wologizi-Wonegizi-Ziama

5.7.1. Collaboration framework

Historical overview of legal cooperation	
Formal aspects	
The different names of the agreements and dates	Bilateral cooperation agreement on the conservation and sustainable management of the Ziama-Wonegizi-Wologizi Transboundary Forest Landscape, 24 October 2019.
Type of agreements	Bilateral cooperation agreement.
Signatories to the texts	Between the Government of the Republic of Guinea and the Government of the Republic of Liberia, signed by both the Minister of the Environment (Guinea) and the Director of the FDA (Liberia) and by the Ministers of Cooperation (Guinea) and Foreign Affairs (Liberia).
Geographical scope	Ziam-Wonegizi-Wologizi transboundary forest landscape.
Duration of the agreement	No duration specified.
Substantive aspects	
Scope/common challenges to be overcome through this cooperation	The scope of the cooperation agreement is threefold: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition of the international importance of conserving and protecting the cross-border landscape. - Support for conflict resolution and the promotion of peace and stability. - A catalyst for socio-economic development.
Objectives	The agreement confers the status of "cross-border conservation and development area" on the cross-border forest landscape of Ziama-Wonegizi-Wologizi and affirms that the site should be integrated into

	the MAB (biosphere reserve) networks - only Zamia is a biosphere reserve.
Obligations arising from the agreement (degree of constraint)	The parties undertake to make efforts to safeguard the ecological integrity of the landscape; to request technical and financial assistance; to develop, approve and implement the strategic landscape management plan; and to adopt the same landscape management status.
Institutional mechanisms (and actors involved) and decision-making powers	The agreement establishes a cross-border steering committee (CPT) ²⁶ as a consultative framework to address issues related to bilateral landscape management. Bilateral technical committees may also be established – no description of their composition; no permanent institution established.
Operational provisions/means of implementation	Establishment of the cross-border steering committee as a consultative framework for a number of areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish compatible legal and policy frameworks for the implementation of actions. - Harmonize management policies. - Coordinate management measures. - Identify sources of funding.
Financing of implementation	Not specified
Points to monitor/aspects to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What about the national status of protected areas and the resulting disparities in protection regimes? Need for harmonization. - Several cross-border projects have been implemented, raising issues of continuity in terms of momentum and funding. - Differences in institutional functioning (regional CFZ, national FDA). 	

Since 1981, the Ziama classified forest has had biosphere reserve status. Among the objectives of its PAG (2020-2029) are cross-border cooperation and the implementation of the cooperation agreement.

5.7.2. Effectiveness of collaboration

Following the maintenance and documentation work, we present here the main strengths/weaknesses of cross-border collaboration and its impact on the WWZ landscape.

Advantages/Strengths	Disadvantages/Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synergy between countries. Better coordination for anti-poaching, ecological monitoring and fire management. Sharing of data and expertise (elephant movements, wildlife inventories). • Community empowerment. Development of alternative livelihoods (nurseries, agroforestry) and increased involvement of local people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and sustainability. Dependence on short project cycles and lack of funds for the secretariat or field activities. • Conflicts of interest. Tensions between conservation and mining, or between communities and eco-guards. • Administrative barriers. Slow-moving institutions (FDA), differences in salaries/per

²⁶ The 1st meeting of the COPIL took place on 17-18 April 2024 (Liberia).

diems between countries, and lack of clarity on land use rights.

The main results and impacts of cross-border collaboration in the WWZ landscape are characterized by:

- Overall positive collaboration between Guinea and Liberia, with encouraging feedback from governments.
- Establishment of joint patrols (2 completed), cross-border workshops, and participatory mapping.
- Development of tools to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts (bee noise to scare away elephants).

The main limitations encountered by actors in the WWZ landscape are as follows:

- Lack of resources for eco-guards (low salaries, demotivation, conflicts with communities over per diems).
- Mining pressures and the granting of operating licenses without consulting communities.
- Risk of fragmentation of protected areas (enclaves in Wologizi).

5.7.3. Key lessons learned & recommendations

The main lessons learned from the WWZ landscape's cross-border collaboration experiences are as follows:

- **Dependence on donors.** The end of financial support from donors often leads to the cessation of collaborative efforts. Transition phases must be planned for gradual autonomy.
- **Importance of co-governance.** Land use rights and community participation are crucial to the sustainability of conservation efforts.
- **Institutional complexity.** Differences in how institutions operate (CFZ in Guinea vs FDA in Liberia) and conflicts of interest (mining vs conservation) complicate cross-border management.
- **Communication and language.** The Loma dialect, spoken on both sides of the border, could be an asset, but English and French remain barriers.

The main recommendations from interviews with stakeholders in the WWZ landscape can be summarized as follows:

- **Sustainable financing.** Create an independent, funded cross-border secretariat (through carbon or REDD+ funds) to ensure the sustainability of collaboration after donor withdrawal.
- **Local capacity.** Enable communities to have representative offices and develop their own capacities (mapping, patrol reports) without relying solely on NGOs or external consultants.
- **Legal and operational harmonization.** Clarify and harmonize rules between the two countries (protected species, land use rights, per diems, eco-guard salaries). Develop a standardized operations manual, while respecting local cultural specificities.
- **Community and civil society involvement.** Strengthen the participation of local communities and local groups in governance, with dedicated funds. Promote initiatives such as women's patrols (inspired by WCF) for better social integration.
- **Exchanges and learning.** Increase exchange missions between sites to share experiences and best practices (between NAAO landscapes). Encourage co-governance and local capacity building for long-term autonomy.

6. Comparison of cross-border collaboration experiences between NAAO landscapes

6.1. Comparative analysis of the legal framework

The purely legal comparative analysis must be placed in the context of different situations.

6.1.1. Motivations/reasons/values

There are various reasons why cross-border states may wish to cooperate, and the preamble to the agreements provides context and justification for their development by listing the reasons. The preamble also helps to clarify the interpretation of the agreement and determine the meaning of a provision²⁷. At the same time, the interviews also identified other motivations that are not openly stated in the texts but help to understand certain provisions (or their absence) and to put these agreements into perspective with their implementation (and assess their future effectiveness). A distinction can be made between endogenous and exogenous factors.

Endogenous factors

- Peace and conflict prevention appear to be key motivations for certain agreements, even if their primary aim is environmental protection. After years of war and local conflicts (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea), cross-border cooperation has followed the example of southern Africa by promoting the concept of "Peace Parks" (Gola-Foya).
- The history between countries can also be a source of strengthened cooperation: populations on both sides of the border share common cultures, but also family and economic ties, regardless of the artificial division of borders linked to colonial heritage (Nigeria/Cameroon). It should be noted that in some cases, the demarcation of borders has not been fully formalized, requiring joint responses to resolve the situation (e.g. Mount Nimba between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia²⁸). Previous cooperation between states (e.g. Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger for the WAP) can also be a driving force for formalizing agreements.
- The management of cross-border issues (non-environmental) such as immigration, the free movement of people, and legal and illegal trade also leads states to conclude framework cooperation agreements that go beyond cross-border conservation but can contribute to it (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia).
- The protection of shared values, shared ecosystems and flagship species (e.g. Cross River with the protection of Cross River gorillas and a common species of chimpanzee): in most cases, these unifying elements are identified in the field by technicians before being escalated to the political level.
- Conversely, political agendas that may differ from one state to another (national economic interests vs. protection of a shared ecosystem) can hinder the development of cooperation agreements or render them empty shells, with no commitment other than to respond to a demand from civil society or the international community.

Exogenous factors

- Pressure from technical and financial partners can also be identified as a motivation, particularly when political will is weak (TGKS). Although this motivation does not appear openly in agreements, it is present upstream through the funding of workshops and joint meetings, which would not take place without them.

²⁷ Art. 31 "For the purposes of the interpretation of a treaty, the context includes, in addition to the text, the preamble and annexes," Vienna Convention on Treaties, 1969.

²⁸ Action point in the PAG for the Nimba Mountains Reserve in Liberia, border demarcation, p.34

- Obligations arising from international and regional agreements that encourage cross-border states to cooperate, as well as the attainment of internationally recognized status (World Heritage, Ramsar) that 'obliges' states to come together and find common solutions to protect assets whose value extends beyond their borders. Some regional organizations also support states in drafting and developing their cooperation agreements (e.g. Gola-Foya with the support of the Mano River Union).

6.1.2. Types of legal cooperation arrangements

Cooperation agreements can take different forms, and their legal scope differs both in international law and at the national level. Several names are used at the landscape level, but two categories can be distinguished:

- **Agreements between States:** from an international law perspective, these agreements are binding on the States Parties, but depending on how their provisions are drafted, the degree of constraint and commitment may be limited.
 - Framework agreements: as their name suggests, these aim to provide a framework for collaboration between the parties with a greater or lesser degree of detail.
 - Bilateral cooperation agreements/trinational agreements, which may develop specific actions in a particular area of cooperation.
- **Memorandum of Understanding:** in general, this term is more common in Anglo-Saxon contexts, particularly in *common law*, and its legal scope in international law may be perceived as uncertain by some States, particularly those with a more civil law tradition²⁹.

However, depending on the level of commitment of the parties and its provisions, it can be binding and similar to a formal agreement. But in general, these MoUs set out the terms of partnerships between several parties, demonstrating their willingness to cooperate on certain issues without doing so formally through an agreement or treaty. This does not preclude the possibility of concluding a more binding agreement of this type at a later date.

Beyond their name, they can also be classified according to terms commonly used in international law

- **Intergovernmental agreements:** these are agreements concluded between governments (in the majority of cases).
- **An agreement between states (WAP):** the tripartite agreement is signed not on behalf of governments, but between heads of state (or representatives who have the power to sign and commit the state), giving the agreement a "more solemn³⁰" dimension.
- **A Memorandum of Understanding:** signed between two governments and organizes the terms of cooperation.
- **An administrative arrangement** that has no value under international law: the MoU signed between two public institutions (such as OKKPS, on behalf of their Ministry; the Ministers did not sign) has no value under international law. Only subjects of international law can make commitments at the international level, which is not the case for OGPNRN and NPAA.

²⁹ This is the case in France. MEAE, Guide to good practice in the negotiation and conclusion of France's international commitments, 2020

³⁰ MEAE, Guide to good practice in the negotiation and conclusion of France's international commitments, 2020 .

Table 6. Summary of existing agreements within NAAO landscapes.

paysage	Pays 1	Pays 2	Pays 3	Nom du document	date	type de document	entité signataire
Cross River	Nigeria	Cameroun		Cooperation Framework Agreement on Transboundary Ecosystems Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forestry and Wildlife Resources	19-avr-24	accord cadre de coopération	entre le gouvernement de la République du Cameroun et le gouvernement de la République du Nigeria
Gola-Foya	Sierra Leone	Liberia		Memorandum of understanding on the cooperation in management, research, protection and conservation of the Greater Gola Transboundary Peace Park	juin-19	MoU	MoU entre le gouvernement du Liberia et le gouvernement de Sierra Leone (appui du MRU)
Monts Nimba	Guinée	Liberia	Côte d'Ivoire	Accord cadre portant sur la conservation trinationale et durable des Monts Nimba	08-déc-12	accord cadre	entre les gouvernements de la République de Côte d'Ivoire, de la République de Guinée et de la République du Libéria pour la conservation intégrée et durable des Monts Nimba
OKKPS	Guinée	Sierra Leone		Memorandum of understanding for the conservation and sustainable management of the transboundary forest landscape of OKKPS	18-mai-23	MoU	Ministère de l'environnement et du développement durable de Guinée représentée par OGPNR et Ministère de l'environnement et du changement climatique du Libéria représenté par la NPAA
TGKS	Côte d'Ivoire	Libéria		accord de coopération dans le domaine des ressources forestières et fauniques	30-août-17	accord de coopération bilatéral	entre le gouvernement de la République de Côte d'Ivoire et le gouvernement de la République du Libéria
TGKS	Côte d'Ivoire	Libéria		accord cadre sur la coopération transfrontalière	17-mai-24	accord cadre de coopération	entre le gouvernement de la République de Côte d'Ivoire et le gouvernement de la République du Libéria
TGKS	Côte d'Ivoire	Libéria		Accord relatif à la conservation durable du Complexe forestier transfrontalier Tai-Grebo-Krahn-Sapo	draft	accord	entre le gouvernement de la République de Côte d'Ivoire et le gouvernement de la République du Libéria
WAP	Bénin	Burkina Faso	Niger	accord tripartite sur la gestion de la transhumance dans la zone de la Réserve de Biosphère Transfrontalière du W-RBT-W)	2003		
WAP	Bénin	Burkina Faso	Niger	accord relatif à la lutte anti-braconnage	12-juil-84	accord	entre les Etats
WAP	Niger	Burkina Faso		Protocole d'accord portant création d'un cadre de concertation entre le Burkina Faso et la République du Niger sur la transhumance transfrontalière	26-janv-03	accord	entre les gouvernements
WAP	Bénin	Burkina Faso	Niger	accord relatif à la gestion concertée de la Réserve de Biosphère Transfrontalière du W	févr-08	accord trinational	entre les Etats
WAP	Bénin	Burkina Faso	Niger	Accord cadre de coopération pour la promotion du dialogue politique dans le bassin transfrontalier de la Mekrou	21-déc-15	accord tripartite	entre les Etats
WAP	Bénin	Burkina Faso	Niger	accord tripartite entre la République du Bénin, le Burkina Faso et la République du Niger relatif à la gestion harmonisée des aires protégées du complexe transfrontalier W-Arly-Pendjari (accord W-Arly-Pendjari)	09-mai-19	accord tripartite	entre les Etats
WWZ	Guinée	Libéria		accord de coopération bilatéral relatif à la conservation et à la gestion durable du paysage Forestier Transfrontalier de Ziama-Wonegizi-Wologizi	24-oct-19	accord de coopération bilatéral	entre le gouvernement de la République de Guinée et le gouvernement de la République du Libéria

6.1.3. State commitments to cross-border landscape conservation

Each agreement (both in terms of their content and their adoption process) demonstrates that giving legal form to transboundary cooperation takes time and depends on a number of non-legal factors, but their existence testifies to a political will to move in the same direction to conserve common and shared resources.

Establishment of cooperation frameworks

A reading of these agreements reveals the desire of States to establish formal legal frameworks, which are more or less binding, to give substance to their cooperation in each of the landscapes. Regardless of their name, these agreements serve as a reminder that States must also respect their obligations under major international conventions, their regional commitments, and the key principles of environmental protection and cooperation.

This framework for cooperation is further strengthened when protected areas have internationally recognized cross-border status, particularly those designated as World Heritage Sites and Ramsar Sites, due to the shared responsibility of States to protect these ecosystems for the international community and present and future generations.

This legal formalization through agreements contributes to the legitimacy of cooperation by demonstrating that sharing a common ecosystem calls for common responses regardless of borders. While states retain full sovereignty over their territory, they have shared responsibilities to ensure its protection.

Integrated and harmonized landscape management

While the details of the areas of cooperation differ from one agreement to another, integrated and harmonized landscape management appears to be a common theme. This can be achieved through joint actions, collaboration between administrations, harmonization of political and legal frameworks, and the implementation of planning tools at different levels.

Shared governance and institutional mechanisms

These agreements establish institutional structures, but vary greatly, ranging from steering committees to permanent secretariats, demonstrating the importance of consistent political will and regularity of projects.

The institutionalization of cooperation is a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness of agreements. The establishment of joint institutions contributes to the sustainability of cooperation and its implementation on the ground.

The participation of all stakeholders, particularly local communities, must also be an integral part of these institutional mechanisms. Decentralized cooperation must also be encouraged (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire/Liberia Framework Agreement) to give cross-border cooperation its full scope.

6.2. Cross-border collaboration within NAAO landscapes

6.2.1. Informal collaboration

With regard to the informal criterion of cross-border collaboration, we summarize below the main characteristics of this criterion by landscape:

- **Cross River.** This landscape appears to benefit from little or no informal exchanges between protected area managers. The security crisis has had a considerable negative impact on initiatives in this area that had been launched several years earlier. Language barriers do not facilitate more fluid informal collaboration.
- **Gola-Foya.** Informal collaboration seems to be much more developed within this landscape, with the existence of several WhatsApp groups between PA managers. Some groups include traditional chiefdoms. Communication has been perceived as fluid and satisfactory.
- **Nimba Mountains.** This landscape benefits from a fairly good level of informal collaboration, with at least one WhatsApp group bringing together the managers of each PA. A technical group dedicated to biomonitoring has also been set up.
- **OKKPS.** A biodiversity WhatsApp group has reportedly been set up (thanks to a project) but does not appear to be functional or dynamic. Language barriers seem to be a significant obstacle to better informal exchanges.
- **TGKS.** Informal exchanges between the two countries appear to be limited, mainly due to language and cultural sensitivities.
- **WAP.** There are numerous WhatsApp groups for this landscape, both between managers from each country and technical groups (biodiversity, etc.), including a "Baobab" group of 278 people. Human and technical relations are generally considered to be good, with regular meetings between managers. However, insecurity and the deterioration of the climate of dialogue between the three countries have had a negative impact on this criterion.

- **WWZ.** Informal collaboration in this landscape appears to exist but is very limited. The absence of English speakers in Guinea (and vice versa in Liberia), despite the existence of a common dialect between the two countries (Loma), does not facilitate informal exchanges.

Thus, for this study, it was considered that the two landscapes benefiting from the least informal collaboration are Cross River, WWZ and TGKS (scores of 2-3-3 respectively). In contrast, the two landscapes benefiting from the best informal collaboration are Gola-Foya and WAP (scores of 7-8 respectively).

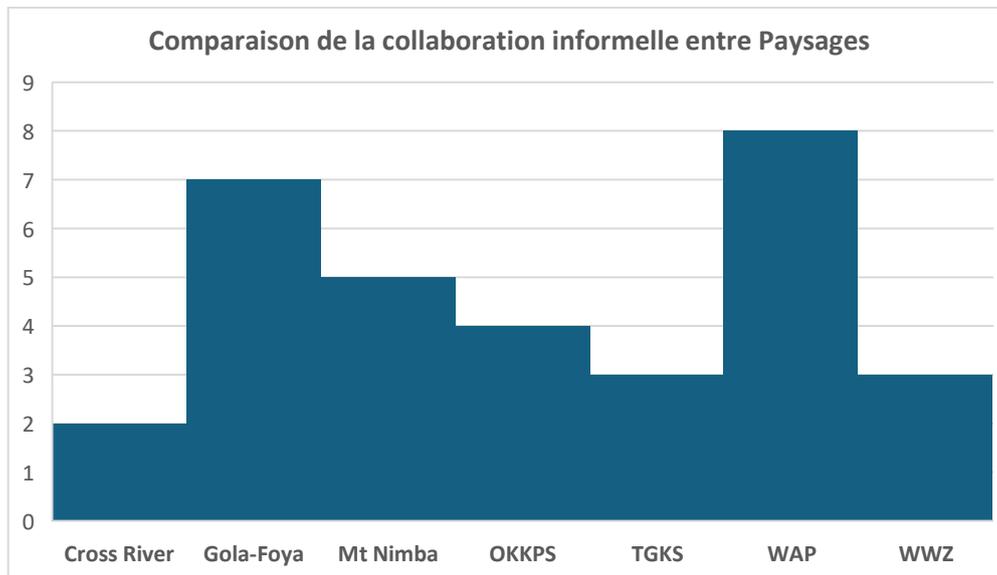


Figure 2. Representation of differences in informal collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

6.2.2. Formal collaboration

With regard to the formal criterion of cross-border collaboration, we summarize below the main characteristics of this criterion by landscape:

- **Cross River.** This landscape benefits from a bilateral CMR/NGR cooperation framework agreement specific to the conservation of transboundary ecosystems, which was signed very recently (early 2025). There is no collaboration agreement between the major technical partners in this landscape (WCS/WWF). International certification processes are underway (World Heritage + 2 Biosphere Reserves).
- **Gola-Foya.** Formal collaboration is based on a MoU between Sierra Leone and Liberia that has been in place since 2009 (amended in 2020). The Sierra Leonean part of this landscape was designated a World Heritage Site in July 2025.
- **Nimba Mountains.** This landscape has benefited from a tri-national framework agreement since 2012. It has been difficult to assess its functioning and vitality.
- **OKKPS.** This landscape has had a MoU between the Ministries of Environment of Guinea and Sierra Leone through public institutions (OGPRNF and NPAA) since 2023. A MoU exists between the two NGOs in each country (WCF/Guinea & Takogama/Sierra Leone).
- **TGKS.** A framework agreement between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia was signed in 2024 on cross-border cooperation, but not on landscape management. Since 2020, there has been an unsigned draft MoU between the two countries on the enforcement of landscape legislation. A draft agreement on the sustainable conservation of the cross-border forest complex has been under discussion since 2022.

- **WAP.** Twenty years of thematic collaboration with trilateral agreements (LAB in 1984, RBW³¹ in 2008, transhumance in 2003). Signing of a tripartite agreement in 2019 on landscape management. Signing of a PPP agreement between APN and Benin. Designation of the landscape as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and of the W as a Transboundary Biosphere Reserve and a transboundary Ramsar site.
- **WWZ.** This landscape has a bilateral cooperation agreement signed between Guinea and Liberia since 2019.

Thus, based on the information gathered, discussions with stakeholders and comparative analysis, this study considers that the two landscapes with the poorest formal collaboration are Monts Nimba and TGKS (with respective scores of 2). Conversely, the two landscapes with the best formal collaboration are Gola-Foya and WAP (scores of 7 and 9 respectively).

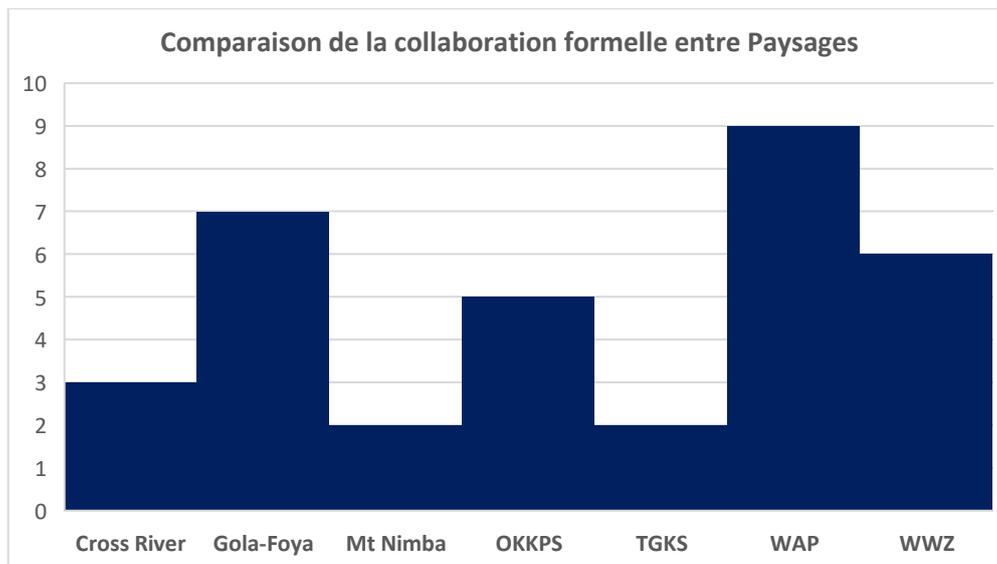


Figure 3. Representation of differences in formal collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

6.2.3. Scale of collaboration

With regard to the criterion of the scale of cross-border collaboration, we summarize its main characteristics by landscape below:

- **Cross River.** Although the security crisis has had a negative impact on cross-border collaboration efforts, it appears that this landscape is divided into two "collaboration entities" with a northern, historical and more developed part (between the Cross River/Nigeria and Takamanda/Cameroon PAs) and a southern part that is more "ambiguous" (between the Korup PA in Cameroon and the Cross River PA in Nigeria).
- **Gola-Foya.** The scale of collaboration seems to apply more evenly across the entire landscape (compared to Cross River), although the core of the latter is concentrated on the two Gola areas (Gola Rainforest/Sierra Leone and Gola Forest/Liberia). Kambui Hills/Sierra Leone and Fola (not yet legalized) seem to lag slightly behind.
- **Nimba Mountains.** Although this landscape consists mainly of contiguous protected areas across three countries, it appears that cross-border collaboration is essentially limited to the local level or between two countries, notably between Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, thanks to World Heritage status (which does not include Liberia).

³¹ W Biosphere Reserve.

- **OKKPS.** Despite emerging collaboration (approximately three years) between the two countries in this landscape, it appears that the spatial scale is fairly homogeneous across the entire conservation area. This situation is facilitated by the geographical continuity of the protected areas – four out of five are contiguous, with only Kilimi being further away.
- **TGKS.** Collaboration seems difficult between the two countries, with disparities in resources/capacities and, ultimately, few joint activities. It seems that each side of the border is operating/collaborating in a more "silo" manner, despite efforts to improve collaboration.
- **WAP.** The security situation has undermined the (historical) collaboration between the three countries, with the breakdown of dialogue between Burkina Faso/Benin and Niger/Benin, the withdrawal of ECOWAS (Burkina Faso and Niger), the closure of borders (Niger), the ban on transhumance (in Benin), the situation with terrorist groups, etc. Collaboration in the field is essentially limited to W-Benin & Pendjari, which harmonize their resources through a single manager (APN).
- **WWZ.** At first glance, there does not appear to be any effective collaboration between the protected areas of the two countries; it seems to be limited to one protected area.

Thus, for this study, it was considered that the landscape with the lowest level of collaboration was WWZ (score of 2). Conversely, the landscape with the highest level of collaboration is Gola-Foya (score of 7). OKKPS and WAP have the same scores (5), with the security situation having seriously undermined effective collaboration on the ground for the latter.

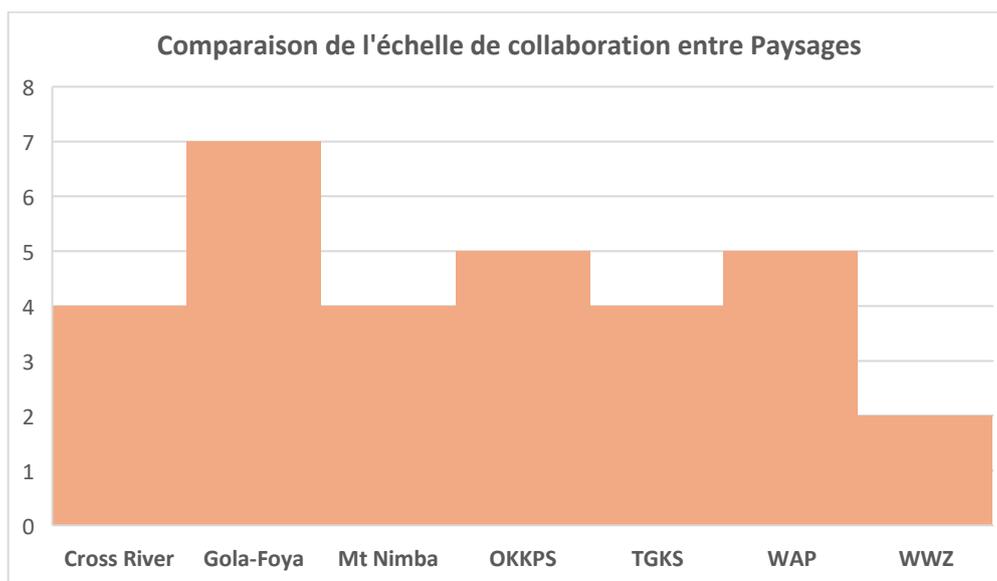


Figure 4. Representation of differences in the level of collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

6.2.4. Political commitment

With regard to the criterion of political commitment to cross-border collaboration, we summarize its main characteristics by landscape below:

- **Cross River.** Political support for this landscape seems to be mainly at the national level (more or less in silos), with many years (more than 10) spent obtaining the bilateral framework agreement. The current dynamic seems to be moving towards stronger regional political support.
- **Gola-Foya.** Political commitment to this landscape exists at both national and regional levels – the last high-level bilateral political meeting took place in 2020 and another is planned for 2026. Additional political support and coordination are provided through the involvement of the regional authority MRU. Peace Park status brings political prestige at the highest level.

- **Nimba Mountains.** Political support in this landscape appears to come mainly from the regional MRU authority and its World Heritage status. Political will seems to be limited to individual countries (in silos).
- **OKKPS.** This landscape seems to have political support mainly at the local and national levels in each country (in silos). At first glance, there is not yet any concerted/strong political support at the regional level, nor any involvement of regional political institutions, but a political will to move forward seems to be emerging.
- **TGKS.** Despite the presence of foreign ministries in the bilateral committee, it seems that the commitment and political will for high-level collaboration is limited.
- **WAP.** This landscape benefits from a tripartite agreement signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, whose last meeting (Council of Ministers) took place in August 2025. The WAEMU appears to be (or to have been) heavily involved in supporting this political aspect, particularly through the WAEMU Environment Commission, which is the lead agency for the natural resources sub-sector under the ECOWAS Commission.
- **WWZ.** This landscape appears to benefit from satisfactory political commitment in view of the bilateral agreement also signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the two countries. This demonstrates national political support in each country. In addition, the regional MRU body appears to be involved (only through the MRU-IUCN-GEF project) in strengthening political and institutional coordination.

Thus, for this study, it was considered that three landscapes appear to benefit from less political commitment to cross-border collaboration, namely Cross River, Nimba Mountains and OKKPS (scores of 3). In contrast, the two landscapes benefiting from the strongest political support appear to be Gola-Foya and WAP (scores of 7 and 8 respectively).

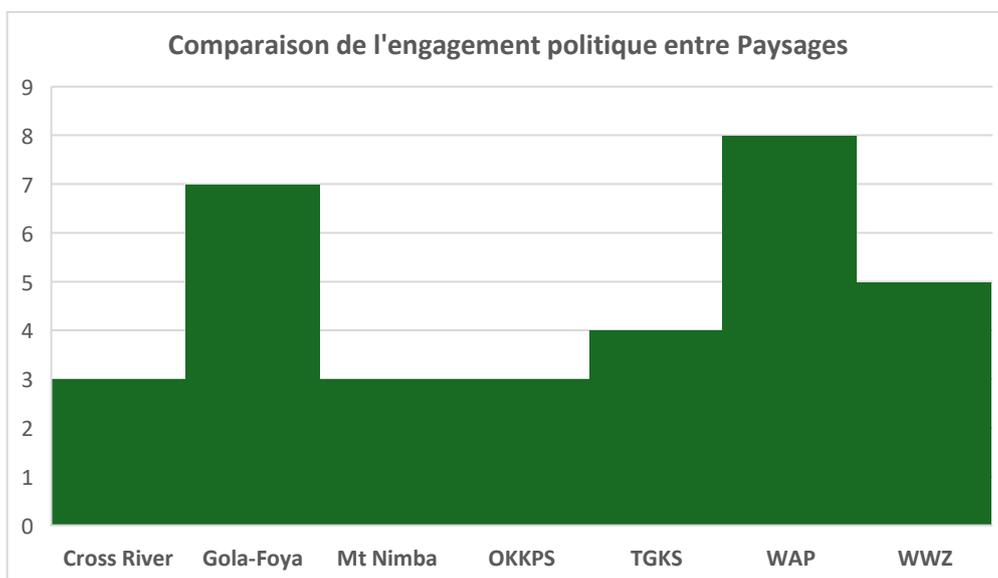


Figure 5. Representation of differences in political commitment to cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

6.2.5. Financial commitment

With regard to the criterion of financial commitment to cross-border collaboration, we summarize the main characteristics for each landscape below:

- **Cross River.** Financial contributions for this landscape come mainly from technical partners (WCS for Cross River/Nigeria and Takamanda/Cameroon, and WWF for Korup/Cameroon), an

institutional donor project (PSNMR funded by GIZ, Cameroon) and governments (insufficient). There does not appear to be any funding for regional programmes. No funding mechanism is provided for in the framework agreement.

- **Gola-Foya.** This landscape benefits from a sustainable financing mechanism (REDD+ carbon funds, but the amount is unknown) and support from international donors (USAID, EU). However, financial capacity is considered insufficient for the entire landscape.
- **Nimba Mountains.** Financial capacity is limited and highly dependent on donor projects (EU, etc.). Opportunities for financing by the private sector and extractive industries (mining) are developing on the Guinean side. However, the financial situation is considered to be very inadequate.
- **OKKPS.** This landscape receives regional funding (EU, USAID) but lacks sustainable or innovative mechanisms. Private sector extractive companies support conservation but in a targeted manner (biomonitoring, patrols). The general feeling is that financial resources are insufficient, with periods of scarcity between funding rounds.
- **TGKS.** This landscape benefits from financial contributions from governments (more in Côte d'Ivoire than in Liberia), sustainable funding (Parks & Reserves Foundation for Côte d'Ivoire) and regional funding (EU, GIZ). Côte d'Ivoire, and Taï in particular, is clearly better supported financially than Liberia.
- **WAP.** This landscape has the support of numerous donors (EU, GIZ, AFD, etc.) and sustainable financing mechanisms with the FSOA and carbon funds mobilized by APN. Of note are the considerable financial contributions from APN (private funding) and the Beninese government (€2 million per year committed). The financial situation of the landscape is comfortable on the Beninese side but totally insufficient on the Burkina Faso and Niger side.
- **WWZ.** The financial capacities of the WWZ depend mainly on funding mobilized by its technical partners (FFI, WCF) and support from donors. However, this is considered to be very insufficient, given the short cycle of projects. It should be noted that a REDD+ process is currently being developed with FFI.

Thus, based on this comparison, it was considered that three landscapes suffer particularly from insufficient financial capacity, namely Cross River, Monts Nimba and WWZ (scores of 2-3-3 respectively). Conversely, the two landscapes with the best financial capacity are TGKS and WAP (scores of 6).

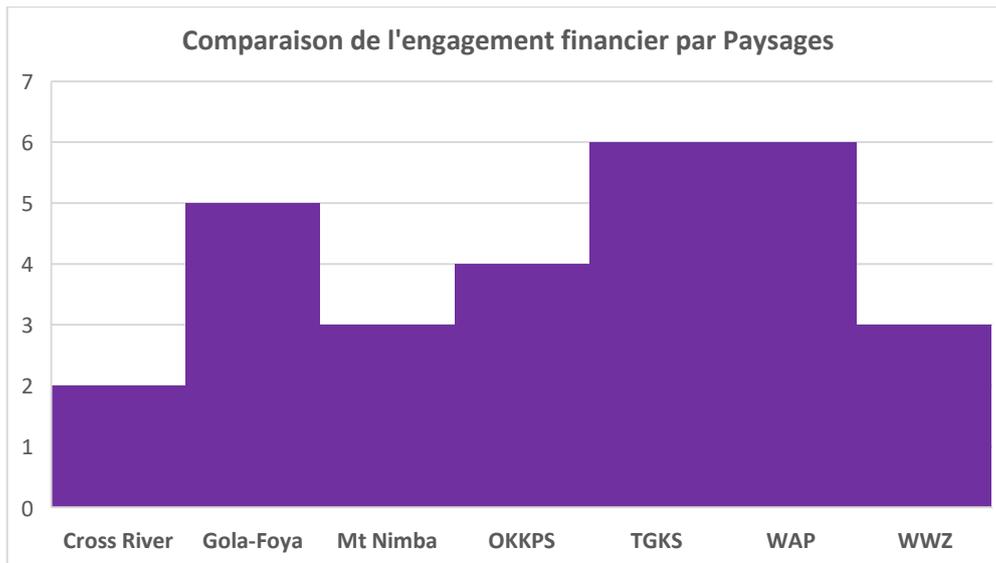


Figure 6. Representation of differences in financial commitment in cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

6.2.6. Institutionalization

With regard to the criterion of institutionalization of cross-border collaboration, we summarize its main characteristics by landscape below:

- **Cross River.** This landscape does not have a dedicated structure to facilitate cross-border collaboration. The cross-border agreement is very recent (2025) but only provides for the establishment of a committee to monitor and evaluate the framework agreement and proposes the creation of thematic working groups.
- **Gola-Foya.** There is a cross-border coordination committee that is to meet annually (meetings in June 2019 and December 2024) and a technical subcommittee (meetings in May 2022 and August 2023).
- **Nimba Mountains.** It has an institutional body between Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire that is linked to World Heritage status, with regular meetings held. However, Liberia is not involved and this landscape suffers from a lack of consultation between the three countries.
- **OKKPS.** This landscape has a steering committee (advisory, project-based approach) that has met twice in three years, as well as two subcommittees (one in each country) that have met three times for Guinea and twice for Sierra Leone in three years (five meetings in total).
- **TGKS.** A bilateral consultation committee has been in place since 2009 and has met eight times (2012, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2021, 2023 and 2025), as well as a LAB technical committee (led by WCF).
- **WAP.** This is the most "sophisticated" landscape in terms of structures dedicated to cross-border collaboration, with the existence of a Regional Council of Ministers (3 meetings, 2022-23-25), an Executive Secretariat (set up in December 2022, recruitment of the executive secretary in August 2025), a Scientific Council (not yet set up), a Technical Monitoring Committee (TMC) and a Monitoring Committee (W-Benin & Pendjari with APN).
- **WWZ.** This landscape has had a Transboundary Steering Committee for the ZWW Transboundary Programme since October 2018 (project approach). Meeting in October 2018, then first meeting of the transboundary steering committee (resulting from the bilateral cooperation agreement) in April 2024 (not very functional) + technical committee on biodiversity conservation & sustainable

financing. There is a cross-border platform for two local advisory committees (under MRU) created in 2021 as part of the MRU-IUCN-GEF project, but it is not functional.

Thus, for this study, it was considered that the two landscapes with the least institutionalized cross-border collaboration are Cross River and Nimba Mountains (scores of 0-2 respectively). In contrast, the two landscapes with the most institutionalized cross-border collaboration are TGKS and WAP (scores of 6-7 respectively).

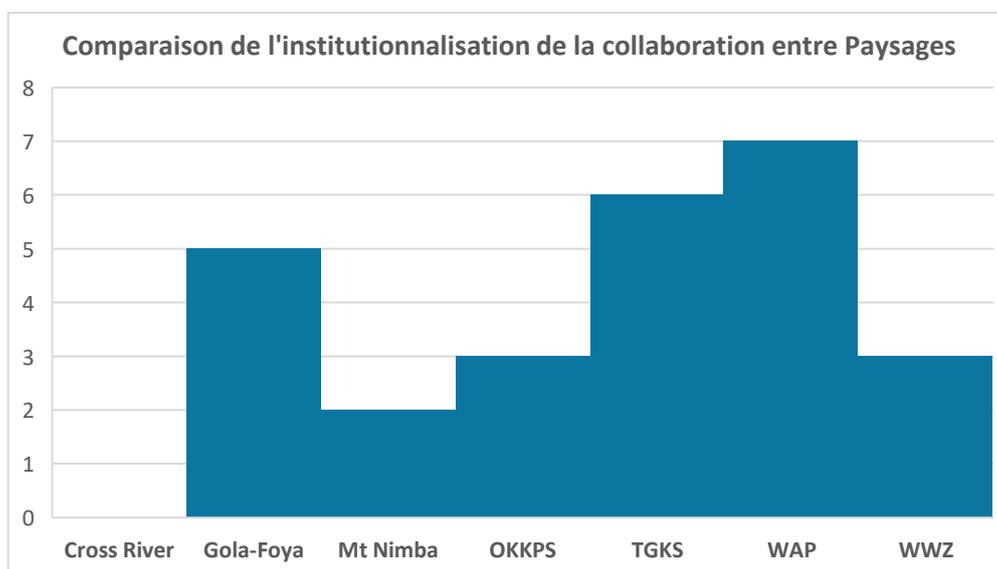


Figure 7. Representation of differences in political commitment to cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

6.2.7. Community participation

With regard to the criterion of local community participation in cross-border collaboration, we summarize the main characteristics by landscape below:

- **Cross River.** The local populations of this landscape are not involved in the governance of protected areas, either in Cameroon or Nigeria. However, they do seem to be involved through cross-border platforms, particularly in the context of UNESCO certification processes, which include traditional leaders. There do not appear to be many benefits for communities or involvement in PA management activities (apart from LAB & biomonitoring).
- **Gola-Foya.** Communities sit on the cross-border coordination committee and visibly chair it. They appear to perceive tangible benefits and effective participation in the management of the landscape's PAs.
- **Nimba Mountains.** Local communities are involved in landscape governance through one local management committee (in Guinea) and one *Joint Community Forest Management Body* (in Liberia, co-management agreement for the East Nimba Nature Reserve). Their involvement in management seems to be mainly at the local level through natural resource management activities, but appears to be very limited.
- **OKKPS.** Communities in this landscape are involved in subcommittees in each country (see institutionalization above) and perceive limited benefits from PA management, with an imbalance between Guinea and Sierra Leone (more impacts in Guinea for communities).
- **TGKS.** Local populations are involved in the Tai Local Management Committee (CGL) and the Grebo-Krahn *Protected Area Management Advisory Committee* (PAMAC), but not in the Bilateral

Committee. Communities are involved in PA protection (on both the Liberian and Ivorian sides) and seem to benefit from community development actions (at least on the Ivorian side).

- **WAP.** Communities are involved in the governance of Pendjari/W-Benin through AVIGREF, which sits on the management board (the decision-making body of the PPP between APN and the Government). There is also an association of neighboring municipalities in the three countries with one representative for the management of the WAP. Communities benefit from park management, especially in Benin, with ZICs, AGRs, direct employment and the development of industries (baobab, shea, etc.).
- **WWZ.** Community involvement in the governance/management of protected areas takes place at the local level through local natural resource management committees, particularly around the Ziama Biosphere Reserve (commitment signed in 2019 by neighboring communities establishing an RBZ user advisory committee). Community involvement in management appears to be limited, with little direct impact on local populations.

Thus, the comparative analysis shows that the two landscapes with limited local community participation in transboundary conservation are Cross River and WWZ (scores of 1-3 respectively). In contrast, the two landscapes with the highest levels of local community participation are Gola-Foya and WAP (scores of 8-6 respectively).

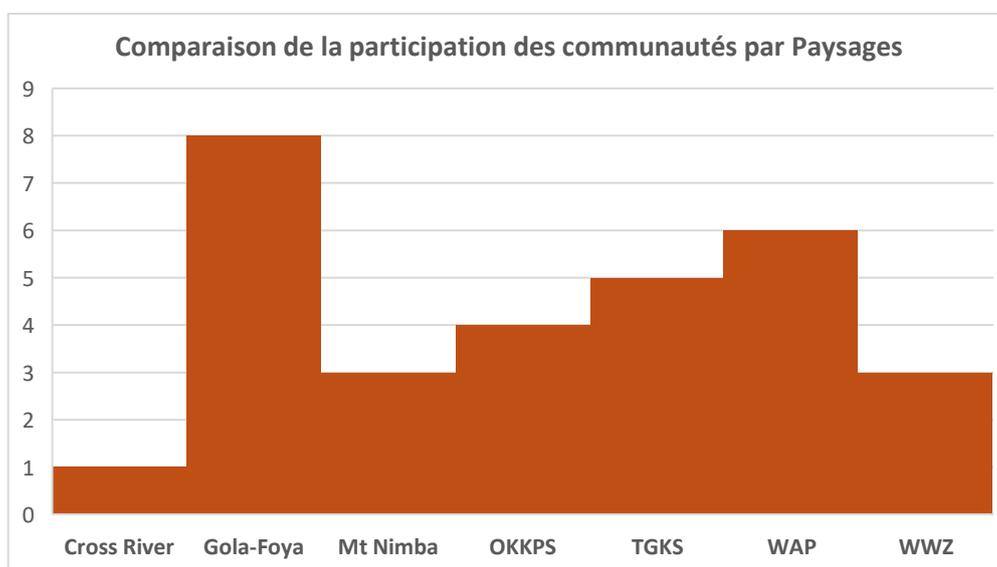


Figure 8. Representation of differences in community participation in cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

6.2.8. Operationalization

With regard to the criterion of operationalization of cross-border collaboration, we summarize its main characteristics by landscape below:

- **Cross River.** Joint cross-border management operations appear to be limited to great ape inventories in the landscape. Operational capacities are slightly stronger on the Nigerian side but overall insufficient across all PAs in the landscape.
- **Gola-Foya.** Joint actions are fairly limited, focusing on awareness-raising and community development (honey) and LAB training. A standard operating procedure (SOP) on LAB is being developed to enable joint patrols. Operational capacities at the level of each PA appear to be somewhat disparate (with Liberia having insufficient capacity) and could be significantly strengthened for greater biodiversity impact.

- **Nimba Mountains.** Joint activities are mainly between Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, with joint patrols and information exchanges. A scientific research framework covering the three countries appears to exist. Operational capacities appear to be stronger on the Côte d'Ivoire/Guinea side compared to Liberia. However, resources are generally insufficient across all protected areas in the landscape.
- **OKKPS.** Joint actions have been initiated with a few joint LAB patrols (initial intelligence gathering) and awareness-raising activities. A wildlife inventory methodology has been established and harmonized across the entire landscape. Operational capacities appear to be slightly stronger on the Guinea/Pinselli-Soyah side with WCF, but resources remain very limited.
- **TGKS.** Joint operations in the landscape are limited to a LAB technical committee. Operational capacities are stronger on the Côte d'Ivoire side, particularly with Taï. Grebo-Krahn & Sapo appear to be lagging behind Taï in operational terms.
- **WAP.** Joint activities in the landscape have been halted due to the security crisis, despite an encouraging track record. Operational management capacities are very strong on the Benin side with Pendjari/W, which has substantial resources and the experience of APN.
- **WWZ.** Joint landscape management actions appear to be limited to a few joint patrols (2). The Guinean side appears to be more operational, with efforts focused on community development (with GRET). However, operational capacities remain very limited.

Thus, with regard to the operationalization of cross-border conservation, the comparative analysis shows that many landscapes have limited or very limited resources, including Cross River, Monts Nimba, OKKPS and WWZ (scores of 3-3-3-2 respectively). The landscapes with the best capacities, although still insufficient, are Gola-Foya, TGKS and WAP (scores of 5-4-4 respectively).

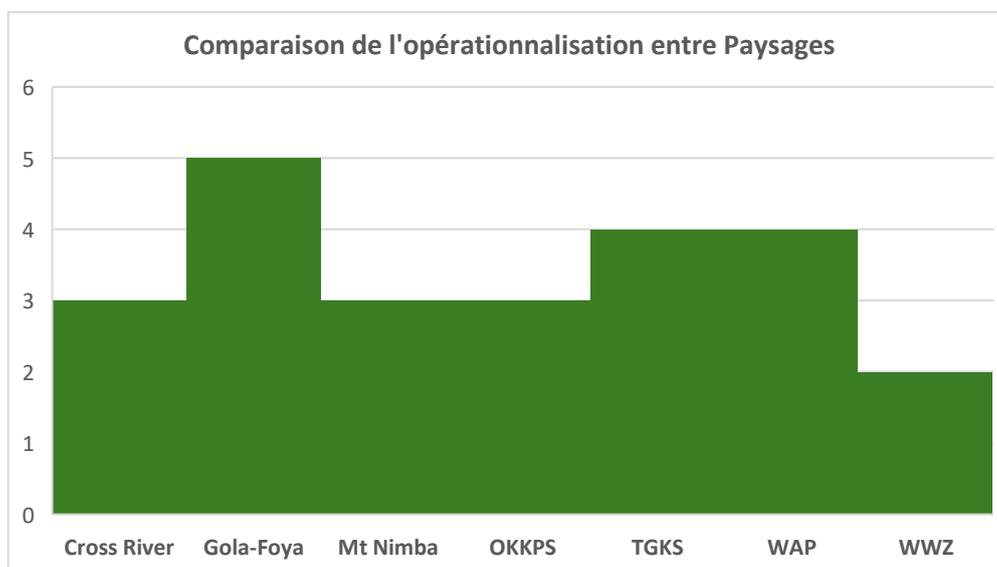


Figure 9. Representation of differences in the level of operationalization of cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

6.3. Overview of cross-border collaboration

Based on the analysis of the seven targeted NAAO landscapes and the application of the comparison matrix, it is possible to highlight the different experiences of cross-border collaboration. The results are presented below in the form of a diagram that visualizes these differences and provides an overview.

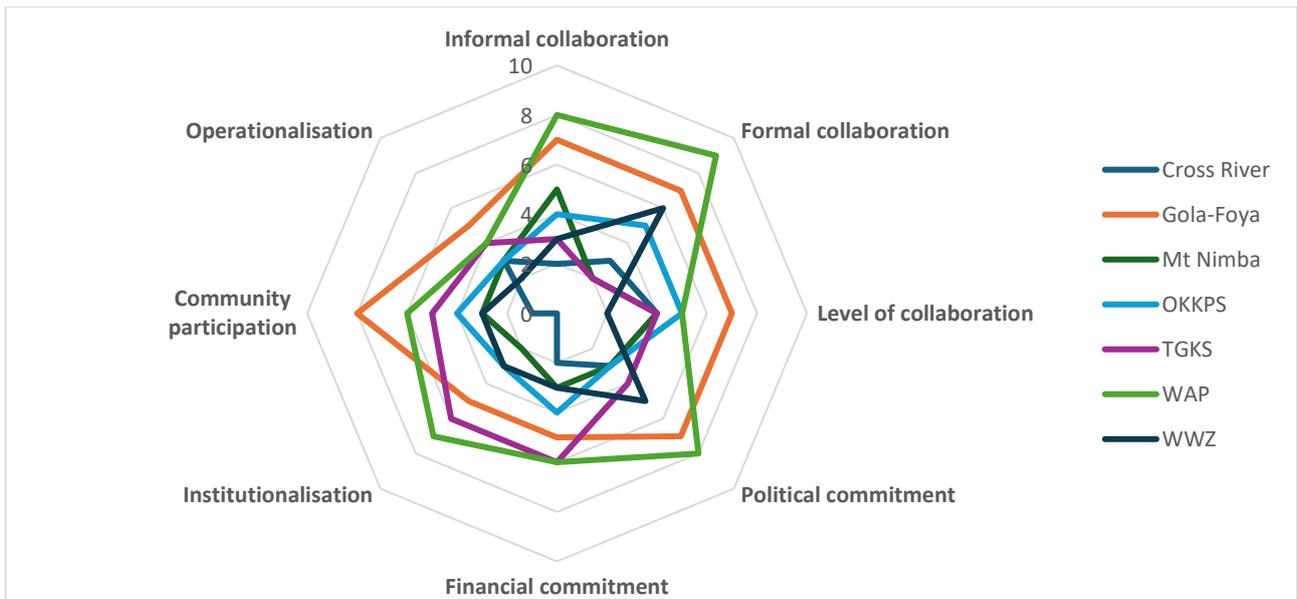


Figure 10. Radar chart showing the differences in cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

The Pareto approach could be applied to this comparative study, which is based on the 80-20 rule, highlighting that a few elements (20%) contribute to the majority of the effects (80%). It ranks landscapes in descending order according to their contribution to the criteria for analyzing cross-border collaboration. Thus, two groups of landscapes emerge according to their stage of development in cross-border collaboration, based on the Pareto cumulative curve:

- A first group, consisting of the WAP (30%), Gola-Foya (25%) and Nimba Mountains (20%) landscapes, is at a more advanced stage of cross-border collaboration (contributing 75% between them).
- A second group, consisting of the other landscapes (OKKPS, TGKS, WWZ and Cross River in descending order), are at less advanced stages of cross-border collaboration (contributing 25% of the cumulative Pareto curve).

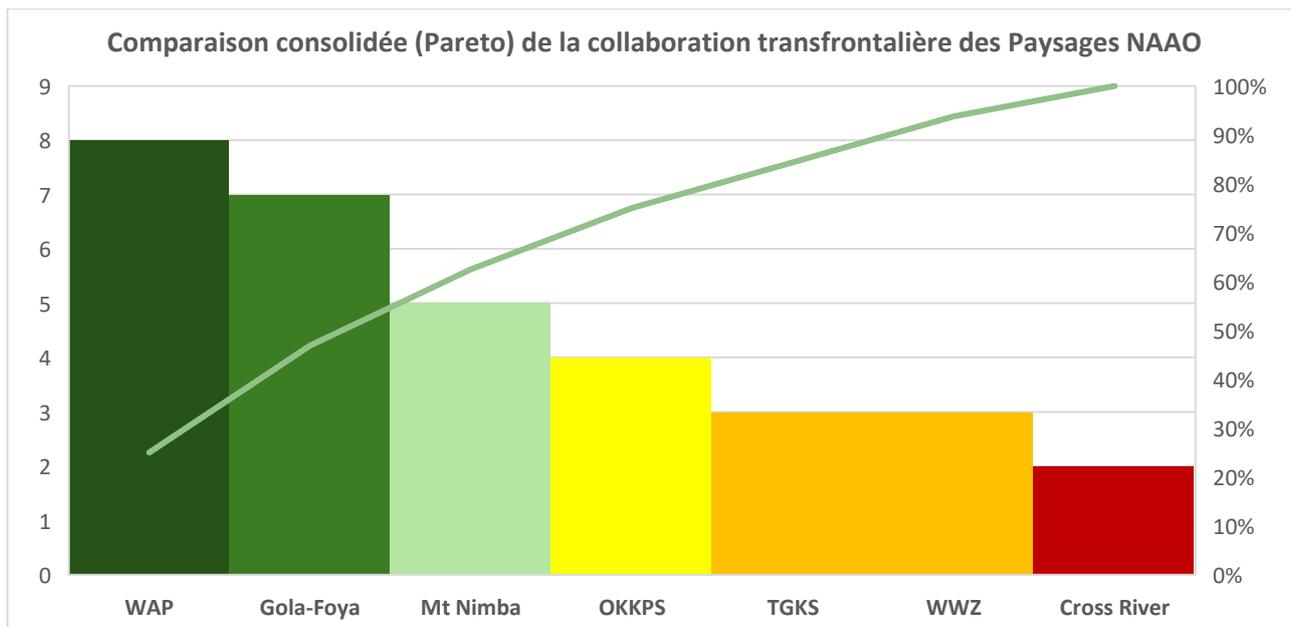


Figure 11. Graphical representation (Pareto diagram) of the stage of development of cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

The Pareto approach has the advantage of distinguishing between major or most active landscapes and enabling efforts to be prioritized (e.g. on the weakest landscapes if the objective is harmonization). However, it is also subject to bias (tendency to mask details) compared to an analysis based on average scores (more balanced assessment but tendency to smooth out extremes), the results of which are presented below.

Thus, if the average scores obtained for each landscape are used to obtain an overview of the levels of maturity of cross-border collaboration, the following trends emerge:

- A first group stands out with more advanced stages of development, namely WAP (average score of 6.63) and Gola-Foya (average score of 6.38). WAP could be considered the "model to follow".
- A second group, with a more moderate stage of development in cross-border collaboration, consists of the TGKS (average score of 4.25) and OKKPS (average score of 3.88) landscapes.
- Finally, a third group, with the least advanced stages of cross-border collaboration, includes the WWZ landscapes (average score of 3.38), Nimba Mountains (average score of 3.13) and Cross River (average score of 2.25).

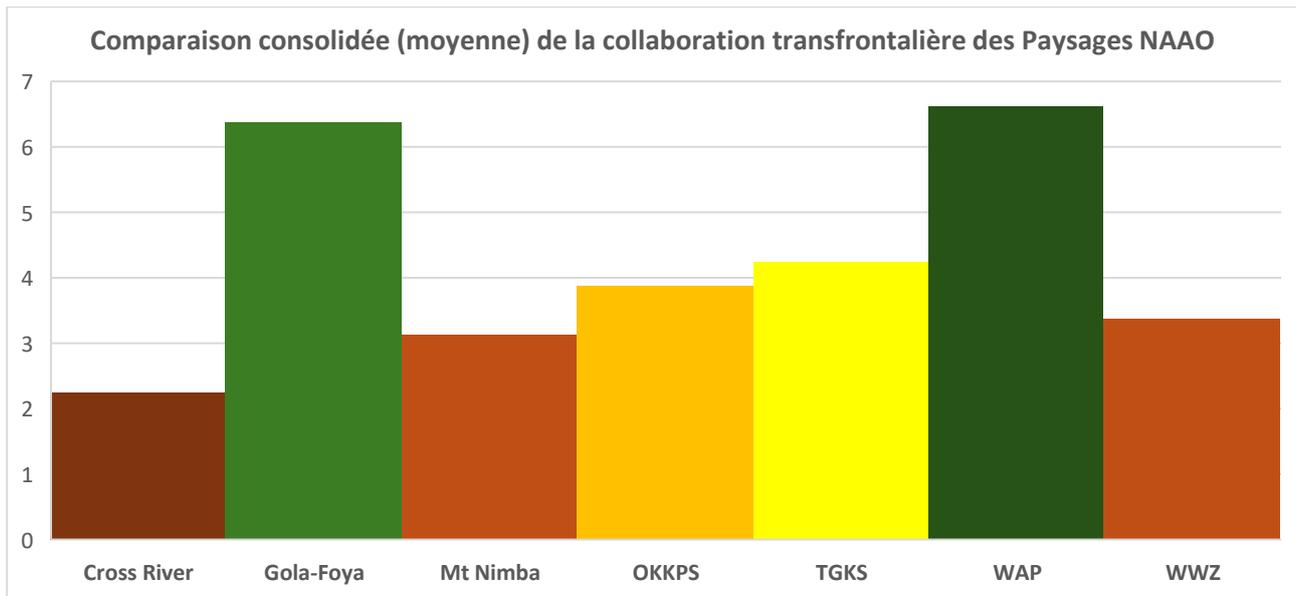


Figure 12. Graphical representation (based on averages) of the stage of development of cross-border collaboration between NAAO landscapes.

7. Conclusion & main recommendations

7.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, the most important points to remember from this analysis and comparison of cross-border collaboration experiences between the seven NAAO landscapes targeted are as follows:

- (i) Firstly, the highly "relative" and, even more so, "subjective" nature of this analysis, which is based on significant biases (the level of detail of the information obtained, the absence of financial data, the plurality of opinions, the great diversity of contexts, the sparse documentation, etc.). Mitigating these biases would require more time.

Consequently, the objective and final interpretation should not be geared towards ranking landscapes and/or distinguishing between "good and bad performers". The main purpose of this work is to identify overall trends (admittedly fairly superficial) and priorities (specific criteria for a landscape, a conservation area, etc.).

- (ii) This analysis and comparison provides an initial draft of tools and a methodological framework for the NAAO programme and/or the managers of protected areas in these landscapes. It will of course need to be improved, but can already be used to encourage self-assessment processes (for example, as a complement to IMET exercises), exchanges/debates between key stakeholders, and strategic thinking.
- (iii) It summarizes the main recommendations made by key stakeholders in these landscapes (although some people were unable to participate and it would be interesting to broaden the spectrum). Below, we develop some more cross-cutting recommendations for the NAAO programme.
- (iv) The WAP and Gola-Foya seem to stand out from the other landscapes and show signs of greater maturity/development in their cross-border collaboration, despite the biases of the analysis and the security situation in the WAP.

There are also significant disparities between and within landscapes. The average score for the WAP, for example, somewhat masks the shortcomings experienced by the Burkina Faso and Niger sections. Hence the importance of treating these scores with great caution.

7.2. Main recommendations

The main recommendations arising from this comparative analysis could be summarized as directing financial support from the NAAO programme towards harmonizing cross-border collaboration between the different landscapes. This could be achieved by:

- (i) Providing political support to the various institutions in charge of protected areas in the different countries to strengthen their formal framework for collaboration through the signing of agreements, the establishment of dedicated structures and making them efficient (not too large, regular meetings, follow-up and implementation of recommendations, etc.).

Given the diversity of contexts and lessons learned in cross-border conservation (IUCN), it would be preferable not to impose a predetermined model but to support and encourage local energies and ideas that are agreed upon by the key actors in each landscape.

The WAP collaboration system, which appears to be the most "sophisticated" in the NAAO programme, does not necessarily mean that it will work elsewhere and achieve the same results.

- (ii) By focusing funding on the management of protected areas in order to significantly improve their operational capacities, even if it means establishing conditions for obtaining these funds, for the benefit of biodiversity and local communities. The concentric circles approach, which has proven successful in other protected areas, particularly in Central Africa, should be a model for financial partners to follow – prioritizing the management of the biodiversity hotspots of these landscapes and securing them before investing elsewhere (ecological corridors, more secondary protected areas, etc.).

Consequently, financial support targeting other protected areas or conservation measures (ecological corridors, etc.) should **only** be provided **if** the central/priority PAs are sufficiently resourced (financially, humanly, technically, logistically, etc.) and achieve satisfactory conservation results and impacts (70% of annual plans implemented, increase in flagship species, increase in community income, etc.).

- (iii) Focus landscape support on establishing the conditions for obtaining sustainable financing. Successful experiences with trust funds (FSOA, [F-TNS](#)³² or [FAPBM](#)³³) should be replicated/adapted/encouraged in landscapes that do not have them. This would meet the sustainable financing needs commonly expressed by the majority of stakeholders.

For carbon financing, experiences in Central Africa (Chinko, CAR) show that protected area managers must demonstrate strong management capabilities in the field and that a number of conditions must be met (CLIP, good relations with communities, political negotiation and monitoring and evaluation capabilities, etc.). It would be interesting to compare/capitalize on the experience of Gola-Foya and for the NAAO programme to support managers in other landscapes to put these conditions in place.

- (iv) Promote sharing and emulation between landscapes. Although there are notable differences in capacity between protected areas, the NAAO programme should encourage the exchange of experience between landscapes.

³² The Sangha Tri-National Foundation.

³³ Foundation for Protected Areas and Biodiversity in Madagascar.

Well-supervised induction missions (with capitalization objectives, monitoring, etc.) would make it possible to replicate good practices and strengthen motivation and informal collaboration. This is crucial for overcoming the many obstacles encountered by protected area managers and for increasing the resilience of stakeholders in the face of crises (which are inevitable and will certainly increase over time).

It should be noted that this tool has been widely adopted by operators of delegated protected areas, notably African Parks, but also Noé and WCS, demonstrating its usefulness in developing capacities, replicating good practices and harmonizing management.

- (v) Encourage legal harmonization by taking into account several conditions (harmonize texts to ensure their effectiveness and efficiency in the field, to facilitate institutional relations³⁴. It is important to find a balance and consistency between political support (*buy-in*), which would translate into cooperation agreements, and technical collaboration in the field.

Rely on regional organizations as a driving force to strengthen the formalization of cooperation. Gradually institutionalize cooperation, recognizing the need to proceed in stages and take into account existing relations between states.

³⁴ Despite the adoption of cooperation agreements, these do not resolve all difficulties, as the disparity in legal traditions between English-speaking and French-speaking states cannot be settled in an agreement (Cross River: need to reach an agreement on the recognition of enclaves in national parks in order to complete the World Heritage site process).

8. Appendix 1. Matrix of types and levels of cross-border collaboration

See Excel file.

9. Appendix 2. Comparison table of the operational capacities of NAAO landscapes

See Excel file.

10. Appendix 3. Study implementation stages

The table below summarizes the main methodological stages of the study, taking into account time constraints (between June and September 2025).

Table 7w. Summary of the main methodological stages of the study.

Stages	Details	Responsible	Date of completion
Initial contact	Identification of key individuals by region	Consultants/Regional coordination	9 June
	Introductory emails to key contacts targeted by landscape	Regional coordination	11 June
	Email requesting availability of documentation. Follow-up and monitoring	Consultants	13 June
Tools and document analysis	Development of comparison criteria	Consultants	June
	Development of analysis grid (technical and legal aspects) and interview grid	Consultants	June
	Classification and analysis of documentation received	Consultants	July
Semi-structured interviews	Planning interviews with key individuals (emails)	Consultants	18–19 June
	Conducting interviews	Consultants	July
	Reporting and analysis of interviews	Consultants	July
	Request for additional information, if necessary	Consultants	July
Analysis report	Report drafting	Consultants	Early September
	Review of draft for correction/improvement	Regional coordination	10 September
	Integration of feedback	Consultants	15 September
	Submission of final report	Consultants	17 September

11. Appendix 4. List of persons consulted during the study

Country	Land scape	Type of actor	Name of actor	Person's surname and first name	Position	Email	Telephone
Cameroon	Cross River	NGO	WCS	Camille Affana	WCS Cameroon Country Director	caffana@wcs.org	00237 672101198/ 691539410
Cameroon	Cross River	NGO	WCS	Fleur SCHEELE	Programme Manager	fscheele@wcs.org	
Cameroon	Cross River		Project	Julien Dupuy	PSMNR	juliendpy@gmail.com	
Nigeria	Cross River	NGO	WCS	Andrew DUNN	Project Manager, WCS	adunn@wcs.org	+234 803 567 9609
Nigeria	Cross River	NGO	WCS	Matthew Hatchwell	WCS Consultant	mchatchwell@gmail.com	0044 7976 605770
Liberia	Gola		SCNL	James Mulbah	SCNL	jmulbah@scnlliberia.org	
Sierra Leone	Gola	Administration	EPA	Bintu Sia Kamara	EPA	bintusiaf29@gmail.com	
Sierra Leone	Gola		RSPB	Alade Adeleke	Director Sierra Leone RSPB	Alade.Adeleke@rspb.org.uk	
Liberia	Nimba		UNOPS	Yacouba MAGAGI	former PAPFor programme manager Nimba	yacmagagi@gmail.com	
Guinea	OKKPS	Administration	OGPNRF	Salian Traoré	Former OGPRNF focal point at the WCF	salian@wildchimps.org	
Guinea	OKKPS	NGO	WCF	Pacifique KIZILA	Director Guinea, WCF	kizila@wildchimps.org	00224 621 14 39 81
Sierra Leone	OKKPS	Administration	NPAA	Dauda Laingay Bangura	NPAA Law Enforcement	daudalaingay@gmail.com	
Sierra Leone	OKKPS	Administration		Bintu Sia Kamara	EPA	bintusiaf29@gmail.com	
Ivory Coast	TGKS	Administration		Vincent Beligne	Former GIZ	vincent.beligne@gmail.com	
Ivory Coast	TGKS	NGO	WCF	Emmanuelle Normand	Regional Director	normand@wildchimps.org	

Benin	WAP	Administration	CENAGREF	Abdel Aziz BABA-MOUSSA	CEO, CENAGREF	a_bamouss@yahoo.fr / ababamoussa@gouv.bj	
Benin	WAP	Administration	UNESCO	Aristide Tehou	UNESCO National MAB Commission	tehouaristide@gmail.com	
Benin	WAP	NGO	APN	Eric Stanislas Hermann	Country Director	ericm@africanparks.org	
Benin	WAP	NGO	APN	Habteyesus TADESE	Director of Pendjari National Park	habetet@africanparks.org	
Benin	WAP	NGO	APN	Julien Chevillot	Programme Manager	julienc@africanparks.org	0033 6 50 49 71 60
Benin	WAP	CSO	AVIGREF	Djaléni DJATTO YEMPABOU	Executive Secretary, AVIGREF PN Pendjari	djatto_leni@yahoo.fr	
Burkina Faso	WAP	Administration	MEEA	Emmanuel Sawadogo	Office of Protected Areas (Former Director of W National Park)	emmanuelsawadogo17@yahoo.fr	00226 71414333
Burkina Faso	WAP	CSO	RNB	Alain Lankoandé	Executive Director	alainlankoande@yahoo.fr	
Niger	WAP	Administration		Sahailou Samaila	Deputy Director General of Water and Forests (former Director of PN W)	sahailou2@yahoo.fr	
Niger	WAP	Administration		Salif Zoumari	Director of Wildlife, Hunting and APs	salifzoom2@yahoo.com	
	WAP		UEMOA	Cheikh Tidiane KANE		ctkane@uemoa.int	23288326262
Liberia	WWZ	Other	FFI	Simon Burdett	PAPFor Programme Manager, former FFI	simonburdett27@gmail.com	
		NGO	MRU	Marc Doumbia	Programme Officer in charge of Infrastructure and Water Resources	doumbia1959@gmail.com adoumbia@mru.int	23279081717
			UEMOA	Christophe DEGUENON		cdeguenon@uemoa.int	

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