

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Project ID:	9910
Project Name:	Reversing Ecosystem and Water Degradation in the Volta River Basin (REWarD-Volta River Basin)
Countr(ies):	Regional, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Togo
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Reversing Ecosystem and Water Degradation in the Volta River Basin (REWarD-Volta River Basin)

Country

Regional, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Togo

GEF ID

9910

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

Volta Basin Authority, GWP-WA, Ministries in charge of water resources in basin countries, other relevant national authorities.

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

PIR Submission

9/15/2025

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2025 , 3rd PIR

Objective

Reverse ecosystem and water degradation and support integrated ecosystem-based development in the Volta River Basin through strengthened transboundary governance and restoration and conservation of ecosystems for sustainable livelihoods.

B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress

Moderately Satisfactory

Development Objective

Moderately Satisfactory

Overall risk

Moderate Risk

Project Financing

7,781,500.00

Cumulative Disbursement

1,428,150.00

C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval 1/21/2022	Agency Approval 10/17/2022
Implementation Start 10/17/2022	First Disbursement 2/7/2023
Expected MTR 12/1/2025	Actual MTR
Expected Completion 4/28/2028	Actual Completion

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities

Outputs

Information on progress outcomes of project implementation activities

Component 1: Improvement of knowledge base and development of management tools for informed decision making

Output 1.1.1.: Annual surface water resources models and Decision Support Tools made available to support optimization of water use and flows to minimize negative environmental impacts (link to output 2.2.1 and 2.2.2)

- **Inception report finalized:** Completion of the inception report, including a detailed activities plan, comprehensive methodology, and implementation strategy to ensure the delivery all three key outputs, August 2024;
- **Database Inventory and Integration Recommendations Report Finalized:** Completion of the Report detailing the inventory of existing databases, along with actionable recommendations for integration into the DSS, May 2025
- **Draft DSS Web Interface Released:** Availability of the draft version of the web interface for the DSS knowledge base, May 2025

Output 1.1.2.: Indicators (linked to the Decision Support Tool) taking into account the environmental capital, ecosystem services and functions. Socio-anthropological impact analysis methods developed, tested and integrated into the Decision Support Tool.

- **Consultant recruitment completed:** Selection and recruitment of the consultants to carry out the mission, November 2024;
- **Online mission framing meeting held:** Organization of an online meeting to refine and validate the consultant proposed methodological approach - December 27, 2024 by the;
- **Regional inception workshop conducted:** Facilitation of the regional workshop to review, amend, and validate the inception report of the mission, 14-17 January 2025;
- **Stakeholder mobilization supported:** Coordination and support for the mobilization of country level stakeholders to ensure effective data collection and sharing

Outputs

Information on progress outcomes of project implementation activities

- **Ongoing mission follow-up:** Continuous engagement and follow up with the consultants to monitor progress and ensure alignment with mission objectives.

Component 2. Strengthening of transboundary planning, regional and in-country coordination and capacity

Output 2.1.1.: Functional regional coordination and national water user inter-sectoral/inter-ministerial committees established to assure formal dialogue between countries and sectors

Establishment of National and Regional Users' Coordination (NUCs) in six countries

- **Consultant recruitment completed:** Recruitment of consultants to conduct the mission, November 2024;
- **Mission framing meeting held:** Online meeting to amend and validate the methodological approach proposed by the consultant; - December 27, 2024
- **Regional inception workshop conducted:** Regional workshop held to review, amend, and validate the inception report of the mission, 14-17 January 2025;
- **Stakeholder mobilization facilitated:** Support provided to mobilize country-level stakeholders for relevant data collection and sharing;
- **Preparation of National Workshops Initiated:** Planning and coordination of national workshops for the establishment of National Users' Coordination (NUCs) in six countries;
- **NUC workshop held in Mali:** National workshop conducted for the establishment of National Users' Coordination (NUC) in Mali, 25 June 2025;

Establishment of the Inter-Parliamentary Committee (IPC) of the Volta Basin

- **Concept note finalized:** Finalization of the concept note, incorporating feedbacks and observations from various partners.
- **Preparation of Regional IPC Workshop (Ongoing, Delayed):** Preparatory activities for the regional workshop aimed at establishing the Inter-Parliamentary Committee (IPC) of the Volta Basin Planned for September 2025.

Elaboration of a detailed project document on the management of shallow groundwater (water table) in the Volta basin

Outputs

Information on progress outcomes of project implementation activities

- **Consultant recruitment (delayed):** Recruitment of consultants to conduct the mission- Delayed;
- **Mission framing meeting held:** Online meeting to amend and validate the methodological approach proposed by the consultant - December 27, 2024;
- **Regional workshop conducted:** Workshop organized to review, amend and validate the inception report of the mission;
- **Regional workshop planned:** Workshop planned to amend and validate the deliverables of the mission;
- **Terms of reference finalized and published:** Finalisation and publication of the terms of reference on the “Mission to develop a detailed project document on the integrated management of invasive aquatic species in the Volta Basin”
- **Consultant recruitment process (In progress, Delayed):** Ongoing recruitment process for consultant- In progress, delayed

Elaboration of a detailed project document to develop a detailed project document on the integrated management of invasive aquatic species in the Volta Basin

- **Reframing and Relaunch of Mission ToR:** Revision and relaunch the ToR for the Mission to develop a detailed project document on the integrated management of invasive aquatic species in the Volta Basin, November 2024
- **Consultant Recruitment (Ongoing, Delayed):** Recruitment of consultants to conduct the mission, November 2024 (still ongoing, delayed);

VBA Observatory capacity building

- **Regional Training Workshop on DSS Requirements:** Organization of a regional training workshop focused on the requirements of the decision-support tool for sustainable water resources planning and management in the Volta Basin, on 15 and 16 November 2024 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
- **Regional Stakeholder Training Workshop on DSS Knowledge Base:** Organization of a regional workshop to train stakeholders on the Knowledge Base of the Decision Support Tool for the sustainable planning and management of water resources in the Volta Basin, 6 – 8 May 2025

Outputs

Information on progress outcomes of project implementation activities

Output 2.2.1.: Community oriented early-warning system(s) for droughts developed and operational

- **VBA Observatory Training Workshop on DSS Knowledge Base:** Organization of a training workshop for the VBA observatory on the Knowledge Base of the Decision Support Tool for the sustainable planning and management of water resources in the Volta Basin, 5 May 2025.
- **Finalization and Publication of ToR for Community Consultations:** Completion and dissemination of the terms of reference for Community Consultation in Drought Risk Sites in the Volta Basin, June 2025
- **Recruitment of consultants for the mission:** Recruitment of the 6 consultants and the regional consultant to conduct the mission, July 2025
- **Inception and framing workshops held:** Organization of inception and framing workshops with the recruited consultants to align on objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes.
- **Follow-Up of Country-Level Studies:** Ongoing monitoring and support for the studies being conducted in the six participating countries.

Output 2.2.2.: Staff of the Volta Basin Observatory capable of operating the Decision Support System including Drought Early Warning System

- **Regional training workshop on DSS requirements:** Organization of a regional training workshop on the requirements of the decision-support tool for sustainable water resources planning and management in the Volta Basin, - 15 and 16 November 2024 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
- **Regional stakeholder training workshop on DSS Knowledge Base (In Progress):** Ongoing organization of a regional workshop to train stakeholder on the Knowledge Base of the Decision Support Tool for the sustainable planning and management of water resources in the Volta Basin.

Component 3. Strengthening of resilience of ecosystems for sustainable livelihoods in the Volta basin.

Output 3.1.1.: Measures on sustainable use of water for crop and livestock productions implemented to improve productivity, food security and incomes

- **Regional integrated workshop co-organized and held:** Strategic Orientation and Planning workshop for Component 3 Implementation in Lomé, 14-17 January 2025
- **Follow-up and implementation of workshop conclusions (ongoing, delayed):** Monitoring and execution strategic recommendations from the integrated workshop on the Strategic framing of Component 3
- **Regional online workshop organized:** online workshop to start Component 3 activities and follow up on conclusions assignments, March 2025
- **Facilitation of country-level planning and costing:** Support provided to countries for planning and budgeting Component 3 activities

Outputs

Information on progress outcomes of project implementation activities

- **Strategic Framing Finalization (Ongoing, Delayed):**
Finalization of the Strategic framework for Component 3 implementation
- **Terms of reference finalized and published:** The Terms of Reference for hiring a consulting firm to support the Technical Assistance mission for Component 3 in the Volta Basin, January 2025
- **RfP process for consulting firm (Ongoing, Delayed):**
Preparation of expression of interest and request for the consulting firm to support the Technical Assistance mission for Component 3 in the Volta Basin, initiated January 2025
- **Preparation of ToR for National Implementation Units (NIUR): Drafting and submission** of the Terms of Reference for the National Implementation Units (NIUR) under the REWarD Project, including no-objection request to IUCN and UNEP.
- **Ensuring transparent and trackable communication and liaison:** Ongoing efforts to maintain smooth, transparent and well-documented communication and coordination across stakeholders.

Output 3.1.2.: Sustainable fisheries management practices implemented to improve productivity, food security and incomes

- **Regional integrated workshop held:** Co-organizing and facilitation of the Strategic Orientation and Planning workshop for Component 3 , 14-17 January 2025, Lomé
- **Follow-Up on Workshop Conclusions (Ongoing, Delayed):**
Implementation of Strategic recommendations from the integrated workshop on the framing of Component 3 - Ongoing, delayed
- **Regional online workshop organized:** online workshop to launch Component 3 activities and follow up on workshop conclusions and assignments, March 2025
- **Facilitation of country-level planning and costing:** Support provided to countries for planning and budgeting Component 3 activities
- **Strategic framing finalization (Ongoing, Delayed):**
Finalization of the Strategic framework for the implementation of Component 3 of the project
- **ToR Finalized and Published:** Finalization and publication of the terms of reference for hiring a consulting firm to support the Technical Assistance mission for Component 3 in the Volta Basin, January 2025
- **RfP Process for Consulting Firm (Ongoing, Delayed):**
Preparation of RfP documents for hiring a consulting firm to support the Technical Assistance mission for Component 3 in the Volta Basin, January 2025 (Ongoing, delayed)
- **Preparation of ToR for National Implementation Units (NIUR):** Drafting and submission of Terms of Reference for the National Implementation Units (NIUR) of the REWarD Project, including no-objection request to IUCN and UNEP.

Outputs

Information on progress outcomes of project implementation activities

- **Ensuring Transparent and Trackable Communication:** Ongoing efforts to maintain smooth, transparent and documented communication and liaison among stakeholders.

Component 4. Knowledge management and sharing, and effective M&E

Output 4.1.1.: Communication strategy for SAP implementation is developed and implemented, also through a series of public awareness campaigns

- **Preparation and Publication of Articles:** Development and dissemination of articles highlighting the implementation progress and key achievements of project activities
- **Design and Production of Communication Materials:** Creation and printing of branded communication tools, including notepads, banners, information sheets, calendars, kakemonos, and other visibility materials to support outreach and stakeholder engagement.
- **Participation in International Water Conference:** Two representatives from VBA and GWP-WA attended the 10th GEF International Water Conference in September 2024, contributing to cross-basin knowledge exchange and global dialogue on transboundary water governance.

Output 4. 1. 2: Development of International Water Knowledge Products Using Existing Global Information and Knowledge Sharing Platforms, e.g. GEF IW:LEARN

Component 5. Project Management (PMC)

Output 5.1.1.: Project Personnel (Project Management 5% of overall total)

- **Coordination strengthened:** New Coordinator recruited, roadmap developed, and 2025 workplans consolidated; MS Project introduced to improve planning and monitoring.
- **Procurement advanced:** Major tenders completed, and contracts signed for shallow groundwater, environmental capital/ecosystem services, and user coordination studies.
- **Consultancies operational:** SUCCESS GC, BERAC, and BUGEGO firms mobilized and commenced technical studies.
- **Workshops delivered:** Key national and regional events held (Abidjan, Lomé, Cotonou), including stakeholder training and review workshops.
- **Stakeholder mobilization:** NUC established in Mali; preparation kits produced for other countries; 43 stakeholders engaged in Q1 2025.
- **Knowledge & communication:** Knowledge base inventories and indicators validated; communication strategy drafted; awareness campaigns launched with media coverage.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** ToR for M&E expert prepared, initial framework designed, but recruitment delayed due to budget allocation issues.
- **Challenges remain:** Gaps in staffing (admin, procurement, M&E), undefined Resource Pool, and sustainability of stakeholder participation.

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities

1. Human Resources Gaps

- Recruitment delays for key staff (Admin/Finance Assistant, M&E Specialist, Social Safeguards, Procurement).
- Resource Pool still undefined, limiting support capacity.

2. Procurement Bottlenecks

- Some tenders attracted insufficient bids (e.g., invasive aquatic species study).
- Delays in procurement process slowed activities implementation.

3. Coordination & Preparation Issues

- Workshops required heavy last-minute technical/logistical work.
- Limited responsiveness from countries, combined with weak anticipation of document validation and data mobilization, created bottlenecks.

4. Data & Technical Inputs

- Delays in transmission and harmonization of datasets from national focal structures to DHI/VBA affected modelling and DSS work.
- Parallel consultancy missions needed closer synergy.

5. Field Activities

- Many field-level interventions (pilot sites, fisheries, riverbank restoration) have not yet started, causing low % completion rates (5–15% on several outputs).

6. Financial & Sustainability Concerns

- Some activities rated as over-estimated in progress versus actual financial execution.
- Sustainability of stakeholder participation and financing mechanisms still uncertain.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

- M&E framework and tools under preparation, but lack of a specialist hampers systematic progress tracking.
- Need to establish a consistent and permanent rating system for outcomes, outputs, and activities.

Overall Message

Project implementation is progressing, with major consultancies contracted and key workshops delivered. Nonetheless, significant challenges remain, including staffing gaps, procurement delays, weak data flows, and postponed field interventions. These issues risk slowing the launch of Component 3 and undermining sustainability efforts. Addressing them will require stronger anticipation, streamlined procurement processes, and more flexible, proactive recruitment mechanisms.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

During the implementation phase, VBA and GWP-WA organized and facilitated numerous meetings with stakeholders at national and regional levels. Participants included representatives of national institutions

(environment, hydrology, meteorology, civil protection, National Assemblies), local authorities in the Volta Basin, the private sector (consultants and service providers), and civil society, particularly NGOs active in the basin. Regular consultation and communication with the VBA's National Focal Structures ensured that stakeholder ideas, needs, and expectations were taken into account and helped to maintain political commitment.

Stakeholder engagement was also central to the establishment of National User Coordinations (NUCs), which has been a cornerstone of the REWaRD–Volta Basin Project. These platforms brought together farmers, herders, fishers, women, youth, traditional authorities, and community representatives, alongside government institutions, local authorities, NGOs, and private sector actors. Transparent elections, adoption of statutes, and validation of action plans reinforced local ownership and legitimacy, while the strong involvement of national ministries and territorial authorities provided political and institutional anchoring.

Despite these successes, challenges emerged, including late preparation, weak logistics, and sustainability issues such as financing stakeholder participation. To address these, corrective measures emphasized early planning, pre-validation of documents, continuous capacity building, and effective communication. Lessons learned demonstrate that broad mobilization, legitimacy, and inclusivity can overcome initial shortcomings and reinforce the long-term sustainability of the NUCs.

Overall, stakeholder engagement has laid a strong foundation for sustainable governance in the Volta Basin. By embedding inclusivity, political recognition, and continuous capacity building, the project has advanced both ownership and legitimacy—key conditions for the success and durability of the NUCs and of the REWaRD Project as a whole.

D. Gender Equality

With regard to the principle of gender equality and women's empowerment', VBA and GWP-WA ensure that gender considerations are systematically taken into account in the implementation of activities in accordance with the gender mainstreaming strategy set out in Annex U of the approved project document. Provisions and announcements are regularly issued to promote gender inclusion, with specific references encouraging the participation of young people, women, and vulnerable groups in project activities. During the mid-term evaluation, we will ensure that gender-disaggregated data is collected and analyzed in order to better understand gender dynamics in the implementation of the project.

E. Knowledge Management

At June 30, 2025, GWP-WA and VBA have ensured good visibility and communication of the project's activities. All documents produced bear the cover page designed for this purpose. Banners were designed and printed for all the workshops organized under the project, and were covered by the print and audiovisual media. Articles were written and published on the GWP-WA and VBA websites to publicize the project's activities.

Regional training workshop on the requirements of the decision support tool (DST)

<https://www.gwp.org/fr/GWP-Afrique-Ouest/GWP-in-Action/News--Activities/atelier-regional-de-formation-sur-les-exigences-de-loutil-daide-a-la-decision-oad/>

Regional workshop to accelerate the implementation of the various activities of the REWaRD Volta River Basin project (Lomé, Togo, January 14-17, 2025)

Togo First <https://share.google/iqFQ45cdxjbJfu1gW>

Regional stakeholder training workshop on the knowledge-based decision-making tool for sustainable planning and management of water resources in the Volta basin

<https://www.notreepoque.bj/atelier-regional-de-formation-des-acteurs-sur-la-base-de-connaissance-de-loutil-daide-a-la-decision-oad-les-acteurs-du-bassin-de-la-volta-en-formation-a-cotonou-pari-gagne-pour/>

NUC establishment – Mali national Workshop

- <https://nyelenimagazine.org/assise-nationale-du-bassin-de-la-volta-au-mali-la-1ere-coordination-nationale-des-usagers-eres-des-ressources-naturelles-mise-en-place-a-bamako/>
- https://www.maliweb.net/environnement/mali-mise-en-place-dune-coordination-nationale-des-usagers-du-bassin-de-la-volta-3106638.html#google_vignette
- <https://abv.int/mali-mise-en-place-dune-coordination-nationale-des-usagers-du-bassin-de-la-volta/>

As part of activity implementation, VBA and GWP-WA developed the new 2024–2030 Communication Strategy and the 2024–2026 Communication Action Plan. These were validated during a regional workshop with VBA member states, followed by a GWP-WA regional support workshop dedicated to updating the VBA Communication Strategy.

Activities to implement the project's communication plan are underway, notably through media coverage of the REWarD project (radio, television, web, etc.), as illustrated by the above URL.

III: Minor Amendments

CONTEXT	
Result Framework	
Components and Cost	
Institutional And Implementation Arrangements	
Financial Management	
Implementation Schedule	
Executing Entity	
Executing Entity Category	
Minor Project Objective Change	
Safeguards	
Risk Analysis	
Increase of GEF Financing up to 5%	
Co-Financing	

Location of Project Activity	
others	

IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Global Water Partnership-West Africa headquarter	12.316305	-1.513005	

Location Description:

Activity Description:

EA headquarters - At next PIR, project interventions sites will be mapped out.

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Volta Basin Authority	12.3114528	-1.492649317	

Location Description:

Ouaga 2000 Av Sembèn Ousmane Ouagadougou - Burkina Faso

Activity Description:

EA headquarters

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hotel Tantiga de Ziniare. Burkina Faso	12.58925	-1.30263	

Location Description:

Ziniare. Burkina Faso

Activity Description:

Regional workshop

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Coconut Grove Regency Hotel. Accra. Ghana	5.57181	-0.19212	

Location Description:

Accra. Ghana

Activity Description:

Regional workshops

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hotel Benebsouga	12.25293	-2.35510	

Location Description:

Koudougou. Burkina Faso

Activity Description:

Workshop

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hotel Pousga	12.25743	-2.35749	

Location Description:

Koudougou. Burkina Faso

Activity Description:

Workshop

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hotel Residence Prestige	12.308957	-1.51776602	

Location Description:

Ouaga 2000. Ouagadougou - Burkina Faso

Activity Description:

Inception workshop

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hotel les Terrasses de Bonoumin	5.3588847	-3.980615	

Location Description:

Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

Activity Description:

Regional workshops

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hôtel « La Concorde », Lomé	12.32724	-1.50200	

Location Description:

Lomé, Togo

Activity Description:

Regional workshops

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Benin Royal Hotel	6.36512	2.42271	

Location Description:

Cotonou, Benin

Activity Description:

Regional workshops

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
Hôtel de l'Amitié	12.63845	-7.99351	

Location Description:

Bamako, Mali

Activity Description:

National workshop

V. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Title
M and E Document	9910-PIR-UNEP-2025-REWarD – Volta River Basin

