

November 2025

 **MANGROVE
BREAKTHROUGH**

 **GLOBAL
MANGROVE
ALLIANCE**



Mobilizing the Mangrove Breakthrough in West Africa

**Enabling conditions and priorities for mangrove
conservation and restoration action**



Mobilizing the Mangrove Breakthrough in the Americas

ENABLING CONDITIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR MANGROVE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION ACTION

This Regional Report – which offers a regional scope for mangrove priorities in West Africa – is accompanied by separately downloadable Country Summaries for [Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, and Brazil], with more detailed insights of country-specific enabling conditions and priorities for mangrove action.

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Reference list

The reference list for this report is available [here](#).

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Fisher boats in Sierra Leone
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1. Introduction

The Mobilizing the Mangrove Breakthrough series of regional reports are designed as accessible reference points for linking global goals on mangrove conservation, protection, restoration, and finance to national and local contexts.

Each regional report gives a high-level overview of the Breakthrough, its key partners, and available resources. It also highlights countries with strong potential for restoration and conservation.

Alongside these reports are separately downloadable Country Summaries, prepared by local and regional experts, that provide more detail on the country-specific enabling conditions for mangrove action on the ground.

Introduction to the Mangrove Breakthrough

Mangroves provide food security, extreme weather protection, and support livelihoods, while harboring incredible biodiversity, building coastal resilience, and acting as immense carbon sinks. These combined benefits make mangrove conservation and restoration a cost-effective strategy to mitigate the dual climate and biodiversity crises.

Mangrove restoration and protection is drastically underfunded compared to the benefits they bring, receiving less than 1% of climate finance. The recently released IUCN Red List of Mangrove Ecosystems categorized half of the world's mangrove provinces as threatened.¹

The Mangrove Breakthrough, launched at UNFCCC COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, provides a framework for State and non-State Actors to work together towards global science-based goals. The Breakthrough and its partners aim to enable the mobilization of USD 4 billion by 2030, boosting actions to restore and protect 15 million hectares — along with the communities and biodiversity that rely on them.

The Breakthrough has been endorsed by over 100 national and subnational governments, NGOs and corporate partners, coordinated globally by a Hub hosted by Ambition Loop. The Breakthrough is guided by a High Level Advisory Council, including representatives from nine stakeholder groups such as the UNFCCC Climate Champions, the Global Mangrove Alliance (GMA), and the Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC). The Hub works directly with governments, financial institutions and delivery partners around the world to achieve the Breakthrough goals, in alignment with the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Achieving the Mangrove Breakthrough's ambitious goals will provide local food security while reducing storm and flood risk for millions of people and protecting billions of dollars' worth of property. It will support unique terrestrial and marine biodiversity and provide vital mitigation benefits through sequestration of 43.5 million tons of CO₂ in living mangrove biomass and 189 million tons of CO₂ in the soil.²

Collecting cockles during ebb in Saloum Delta
© Joeri Borst, Wetlands International





Unpacking the global

Mangrove Breakthrough Goals to the regional level

Based on spatial data from Global Mangrove Watch (GMW)³ we calculated regional targets for each of the Breakthrough global goals: Halt Loss (Table 1), Restore Half (Table 2) and Double Protection (Table 3).

Goal 1

HALT ANTHROPOGENIC MANGROVE LOSS

Deliberate clearing of mangroves is currently the greatest driver of loss globally (Table 1).⁴ Reasons for clearing are variable, ranging from port development, hotels and tourism facilities, or other coastal infrastructure, through to local community reliance on mangrove wood resources for building, firewood, or charcoal.

Conversion to aquaculture, oil palm plantations, and rice cultivation together explain 43% of mangrove losses between 2000 and 2020.⁵ Under ‘business as usual’ rates of mangrove clearance, emissions from loss could reach 2,391 million tonnes of CO₂eq by the end of the century, or 3,392 million tonnes of CO₂eq when considering lost soil carbon sequestration.⁶

Table 1: Human driven loss of mangrove area by region. Note that the technical capacity to effectively differentiate environmental and anthropogenic drivers of loss is much improved with higher resolution datasets from 2010 onwards.

REGION	NET CHANGE 2010-2020 (KM²)	GROSS LOSS 2010-2020 (KM²)	PROPORTION OF LOSS FROM DIRECT HUMAN DRIVERS (%)	TOTAL HUMAN DRIVEN LOSS 2010 – 2020 (KM²)
Asia	-260.85	-2,353.81	68	-1,604.91
Americas	+91.64	-1,573.59	37	-581.63
W Africa	-199.32	-495.10	63	-310.56
Central Africa	-16.55	-51.39	66	-33.73
E Africa	-78.52	-281.59	34	-95.18
Caribbean	-26.15	-276.96	29	-79.64
Middle East	-22.63	-45.78	48	-21.77
Oceania	-136.07	-587.60	15	-86.39
United States	-12.84	-89.34	84	-75.24
World	-661.30	-5,478.20	51	-2,809.42



Spur-winged lapwing, a wader bird which is common for west-africa © Lammert Hilarides, Wetlands International



Looking at changes in the net mangrove area can mask the true extent of ongoing loss and the associated emissions and reduction of ecosystem services. As mangrove area expands into suitable habitat, the rate of change may keep pace with loss or destruction elsewhere – this can be seen in the Americas (Table 1) where overall mangrove extent has increased by 91km² between 2010 and 2020 – while at the same time, more than 1500km² were lost.⁴

For example, Panama’s Special Coastal Marine Management Area (ZEMMC) legislation mandates compensation to be paid for damaging use of ecological resources, incorporating the conservation costs and economic value of the natural resources affected.

However, in many locations, community reliance on natural resources is a key driver of degradation or loss. Addressing this in an equitable or socially just way requires providing alternative sources of income, fuel, food, and building materials, along with other measures to improve local living conditions and quality of life – which may be further linked to land rights and broader economic or political stability. There are existing projects which address this effectively at local levels, some using market mechanisms such as carbon credits to subsidize community needs over timescales of 15–40 years.^{7,8} At the national level, schemes such as Ecuador’s Socio Manglar payments for ecosystem services program operate at large scales, providing income and sustainable management rights in exchange for responsible stewardship of 42% of Ecuador’s mangroves.⁹

Embedded in any action to halt anthropogenic loss of mangroves is the need to effectively address drivers of change, which bring their own challenges. Increased control and restrictions based on environmental impact assessments for mangrove conversion for commercial purposes or other development can be paired with legal obligations to compensate for lost ecosystem services.

The rate of anthropogenic mangrove loss is trending downwards.⁵ Whether this is due to improved legal protections, awareness of the coastal protection value of intact mangroves, or due to most of the accessible area at risk of development or conversion already being lost is unclear. The Breakthrough aims to explore mechanisms to support and accelerate this downward trend for a goal of no avoidable mangrove loss.

43%

of mangrove losses (2000–2020) are due to conversion to aquaculture, oil palm, and rice cultivation



Goal 2

RESTORE HALF OF RECENT LOSSES

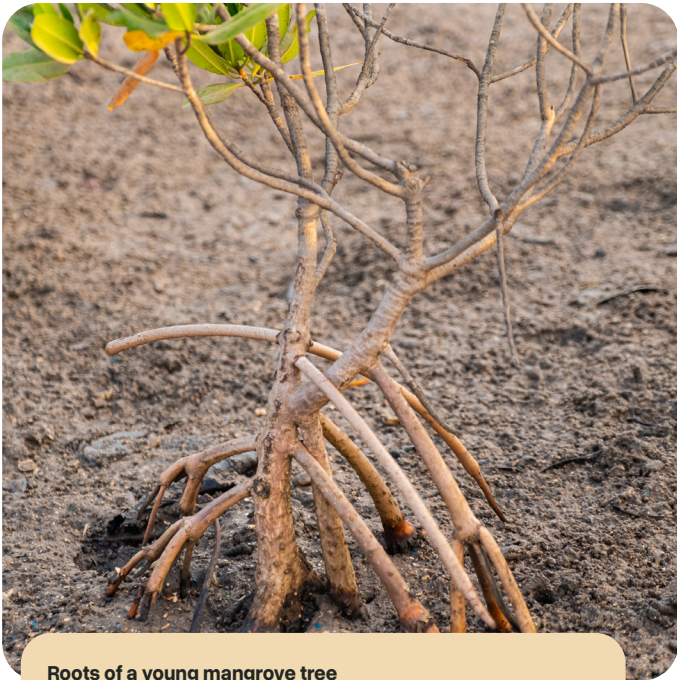
Around 11,325 km² of mangrove area has been lost since 1996.³ Within this area, some 7,939 km² of former mangrove area could potentially be restored,¹⁰ the remainder having been lost to erosion or replaced with hard infrastructure.

Table 2: Global Mangrove Breakthrough restoration goals

REGION	TOTAL MANGROVE AREA 2020 (KM²)	TOTAL RESTORABLE AREA (KM²)	RESTORE HALF GOAL (KM²)
Asia	57,999.31	3,758.64	1,879.32
Americas	34,844.42	1,785.83	892.92
W Africa	17,200.77	560.34	280.17
Central Africa	4,513.95	54.13	27.07
E Africa	7,634.17	366.21	183.10
Caribbean	6,031.51	442.33	221.17
Middle East	287.62	103.95	51.97
Oceania	16,518.12	772.12	386.06
United States	2,329.12	95.58	47.79
World	147,358.99	7,939.13	3,969.56

The Mangrove Breakthrough goal to “Restore Half” aims to support the restoration or rehabilitation of half of this potential area, for a global goal of approximately 4,000km² in process of recovery by 2030. A separate analysis estimated that reforestation of half of all physically feasible areas in the deforested mangrove regions of the world could promote the uptake of 335.5 – 344.4 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent globally over a 40-year period.¹¹

4,000 km²
of mangroves are
approximately targeted
for restoration by 2030



Roots of a young mangrove tree
© Joeri Borst, Wetlands International



Goal 3

DOUBLE THE AREA OF MANGROVES
UNDER FORMAL PROTECTION

Currently approximately 40% of mangroves globally are under some form of formal protection.¹² Doubling this to 80% is not straightforward, as the percentage of mangrove area protected by each country is extremely variable. Some countries have levels of protection as low as 5% and doubling protection here would be insufficient. Conversely, approximately 50 countries currently have more than 50% of their mangroves within formal protections, so doubling the area under protection is not feasible.

For countries where current protection is below 15%, the GMA goal is a minimum protection of 30%, in alignment with Target 3 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) 2030 goals.¹³ For nations with 45% or more mangrove coverage already protected, achieving 90% protection would be ambitious yet attainable.

40%
of global mangroves are
under formal protection

Where greater than 50% of mangrove areas are protected, it is not possible to protect more than 100% so the goal is capped at 90%.¹³ Cumulatively, this could increase the global protected area to around two-thirds of the 2020 extent. It is logical for the Mangrove Breakthrough to apply a similar approach, with the additional 14% needed to double global protection being achieved incrementally as more ambitious countries exceed their initial goals over time.

Table 3: Double the area of mangroves under formal protection

REGION	PROTECTED AREA (KM²)	UNPROTECTED AREA (KM²)	PORTION OF MANGROVE AREA WITH PROTECTED STATUS (%)	ADDITIONAL PROTECTED AREA BY ACHIEVING NATIONAL GOALS (KM²)	PORTION OF MANGROVE AREA WITH PROTECTED STATUS BY ACHIEVING NATIONAL GOALS (%)
Asia	15,726.38	42,272.93	27	13,452.00	50
Americas	24,484.08	10,360.34	70	6,525.06	89
W Africa	3,889.78	13,310.99	23	5,174.56	53
Central Africa	2,860.17	1,653.78	63	1,052.50	87
E Africa	3,262.92	4,371.25	43	1,939.97	68
Caribbean	3,327.45	2,704.06	55	2,041.04	89
Middle East	129.10	158.52	45	32.75	56
Oceania	5,551.92	10,966.20	34	5,851.84	69
United States	2,055.40	273.72	88	40.80	90
World	61,287.20	86,071.79	42	36,110.52	66



Goal 4

ENSURE SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FOR EXISTING MANGROVE AREAS

Core to achieving the Breakthrough goals is the mobilization of large-scale funding to support locally led action on the ground, and to address overarching impediments to scaling current conservation and restoration efforts. This funding should be multi-sectoral, including private, public, and philanthropic sources, with partnerships such as private-public funding models particularly important.

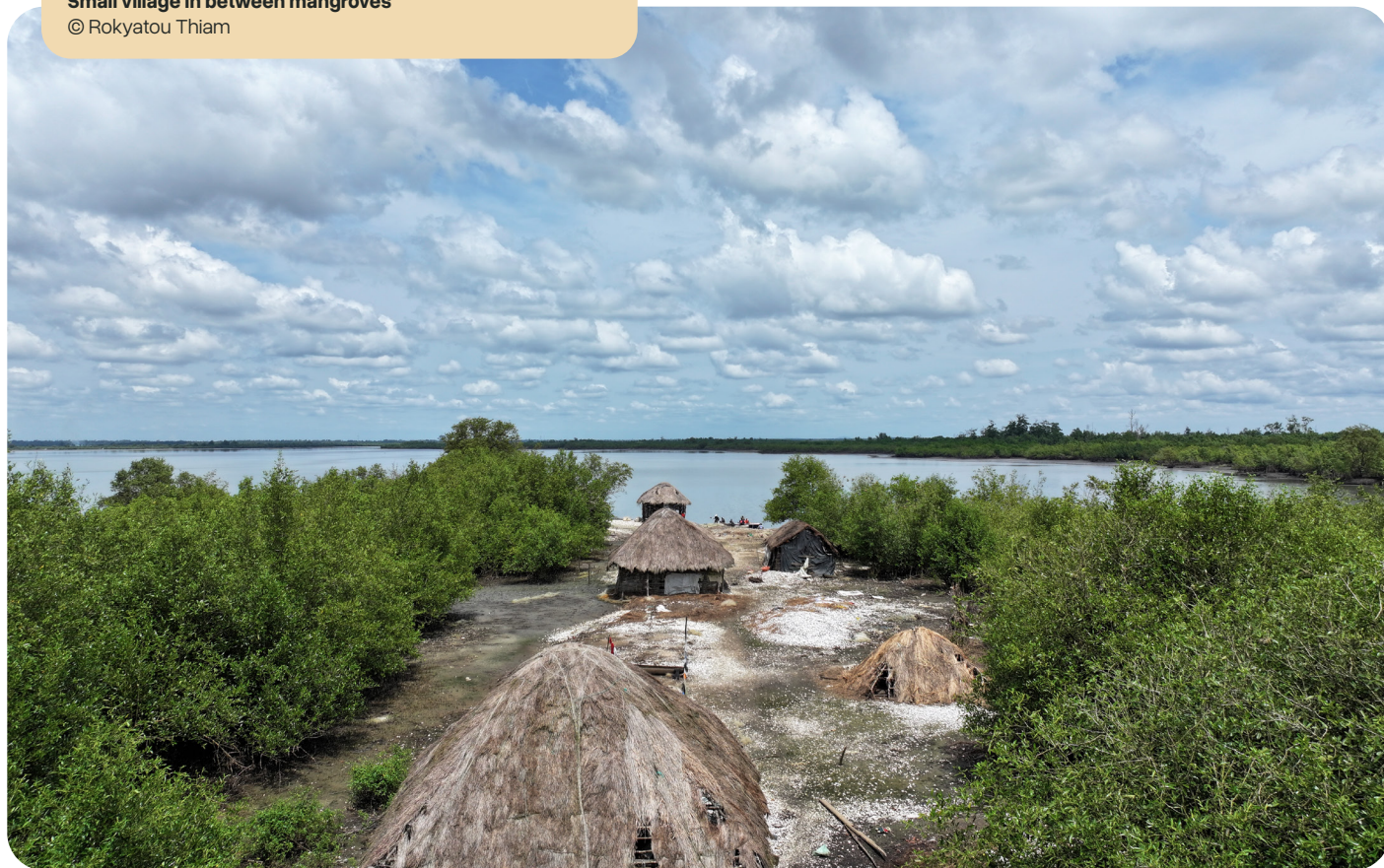
A new asset class of regenerative mangrove-positive business models is already emerging. Financing conservation areas will remain critical, but sustainable productive businesses also have a vital role to play in creating long-term, market-driven mechanisms to ensure mangroves are more valuable standing than destroyed. Business models like sustainable aquaculture and fisheries, ecotourism, blue carbon crediting, waste infrastructure, and technology enablers can generate real financial returns¹⁴ while building resilient coastal communities and creating a host of environmental benefits.

\$4 billion USD
is required by 2030,
with a third of it expected from
commercial sources

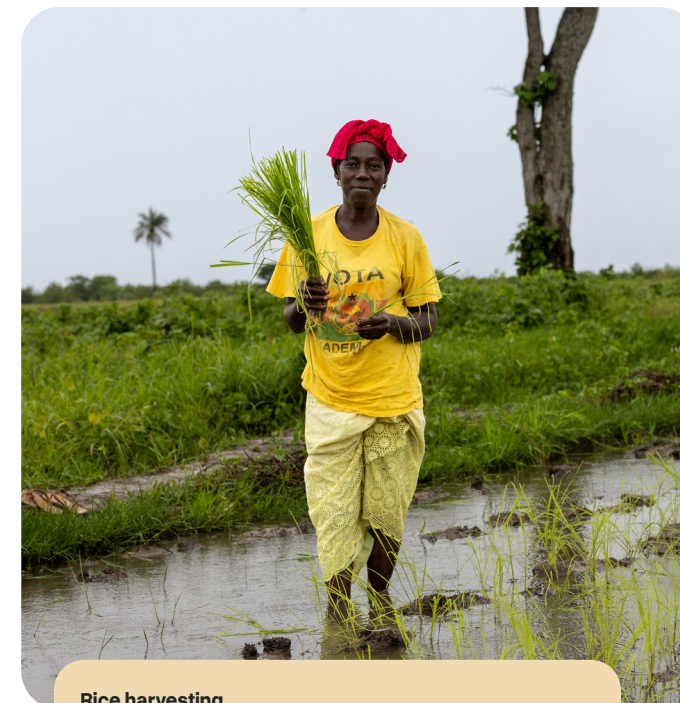
Of the estimated US\$4 billion investment needed by 2030, around a third – US\$1.2 billion – could come from commercial sources. Philanthropic, development, and public finance must deliver the rest. Much of this commercial capital will need to be de-risked through blending with grant and concessional capital in the early stages. Getting the sequencing right will be critical: grant and concessional capital have an outsized role to play in the next few years.

Small village in between mangroves

© Rokyatou Thiam

**Mangrove Breakthrough****Guiding Principles**

Countries and other stakeholders endorsing the Breakthrough commit to implementing science-based mangrove restoration and management in a fair and equitable way.



Rice harvesting

© Beyond Border Media

The **Guiding Principles** serve as guardrails which guide endorsers towards sustainable and effective conservation and restoration of mangrove ecosystems in a way that benefits both nature and people. There are six principles:

1. **Safeguard nature and maximize biodiversity**
2. **Employ the best information and practices**
3. **Empower people**
4. **Align to the broader context – operate locally and contextually**
5. **Design for sustainability**
6. **Mobilize high-integrity capital**

Application of the Mangrove Breakthrough Guiding Principles in practice is supported by the **High-Quality Blue Carbon Principles: Practitioner's Guide**.¹⁵





Mangrove Breakthrough

Delivery Partners

Together with an alliance of 57 non-state early supporters and partners, the Breakthrough is endorsed by a total of 37 national and state governments, and a formal partnership with the Mangrove Alliance for Climate and its 23 country members. Cumulatively these countries represent around 60% of the world's mangrove area.



The Global Mangrove Alliance (GMA) includes over 100 member organizations, bringing together technical experts, civil society organizations, governments, local communities, businesses, funding agencies, and foundations to accelerate a comprehensive, coordinated, global approach to mangrove conservation and restoration at a scale that matters. The GMA has also formed 14 National Chapters, bringing together NGOs, academics, and other stakeholders within individual countries into national alliances, in coordination with the global membership team.

Each chapter fosters cross-cutting collaboration, mutual support, and coordination while reducing competition for limited funding. Their work is centered around national action plans developed by chapter members. This innovative model aims to increase the share of GMA activities focused on-the-ground conservation and restoration efforts, and knowledge sharing, complementing the global membership's ongoing work on policy, finance, best practice, and capacity strengthening.



At UNFCCC COP27, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia launched the Mangrove Alliance for Climate (MAC) to support, enhance, and expand mangrove forests globally as a nature-based solution against climate change.

The MAC follows a voluntary approach, with members determining their own commitments towards restoring mangrove forests, promoting multilateral cooperation, and sharing knowledge. Since 2024 the MAC formally supports and works with the Mangrove Breakthrough.

White herons nests in mangroves
© Joeri Borst, Wetlands International





Government Endorsements

Key

● Government Endorsements

Government Endorsements by May 2025			Subnational Governments	
Australia	Germany	Panama	Atlantio, Colombia	Sucr�, Colombia
Belgium	Guinea-Bissau	Philippines	Bol�var, Colombia	Yucat�n, Mexico
Burundi	Jamaica	Senegal	C�sar, Colombia	Quintana Roo, Mexico
Costa Rica	Liberia	Sierra Leone	Baranquilla, Colombia	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Colombia	Mexico	South Korea	Cartagena, Colombia	
Cuba	Mozambique	Spain	Cordoba, Colombia	
Dominican Republic	Norway	United Arab Emirates		
Ecuador	Pakistan	United Kingdom		
Gambia	Palau			



Mangrove Breakthrough

Key Tools & Resources



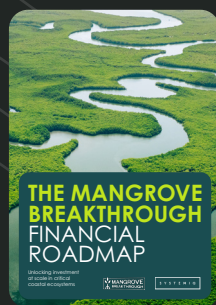
The Global Mangrove Watch (GMW) is a free online mapping and data platform which provides accessible global and national mangrove datasets.

Data on the location and spatial extent of mangroves is crucial for the protection and conservation of mangrove forests.

Since 2018, GMW has provided a time series of global mangrove extent maps from 1996 to 2020. The GMW mangrove extent dataset is now in its fourth iteration, with the GMW v4.0 released in 2024.⁴ A key element of the GMW approach has been the use of both optical and radar satellite data, and the iterative improvement of the extent maps through the incorporation of user feedback. The new 2020 GMW v4.0 baseline has a spatial resolution of 10 x 10 meters, sufficient to be applied at both nationally and locally relevant scales.¹⁶

The overall accuracy of the GMW v4.0 map was estimated at 95.3% and provides the baseline spatial data underpinning these reports. Where they exist, national mangrove maps and datasets have also been included in country summaries, especially when they provide the baseline for national commitments, mangrove management planning or restoration initiatives.

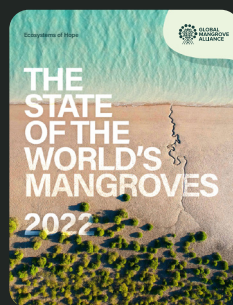
Key Resources



The Mangrove Breakthrough Financial Roadmap



The State of the World's Mangroves 2021



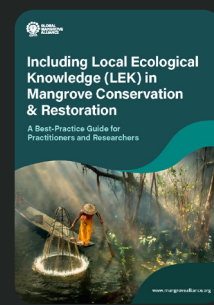
The State of the World's Mangroves 2022



The State of the World's Mangroves 2024



Best practice guidelines for mangrove restoration



Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK)

THE MANGROVE BREAKTHROUGH FINANCIAL ROADMAP

To achieve the Breakthrough goals, it is essential to mobilize large-scale funding from government, private sector, and philanthropy to support locally led action on the ground and address overarching impediments to scaling current conservation and restoration efforts.

Developed by Systemiq in partnership with the UN Climate Champions and the GMA, and in collaboration with the Financial Services Taskforce of the Sustainable Markets Initiative, the Financial Roadmap for the Mangrove Breakthrough makes the case for using financial instruments in innovative and complementary ways. It offers in-depth analysis and detailed recommendations for a synergistic toolbox of financial instruments that can together mobilize private, public, and philanthropic capital at speed and scale, and shows why creating the right enabling conditions will be key to their success.

STATE OF THE WORLD'S MANGROVES REPORTS

Published by the GMA, the State of the World's Mangroves reports highlight advances to safeguard these ecosystems. Member contributions showcase progress towards science and understanding, collaboration and information sharing, practical management interventions, and the many policy, legal, and financial tools that will help to secure a better future for these ecosystems.

THE MANGROVE BREAKTHROUGH NDC TASK FORCE

The NDC Task Force brings together policy and mangrove experts from international and local environmental organizations to provide technical policy guidance, coordinate knowledge sharing and access to mangrove data, and facilitate institutional and stakeholder coordination for Mangrove Breakthrough countries preparing their 2025 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

Urgent large-scale funding is required from governments, private sectors, and philanthropy to meet the Mangrove Breakthrough goals

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR MANGROVE RESTORATION

The Best Practice Guidelines for Mangrove Restoration brings together the latest accumulated local and scientific knowledge about mangrove restoration best-practices into one comprehensive resource. Unlike traditional mangrove planting programs, Community-Based Ecological Mangrove Restoration (CBEMR) is a participatory approach to restoring degraded mangrove ecosystems by addressing the root causes of degradation, which can dramatically increase implementation success.¹⁷ Combined with project design and management approaches and a detailed module on Blue Carbon, the aim of the guideline is to align mangrove practitioners, NGOs, governments, scientists, industry, local communities, and funders around accepted best-practices for science-based and inclusive mangrove restoration.

INCLUDING LOCAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) is the knowledge, practices, and beliefs gained through extensive personal observation of and interaction with local ecosystems which is shared among local resource users and is typically handed down through generations of local inhabitants, often Indigenous.¹⁸ Including Local Ecological Knowledge in Mangrove Restoration & Conservation was designed to help mangrove researchers and practitioners include local ecological knowledge in their projects.





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2. Mobilizing the Mangrove Breakthrough

With more than 120 mangrove countries worldwide, there is a need to understand how the Breakthrough global goals can be realized in individual countries, and where governments, financiers, and implementing organizations can focus their efforts to create viable starting points for achieving the goals.

Action is needed at all levels and at all scales, from bilateral financing for national mangrove restoration and sustainable use initiatives, to boutique funding solutions for microscale projects which provide critical local services.

Using remote sensing data, the Breakthrough global goals are broken down across three regions – Asia, West Africa, and the Americas, defining goals which are achievable at national scales and identifying countries with the greatest areas for potential restoration and protection.

Presented in this report are summaries of the enabling conditions for large scale mangrove action in selected countries identified as key to achieving the Breakthrough goals in each region. Drawing on a wide network of regional and local experts, each country summary uses a standardized format including existing government initiatives, land tenure and management structures, and implementation capacity through GMA national chapters and other partnerships.

Surveillance of protected areas by park staff
© Rokyatou Thiam



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Scaling Impact, Overcoming Barriers

Over the past decades a diverse community of mangrove professionals, including representatives from civil society, government, and private sector, along with local communities has worked collectively to conserve and restore mangrove resources. This community has built valuable experiences and achieved successes across a variety of settings. They have demonstrated innovative approaches to community-based conservation, tested novel approaches to restore degraded areas, and introduced sustainable livelihoods that contribute to a mangrove-based economy. Together, these efforts have strengthened both the impact and business case for investing in mangrove conservation and restoration.

Yet, across geographies this community has encountered recurrent barriers that limit both the scalability and long-term sustainability of their interventions. Transforming these barriers into enabler conditions is crucial for turning the tide for mangroves.

Enabler I

Mobilizing Mangrove Partnerships

Many conservation programs are carried out in isolation, lacking shared strategies with mangrove stakeholders for achieving transformative change. This fragmentation hinders the achievement of large-scale, lasting impact across mangrove landscapes. Grassroots organizations, local governments and indigenous communities living in mangrove areas as well as scientists underpinning work with the latest insights are critical to designing, implementing, and evaluating programs.

Each country summary identifies a selection of key organizations active in the national mangrove space. Where they are present, the membership of GMA national chapters are listed, offering points of contact for international donors interested in supporting on-the-ground initiatives and building relationships with local implementing organizations. Government-led initiatives are identified, to provide context on national ambition and leadership and to inspire opportunities for potential public-private partnerships.

King fisher on a branch of a mangrove tree, Senegal
© David Havel, Shutterstock



Enabler II

Incubate finance and investment

There is a need to increase funder commitments for mangroves and to ensure these resources are channeled to high quality projects and over suitable timescales. Where international funding is appropriate, it should be aligned with and be supportive of national initiatives.

Each country summary reports on national mangrove management or restoration plans, existing government-led initiatives, the status of blue carbon markets and other extant financial mechanisms. Where data is available, summaries also include estimates of the value of mangrove ecosystem services to national and local economies.

Enabler III

Enhance policies and governance

Policies, plans, and legislation related to climate, biodiversity, and sustainability differ widely between countries in how they prioritize action for mangroves and whether there are safeguards to prevent mangrove degradation or overexploitation. Jurisdictions and land ownership arrangements in intertidal mangrove zones are often unclear, complicating effective governance.

Each country summary outlines the current state of mangrove-related policy and governance at national and subnational levels. This includes identifying the government bodies responsible for mangrove management, national goals for mangroves or blue carbon ecosystems policy, and relevant commitments communicated through international frameworks such as a country's NDC or National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP).

Enabler IV

Develop knowledge and capacities

While global understanding of mangrove trends, values, management, and restoration approaches has grown rapidly, local interpretations of best practices still vary. In addition, barriers such as language, isolation, education levels, and time constraints may hinder access to global resources.

Each country summary presents, where possible, insights into the local and national context, the application of best practices and existing implementation capacity.

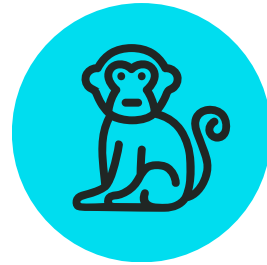
Collectively, these enablers allow the identification of intervention areas focused on fostering transformative collaboration and building an enabling environment for on-the-ground action in critical mangrove regions. These areas are essential to achieve the overarching Breakthrough goals.

Although these intervention steps are relevant across all mangrove geographies and are essential to achieving the Breakthrough goals, their specific application depends on the local context in any target region. **As such, these regional and national summaries of enabling conditions, government and civil society initiatives, implementation capacity, and potential for action represent a critical first step towards the planning of effective interventions.**





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3.

Mobilizing the Mangrove Breakthrough in West Africa

AUTHORS

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According to Global Mangrove Watch (GMW) data, West Africa is home to the third largest area of mangroves in the world, totaling 17,201 km² or around 12% of the 150,000 km² of mangroves remaining globally in 2020.⁴ For the purpose of this report and analysis, West African countries with mangroves include Nigeria, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, Liberia, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Mauritania, and Togo.



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Digging channels to naturally restore mangroves
© Beyond Borders Media



Mangrove Breakthrough Goals

HALT ANTHROPOGENIC LOSS OF MANGROVES

In West Africa drought conditions through the 1970s to 1990s contributed to hypersalinity and reduction in mangrove area. More than 90% of mangrove area expansion from 2000 to 2015 was due to natural recovery, as rainfall returned to pre-drought levels.²² While mangrove range has expanded in some areas due to increased protection and both natural and assisted recovery, this masks severe loss in other areas. In West Africa, gross mangrove loss is approximately 150% greater than the net change in area, highlighting the underlying degradation despite overall stability (Table 4). Based on the data in Table 4, significantly reducing avoidable human-driven destruction of mangroves could stabilize the net extent across Western Africa.

Table 4: Loss of mangroves in West Africa due to human causes, 2010–2020⁴

REGION	NET CHANGE 2010–2020 (KM²)	GROSS LOSS 2010–2020 (KM²)	PROPORTION OF LOSS FROM DIRECT HUMAN DRIVERS (%)	TOTAL HUMAN DRIVEN LOSS 2010 – 2020 (KM²)
West Africa	-199.32	-495.10	63	-310.56

West African coastal communities have a high degree of reliance on mangroves for resource provision, including fuel for cooking and charcoal production, building materials, and food, while also benefiting from less tangible services such as coastal protection. Traditional food production methods – for example rice production in Guinea-Bissau or the Gambia – often involve clearing the landward end of mangroves for crops and moving to new areas once salinization reduces productivity. The resulting disruption of freshwater delivery and altered hydrology can persist for years, leaving visible traces of mangrove loss from satellite observations decades after recovery. Human livelihoods and mangroves are intrinsically linked in many areas – and any action to reduce loss needs to be highly sensitive to both resource needs and cultural heritage of indigenous peoples and local communities.

150%
greater gross mangrove loss than
net change reveals major underlying
degradation in West Africa.

Government recognition of the importance of reducing mangrove loss appears relatively high across West African countries, but active implementation of large-scale mangrove protection is reliant on addressing social and economic needs and may need to compete with other human health and development priorities for often limited public funding. However, the ambition of West African governments is reflected in the inclusion of mangroves or blue carbon in the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) in 9 out of 12 mangrove countries in the region, including specific mangrove targets for mitigation, adaptation or both.

RESTORE HALF

Historically, loss of mangroves in West Africa has been lower than the global average, largely because human-driven pressures, such as conversion to food production, cutting for fuel, and urban expansion, have been smaller in scale compared to large-scale development seen in other places. Much of the restorable area consists of fragmented zones where mangroves were previously cleared and no longer in productive use. Additionally, in some estuarine or river deltaic locations, sea level rise coupled with altered freshwater flow is creating new mud flat habitats suitable for assisted mangrove expansion through afforestation. Notably, West Africa contains approximately 14% of the world's potential for mangrove restoration.



Table 5: Restoring half of potential restoration area in West Africa

NET MANGROVE AREA LOST SINCE 1996 (KM²)	TOTAL RESTORABLE AREA IN ASIA (KM²)	REGIONAL RESTORATION GOAL BY 2030 (KM²)	PERCENTAGE OF GLOBAL RESTORATION GOAL (%)
-357.69	560.34	280.17	7

Access to finance is the most common barrier to effective restoration, and with limited funds available, restoration frequently uses cheap mass planting techniques. Minimal investments in training or capacity building on appropriate restoration techniques has exacerbated the widespread use of terrestrial forestry plantings in mangrove ecosystems – with often poor results. Where local understanding of hydrological conditions exists, survival rates can be reasonable. Nevertheless, monoculture plantations that do survive do not represent the structure, health and biodiversity of mangrove ecosystems.²³ These locations likely require remedial action, such as installation of tidal channels, are likely to be less resilient to climate stress, and have been shown to store less carbon than diverse restoration sites.²⁴

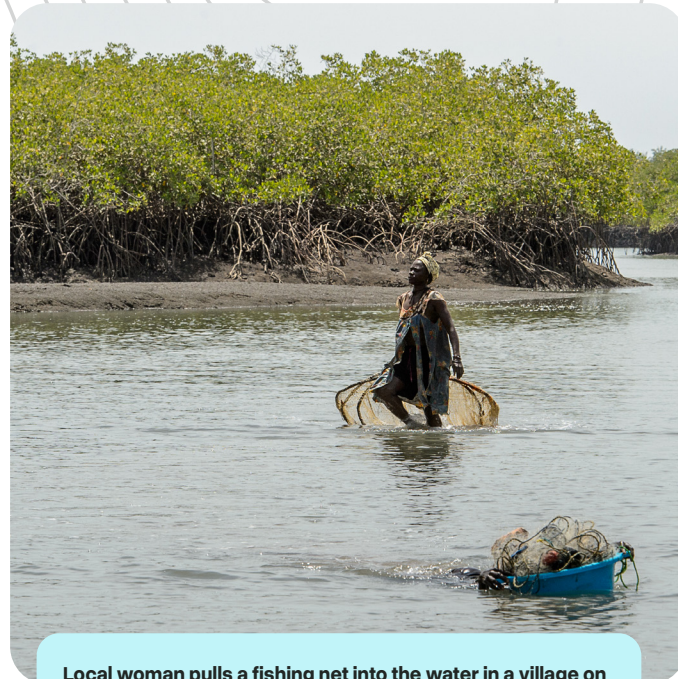
Carbon finance provides one potential source of income for mangrove restoration, with several active projects in Senegal, and projects under development in Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. Concerns have been raised about underdeveloped policy and regulatory frameworks for carbon trading and the need for legal safeguards for indigenous people and local communities to prevent against land grabbing and protect humans rights and livelihoods.^x

Access to finance is the main barrier to effective mangrove restoration, often leading to low-quality monoculture plantings with poor ecological outcomes



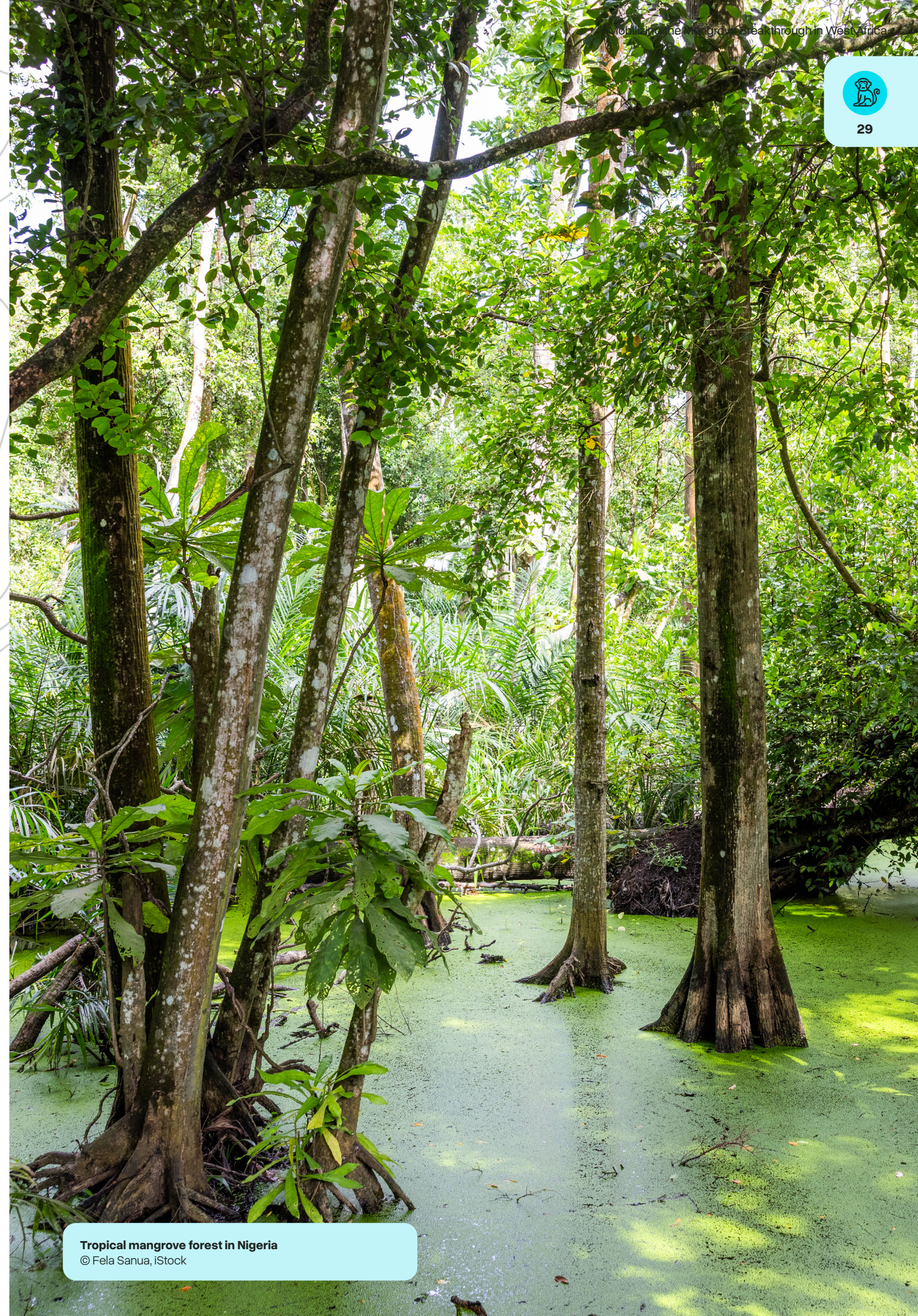
Mangrove restoration in West Africa, as in the rest of the world, is far more complex than simply planting seedlings. Whether intact or restored mangrove areas will persist in the long-term will depend on:

- External long-term investment in both national and private programs
- Blending return seeking capital with philanthropy to target capacity building in addition to implementation.
- Clarifying land tenure and recognizing community rights to use the areas sustainably.
- Development of conservation programs focused on reducing poverty and increasing food security by addressing the underlying drivers of loss.
- Increased uptake of proven science-based restoration approaches, including the assessments of substrate conditions, and hydrology and history of the area prior to restoration.
- Using long-term survival or biodiversity rates rather than targets based on the area planted, which rarely incentivizes change.
- Clearly defined jurisdiction and institutional capacity of the relevant national and subnational agencies to enforce conservation regulations and manage the areas
- Engaged stakeholders with a shared vision of mangrove restoration and increased flow of (blended public and private) finance to drive large scale action.
- Increasing requirements for multi-year monitoring of planting or restoration efforts to produce transparent data on success rates and inform positive changes in restoration approaches and goal setting.



Local woman pulls a fishing net into the water in a village on the island of Canhabaque, Ghana © Siem Preverde, iStock

The establishment of Global Mangrove Alliance national chapters in key West African countries is increasing local connectedness to international support and knowledge. The Global Mangrove Alliance and **Mangrove Action Project** build restoration capacity from global to local levels, while the Association for Coastal Ecosystem Services are working with local orgs in The Gambia. **The World Economic Forum** and **Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance** are engaged in donor and **investor education** on appropriate project goals and **high-quality implementation**.



Tropical mangrove forest in Nigeria © Fela Sanua, iStock



DOUBLE PROTECTION

Analyses by the GMW show around 23% of mangroves in West Africa are under some form of formal protected area designation with a national average of 30%.⁴ The Mangrove Breakthrough goal to double protection varies based on individual national context:

- National mangrove protected area <15%: increase to 30%
- National mangrove protected area 16–45%: double protected area
- National mangrove protected area >45%: increase to 90%

This recognizes that it is unfeasible to double protection for countries with, for example, 70% of mangroves already protected.¹³ In West Africa, 45% protection is only exceeded by three countries: Senegal, Ghana, and Mauritania. Expanding national mangrove protected areas in line with Breakthrough goals would more than double protected mangrove area in West Africa as a whole (Table 5), due to mangrove extent in Nigeria (8442km²) being almost equal to the entire rest of West Africa combined (8758km²) with only around 5% protected at the time of this analysis.⁴

Table 5: Doubling mangrove protection in West Africa

TOTAL PROTECTED MANGROVE AREA IN WEST AFRICA (KM ²)	TOTAL UNPROTECTED MANGROVE AREA IN WEST AFRICA (KM ²)	PORTION OF MANGROVE AREA WITH PROTECTED STATUS (%)	ADDITIONAL PROTECTED AREA BY ACHIEVING NATIONAL GOALS (KM ²)	PORTION OF MANGROVE AREA WITH PROTECTED STATUS BY ACHIEVING NATIONAL GOALS (%)
3,889.78	13,310.99	23	5,174.56	53

In some countries, such as Senegal, while the inclusion of mangroves in protected areas may be minimal, mangroves may be subject to other forms of legal protection, such as national or local laws prohibiting cutting or felling.¹⁹ This level of protection typically applies to the trees only rather than the ecosystem itself, and exceptions or licenses for subsistence needs are common in West African countries. The effectiveness of protected areas is influenced by local economic realities, community reliance on natural resources or limited enforcement capacity. There is evidence that protected areas generally only slow rates of loss, rather than prevent loss.²¹ Therefore, a focus on improving the effectiveness of protected areas will be a critical component of the protection goal.

An important component of increasing protection, which is highly linked to the long-term effectiveness, is making sure that protections are equitable for communities that rely on mangroves as a resource alongside their ecological benefits.

Forthcoming updates to NDCs are expected to reflect further increased ambition across the region and include language relevant to all three of these goals. In some countries, mangroves are defined as forest and therefore included in Forest Reference Emissions Levels (FRELs), National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (NGHGs) and Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) NDC policy targets by default. However, West African countries lack the financial resources to realize their mangrove and blue carbon targets without assistance, and not all countries have sufficient technical capacity to develop action plans for implementation.



Oysters attached to mangrove roots in Gambia
© Philou, iStock

Country selection process for regional readiness reports

Given the impracticality of producing written reports for all 120+ mangrove countries, an evidence-based selection process was used to identify focus countries for inclusion in each of three regional readiness summaries: Asia, West Africa and the Americas.

Spatial data supplied by the GMW was used to identify countries with the greatest potential restoration area, and the largest area of unprotected mangroves.

Restoration area was prioritized over unprotected area to create a shortlist of countries with a total cumulative restoration area equal to around 120% of the regional restoration goal.

To mobilize early funder and investor interest and engagement, focusing efforts on strategically selected geographies can create impact at scale and demonstrate the effectiveness of the Mangrove Breakthrough as a mechanism for cooperation and leadership, building momentum towards sustainable finance. Supporting and scaling up implementation in a handful of key countries in West Africa has significant potential to deliver positive outcomes for both nature and people.

An evidence-based selection process was used to identify focus countries for three regional readiness summaries: Asia, West Africa and The Americas

Community based ecological restoration in Guinea Bissa
© Beyond Border Media





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Restorable area and unprotected area

West African countries with the greatest restoration and increased protection potential⁴:

COUNTRY	RESTORABLE AREA (KM ²)	COUNTRY	UNPROTECTED AREA (KM ²)
Nigeria	202.99	Nigeria	7981.35
Guinea-Bissau	120.64	Guinea	1635.97
Guinea	101.63	Guinea-Bissau	1573.97
Sierra Leone	71.89	Sierra Leone	915.71
Ghana	32.92	Senegal	525.43
Senegal	13.30	Gambia	340.86

Map 1: Spatial data for Breakthrough goals

Key

- Mangroves
- Countries
- Country Boundaries
- Mangrove Protected (% of national mangrove extent)
- Restorable Area (% of West Africa restoration target)



Financial stability and investor confidence

It would be short-sighted to restrict analysis to spatial data only: both political will and financier confidence to fund or invest in any country are critical factors. Publicly available corruption, political stability, and ease of doing business indices combined with gross domestic product (GDP) growth and inflation rates were used to evaluate high level financial stability, and if there may be a case for funder hesitancy (Fig 1).

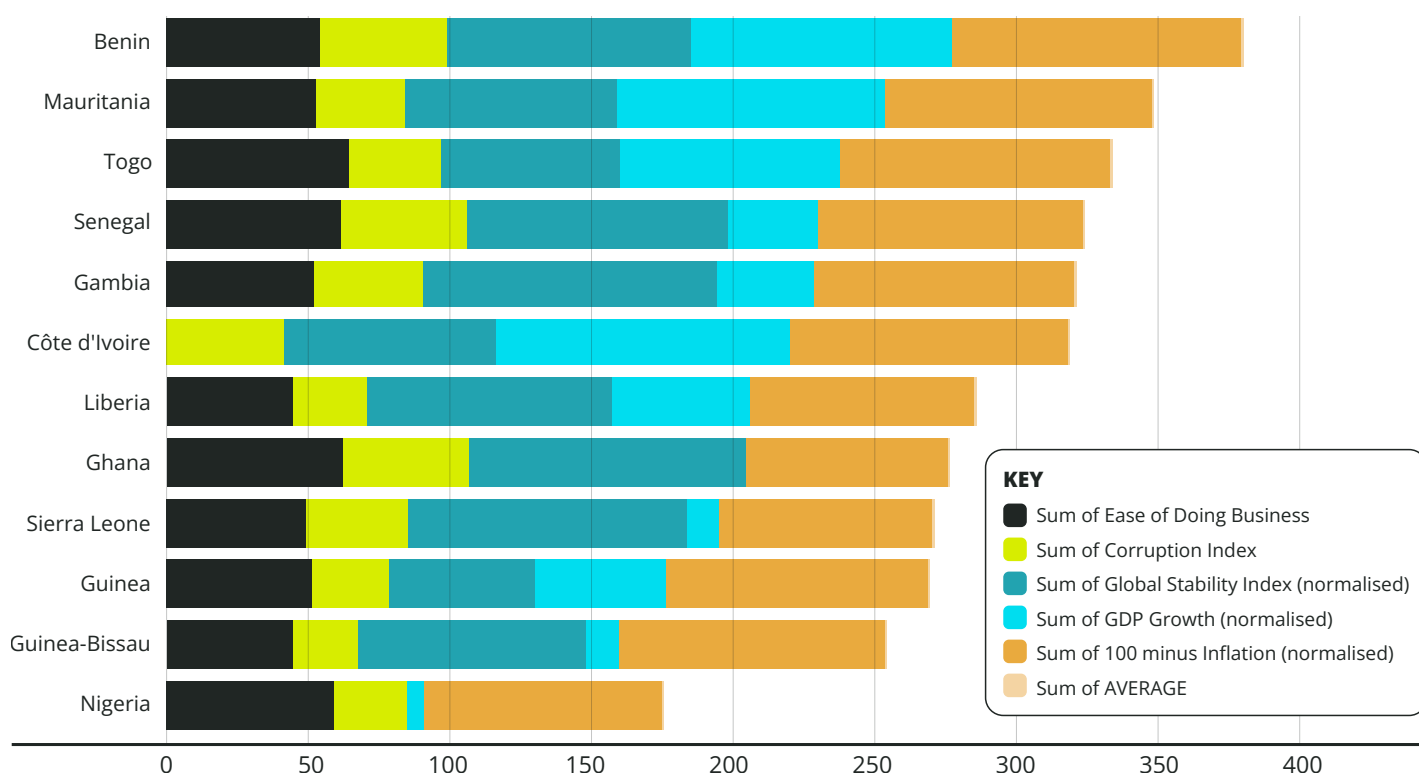


Figure 1: The ease of doing business and corruption indices both assign a value of 1-100. The differing scales used by the global stability and growth indices set values were normalized to provide a comparable 1-100 value. Finally, to include inflation as an indicator we subtracted the rate of inflation at the time of this analysis (March 2024) from 100 – so low inflation confers a higher score. These values were then combined into a single value of 5-500 allowing simplified visual comparison.



Aerial view over the mangroves in Guinea Bissau
© Beyond Borders Media

HIGH-IMPACT LOCATIONS FOR MANGROVES

The world's remaining mangrove stocks are concentrated in 750 regions around the planet's tropical and sub-tropical belt. Just 40 locations – known as the M40 – hold nearly 70% of the world's mangroves and store some 3 billion tonnes of CO₂e.²⁰

Four of the M40 locations are in West Africa, three in Nigeria and one in Sierra Leone.²⁰ The **M40 Cities** concept was published by Earth Security in 2021, based on insights from their 2020 report *Financing the earth's assets the case for mangroves* and draws on research by IUCN, UNEP, the Global Mangrove Alliance and lessons from the two Mangrove Bond pilots in the Philippines and Australia.

THE BIODIVERSITY FINANCE INITIATIVE

The **Biodiversity Finance Initiative** (BIOFIN), a global partnership spearheaded by UNDP and the European Commission, supports countries to enhance their financial management of biodiversity and ecosystems.

750 Regions
around the planet's tropical
and sub-tropical belt hold
the world's remaining
mangrove stocks

To date, 40 countries have commenced national BIOFIN processes, aimed at supporting the implementation of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and achieving national biodiversity targets. None of the West African mangrove countries are participating in this initiative yet.

The countries with greatest restoration and protection potential were also cross-referenced with countries which included M40 locations and which are participating in BIOFIN.



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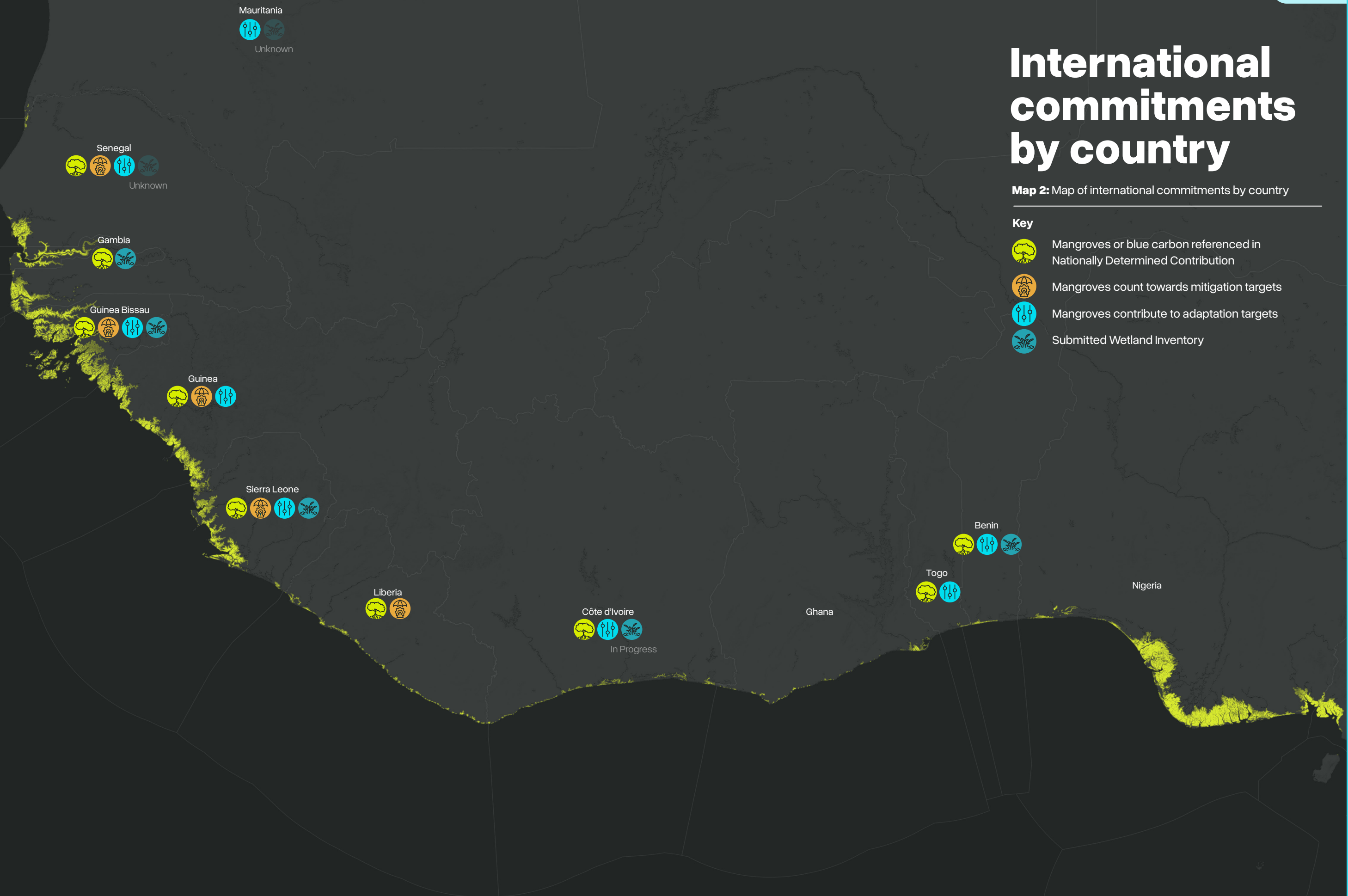
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International commitments by country

Map 2: Map of international commitments by country

Key

-  Mangroves or blue carbon referenced in Nationally Determined Contribution
-  Mangroves count towards mitigation targets
-  Mangroves contribute to adaptation targets
-  Submitted Wetland Inventory





A range of indicators were used to assess the potential alignment between government policies, national targets, and the goals of the Mangrove Breakthrough. These included whether countries had published national goals or made international commitments that reference mangroves or blue carbon in their NDC, completed a RAMSAR national wetlands inventory, the presence of projects producing blue carbon credits for the voluntary carbon market, and engagement in financial mechanisms such as debt for nature swaps or blue bonds. Information on the inclusion of mangroves in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and updated NBSAPs was sparse, especially as adaptation targets are often included within NDCs and therefore covered within that analysis. Additionally NAPs and NBSAPs were not always available in English, so were excluded from this selection process.

As a final step, official endorsement of the Mangrove Breakthrough, membership of the Mangrove Alliance for Climate, and the presence of GMA national chapters and members actively engaged in mangrove conservation or restoration in each country were all considered.

This analysis supported the selection of Guinea-Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone as having the highest potential for decisive mangrove action and inclusion in this regional readiness report



Mudskipper in mangrove roots
© Somdul, iStock

Overall, this analysis supported the selection of Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, and Sierra Leone as having the highest potential for decisive mangrove action and inclusion in this regional readiness report.

Nigeria, although having both high restoration and potential data, is not included in this report due to ongoing instability and related challenges to effectively channeling funding into the country. However, it should be noted that since this analysis was conducted in March 2024, there have been significant developments in mangrove policy and protections in Nigeria, including progress towards establishing a blue carbon trading framework aimed at financing mangrove restoration and protection. As such, the authors would strongly recommend.

Restoration area was the primary defining factor in this selection, however this does skew selection away from smaller countries and island states. This should not be interpreted as these being less important, rather that due to limitations in time and capacity, only a subset of countries could be profiled in detail.

Mangrove protection and restoration particularly remains a critical priority for island states under threat by storms and sea level rise. The templates used to produce these country summaries will be made available for others to replicate the analysis and extend coverage to additional countries over time.

Silver Heron in front of mangrove roots
© Beyond Borders Media



November 2025

 **MANGROVE
BREAKTHROUGH**

 **GLOBAL
MANGROVE
ALLIANCE**



Mobilizing the Mangrove Breakthrough in West Africa

**Enabling conditions and priorities for mangrove
conservation and restoration action**