


# CASE STUDY

## Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project

### WESTERN AND CENTRAL AFRICA



## 1. PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Key Cross-Country Benefit	Key National Benefit
 <p><i>Promote crisis resilience concerning the Sahel conflict plus positive externalities for a number of other climate GPGs.</i></p>	 <p><i>Integrated and holistic approach to promote socio-economic development, social cohesion, and poverty alleviation.</i></p>

## 2. QUICK FACTS

Categories	Project Details
<b>Project Name</b>	Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project
<b>Project Description</b>	The Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project aims to proactively prevent the spread of conflict from the Sahel, reduce vulnerability to climate change, and strengthen local institutions, economic opportunities, and public trust using an integrated and holistic regional approach.
<b>Global Public Good (GPG) Theme</b>	Peace & security
<b>Sub-Theme</b>	Prevention and limitation of violent conflicts
<b>Sector</b>	Social protection, Sub-National government, Public Administration, Social protection

**Disclaimer:** We based the case study on the information cited and publicly available as of May 2023. The findings – especially concerning the GPG perspective – have been concluded to our best knowledge. The views expressed are the authors’ assessments and do not necessarily reflect the project stakeholders’ views. Any errors that remain are our responsibility.

<b>Countries of Implementation</b>	Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin
<b>Region</b>	Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>Income Category</b>	Lower middle income
<b>Implementation Period</b>	2022-2027
<b>Project Volume (planned)</b>	US\$ 450 Million
<b>Financial source (planned)</b>	International Development Association (IDA) credit (US\$ 375 Million) IDA grant (US\$ 75 Million)
<b>Instruments</b>	Investment Project Financing
<b>MDB Involved</b>	World Bank
<b>Implementing Partner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Community Development Support Agency (ANADEB) (Togo)</li> <li>• Ministry of Local Government Decentralisation and Rural Development (Ghana)</li> <li>• General Secretariat of the Presidency (Benin)</li> <li>• Prime Minister's Office (Côte d'Ivoire)</li> </ul>
<b>Link to detailed project information<sup>1</sup></b>	<a href="https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf">https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf</a>  <a href="https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099064701312340575/pdf/P17504302137450ea09f380ed6d509da82e.pdf">https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099064701312340575/pdf/P17504302137450ea09f380ed6d509da82e.pdf</a>

### 3. WHY THIS IS A BEST PRACTICE

- **Ambition:** The project is ambitious as it aims to improve crisis resilience concerning the escalation of violence as well as climate resilience in several countries, thus supporting positive spillovers to other countries significantly. Moreover, the countries concerned face multiple crises, including a significant share of the population living in extreme poverty, for example. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic has worsened the economic situation, leading to increased suffering and an erosion of trust and social cohesion. The aim of the project is therefore to improve the region's resilience overall by promoting several aspects, including community development, job creation, and increased regional co-operation and coordination.
- **Sustainability:** The project is sustainable because it supports building a solid socioeconomic foundation that will ideally lead to further positive developments once the project is finished. Moreover, it

<sup>1</sup> If not stated otherwise, the two documents provide the main source for the case study.

specifically promotes climate-resilient infrastructure, for example, to ensure that the benefits reached can be sustained even as climate change starts to impact the region more heavily.

- **Transformability:** Since the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project addresses social cohesion as well as socioeconomic aspects and infrastructure, it improves the foundation for social and economic development in the whole region. These strengthened institutions may lead to changed incentive structures for locals leading to more trust, cooperation, and coordination.

## 4. PROJECT INFORMATION

### 4.1 CHALLENGES OF GPG PROVISION IN THE COUNTRY CONTEXT

The Gulf of Guinea region is characterised by **extreme poverty that is particularly focused in the northern parts of Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo**. In Togo and Benin, for instance, 50% of the population in the North live on less than US\$1.90 per day.<sup>2</sup> The situation has been exacerbated in recent years by the Covid-19 pandemic eradicating earlier poverty reduction gains. Moreover, there are severe threats to peace and security within that region stemming from concerns about the **Sahel conflict spilling over to the Northern Gulf of Guinea**. Several factors could potentially lead to a vicious cycle between conflict escalation and severe poverty, including, for example, Covid-19 impacts and climate change threats. The security situation has deteriorated in recent years as extremist and armed groups in the Sahel have grown virulently, leading to the last five years being the most violent on record. Due to the surging violence the number of internally displaced people reached a new record in 2021—2.5 million. Additionally, the Sahel also hosts over 850,000 refugees.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, **the Covid-19 pandemic has destabilised the region further** with a lack of access to vaccines and depleted fiscal and monetary buffers. Additionally, regional trade and mobility have been disrupted and local economies have shrunk, leading to the loss of livelihoods and food insecurity. Compared to 2021, for example, the number of people facing severe food insecurity in 2022 is expected to have increased by more than 40%.<sup>4</sup>

**FIGURE 1: MAP OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**



Source: [The World Bank](https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank Group (2022, 9): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The World Bank Group (2022, 9): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank Group (2022, 10): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf>

Thus, a major risk is violent extremist groups exploiting intercommunity tensions and structural fragilities to expand their operations towards the South, leading to a **serious threat of a rapid escalation of the Sahel conflict**. Porous borders coupled with intense migratory flows of people—as well as shared economies, history, politics, and importantly a shared sense of frustration—further accelerate the spread of extremist influence and violence, particularly at the peripheries of the turbulent Sahel countries.

**Another threat faced by the region is climate change.** It may act as a multiplier by compounding fragilities and conflict dynamics, particularly relating to access to natural resources and migration. Moreover, sub-Saharan Africa is projected to have the largest number of internal climate migrants globally—as high as 85.7 million by 2050.<sup>5</sup> In the Gulf of Guinea region, models suggest a migration into northern lagging regions, largely due to coastal flooding. Impacts associated with climate variability and change—and secondary impacts on water availability, livelihoods, food security, and climate-induced displacement—can provoke contestation over issues such as land tenure and increasingly limited access to natural resources. These impacts of climate change also disproportionately affect marginalised and minority group, and particularly women who are mainly reliant on agricultural livelihoods economically and socially and thus responsible for sourcing water for their households.

**Needs are surging across the Gulf of Guinea where multiple crises converge,** including external pressures of Covid-19, conflict, and climate change, compounded and reinforced by long-standing structural fragility factors of poverty, exclusion, and weak governance—further entrenching poverty and inequality.

To proactively prevent the spread of conflict from the Sahel, reduce vulnerability to climate change, and strengthen local institutions, economic opportunities, and public trust, a new regional project is implemented in at-risk communities in northern Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo. The Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project, approved by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors for \$450 million in International Development Association (IDA) financing, seeks to **"think regionally and act locally"**. This means boosting regional collaboration and socioeconomic and climate resilience in the vulnerable northern regions of these four Gulf of Guinea countries, thus benefitting more than 16 million people living in the area.<sup>6</sup>

## 4.2 INTERVENTION

### 4.2.1 Project Design and Agents of Change

The project development objective (PDO) is to **improve regional collaboration and the socioeconomic and climatic resilience of border-zone communities** concerned. More precisely, the project consists of three main components displayed in Figure 2. The first component aims to support community resilience and inclusion by financing corresponding local-level investments. The communities, local governments, and targeted groups (component 2) will be part of the identification and implementation of the local-level investments chosen, representing the community-driven approach of the project fostering participation and inclusion. These

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<sup>5</sup> The World Bank Group (2022, 10): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The World Bank Group (2022, 41): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf>

investments will also be centred around the most vulnerable identified village clusters consisting of 8-12 neighbouring villages per country with an average population of 8,500 people.<sup>7</sup>

The subcomponents 1.1 to 1.3 focus on different investment types within each cluster: subcomponent 1.1. aims to support the identification and prioritisation of the most pressing socioeconomic infrastructure needs locally. Subcomponent 1.2 addresses economic opportunities linked to local markets. Lastly, subcomponent 1.3 focuses on youth sociocultural priorities and aspirations.

**FIGURE 2: PROJECT COMPONENTS**



Source: Oxford Economics based on the World Bank Group (2022)<sup>8</sup>

Component 2 aims to build capacity for community investments, promote local economic development through training and skills development, and facilitate social conflict analysis. Lastly, component 3 includes the establishment of a regional coordination platform as well as a digital portal to mirror the regional coordination platform by providing digital visualisation and supporting actionable diagnostics. The goal is to support regional collaboration across the four target countries and promote a coherent response concerning the prevention of fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) risks as well as climate and disaster risk management.

Concerning the financing, 75% of the project volume are spent on component 1, out of which 75% are spent on subcomponent 1.1. Some 10% are directed towards component 2 and 5% towards component 3. The remaining 10% are used to cover the cost of project management. Looking at the financial distribution across the participating countries, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana receive a third of the volume respectively, while 20% are allocated to Benin and 13% to Togo.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The World Bank Group (2022, 25): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> The World Bank Group (2022): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The World Bank Group (2022, 24): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/636701648764907786/pdf/Benin-Cote-dIvoire-Ghana-Togo-Gulf-of-Guinea-Northern-Regions-Social-Cohesion-Project.pdf>

#### 4.2.2 Expected Results

As the project has just started in 2022, its overall performance remains to be seen. So far, the project has been rated **satisfactory** overall. The indicators used, their baseline value, and end target are stated in Table 1. As of December 2022, the actual implementation status corresponds to the baseline values across all indicators.

Although none of the indicators measures the prevention and limitation of violent conflict directly, all of them support the aim by addressing the context-specific drivers of conflict. For example, Rural markets are rehabilitated or expanded under the project addressing the persisting poverty and therefore contributing to the stabilisation of the region. Another example is the goal to increase share of households in target communities who participated in planning, decision-making, or monitoring of subprojects. Thus, social cohesion and trust among community members is built.

Hence, while these indicators are context-specific they nevertheless provide a good example of how to design results indicators relating to the GPG peace & security by identifying and addressing the key drivers of conflict.

**TABLE 1: RESULTS INDICATORS AND END TARGET**

Indicator	Base-line	End Target (2027)
<i>PDO: Improve socioeconomic and climate resilience of border zone communities in northern target zones.</i>		
People having access to project built or rehabilitated socio-economic and climate resilient infrastructure and services	0.00	2,344,500
Beneficiaries surveyed reporting project investments reflected their needs	0.00	85%
New job opportunities created as a result of project activities	0.00	121,725
Beneficiaries reporting that project investments have positively contributed to increased trust among community members	0.00	80%
Actions implemented by each country of the agreed annual joint regional action plan	0.00	100%
<i>Intermediate Results Indicators by Components:</i>		
<i>Component 1: Investing in Community Resiliency and Inclusion</i>		
Community socio-economic climate-resilient infrastructure rehabilitated or constructed under the project	0.00	4,613
Rural markets rehabilitated or expanded under the project	0.00	428
Farmers reached with agricultural assets or services	0.00	33,750
Female beneficiaries reporting an increase in annual income as a result of benefiting from agricultural assets and services	0.00	13,500
<i>Component 2: Building foundation and capacity for inclusive and resilient communities</i>		
Households in target communities who participated in planning, decision-making, or monitoring of subprojects	0.00	50%
People participating in local capacity building activities	0.00	34,256
Markets rehabilitated or expanded by the project which have maintenance plans prepared and endorsed by local governments	0.00	90%
Surveyed women and youth beneficiaries reporting that they have a say in community decision-making	0.00	70%
Community Facilitators and Technical Facilitators trained and using their participatory development skills	0.00	362
<i>Component 3: Regional Coordination Platform and Dialogue</i>		

Completed studies on key FCV themes and/or climate fragility sponsored by the project and endorsed by the Committee for Regional Coordination	0.00	40
Establishment of digital platforms by country with effective data sharing at regional level	No	Yes
Monthly active users of the Community-Driven Development/Citizen Engagement applications	0.00	3,546

Source: Oxford Economics based on World Bank Group (2023)<sup>10</sup>

## 5. PROJECT IMPACT

### 5.1 NATIONAL BENEFITS

The participating client countries clearly benefit from the targeted increase in crises resilience. This leads to a **stabilisation of the region** making a further escalation of the Sahel conflict towards the Northern Gulf region less likely. As the increase in crisis resilience is achieved through several interventions, various other national co-benefits result from the project as well. For example, component 1 includes the rehabilitation or building of infrastructure, job creation, and increased trust among community members. Moreover, component 2 includes capacity building as well as skills and training development of locals that are likely to benefit the region beyond the project.



**16 million**  
**People**  
living in at-risk communities will benefit from the project

Lastly, component 3 supports regional cooperation that is also likely to exhibit benefits beyond the project and supports citizen engagement. **Thus, the project increases crises resilience by supporting local socio-economic development and social cohesion that constitute national benefits on their own.** Furthermore, as women and young people are addressed in particular, the project especially promotes the inclusion of those parts of the population particularly affected and concerned with the region’s complex multi-crises. Women, for example, are assumed to be hit particularly hard by climate change since they are most reliant on agricultural livelihoods—economically and socially. Young people are addressed as providing a perspective, social inclusion, and stability may prevent them from promoting the violence and conflict already existing leveraging their strength and motivation to promote the development of the region. **The programme is therefore highly SDG-relevant.**

Additionally, the project does not only focus on building crisis resilience concerning violent conflicts but takes **climate resilience** into account as well. Social cohesion and socio-economic development, for instance, increase climate resilience. Moreover, concerning component 1, climate resilience is directly addressed as well by focusing on climate resilient infrastructure investment. Thus, the project also promotes adaptation constituting a benefit for the region as well.

### 5.2 CROSS-COUNTRY BENEFITS

As the prevention of an escalation of the Sahel conflict is at the core of the Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project, the cross-country benefits mainly relate to that as well. As the project has not been

<sup>10</sup> World Bank Group (2023): <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099064701312340575/pdf/P17504302137450ea09f380ed6d509da82e.pdf>

implemented yet it remains to be seen whether it succeeds in preventing an escalation of the conflict. Therefore, specific outcomes and results cannot be reported and quantified at this point. Nevertheless, the potential of positive externalities is very high. **The programme is expected to prevent an escalation of the conflict, and hence mitigate refugee flows, to avoid an interruption of trade and decreased food security.** On the contrary, an increase of trade and interchange of knowledge between the countries can be expected. Thus, while prevention projects concerning peace and security are necessarily associated with a number of insecurities, experience has shown that they are highly cost-efficient as the prevention of a conflict comes in almost all cases at lower cost than its pacification.

Furthermore, as the project also addresses climate resilience, other countries may benefit from it in the future if the concerned region constitutes a stabilising factor in the area. Increased socio-economic development and social cohesion may also impose positive externalities, for example, if trade and food security are improved or if jobs are created in other countries as a consequence of increased economic activity, employment, and income in Togo, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Benin. Lastly, stabilising the Northern Gulf may also exhibit positive externalities towards the whole conflict-affected Sahel zone.

## 6. LESSONS FOR FUTURE GPG PROVISION

### 6.1 SUCCESS FACTORS


As the project has just started in 2022, its final success factors and lessons learned remain to be seen. Yet, the project is based on a particularly integrated and holistic approach addressing the region concerned across borders and border-zone communities particularly. More precisely, the project is based on **three principles**:

- (a) regional threats require regional responses;
- (b) thinking regionally and acting locally—investments should be coordinated regionally, and implemented locally, following a community-driven development (CDD) and climate-resilient approach adapted to each country context; and
- (c) investment targeting should be informed by solid vulnerability assessments and focused on strengthening social cohesion and resilience to climate-related shocks and stressors

Moreover, the general concept behind the project is to identify the threat and conflict drivers first and then develop the project design accordingly. For example, since the threat concerns the Northern Regions of the Gulf of Guinea including several countries, a regional approach has been selected to mitigate the escalation of the conflict. Additionally, the results indicators have been selected addressing the identified conflict drivers. These outstanding features are likely to contribute to the project's success.

### 6.2 HOW TO REPLICATE THE BEST PRACTICE

The project concept and its principles, such as regionality, think regional and act local, and targeted investments promoting social cohesion and resilience are replicable. This integrated approach could be applied to

 *Regionality is essential to promote dialogue and coordination on conflict prevention, climate and disaster risk management, and cross-border opportunities.*



*(Boutheina Guermazi, World Bank Director for Regional Integration for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Northern Africa)*



other fragile regions too. Nevertheless, any replication would of course require an adjustment of the implementation to the concerned context.

Since the project implementation phase has just started, the final lessons learned remain to be seen. Yet so far the project has demonstrated that:

- Projects may address several aspects, such as climate resilience, the prevention of violent conflict, and socioeconomic development, at once confirming the assumption that **many GPGs mutually depend on and positively reinforce each other;**
- Regional projects may be a suitable option whenever the issue to be addressed concerns people across borders. Or, as Boutheina Guermazi, the World Bank Director for Regional Integration for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Northern Africa states: “Regionality is essential to promote dialogue and coordination on conflict prevention, climate and disaster risk management, and cross-border opportunities”. (reliefweb, 2022).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Reliefweb (2022): <https://reliefweb.int/report/benin/new-450-million-regional-investment-northern-regions-gulf-guinea-countries-seeks-build>