

# 6 Africa

## Mali and the Albertine Rift

This chapter summarizes in-depth analyses of projects in fragile and conflict-affected contexts funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in Mali and the Albertine Rift, a 920-mile area that includes portions of six African nations (Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia), to explore the impact of conflict and fragility on environmental projects in Africa.

Since its founding in 1991, the GEF has launched 101 projects in Mali and 274 projects in the Albertine Rift. Considering the environment and conflict linkages and the risks posed by armed conflict, these portfolio-level reviews of projects sought to evaluate the extent to which GEF projects have taken into account conflict risks and how conflict sensitivity in project design and implementation affects project outcomes.

This analysis found a range of conflict sensitivity in GEF-funded projects in Mali and the Albertine Rift. The projects in Mali reviewed in depth suffered in their evaluations because of conflict-related risks, and most did not actively manage conflict-related risks. In the Albertine Rift, in contrast, most projects did manage conflict-related risks, but even with that management, project evaluation scores were mixed.

### **Regional Background**

Since gaining its independence in 1960, Mali has experienced decades of instability. The Tuareg, a seminomadic ethnic minority, and Arab groups in the sparsely populated north have led four separatist rebellions since 1963 to secure autonomy for the region they named Azawad (Pezard & Shurkin, 2015). Mali's current conflict began in 2012 when a coalition of rebel groups rapidly achieved a military coup and gained control of most of northern Mali. Shortly after declaring independence, in June 2012, the coalition splintered and several jihadist groups began claiming territory (Arieff, 2022). In 2013, when jihadist groups began to move south, French forces with support from Chad and the United States began a counterinsurgency campaign in Mali.

In 2015, the Malian government and two rival coalitions of armed groups in the north signed a peace accord (Arieff, 2022). It aimed to increase local autonomy and

representation of northerners, integrate rebel fighters into the state security forces, and encourage development, justice, and reconciliation (Arieff, 2022). However, the agreement failed to demobilize armed groups, and the French campaign continues amidst fears that Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) could create a stronghold in the Sahel region (Center for Preventive Action, 2022).

In August 2020, military officers in Mali staged a coup following months of antigovernment protests and widespread dissatisfaction (Maclean, 2020). The military carried out another coup in May 2021 (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). The continuing instability is expected to harm international efforts to combat militant groups in Mali and have a destabilizing effect on the Sahel region (Gramer & Hadavas, 2020; Center for Preventive Action, 2022).

The Albertine Rift is a 920-mile stretch of land on the western side of the East African Rift, running from the northern tip of Lake Albert to the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika (Heisler, 2012). The Albertine Rift features a range of habitats from wetlands to montane forests and contains several protected zones. It is also characterized by “exceptional endemism,” as it is home to a large portion of the continent’s bird and mammal species, including dozens of rare and endangered species (Heisler, 2012; WWF, 2020).

Also known for its complex political, ethnic, and economic dynamics, the Albertine Rift straddles six countries with a shared history of interlinked conflicts and violence: Burundi, Rwanda, the DRC, Uganda, Zambia, and Tanzania. Figures 6.1 and 6.2 illustrate the scope of this region. Over the last several decades, the region has been affected by chronic armed conflict in four of the six countries, characterized by ethnic politics and political instability, genocidal violence, resource competition, and mass refugee movements. The region’s conflicts have tended to spill across national boundaries, especially along the shared borders of the eastern DRC and western Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi (Hammill & Brown, 2006). In Burundi and neighboring Rwanda, civil wars between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups took place between 1990 and 2005, resulting in more than 300,000 deaths (BBC, 2018c; Cunningham, 2011). In the Rwandan genocide in 1994, approximately 800,000 largely Tutsi Rwandans were killed and 2 million Hutu refugees fled to the DRC, fearing reprisals (BBC, 2018b). In the DRC, the First and Second Congo Wars have resulted in between 3 and 5 million deaths since 1998 (McGreal, 2008). Uganda has led a continuous fight against the Lord’s Resistance Army rebel group since 1987 (BBC, 2018a). Zambia and Tanzania have largely escaped major conflict in recent years but have been affected by the aftermath of regional wars, including refugee influxes into both countries.

Using the methodology described in Chapter 2, ten GEF-funded projects in Mali and 12 in the Albertine Rift were selected for in-depth analyses using project documents and interviews with agency staff and stakeholders. Each team assessed the relationship between a project’s management of conflict risk and project outcomes, using the four evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

In selecting projects, the Mali evaluation team sought diversity in conflict categories, project results, and project focal areas. The results illuminated the

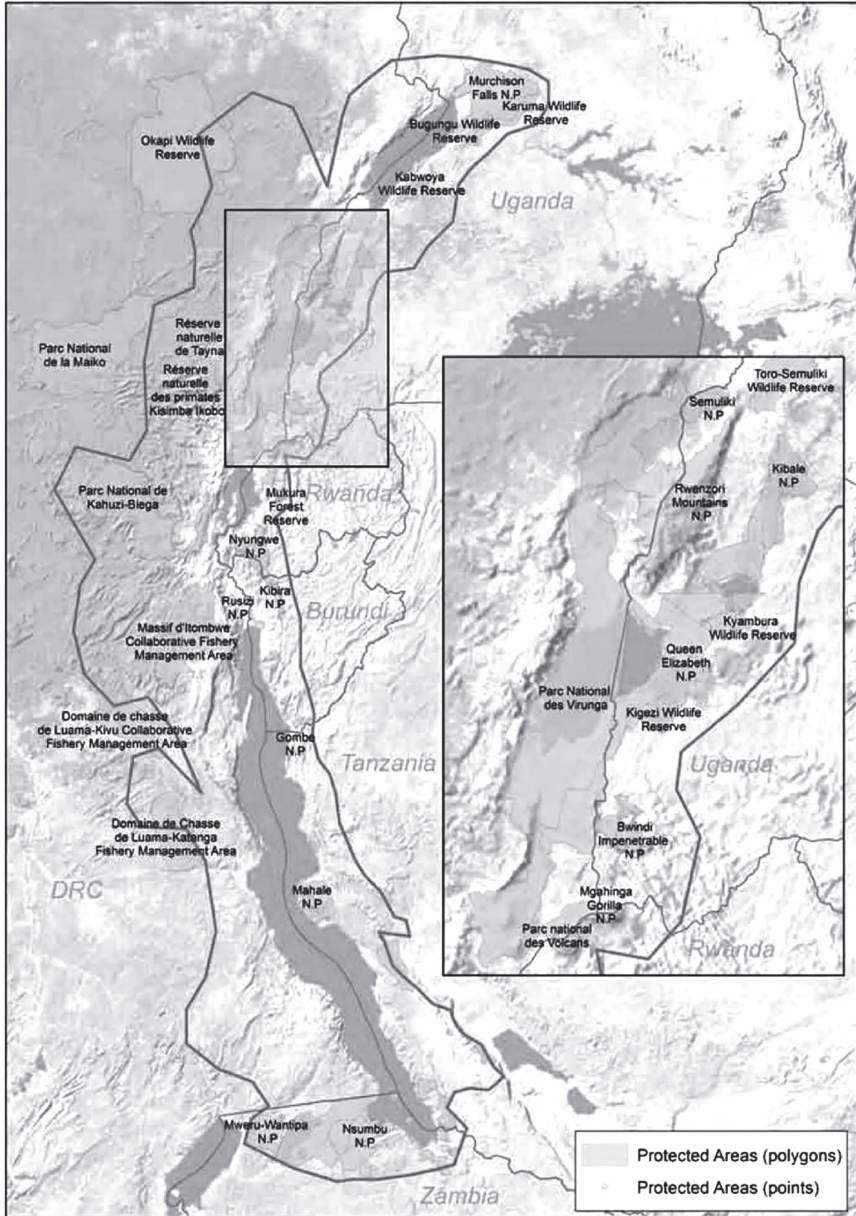


Figure 6.1 Albertine Rift Regional Boundaries and Major Protected Areas

Source: Carr et al., 2013

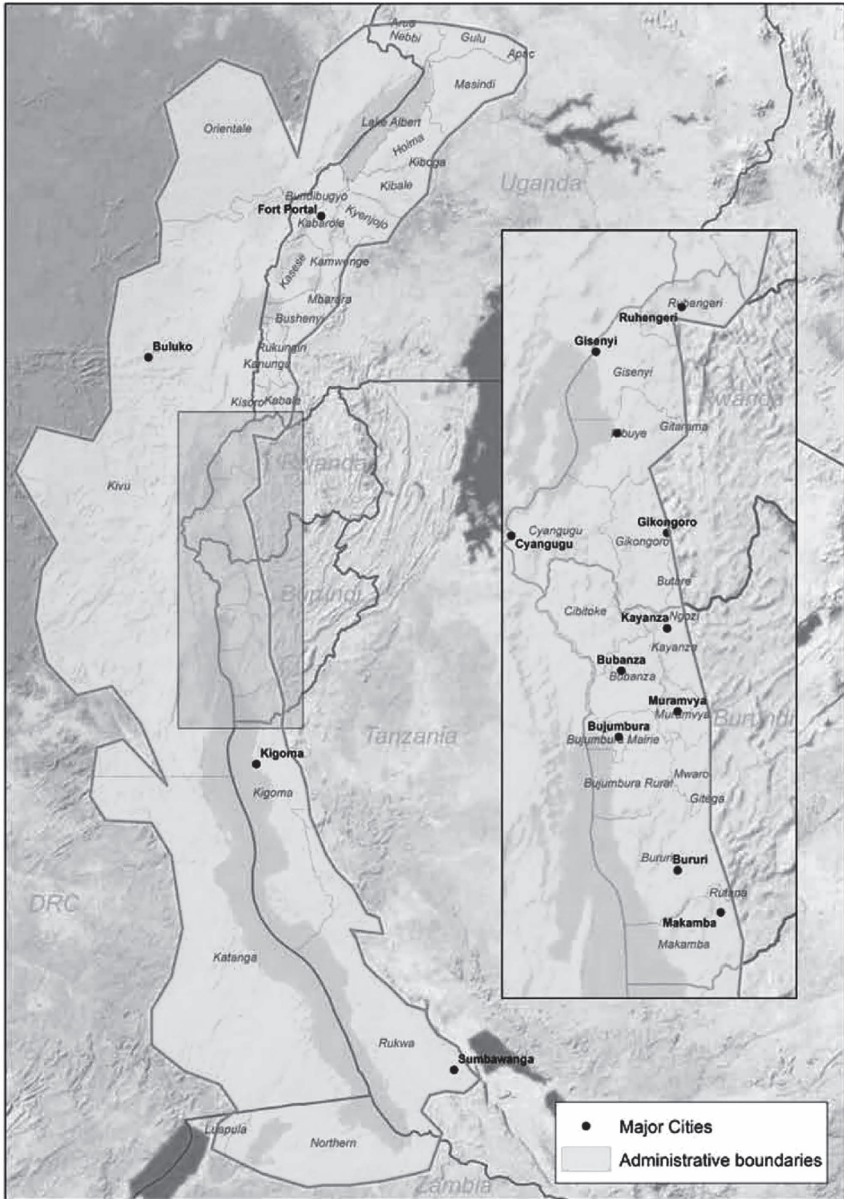


Figure 6.2 Albertine Rift Administrative Boundaries and Major Cities

Source: Carr et al., 2013

relationship between a project's management of conflict risk and project outcomes. The ten GEF-funded projects performed well in relevance and effectiveness but poorly in efficiency and sustainability, with the conflict in Mali negatively affecting project results in all four GEF criteria. Further, non-conflict challenges, like a lack of financial support from the government, poor management of project funds, and low state or local capacity, also negatively affected project outcomes. Given that these non-conflict challenges are common in fragile states, future evaluations of GEF projects in Mali might account for impacts of state fragility on project outcomes.

Of the selected Albertine Rift projects, 11 of the 12 exhibited substantial conflict sensitivity through their acknowledgement of past and current conflict and inclusion of measures to mitigate conflict-related risk. Four of these projects had overall positive results based on their evaluation scores, three had poor results, and four did not have documentation necessary for scoring. One additional project that was designated as not conflict sensitive received an overall poor score. The inability to score evaluation documents for several of the selected projects made generalizing the effect of conflict sensitivity on project outcomes difficult.

### *Environmental Background: Mali*

Although the environment and natural resources are not usually considered a direct cause of conflict in Mali, the impact of climate change on food insecurity and livelihoods in northern Mali has exacerbated insecurity and instability in the country. Northern Mali has been identified as a vulnerability hotspot, exhibiting high climatic stress, high sensitivity to climatic changes, and low adaptive capacity (De Sherbinin et al., 2014). Since 1998, Mali's average annual rainfall has decreased by 30 percent, with prolonged and more frequent droughts raising levels of food insecurity in the country (Stewart, 2014). The north has experienced the most severe food insecurity; in 2015, around 270,000 people in the north faced starvation, and as of 2019, it continues to be the most food-insecure region in the country (FAO, 2019). Chronic food insecurity that was largely left unaddressed by the Malian government created an environment where Islamist armed groups could recruit Tuareg separatists and other groups in the north by providing food (d'Errico et al., 2017).

Drought has also caused increased desertification in Mali (Niang et al., 2014). The impacts of desertification have been felt acutely in the north, where predominantly nomadic pastoral communities, like the Tuareg, have had their animal herds greatly reduced due to lack of water and vegetation. With the Sahara Desert expanding southward 48 kilometers per year, herders from other regions and countries, like Algeria and Niger, are moving onto territory the Tuareg use for grazing, exacerbating desertification and soil degradation. Ecological stressors like these contributed to the previous Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s. In the 1970s and 1980s, prolonged famine in the north led to mass starvation and loss of livelihood among the Tuareg (Lecocq & Belalimat, 2012). The impacts of the famine, coupled with limited support from the government, drove Tuareg nationalist sentiment and

support for the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) because the Tuareg believed their survival depended on political independence (Lecocq & Belalimat, 2012). In response to the 1990s rebellion, the government launched a series of development programs to provide economic security in the north. These failed to meet their objectives because funds were “employed in direct relief aid or programmes with high visibility in the local ‘traditional economy’ (cemented wells and the like)” and not in sustainable development initiatives, leaving pastoral economies vulnerable to environmental shocks (Lecocq & Belalimat, 2012, para. 14). Without substantial investment in sustainable development initiatives in the region, the rapid ecological degradation and influx of migrant pastoralists threaten to place additional stress on the Tuareg. This may exacerbate the current armed conflict by strengthening support for the nationalist movement and creating intercommunal conflicts over scarce resources. Although sustainable development initiatives may not be sufficient to solve the current armed conflict or prevent future conflicts, they could alleviate conflict by building regional resilience in the north and providing tangible economic benefits.

In central Mali, the dominant agricultural region in the country, drought and the expansion of desertification southward has also increased vulnerability. Soil degradation and increased variability in rainfall have jeopardized livelihoods and caused conflicts over land between pastoralists and farmers (Hegazi et al., 2021).

#### *GEF Involvement in Mali*

Since 1992, the GEF has launched 101<sup>1</sup> projects in Mali, of which 41<sup>2</sup> were active as of 2020. Projects have predominantly focused on addressing climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity, and focused to a lesser extent on persistent organic pollutants (POPs), chemical waste, and international waters. Many of the projects did not specify a geographic region of focus, but those that did predominantly took place in south and southwestern Mali near Koulikoro, Kayes, Segou, Bamako, and Sikasso. Only a handful of projects took place in the northern region of Mali and were predominantly located in Gourma, a biodiversity hotspot.

From the initial analysis using the methodology described in Chapter 2, three categories of projects emerged:

1. projects that did not substantially address conflict risks and received poor evaluation scores (Category 1);
2. projects that addressed conflict risks but not to project outcomes (Category 2); and
3. projects that assessed both conflict risks and how they could impact project outcomes (Category 3).

Of the GEF-funded projects in Mali, 50 percent were classified as Category 1 projects, with the other 50 percent split between Category 2 and 3. The evaluation

team also found that multi-focal projects and those under the GEF focal areas of international waters and land degradation were more likely to be in Category 2 or 3. Climate change, biodiversity, POPs, and chemicals and waste projects were more likely to be in Category 1, as illustrated in Figure 6.3. Table 6.1 lists the Mali projects selected for in-depth analysis.

Table 6.1 Mali Projects Analyzed in Depth, with Key Findings

<i>GEF Project ID</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Focal Area</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Category</i>
1152	Biodiversity Conservation and Participatory Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Inner Niger Delta and its Transition Areas, Mopti Region	Biodiversity	2004–2014	Category 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project left unaddressed the risks posed by armed conflict, focusing primarily in its design on managing social conflicts that could impede community-driven sustainable natural resource management.</li> <li>• The project performed well in all four core evaluation criteria; however, for efficiency and sustainability (sociopolitical), evaluators cautioned that armed conflict could negatively impact the project.</li> <li>• Evaluators identified armed conflict as a factor affecting the attainment of project outcomes due to delays in the last two years of the project.</li> </ul>				
2193	Enabling Sustainable Dryland Management through Mobile Pastoral Custodianship	Land degradation	2005–2013	Category 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project left unaddressed the risks posed by armed conflict in Mali and the other participating countries, mentioning it briefly as a cross-cutting issue brought up in project workshops.</li> <li>• The project performed well in all four core evaluation criteria, and conflict was not discussed as having impacted project outcomes in the participating countries.</li> </ul>				
9661	Community-based Natural Resource Management that Resolves Conflict, Improves Livelihoods, and Restores Ecosystems throughout the Elephant Range	Biodiversity, land degradation	2018–present	Category 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project addressed in detail the substantial risk that armed conflict posed to project operations and the achievement of project outcomes.</li> <li>• To manage risks posed by armed conflict, the project designed contingency plans for project operations and objectives should the security situation worsen and developed partnerships with organizations in the project area experienced with operating in conflict zones.</li> <li>• An interview with an agency staff member revealed that the project has not started due to the occupation of the project area by a militant group.</li> </ul>				

(Continued)

Table 6.1 (Continued)

<i>GEF Project ID</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Focal Area</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Category</i>
1253	Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project	Biodiversity	2004–2013	Category 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project did not address armed conflict as a risk, focusing primarily on the risks posed by intercommunal/traditional conflicts over natural resources.</li> <li>The project performed poorly in relevance and sustainability (financial and sociopolitical) due to the outbreak of armed conflict in the project area and Mali as a whole.</li> </ul>				
3699	SPWA-CC: Promotion of the Use of Agrofuels from the Production and Use of Jatropha Oil in Mali	Climate change	2011–2018	Category 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project did not address the risks armed conflict posed to the attainment of project objectives, focusing primarily on risks posed by intercommunal land tenure conflicts.</li> <li>An evaluation of the project in terms of the four core evaluation criteria is not available.</li> </ul>				
5746	Scaling-up and Replicating Successful Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Agroforestry Practices in the Koulikoro Region of Mali	Biodiversity, climate change, land degradation	2016–present	Category 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project only addressed in passing a budgetary risk to the project caused by armed conflict and did not note any plans to address the risk.</li> <li>The project focused primarily on local resource use conflicts in its design.</li> </ul>				
5535	Improving IWRM, Knowledge-based Management and Governance of the Niger Basin and the Iullemeden-Taoudeni/Tanezrouft Aquifer system (NB-ITTAS)	International waters	2018–present	Category 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project only addressed the risk of armed conflict in passing, noting that the security situation in the Bani Basin project site in Mali could impede project implementation, and did not address risks of armed conflict in riparian states.</li> <li>The project primarily focused on addressing risks to the project from local water conflicts.</li> <li>In passing, the project acknowledged the potential for it to exacerbate local water conflicts but did not integrate measures to mitigate such an impact in its design.</li> </ul>				
2469	Supporting Capacity Building for the Elaboration of National Reports and Country Profiles by African Parties to the UNCCD	Land degradation	2004–2007	Category 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In passing, the project identified the political situation in Mali as one of four major factors influencing risk to the project but did not include measures to manage impacts of armed conflict in its design.</li> <li>The project performed well in relevance and sustainability but performed poorly in effectiveness and efficiency.</li> <li>The project's TER did not discuss whether armed conflict impacted project outcomes.</li> </ul>				



<i>GEF Project ID</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Focal Area</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Category</i>
1348	Africa Stockpiles Program, P1	POPs	2005–2017	Category 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project did not address risks posed by armed conflict in Mali or the other participating countries.</li> <li>• The project's TE noted the project's lack of country-specific planning in Mali and its exclusion of an assessment of instability as a risk to the project in Mali.</li> <li>• The project performed well in relevance but performed poorly in effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, with the TER noting for sociopolitical sustainability that the armed conflict in Mali posed serious risks to the outcomes of the project in Mali.</li> </ul>				
4569	Improve the Health and Environment of Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) Communities by Reducing Mercury Emissions and Promoting Sound Chemical Management	POPs	2011–2018	Category 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project did not address risks posed by armed conflict in Mali and other participating countries.</li> <li>• The project's TE did not provide a detailed assessment of whether conflict impacted project outcomes in participating countries but noted in passing that due to the armed conflict in Mali the project was not carried out there.</li> </ul>				

Note: Project Categories: 1. Projects did not substantially address conflict dynamics and received unfavorable terminal evaluation scores. 2. Projects addressed conflict dynamics only in passing and did not significantly evaluate risks social and/or violent conflict could pose to project outcomes. Projects also did not address mitigation measures that could be taken to lessen the impact of the project on conflict. 3. Projects addressed conflict dynamics by evaluating risks that they posed to the success of project outcomes and discussed mitigation measures that could be taken to reduce the impact of the project on latent social conflicts.

### ***Environmental Background: Albertine Rift***

The environmental dimensions of conflict in the Albertine Rift region are complex, influenced by a host of factors from biodiversity conservation to natural resource dependence. This biodiversity hotspot encompasses a wide range of habitats, including wetlands, alpine grasslands, and montane forests (Heisler, 2012). The region is home to more than half of the African continent's bird species and 40 percent of its mammal species (MacArthur Foundation, 2012). The region's important ecosystem overlaps with densely populated centers whose societies depend on natural resources (Kameri-Mbote, 2006; Plumptre et al., 2016). Thus, many of the region's conflicts have been connected to environmental factors: competing claims for scarce resources fuel disputes, mining operations financed armed groups, and encroachment linked to conflict-related displacement stresses fragile ecosystems (Kameri-Mbote, 2006).

The region's history of political instability and armed conflicts has posed significant challenges for conservation. The mass displacement of people fleeing

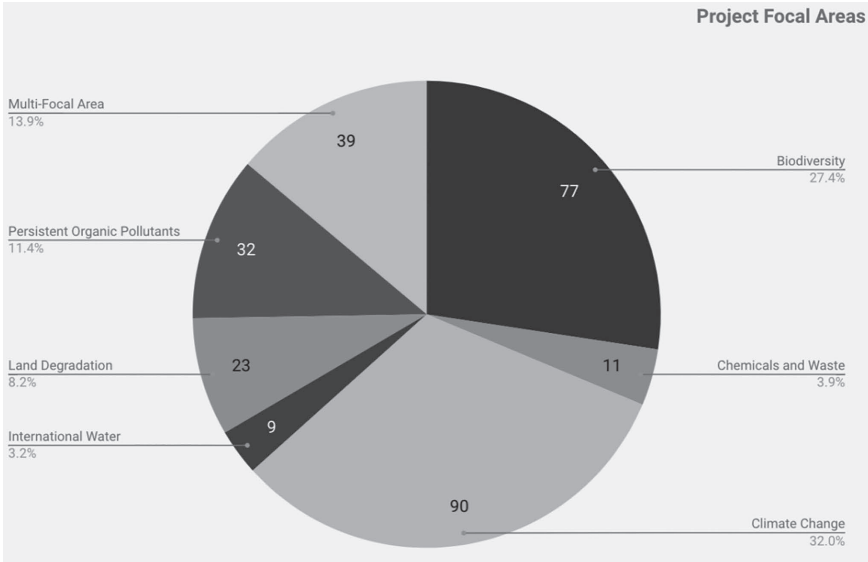


Figure 6.3 Focal Areas of Projects in Mali, by Conflict-Sensitive Category

violence has led to further encroachment into protected areas and has heightened tensions with adjacent communities over resources. In the DRC, for example, conflict broke out in 1996 in Virunga National Park, as resources like fish and wildlife were strained following the influx of internally displaced people (Asin, 2010). The spread of armed conflict into protected areas has also increased resource exploitation in the region. In places like Itombwe Natural Reserve and Luama Katanga Reserve, the presence of armed groups has resulted in artisanal mining operations to fund weapons and munitions (Plumptre et al., 2016). Across the region, multiple groups have engaged in poaching and illegal fishing that diminish biodiversity and threaten large mammal populations in several protected areas (Kujirakwinja et al., 2010; Plumptre et al., 2016). Virunga National Park in the eastern DRC has been particularly susceptible to these illegal activities, especially in the 1990s, when rival rebel groups managed different regions of the park. Conservation work to prevent overexploitation has itself stalled for conflict-related reasons, such as when the Congolese Army’s efforts to remove rebel groups interrupted a project between the Wildlife Conservation Society and USAID in Kahuzi-Biega National Park (Plumptre, 2010).

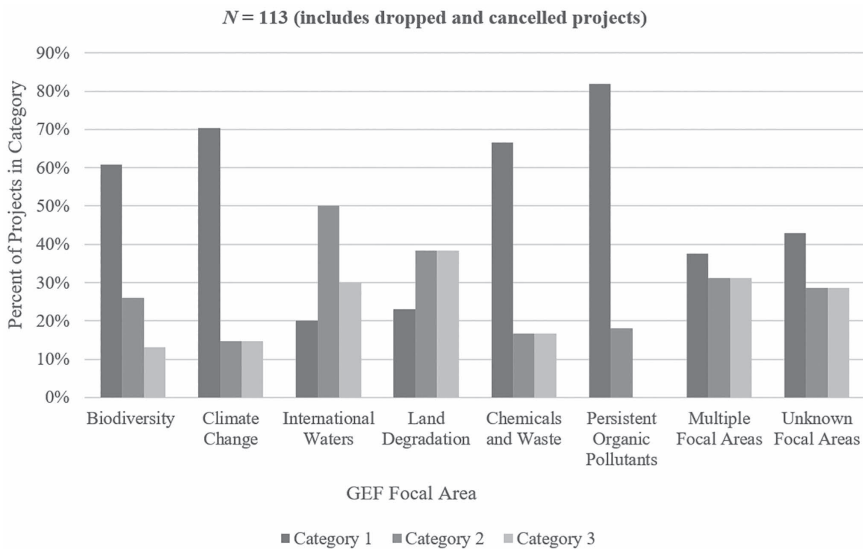
At the same time, because livelihoods and economic development in Albertine Rift communities tend to hinge on access to natural resources, conservation initiatives have frequently sparked or amplified tensions. Interventions that limit access to natural resources, exclude communities from management decisions, or unequally distribute benefits tend to generate conflict between stakeholders (Plumptre, 2010).

Conflicts flared up regarding the establishment of Kahuzi-Biega National Park when some inhabitants were compensated while others were displaced without resettlement measures (Plumptre, 2010). A similar situation occurred when the DRC's Ministry of the Environment announced via government gazette a natural reserve to protect the Itombwe Massif, a biodiversity epicenter with long-acknowledged biological importance (Plumptre, 2010). However, people who lived in the massif pushed back because the reserve had no clear boundaries and had been created without consulting adjacent communities. A series of consultations with local communities to establish clear boundaries eventually resolved this friction (Plumptre et al., 2016).

#### *GEF Involvement in the Albertine Rift*

The GEF has been involved in 274 environmental projects in the Albertine Rift since 1991, more than half of which focused on biodiversity or climate change (Figure 6.4 presents the distribution of project focal areas in this region). The variety of stakeholders and agencies in Albertine Rift projects presents challenges and opportunities for conservation and environmental management in ecosystems. GEF projects in the region have focused on important natural resources that are shared between countries, including Lakes Tanganyika, Kivu, and Edward; the basins of the Nile River and Lake Victoria; and protected areas including Virunga National Park.

Following analysis of all 274 projects using the methods described in Chapter 2, the evaluation team selected 12 projects for in-depth review, listed in Table 6.2.



*Figure 6.4* Focal Areas of Projects in the Albertine Rift

Table 6.2 Albertine Rift Projects Analyzed in Depth

<i>ID</i>	<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Focal Area</i>	<i>Project Dates</i>	<i>Category</i>
398	Pollution Control and Other Measures to Protect Biodiversity in Lake Tanganyika	International waters	1991–2006	1
1094	Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project, Tranche 1	International waters	2003–2011	3
2100	Support to the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN)'s Program for the Rehabilitation of the DRC's National Parks Network Note: Terminal evaluation information for Project 2100 obtained from the World Banks' Implementation Completion and Results Report	Biodiversity	2009–2018	4
2139	SIP: Transboundary Agro-Ecosystem Management Programme for the Kagera River Basin (Kagera TAMP)	Land degradation	2007–2019	1
2357	Agricultural Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management Project	Land degradation	2004–2007	1
2584	Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project (NTEAP), Phase II	International waters	2008–2015	1
2888	Transboundary Conservation of the Greater Virunga Landscape	Biodiversity	2008; closing date unknown	4
3772	CBSF Forest and Nature Conservation Project	Biodiversity	2009–2016	3
4133	SPWA-CC: Energy Efficiency Project	Climate change	2012–2016	2
4990	Community Disaster Risk Management in Burundi	Climate change	2014–present	4
9056	Promotion of Small Hydro Power (SHP) for Productive Use and Energy Services	Climate change	2017–present	4
9515	The Restoration Initiative, DRC child project: Improved Management and Restoration of Agro-sylvo-pastoral Resources in the Pilot Province of South-Kivu	Biodiversity, climate change, land degradation	2018–present	4

*Note:* Project categories: 1. Projects that did substantially address conflict dynamics and received favorable terminal evaluation scores; 2. projects that did not substantially address conflict and received unfavorable evaluation information; 3. projects that did substantially address conflict but received unfavorable evaluation scores; and 4. projects that substantially addressed conflict but did not have terminal evaluation information.

## Results

The in-depth analyses of projects in Mali and the Albertine Rift provide a qualitative assessment of the ways in which GEF-supported projects in Africa addressed conflict risks in their design and whether these risks affected project outcomes.

Examination of the interaction between conflict and the selected projects used the four GEF core evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The analyses also assessed impacts of non-conflict-related factors on project outcomes.

## Relevance

A project's relevance refers to the extent to which its design and intended outcomes align with "local and national environmental priorities and policies and to the GEF's strategic priorities and objectives, and remained suited to the conditions of the context, over time" (GEF IEO, 2019, p. 17).

Most of the selected projects in Mali performed well in terms of relevance, with only one project's relevance being negatively impacted by conflict. Across the ten projects reviewed in depth, the armed conflict was not a common factor affecting a project's relevance. For the Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project, although the project design aligned with national and local environmental priorities, the project's outcomes were not suited to the conflict context. The project had intended to reverse biodiversity degradation in the Gourma region in five years, a timeline noted as being too ambitious given the political risk and insecurity in the project area (World Bank, 2013). The nine other projects reviewed in Mali performed well in relevance, with projects' design and outcomes aligning with local, national, and GEF environmental and strategic priorities.

The selected Albertine Rift projects were relevant to their local and national contexts. All were rated as at least substantial for relevance, and for several, evaluations found that projects' intersection with conflict dynamics was connected to project relevance. Documents for the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management Project cited the persistence of "post-conflict reconstruction" after the project was implemented as evidence that the project was "highly relevant to the situation in Burundi at the time and remained so through the life of the project" (GEF IEO, 2012, p. 14). Evaluation also found that the project's community-driven development strategy was appropriate for "restoring agricultural productivity in communities that were recovering from a post conflict situation" (GEF IEO, 2012, p. 14). The SPWA-CC: Energy Efficiency Project received an overall relevance rating of high, indicating that the project "achieved significant progress . . . in spite of the country's security problems as a result of the political crisis" (GEF IEO, 2016, p. 12). A project supporting the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation's program to rehabilitate the DRC's National Parks Network also received a high rating for project relevance; its project development objective aligned with the country assistance strategy, including "the rehabilitation of protected areas" and "improved governance and institutional strengthening" (World Bank, 2019, pp. 14–15). Documents also noted that the project was implemented in areas at risk of conflict because the target parks were chosen primarily for their biodiversity values, and selecting lower risk zones "would have done a disservice to this important aim" (World Bank, 2019, p. 29). Meanwhile, the CBSP Forest and Nature Conservation Project received a relevance rating of substantial but only a rating of modest for relevance of project design, indicating that "risks were underestimated

and mitigation measures were weak” (GEF IEO, 2015, p. 13). Some of the risk mitigation measures discussed as weak or not implemented had to do with insecurity and land conflict. The remaining projects with available evaluation information received high ratings for relevance but did not make specific references to conflict.

### **Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of a project refers to the extent to which the project “achieved, or expects to achieve, results (outputs, outcomes and impacts, including global environmental benefits) taking into account the key factors influencing the results” (GEF IEO, 2019, p. 13).

Of the ten Mali projects, only one did not perform well in effectiveness due to the conflict: Community-Based Natural Resource Management that Resolves Conflict, Improves Livelihoods, and Restores Ecosystems throughout the Elephant Range. An interview with a project staff member revealed that although the project was approved for implementation by the GEF in 2018, it has been unable to begin its work protecting elephants in the Gourma region of Mali due to insecurity in the project area, a direct result of the armed conflict. Jihadist militants occupied the project area, using forests there for cover from the French Air Force. The staff member noted that the occupation of the project area complicated implementation of the project in two ways. First, the occupation poses serious physical risks to project personnel, staff of partner organizations, and local communities participating in the project. Second, it complicates operational arrangements in that project staff might have to coordinate activities with the jihadist militants because the forests they use for cover overlap with intended elephant reserves. Given these complexities, the staff member indicated that the project’s ability to achieve its intended outcomes safely and effectively may be severely limited.

For the other nine projects reviewed in Mali, project documents did not indicate that conflict affected project effectiveness. Eight of the projects performed well in effectiveness, achieving their expected results. The Africa Stockpiles Program, phase 1, did not receive positive scores for effectiveness due to difficulty in achieving its major objective and building adequate capacity for long-term prevention measures. The project aimed to start a cleanup of stockpiles of obsolete pesticides in African countries, including POPs, and to introduce sustainable measures to prevent creation of new stockpiles. For reasons not necessarily related to the conflict, the project eliminated only 3,164 tons of the 8,949 tons of publicly held POPs. It also did not prevent accumulation of future POPs nor did the second phase of the program ever begin (GEF IEO, 2013).

For several of the studied Albertine Rift projects, effectiveness was entwined with the conflict context, either because conflict posed an obstacle to the completion of project objectives or, in one case, because reaching the project’s conflict-related objectives contributed to overall positive results. Almost all of the projects with evaluation scores earned effectiveness ratings of moderately satisfactory or higher. The Agricultural Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management Project achieved its development and global environmental objectives, with an overall outcome rated moderately satisfactory. In discussing its positive results, this

project specifically referenced conflict, indicating that the project was in line with Burundi and the World Bank's post-conflict priorities and achieved conflict-related objectives, including benefitting persons displaced by conflict. A project to protect biodiversity in Lake Tanganyika was rated satisfactory for effectiveness, having completed most project components with the exception of several that were delayed or made impossible by insecurity in Burundi and the DRC. The project SIP: Transboundary Agro-Ecosystem Management Programme for the Kagera River Basin (Kagera TAMP) received a satisfactory effectiveness rating, with indication that the project was most successful on a technical level and less so on institutional and political levels. The project on the DRC's National Parks Network implemented by the World Bank received a moderate rating for the achievement of project development objectives. These included conflict-related objectives of financing a process "to ameliorate the conflicts in the area and seek redress for the hardships experienced by the indigenous peoples (IPs) following the creation of the park" (World Bank, 2019, p. 16). Where that project's objectives were not met or only partially met, documents cited conflict as an obstacle, including with regard to the stabilization of indicator species, which the evaluation document noted would require "additional efforts to improve security" and "was in hindsight clearly beyond the scope of this project" (World Bank, 2019, pp. 17–18). The SPWA-CC: Energy Efficiency Project was rated as moderately unsatisfactory overall and for its achievement of global environmental benefits. It failed to meet several objectives related to reducing emissions and saving energy due in part to insecurity, and the crisis also prevented implementation of objectives related to national policies and guidelines.

### **Efficiency**

The efficiency of a project refers to the extent to which the project "achieved value for resources, by converting inputs (funds, personnel, expertise, equipment, etc.) to results in the timeliest and least costly way possible, compared to the alternatives" (GEF IEO, 2019, p. 13)

The projects reviewed in Mali largely did not perform well in terms of efficiency. Although the armed conflict was not a common challenge across all of the projects, it did affect the efficiency of the project Biodiversity Conservation and Participatory Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Inner Niger Delta and its Transition Areas, Mopti Region. In that project, the armed conflict in northern Mali caused delays in project activities for the first two years of implementation, leading to issues in attaining some of the desired project outcomes (GEF IEO, 2014, p. 7).

For the other nine Mali projects reviewed, project documents did not indicate that poor performance in project efficiency was related to conflict. A common challenge for projects was converting funds into results in an efficient and least costly manner. In the Africa Stockpiles program, the allocation of funds did not achieve intended project outcomes due to mismanagement caused by the difficulty in tracking allocated funds and reporting expenditures of regional programs using the World Bank's budgeting system. Although 75 percent of GEF funding was disbursed, only 37 percent of the targeted public inventories of POPs were disposed of by the close of the project, and POPs waste was not disposed of in two of the six

countries the project targeted (GEF IEO, 2013, p. 5). Although the project Supporting Capacity Building for the Elaboration of National Reports and Country Profiles by African Parties to the UNCCD did achieve intended outcomes, complicated funding arrangements resulted in higher costs in time and resources to achieve them (GEF, 2006, p. 3).

Among the Albertine Rift projects, seven of the eight completed projects received moderately or substantially satisfactory ratings for efficiency. The eighth project's efficiency received an unsatisfactory rating. Only two projects mentioned conflict in discussion of their efficiency. The project to protect biodiversity in Lake Tanganyika earned an efficiency rating of moderately satisfactory, with documents indicating that civil unrest contributed to "delays in project implementation," but that delays did not increase the project's budget (Manikowski & Gundling, 2014, p. 6). The project on rehabilitation of the DRC's National Parks Network received an implementation efficiency rating of modest, attributed in part to the "difficult environment" in which it operated, citing lack of security, conflict in the National Parks, and "breakouts of violence by armed groups" (World Bank, 2019, pp. 20–21). This context affected efficiency because it required increased spending on patrolling, reduced tourism at parks, and contributed to the "prolonged delay in establishing of the Okapi Fund," which impacted revenues and led to missed opportunities for funding (World Bank, 2019, pp. 20–21). The Agricultural Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management Project received an efficiency rating of substantial but made no reference to conflict's effect on efficiency. Similarly, the CBSP Forest and Nature Conservation Project was rated moderately satisfactory for efficiency, without specific reference to conflict. The SPWA-CC: Energy Efficiency Project and the Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project, with efficiency ratings of high and satisfactory, respectively, also did not cite connection with conflict. For the Kagera TAMP project, the efficiency rating was poor, but conflict did not explicitly play a role in the negative rating.

### *Sustainability*

The sustainability of a project refers to the continuation or likely continuation of "positive effects from the intervention after it has come to an end, and its potential for scale-up and/or replication; interventions need to be environmentally as well as institutionally, financially, politically, culturally and socially sustainable" (GEF IEO, 2019, p. 13).

The Mali projects studied in depth did not perform well in sociopolitical sustainability. For three of the projects reviewed, the common challenge was the ongoing armed conflict in Mali. An example is the Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project. In 2012, while the project was ongoing, a coup d'état occurred, and the project area was subsequently occupied by armed groups. Due to the safety and security issues in the project area, staff, associates, and community members fled the region to southern cities in Mali and to neighboring countries. A project document noted that the security situation in the project area and the loss of personnel would ultimately affect the project's long-term implementation (World Bank, 2013, pp. 29–30).



The projects in Mali also performed poorly in terms of their financial sustainability, with conflict explicitly impacting financial sustainability in one instance. Although not common among the projects reviewed, the armed conflict in Mali did impact the financial sustainability of the Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project: Following the coup d'état, the CFA franc was devalued, which left some of the project's objectives incomplete after the project closed (World Bank, 2013, p. 53). More commonly, project documents indicated that non-conflict barriers had negative impacts on projects' financial sustainability. For three of the projects reviewed, a common challenge to financial sustainability was securing funding from the government to continue the project after GEF involvement ended. For example, the continuation of the Africa Stockpiles Program was assessed to be unlikely because the project failed to secure funding from Mali's government to continue to safeguard and dispose of POPs after the project closed (GEF IEO, 2013, p. 6).

In terms of institutional sustainability, the projects reviewed in Mali generally performed well. The project on biodiversity in the Inner Niger Delta and its transition areas exemplifies projects' performance in this facet of sustainability. The project successfully built ownership of project activities among project beneficiaries by mobilizing stakeholder involvement in designing, implementing, and managing micro projects. The project also successfully strengthened intercommunal organizations, which were indicated as being important for continued institutional sustainability (GEF IEO, 2014, p. 6).

The Mali projects also performed well in environmental sustainability, although assessments of why they did well were limited in the project documents. The Africa Stockpiles Program is an example: Its environmental sustainability was noted as likely, but project documents indicated that this determination was made based on the project identifying no environmental risks (GEF IEO, 2013, p. 6).

Among Albertine Rift projects, document analysis did not break out sustainability by category. The projects analyzed generally received the poorest ratings for the project sustainability criterion and frequently cited conflict as an explanation. The Agricultural Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management Project, which received a positive score for project sustainability, also indicated a moderate risk to project outcomes in its documentation. One component of this risk was "resumption of conflict," something over which the project professed to have "little control" (GEF IEO, 2012, p. 22). Evaluation of the CBSP Forest and Nature Conservation Project indicated that conditions at project close represented a high risk to project outcomes but did not reference conflict in relation to this risk; the project received a negative score for sustainability. The SPWA-CC: Energy Efficiency Project also received a negative score for sustainability and indicated a substantial risk to project outcomes, attributed in part to "a political crisis" that would "hamper REGIDESO's [Agency for Production and Distribution of Water and Electricity (Régie de Production et de Distribution d'Eau et d'Electricité)] efforts to sustain the implementation of energy efficiency measures due to security reasons" (GEF IEO, 2016, p. 18). The Kagera TAMP project received a positive overall sustainability rating and made no reference to conflict in its justification. In contrast, the Lake Tanganyika project received a negative rating for sustainability, with documents indicating that sustainability of

project outcomes was moderately unlikely due to factors of “socio-political instability” and “political and military instability” (Manikowski & Gundling, 2014, p. 7).

### ***Non-Conflict Challenges***

The analysis of the Mali projects noted that challenges unrelated to conflict also had negative impacts on projects’ performance in the four evaluation criteria. Common non-conflict challenges affecting project success were difficulties in securing funding from the government, building local or national capacities to continue project activities, and managing project funding. These can be related to state fragility because initiatives in fragile states often face such funding, capacity-building, and management challenges. The project documents reviewed did not discuss project outcomes in terms of state fragility, making it difficult to draw conclusions about its effect on project design and implementation. Interviews focused on the impact of the conflict on programming and did not explore the role of fragility as such.

The pandemic struck during the course of the evaluation, and therefore, the case study also considered the effects of COVID-19 on GEF projects in situations affected by conflict and fragility. COVID-19 emerged as a non-conflict challenge that affected programming and conservation in Mali in several ways. Terrorist groups and other non-state actors took advantage of the pandemic to destabilize governments in Mali and other Sahelian countries that would delay and extend the process of rebuilding livelihoods and peace (UN News, 2020a). Reports indicated how the pandemic fueled intercommunal violence (UN News, 2020b) and a sharp decline in economic growth (World Bank, 2021). Donors responded, albeit with a temporary pause after the 2020 military coup, with a particular focus on building food security and support for early warning, health facilities, and sanitation and hygiene (e.g., USAID, 2020; World Bank, 2020, 2021). The pandemic devastated the tourism sector and led to an increase in poaching and consequent loss of biodiversity (BBC News, 2020; World Bank, 2021).

### **Conclusions**

Conflict-related risks and impacts may require project-specific adjustments and institutional actions to assist projects with planning for and managing conflict. The conflict-related risks and impacts experienced by the projects reviewed were unique to each project, suggesting that conflict management may need to be tailored to the specific conflict contexts in which projects operate. Despite the unique contexts and constraints on projects, interviews with agency staff on the projects reviewed in Mali and the Albertine Rift highlight measures that could better support projects in planning for and managing conflict.

First, developing GEF guidance would aid project leaders in mitigating conflict-related threats to the safety of personnel and communities, according to project staff in both locations. Staff on Mali projects discussed issues faced by projects operating in areas with an active conflict and/or terrorist activity. They noted a lack of guidance from the GEF on where to draw the line on engagement and a lack of clarity regarding how to assess whether projects in active conflict areas faced

risks too great to be managed. Such guidance on engagement would be helpful for projects in the beginning stages to determine feasibility from a security standpoint and avoid project cancellations due to conflict. Staff also explained that projects operating under these conditions are not only concerned with how conflict risks will impact their ability to meet project objectives but also with threats to the safety of project staff and project participants in the community. Staff noted that the GEF largely addresses these threats on a case-by-case basis and emphasized the need for the GEF to provide well-developed guidance.

Staff working on projects in the Albertine Rift expressed a desire for a more formalized incorporation of conflict risk assessment into GEF project design, involving an analysis of conflict dynamics in the project area and requiring mitigation strategies. Similarly, an evaluation consultant on one project expressed desire for GEF projects to have more robust coping mechanisms built in for conflict-related interventions. Another staff member suggested that one way to prepare for conflict-related project risks would be to build in additional costs to better account for insecurity, citing security details for project designers as an example. Mali project staff highlighted the helpful role conflict advisors could play in project planning. Staff noted that projects operating in areas with active conflicts often may underestimate budgetary requirements for the project to operate in a conflict situation and plan for overly ambitious project outcomes given conflict risks, shortcomings that conflict advisors could help address.

Interviews with staff on Mali projects indicated that streamlining institutional requirements for projects would better support the use of adaptive management strategies to manage conflict risks and adjust project operations in areas with active conflict. Project staff emphasized the need for the GEF to have more flexible requirements for its approval of projects that must make operational adjustments and more modest expectations for outcomes when projects change due to conflict situations. This process of requiring grantor approval for changes to projects is typical in environmental project funding, meaning that these findings have broader relevance beyond the GEF context.

Albertine Rift project staff suggested that projects in conflict-affected areas would have greater success if they could go beyond working only with the central government and also seek buy-in and collaboration with provincial and local partners; this would help avoid exacerbating tensions between groups in the project area. An individual involved in the execution of the DRC National Parks project indicated that their largest difficulties with GEF-funded interventions stemmed from the weakness of the national government partner in the DRC.

Overall, building the GEF's institutional capacity to support projects in preparing for and managing conflict-related risks may reduce the likelihood that conflict negatively impacts the attainment of project objectives. Based on the analysis of project outcomes, the conflicts in both African locations negatively impacted project performance on the four GEF core evaluation criteria. The impacts of conflict on project outcomes may be even more pronounced when indirect effects of conflict, like state fragility, are assessed in relation to challenges projects face. The connection between project outcomes and conflict situations was reflected in interviews with agency staff. Although ongoing conflicts like those in Mali and the Albertine Rift are exogenous to GEF-funded projects,

building the GEF's institutional capacity to support projects in integrating conflict-sensitive measures into their design is an important action to improve the likelihood that projects can manage conflict-related risks and achieve their intended outcomes.

## Notes

- 1 This tally excludes dropped or cancelled projects.
- 2 This tally is based on the GEF project database. It includes only those projects that have no terminal evaluations and do not have a closing date indicated on their profile in the GEF project database.

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