

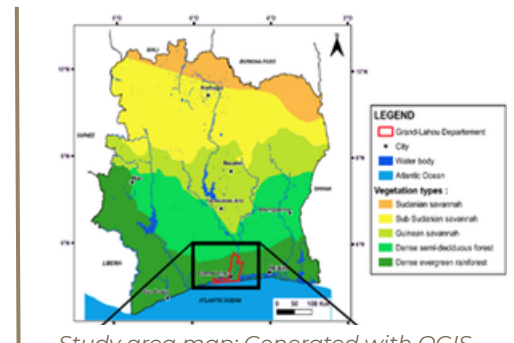
POLICY BRIEF



Part of Grand-Lahou Savanna – Credit for all images: Author

FLORISTIC ANALYSIS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE SOUTHERN SAVANNA (GRAND-LAHOUE, CÔTE D'IVOIRE)

Savannas of Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in the south are vital to local communities but are increasingly degraded by agricultural expansion, urbanization, and resource overexploitation. This analysis explores floristic composition and local community activities in the Grand-Lahou savanna, using Azagny National Park as a reference site. The findings underscore the urgent need for conservation strategies that blend local and scientific knowledge to ensure both ecological integrity and community well-being.



Study area map: Generated with QGIS

OVERVIEW

This study conducted a floristic analysis to assess the floristic composition in the savanna of Grand-Lahou. Azagny National Park was used as a reference site to distinguish natural environmental changes from human-induced degradation. Compared to this protected area, the Grand-Lahou savanna, located in a forest landscape, shows clear signs of vegetation decline, mainly due to the activities of local communities rather than climate change or natural phenomena. Finally, the study focused on analyzing existing management policies and practices to formulate evidence-based recommendations.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement in-situ conservation and habitat restoration as Nature-based Solutions Nbs:

Create conservation plots for vulnerable and rare plant species and promote assisted natural regeneration to support biodiversity recovery.

2. Promote Nbs through community woodlots with fast-growing species:

Create community-managed woodlots with fast-growing tree species suited to local conditions to reduce firewood pressure on the savanna.

3. Establish and institutionalize co-management committees:

Create legally recognized co-management committees with real decision-making power to ensure inclusive and sustainable management of the savanna.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Species degradation

Floristic analysis has identified many plant species belonging to several families. However, species richness and structural diversity are lower in sites close to the village (Braffredon) than in those further away (Kebekro, Agouai), indicating ongoing degradation.

2. Pressure from community activities

Local community activities, mainly agriculture, fuelwood collection, grazing, and bush fires, exert strong pressure on the savanna. These activities significantly affect vegetation structure (e.g., the forest surrounding the savanna decreased from 15,000 hectares in 1990 to 2,500 hectares in 2025.)

3. Limited policy implementation

Although management policies exist, their implementation remains weak due to limited enforcement and low community participation. This limits their effectiveness and highlights the need for participatory governance and improved monitoring.



Focus group discussion with local communities

RESEARCH APPROACH

The study combined field vegetation surveys with household interviews to assess both ecological characteristics and human activities in the Grand-Lahou area.

Comparisons with a control site (Azagny National Park) helped identify the specific impacts of local activities on savanna degradation. However, the research was limited by time constraints and seasonal variation, which may influence species detection.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate the importance of Nature-based Solutions by showing that although the Grand-Lahou savanna is facing ecological degradation, it still maintains a relatively high level of plant species diversity, which represents an important potential for ecological restoration.

The study highlights the impacts of human activities on vegetation structure and regeneration. However, the presence of existing management policies provides a valuable foundation for improving conservation efforts. With stronger enforcement of regulations, increased involvement of local communities, and the promotion of sustainable land-use practices, the degradation of the savanna can be significantly reduced.

REFERENCES

Kouassi, Y. K. (2025). Floristic analysis and local community-savannah interactions in the Grand-Lahou savannah, Côte d'Ivoire (Master's thesis). Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

