



FAO-GEF Mid-Year Implementation Update

Period covered: 1 July 2020 to 31 March 2021



1. Project Basic Data

General Information

Region:	Central Africa
Country (ies):	Republic of Cameroon
Project Title:	Sustainable Forest Management under the Authority of Cameroonian Councils
FAO Project Symbol:	GCP/CMR/033/GFF
GEF ID:	4800

Review and Evaluation

Expected Mid-Term review date:	Started June 2019
Actual Mid-term review date:	Ended November 2019
Terminal Evaluation Date planned (if applicable):	June 2021 <i>(With the budget allocation for management plan review activities and the signing of Letter for these activities, it is expected to request an extension of the project. Actions have already been initiated in this direction)</i>
Expected Project Completion date (NTE):	31 December 2021

Project Contacts

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2. Information on Progress, Outcomes and Challenges of Project Implementation Activities

Please structure your response as follows:

1. *Progress since the FY20 update.* Assess component by component the progress of activities and delivery of outputs (and outcomes, if appropriate) in relation to the implementation plan to deliver on the project objective. Please provide one or two paragraphs per component summarizing the progress of each outcome.

Component 1: Establishment of Council forests for sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation

The outputs under this component are (i) the establishment of a database of biodiversity in the council forests, (ii) the revision and implementation of forest management plans to integrate biodiversity conservation (561 825 ha under SFM) and (iii) the formal designation of 56,200 ha of conservation sites within the council forests. The targets for these outputs have not yet been met.

During this reporting period, the recruitment process for a database development expert has been initiated. The procurement of 23 computers, inverters and hard disks to house the biodiversity database in the 21 councils and 2 government ministries, targeted by the project, has been completed. These activities lay the foundation for the project to deliver on the first output under this component, i.e. the establishment of a database of biodiversity in the council forests.

There has been slow progress in the revision of management plans and designation of biodiversity sites. As per the recommendations of the project steering committee (meeting held in September 2020), two Letters of Agreement (LoA) were signed with Monitortrust and Organization for Conservation and Development (OCD) in March 2021. These agreements will help start activities in 9 council forests targeted by the project. 3 council forests out of the 9 are targeted by the project in collaboration with GIZ / ProFE. These activities in the targeted council forests will contribute to Sustainable Forest Management of 233 924 ha of forests and the designation of biodiversity conservation sites of 23 392 ha of council forest. And finally, a third LoA with UICN has been prepared (but not yet signed) for the designation of 87 220 ha of forests under SFM and 8722 ha of forests for biodiversity conservation. It is expected that the progress made during the reporting period will allow the component results to be achieved within the next 6 months.

Component 2: Capacity Building to strengthen biodiversity conservation and SFM in Council Forests

The outputs under this component are: (i) the development and dissemination of Technical guidance and standards for SFM and biodiversity conservation in conservation sites (ii) the establishment and training of 85 local forest protection committees (FPCs) and the training in alternative livelihoods of 170 local community leaders/change agents from the villages in/around the council forests (iii) the establishment of 17 functional technical units (FTU) and the training of 85 council staff in the development and implementation of forest management plans.

These results were partially achieved before the reporting period, with (i) the drafting of technical guidelines for SFM adapted to council forests, (ii) the restructuring of 21 council forestry units (CFC) and 85 peasant - forest committees (CPF), (iii) the training of 34 council forestry units staff, 85 members of forest-peasant committees and 17 Head of forestry and wildlife station (Local representative of the forestry administration) in forest monitoring and biodiversity conservation, (iv) the training on alternative income generating activities based on forest products through the Market Analysis and Development (MAD) approach.

During this reporting period, the second cycle training of the MAD approach has been conducted for rural populations, members of the peasant - forest committees living around the council forests. 700 people among the targeted 1050 living in 14 councils have benefitted from this training. At the end of the training, the groups will produce a Development Plan for Small Businesses (PDE) based on forest products. The project will proceed to the selection of the

best PDE and provide support (equipment or technology) allowing the effective start-up of small businesses, and generation of alternative income.

As per the recommendations of the United Nations Guidelines for meetings during COVID 19 pandemic, the trainings were conducted with strict compliance of physical distancing measures. These training activities will continue to be conducted in 7 municipalities and target 350 more people till the end of the project.

Since the last quarter of 2020, a communications expert has been recruited and is contributing to the dissemination of the technical guidance and standards for SFM and biodiversity conservation through the preparation of supporting materials (technical sheets, posters, etc.) appropriate for the target audience.

Component 3: Capacity building for the management of forest carbon

The outputs under this component are: (i) the adaptation to council forests and testing of existing accounting and carbon monitoring systems (ii) the training in forest carbon management of 85 forest protection committees (FPC) and 34 Functional technical unit (FTU) staff.

Before the reporting period, the carbon accounting system had been developed and tested. However, the training activities have not yet started. At the end of 2020, two experts in carbon accounting and forest carbon management were recruited to strengthen the capacities of the targeted council forestry units and members of the CPFs. The recruitment of a third expert is underway. The trainings are scheduled to start in May 2021.

Component 4: Ecosystem restoration and enhancement of carbon stocks (Co-financing)

The output under this component is the reforestation and restoration of 56,200 ha in the council forests (10% of total council forests targeted by the project).

The responsible partners for the activities under this component are the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), Ministry of the Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) and NGOs partners of the project (ACFCAM, CAMECO, GIZ) according to the report submitted by MINFOF in September 2020, a total of 463 ha. have been reforested corresponding to 220,000 trees planted.

Component 5: Monitoring and evaluation and information dissemination.

During the reporting period, this result was partially achieved with the completion of the mid-term evaluation of the project, the conduct of the fourth ordinary meeting of the project steering committee, as well as the holding of meetings with the project partners. However, due to the emergence of the COVID 19 pandemic, no field mission (monitoring of activities) was organized by the project team. In terms of information dissemination, during the reporting period, project tools (communication plan, leaflets, folder, poster) have been produced.

2. **Challenges.** Provide an update on the key challenges faced by the project such as procurement, disbursement, audit findings, co-financing, M&E and effectiveness. This section should look in particular at how the challenges posed by COVID-19 are impacting project activities.

- Due to the emergence of COVID 19 pandemic, the project steering committee meeting scheduled for February 2020 was held with 6 months delay. This created further delays in the implementation of project activities as this meeting was crucial for the approval of the annual workplan and the requested budget revision. As indicated in previous year reports, the budget allocation between components was not adequate for the implementation of key activities.

- Government restrictions on travel and meetings due to COVID 19 pandemic made it impossible to plan field activities. The second wave of the COVID 19 pandemic (March 2021) prompted the government to update measures that had been eased in the meantime (June 2020). As a result, from March to September 2020, almost no field activity was carried out. During this period, FAO staff in Cameroon were in full teleworking mode. Most of the work consisted of preparing Letters of Agreement, terms of reference for consultants, drafting reports, etc.

-The project was not able to conduct the MAD cycle 2 training in 7 out of the 21 councils targeted by the due to government's restrictions related to COVID 19. It is expected that by the end of June 2021, the government restrictions can be eased and training activities will resume. Alternatively, the project will adopt a training format with a reduced number of participants and increased number of training sessions to reach the remaining 7 councils.

3. *Adaptive measures and actions.* Highlight the workarounds identified to adapt and enhance implementation. References to proactive actions being taken to improve implementation should be highlighted here, including management change, update in activities and possible project restructuring.

3. Stakeholders Engagement

Please report on progress, challenges and outcomes on stakeholder engagement (based on the description of the Stakeholder engagement plan included at CEO Endorsement/Approval (when applicable))

Please provide an update with a particular focus on how COVID-19 is impacting stakeholders engagement and how the project is overcoming these challenges, for instance engaging stakeholders is done differently. Of course, please consider also mentioning any major non-COVID related change since the FY20 update.

In order to capitalize on the interventions and promote synergy, a collaboration framework has been established with the GIZ/Forest - Environment Project (GIZ/ProFE). This project implements the same activities in 3 council forests targeted by the FAO/ GEF project. Within the framework of this collaboration, GIZ was responsible for carrying out forest inventories that will allow the FAO-GEF project to draft management plans for the 3 councils. However, due to pandemic, the GIZ project suspended all activities related to the inventory. This in turn created delays in the implementation of preparation of management plans in the targeted councils. Activities will resume once the inventory data is made available by the partner.

4. Gender-responsive measures

Please report on the progress of gender-responsive measures taken as documented at CEO Endorsement/Approval in the gender action plan or equivalent (when applicable)

Please provide an update with a particular focus on how COVID-19 is impacting gender and how the project is overcoming these challenges, for instance consequences of women facing disruptions in health and education services, local women's organizations supported etc. Please mention as well any major non-COVID related change since the FY20 update.

Training on alternative income generating activities based on forest products through the Market Analysis and Development (MAD) approach mainly targeting women and young people in communities living around council forests were held from June to September 2020. The training in cycle 1 involved approximately 444 men and 556 women.

5. Knowledge Management Activities

Please report on the progress of implementation of the project's Knowledge Management Approach approved at CEO Endorsement (when applicable), knowledge products documenting good practices, lessons learned, websites/ other platforms developed, a communication strategy adopted.

Please provide an update with a particular focus on how COVID-19 is impacting knowledge management activities and how the project is overcoming these challenges, for example " face-to-face knowledge events are moved to virtual settings". Please mention as well any major non-COVID related change since the FY20 update.

One of the recommendations of the mid-term review of the project is related to the capitalization of all the achievements of the project, their synergy with the interventions of other partners and their dissemination to raise awareness and support political decision-makers, councils officials, forest operators, development actors and beneficiaries in a perspective of sustainability of achievements. To this end and according to the work plan approved by the last steering committee, it is planned the recruitment of a Consultant in charge of capitalization of the results of the project in order to produce and contribute to the dissemination of good practices and lessons learned. This activity has been delayed due to the occurrence of COVID 19 and will start in May 2021. In order to draw out good practices and lessons learned, the project has planned to organize a workshop with the national coordination of the project this year.

6. Risks

RISK TABLE					
<p><i>The following table summarizes risks identified in the Project Document and reflects also any new risks identified in the course of project implementation. The <u>Notes</u> column should be used to provide additional details concerning manifestation of the risk in your specific project, as relevant.</i></p>					

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
1	Climate change impacts (e.g. changes in the water regime, longer and hotter dry seasons, increased incidence of fires etc.)	Low			
2	Forest fires, pests and diseases	Low			

¹ GEF Risk ratings: Low, Medium, Substantial or High

² If a risk mitigation plan had been presented as part of the Environmental and Social management Plan or in previous PIR please report here on progress or results of its implementation. For moderate and high risk projects, please Include a description of the ESMP monitoring activities undertaken in the relevant period.

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
3	Delay in the transfer of funds/payment	Medium	The budget holder has instructed an annual planning of purchase of goods and services for the project. The purchase plan developed will allow the administration to anticipate the payments and purchases necessary for the implementation of the project.	At the beginning of each year since 2020, a planning of purchase of good and services is drafted for the project.	
4	Poor co-ordination between ministries (MINEPDED, MINFOF) and agencies (CTFC/ ACFCAM) and other stakeholders	Medium	There is already a framework for joint meetings between the technical coordination and the national coordination of the project. Similarly, there is a meeting framework with the implementing partners of the project. A framework for collaboration between co-financing partners (GIZ, PFSE C2D2, FEICOM, PNDP, CTFC, etc.) will be set up. In addition to the project focal points at MINFOF and MINEPDED level, it will be necessary to identify within these institutions focal points who will be formally designated and will meet at least once a quarter and / or in time of need to make a contribution and capitalize on the interventions.		

	Risk	Risk rating ¹	Mitigation Action	Progress on mitigation actions ²	Notes from the Project Task Force
5	Changes in political circumstances and govt. priorities	Low	An information and awareness meeting is planned and should bring together the forest administration, municipal executives (including the new elected mayors) and staff from the council forestry units in all the councils targeted by the project.	Staff of council forestry unit are involved of the implementation of project activities and are invited to project meetings.	
6	Lack of interest or non-participation of the local communities in the project activities	Medium	Awareness meetings will be organized at the council level for the populations living near the communal forests targeted by the project.		
7	Lack of adherence to the management plans and continued illegal utilization of forest products by the council executive.	Medium	An information and awareness meeting is planned and should bring together the forest administration, municipal executives and staff from the communal forestry units in all the communes targeted by the project. Awareness meetings will be also organized at the commune level for the populations living near the communal forests targeted by the project.		

Project overall risk rating (Low, Medium, Substantial or High):

FY2020 rating	Mid-Year 2021 rating	Comments/reason for the rating for Mid-Year 2021 and any changes (positive or negative) in the rating since the previous reporting period
Medium	Medium	<p><i>- The LoAs and contracts signed by the project for the revision of forest management plans will only reach 12 out of the 17 council forests targeted by the end of the project and 9 out of the 17 for carbon accounting. Key activities that could allow the project to gain visibility on the ground have not yet started. For example: (i) Training in capacity building of local actors in agroforestry techniques (grafting, cuttings, etc.) of forest species and NTFPs; (ii) Support for the establishment of pilot agroforestry sites in 21 communes targeted by the project; (iii) Support for the start-up of small businesses based on forest products, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Thus the project needs to take swift action to conclude agreements with new partners in order to implement the remaining activities in all the council forests targeted by the project.</i></p> <p><i>- The collaboration with the National Coordination of the project (Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife) needs to be strengthened to ensure the timely approval and validation of management plans. It is essential to actively engage the national coordination in the implementation of the project.</i></p>

7. Development Objective Ratings, Implementation Progress Ratings and Overall Assessment

	Mid-Year 2021 Development Objective rating ³	Mid-Year 2021 Implementat ion Progress rating ⁴	Comments/reasons justifying the ratings for Mid-Year FY2021 and any changes (positive or negative) in the ratings since the previous reporting period
Project Coordinator			
Budget Holder			
Lead Technical Officer⁵			
FAO-GEF Funding Liaison Officer			

³ **Development/Global Environment Objectives Rating** – please refer to Annex 1.

⁴ **Implementation Progress Rating** – please refer to Annex 1.

⁵ The LTO will consult the HQ technical officer and all other supporting technical Units.

Annex 1. – GEF Performance Ratings Definitions

Development/Global Environment Objectives Rating – Assess how well the project is meeting its development objective/s or the global environment objective/s it set out to meet. **DO Ratings definitions:** **Highly Satisfactory (HS)** - Project is expected to achieve or exceed **all** its major global environmental objectives, and yield substantial global environmental benefits, without major shortcomings. The project can be presented as “good practice”); **Satisfactory (S)** - Project is expected to achieve **most** of its major global environmental objectives, and yield satisfactory global environmental benefits, with only minor shortcomings); **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)** - Project is expected to achieve **most** of its major relevant objectives but with either significant shortcomings or modest overall relevance. Project is expected not to achieve **some** of its major global environmental objectives or yield some of the expected global environment benefits); **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)** - Project is expected to achieve of its major global environmental objectives with major shortcomings or is expected to achieve only **some** of its major global environmental objectives); **Unsatisfactory (U)** - Project is expected **not** to achieve **most** of its major global environmental objectives or to yield any satisfactory global environmental benefits); **Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)** - The project has failed to achieve, and is not expected to achieve, **any** of its major global environment objectives with no worthwhile benefits.)

Implementation Progress Rating – Assess the progress of project implementation. **IP Ratings definitions:** **Highly Satisfactory (HS):** Implementation of all components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised implementation plan for the project. The project can be resented as “good practice”. **Satisfactory (S):** Implementation of most components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan except for only a few that are subject to remedial action. **Moderately Satisfactory (MS):** Implementation of some components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan with some components requiring remedial action. **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU):** Implementation of some components is not in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan with most components requiring remedial action. **Unsatisfactory (U):** Implementation of most components is not in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan. **Highly Unsatisfactory (HU):** Implementation of none of the components is in substantial compliance with the original/formally revised plan.