

Scaling up ecological corridors and transboundary connectivity through integrated natural resources management in the Ngotto Forest landscape and Mbaéré-Bodingué National Park

Review CEO Endorsement and Make a recommendation

Basic project information

GEF ID

10347

Countries

Central African Republic

Project Name

Scaling up ecological corridors and transboundary connectivity through integrated natural resources management in the Ngotto Forest landscape and Mbaéré-Bodingué National Park

Agencies

World Bank

Date received by PM

7/15/2020

Review completed by PM

10/17/2020

Program Manager

Jean-Marc Sinnassamy

Focal Area

Multi Focal Area

Project Type

FSP

PIF

CEO Endorsement

Part I – Project Information

Focal area elements

1. Does the project remain aligned with the relevant GEF focal area elements as presented in PIF (as indicated in table A)?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 16, 2020

Cleared (Please, before the board, check that the project duration is coherent in the different documents - 36 months).

JMS, October 14, 2020

60 months is actually the Congo IP duration.

You must decide the project duration at this stage based on your best guess, enter coherent implementation and completion dates, and include the same information in the project document. For instance, if you think that it is more reasonable to plan an implementation date on 06/30/2021 and a completion date on 06/30/2024 , then the project duration should be 36 months. Please, confirm and enter the dates in the portal and the project paper.

We will ask to ITS to change the project duration based on your guidance.

The other items are cleared.

JS 9/8/2020

Thank you for all the clarifications and revisions carried out. In the next resubmission, please make sure to highlight the changes made in the submitted documents and portal entries to facilitate the review process.

1- We note the progress made and understand that coordination with the regional project and the rest of the impact program, which are still under development, has to be step-wise process. Please maintain close coordination with the rest of the program. Cleared.

2- Cleared.

3- Cleared.

4- Thank you for the clarification, but the duration is still "60 months" in the GEF portal entry. Please correct.

A. We note that the full project document contains good elaborations on the COVID-19 context and the project's contribution to post-covid recovery (e.g. paras 43 page 17, 96 page 37) but that they are hardly addressed in the GEF datasheet and PID-ISDS. Please add an elaboration on the project's contribution to COVID recovery and response to COVID-related risks at least on these documents.

JS -7/17/2020

The project remains relevant to the Congo Basin IP and overall consistent with the concept note approved by the GEF Council in June 2019.

1- However, the project's links with the rest of the program, and most notably the regional coordination project and CAR's child project's contribution to the transboundary focus of the program should be clarified. The CAR child project's concept note announced that "Regarding the TNS landscape, [...], CAR will work with neighboring countries to support the regional project in promoting a vision on transboundary landscape management and related instruments for land-use planning, poaching, trafficking, etc.". While we note that the Congo IP PFD made clear that, given CAR's limited capacity and resources, the CAR child project would rely strongly on the regional project for transboundary and regional cooperation in the TNS landscape, the transboundary engagement activities seem limited here to sub-activity 1.3.2 with a budget of \$100,000. Please clarify how this sub-activity will allow for proper delivery of the program-level outcomes related to the TNS landscape, including in terms of timelines to ensure compatibility in methodologies with the rest of the program. How will the planned interventions in CAR's segment of the TNS landscape be complementary and synergistic with that of the rest of the IP in ROC and Cameroon's segments? Please also describe the other areas of integration with the rest of the program, e.g. if collaborations are planned on the strengthening of long-term zoonotic disease surveillance systems in the TNS landscape, the methodological support for land-use planning or the grant mechanism to support IPLCs that are all foreseen under the regional project.

The project is overall aligned with the proposed GEF focal areas elements of table A. However:

2- the sum of amounts for focal area outcomes of a given focal area in table A should match the amount of STAR allocation for that same focal area in table D. For instance, there is less than \$2.03 million tagged to BD in table A (sum of BD-1-1 + BD-2-7) when \$2.54 are used from the BD STAR Allocation (Table D).

Likewise there is only \$0.507 million tagged to CCM in table A versus \$1.196 million in table D. Please correct.

3- Please also make sure while doing so that the amounts attributed to each FA code reflects the budget breakdown of corresponding activities. In particular, activity 1.1 is entirely devoted to the Mbaere-Bodingue National park so that its entire budget (\$2,092,340) should be tagged to BD-2-7. Also, given the projects' activities, LD-1-1 ([...] sustainable land management), LD-1-2 ([...] sustainable forest management, at least to reflect activity 2.3) and LD-1-4 (reduce pressure from competing land uses [...]) should all be reflected in table A.

4- There seems to be inconsistencies in project duration, which is reflected as 4 years to completion (from 12/15/2020 to 12/15/2024) but also 60 months (5 years) long in the GEF portal, when the WB documents present a 3-year-project with closing on 6/30/2024. Please correct.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance of the package and the overall support.

Noted the comment on implementation start date: Given the need for the 4 week of Council circulation which is yet to happen the team agrees that implementation start date of 12/15/2020 will not be realistic. The Portal Data sheet entry has been revised to 6/30/2021 to align with the 3 year implementation period and closing date of 6/30/2024 in the project paper. Thank you for your assistance in resolving the project duration entry which should be 36 months.

September 30, 2020: Thank you for the guidance. Revisions addressing this round of comments have new been highlighted in yellow in the Project Paper and PID for convenience. GEF portal does not save the yellow highlights though they have been entered by the IA.

1. Noted clearance. Thank you. The project design will allow for strong engagement with the regional coordination grant during implementation.
2. Noted clearance. Thank you.
3. Noted clearance. Thank you.
4. The entry box is locked for the IAs to revise content. This was flagged earlier and therefore cannot be revised at our end. Kindly confirm on Portal restrictions. Thank you.
5. Thank you. A new paragraph on COVID-19 was added to the the PID-ISDS in a new para 50 . The text explains the GEF funding's contribution to mitigating negative socioeconomic impacts and supporting a resilient recovery for the country, reducing human exposure and vulnerability to zoonotic diseases in the project area, and strengthening CAR's surveillance and early warning systems for zoonotic diseases.

September 1, 2020:

1. Addressed in Annex III, para 74-76, p96-97 of the Project Paper. Also added a section in the GEF DS (section with the project results framework) to indicate child project contribution to program impact (as template does not allow for this section). This provides support for its linkage to the regional component of the PFD, which is still under development (UNEP).
2. Please note that as per revised GEFSEC guidance on IP related child projects, Table A reflects the overall GEF amount programmed under the IP and not split by Focal area or to tag by FA objectives.
3. See above on tagging funds to focal area outcomes. However it may be clarified that the amounts attributed to each Focal Area have been revised to better reflect the budget breakdown per activity.
4. Addressed. 2024-06-30 is the new, extended closing date of the Parent Project to reflect GEF AF three-year implementation timeline. “Expected Implementation Start” in GEF DS is 2020-12-15 to reflect the need to establish implementation arrangements and related procurement processes so that GEF AF activities do start by 2021-06-30 and are implemented within the three-year timeline.

Project description summary

2. Is the project structure/ design appropriate to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs as in Table B and described in the project document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/8/2020

A- Thank you for the addition of the links with the Congo IP components in table B but please clarify or revise the component attribution. Please notably clarify why component 1 of this child project, which deals with PA, is reflected as related to component 1 of the program, when the latter deals with land use planning and component 2 of the IP is, among other things, directly related to PA management. Likewise, component 2 of this child project includes land-use planning but is not tagged as linked to component 1 of the IP.

1- Thank you for the clarification and revisions. However, the PID still refers to performance-based investment (para. 62) or payment for results (paras 32, 37,) without that clarification . Please also note that "Payment for results" and "Payment for environmental services" still appear twice each in the ProDoc (para 42, 47, 141, 147).

2- Thank you for the clarification and revisions. Cleared.

4- Cleared.

5- Cleared.

6- Thank you for the numbering of outcomes and outputs. However, the hierarchy in the numbering is not entirely consistent with outputs and outcomes being sometimes at the same level (sometimes 2 digits, sometimes 3 digits), making it still difficult to understand which output is underpinning a given outcome. Please revise, ensuring outcomes are all at the same hierarchical level (2 digits), and outputs are all one level below that (3 digits).

8- Cleared.

9- Cleared.

JS 7/17/2020

The project structure and design as described in the draft PAD is appropriate. Two points, however, require some clarifications and table B in the GEF data sheet should be revised to improve readability and better reflect the project.

1- PES / performance-based incentives:

-The draft PAD mentions the development of PES (Para 26, 54, 65, Annex VIII paras 142 and 148). Please confirm that these are in fact the performance/result-based payments mentioned in other parts of the project and not actual PES *stricto sensu* (voluntary, contingent transactions between at least one seller and one buyer over a well-defined ES, or a land use likely to secure that service) that would be sustained beyond the project's lifetime. If so, please clarify in the project description and consider using a single term throughout the text.

-Please clarify the feasibility of the performance-based incentives within a three-year project. Is three years sufficient to deploy sustainable practices, measure performance and provide the payments?

2- Connectivity with the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas (DSPA) and thereby the TNS landscape:

One of the goals of the project is to address MBNP's "institutional" isolation from the DSPA and thus the TNS landscape. Please clarify what is meant by "institutional" isolation, why it is a critical issue to address ecological isolation and deliver Global environmental benefits, and how the project will remedy it. Please also clarify how the project will maintain / improve ecological connectivity. While the project's intervention in the MBNP and its buffer zone appear robust and are set to make a real difference, our understanding is that the main interventions in the vast corridor from the Ngotto Forest to the DSPA are rather soft (activity 2.3; awareness raising, capacity building / training of forest concessions to improve their practice, and notably identify and monitor HCVF or manage bushmeat hunting;). What are the assumptions or incentive mechanism for these interventions to deliver global environmental benefits, and notably maintain ecological connectivity?

For clarity, please also revise table B in the GEF data sheet, by:

4- putting only the objective of the GEF AF project as project objective in table B

5- providing the full names of the components as reflected in the PID (e.g. *component 1: Institutional support: Strengthening the governance and management frameworks for the Mbaéré-Bodingué National Park (MBNP) and corridor to the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas (DSPA)*)

6 -numbering the outcomes and outputs (so that the reader can know to which output corresponds which outcome)

7 -reflecting all subactivities presented in the project document (e.g., the second output in table B seems to be a merger of activities 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4, and 1.1.5)

8- providing the outcomes and outputs for components 3 and 4. Even though there is no additional funds from the GEF devoted to these components, a minimum of information should be provided in the GEF data sheet since the full parent project is reported as co-financing.

9- changing the name of component 5 into "M&E and Knowledge management". The activities 5.1 to 5.5 are indeed rightfully charged as Project Management Cost (PMC) and not as component 5. Component 5 as presented in table B actually corresponds solely to activities 5.6 and 5.7 in the WB documents.

Agency Response

September 30, 2020:

A. Point noted. The tagging has been now corrected in the GEF datasheet.

1. Thank you for flagging that the project paper still includes the "Payment for environmental services". This was an oversight, and as agreed it has now been replaced with "cash-for-work incentives" in para 141 and 147. Likewise, the paragraph of the PID-ISDS on implementation arrangements for "Performance-Based Incentives and Investments" (page 20) was removed in line with the clarification that these would not be the main modalities for implementing project activities benefitting to communities. Please also kindly note that implementation modalities for cash-for-work incentives have also been further clarified p26 of the PID-ISDS "*payments will mostly provide immediate benefits (e.g., communities supporting ecological monitoring in the Park, trail rehabilitation, agroforestry plantations) and may also be based on results (e.g., communities supporting the maintenance of plantations or fire breaks).*" This is based on our M&E guidance and agreement with the counterparts. We believe it is indeed important that agreements with communities not only provide for cash incentives on the first year of the project to implement sustainable investments (e.g. establishment of plantations, firebreaks, park's trails etc.) but also in the following years to maintain them as needed (e.g. maintenance of plantations and firebreaks, park's trails) especially with crops which have yet to enter into production. Related payments will be done through the project operators' monitoring activities (i.e. verification). Given the above, and with the additional clarification now provided in the revised documents, we hope the use of the term payment for results is better clarified.

2. Noted clearance. Thank you.

4. Noted clearance. Thank you.

5. Noted clearance. Thank you.

6. We would like to clarify that the numbering follows that of the project paper and ISDS, with 2 digits for activities and 3 digits for sub-activities (if any). Therefore, 2-digit outputs underpin related 2-digit outcomes, and for sub-activities (if any) 3-digit outputs underpin related 3-digit outcomes. However, for GEFSEC's convenience and as requested, we added 2-digit outputs and outcomes for activities with sub-activities.

8. Noted clearance. Thank you.

9. Noted clearance. Thank you.

September 1, 2020:

1. Addressed. Now referred to as "cash-for-work incentives" as decided during the Bank's Decision Meeting.

See above. As highlighted in the revised Project Paper, cash-for-work incentives will provide communities with alternative income for ecosystem services. Payments will mostly provide immediate benefits (e.g., communities supporting ecological monitoring in the Park, trail rehabilitation, agroforestry plantations) but may also be based on results (e.g., communities supporting the maintenance of plantations or fire breaks). Payments may serve individual or community needs. The type of work, payments modalities, and benefit sharing are specified in contracts which are signed between the project and communities (e.g., through their LCD)

2. Addressed in the revised Project Paper and reflected in the PID/ISDS. While the project's interventions mainly focus on the MBNP and its buffer zone, ecological connectivity with the broader DSPA and TNS landscape will be strengthened through i) WWF's involvement under Component 1 leveraging their experience co-managing the DSPA (since 1989) thereby ensuring consistency in conservation approaches with MBNP; ii) Capacity strengthening provided to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD) agents to oversee impacts of economic activities in the DSPA/MNBP corridor (Activity 1.2); iii) Capacity strengthening provided to the MWFHF agents under the parent project (Component 2) to oversee the forest concessions' sustainable management plans and monitor anti-poaching in the DSPA/MNBP corridor; and iv) close coordination with other projects bringing co-financing to the GEF AF and promoting sustainable governance of natural resources in the targeted broader landscape, including the EU-funded DSPA programs in DSPA and USAID's Artisanal Mining and Property Rights (AMPR). Annex IV presents the theory of change of GEF support and how the components contribute to both the PDO of the parent project and objectives of the GEF CBSL IP.

4. As discussed earlier and agreed this is an AF to an ongoing project and therefore carries the same overall PDO to remain aligned with the parent project and meet the legal obligations. The goal of the GEF investment has been added to better clarify the focus.

5. Addressed. The AF is aligned with the Parent project and the full names of the components are now included in the revised GEF DS.

6. Addressed. Outcomes and outputs were included and numbered for each activity and sub-activity.

7. Addressed as explained above.

8. Addressed to include outcomes and outputs of the parent project under components 3 and 4.

9. Addressed. Component 5 now named "M&E and Knowledge management".

3. If this is a non-grant instrument, has a reflow calendar been presented in Annex D?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Co-financing

4. Are the confirmed expected amounts, sources and types of co-financing adequately documented, with supporting evidence and a description on how the breakdown of co-financing was identified and meets the definition of investment mobilized, and a description of any major changes from PIF, consistent with the requirements of the Co-Financing Policy and Guidelines?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/8/2020 - We welcome the addition of \$5 million of co-financing from USAID with an adequate co-financing letter. Out of the \$5 million of this project focused on mining, \$1.5 million are reported as co-funding for component 2, which does not deal with mining. Please clarify in the GEF datasheet the activities carried out by the USAID project that justify co-funding on component 2.

JS 7/16/2020 - The reported co-funding is accompanied by adequate letters from co-funders and adequately tagged. Cleared.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020: The Artisanal Mining and Property Rights (AMPR) funded by USAID aims to address complex land and resource governance challenges in artisanal and small-scale mining which is a critical economic activity for communities in the area targeted by the GEF project. Co-financing identified under component 2 related to AMPR activities on i) introducing complementary livelihoods, including rejuvenating exhausted mining sites into spaces for productive agricultural activities; ii) and encouraging women and rural populations to adopt alternative livelihoods in an effort to mitigate the environmental damages of artisanal mining while also providing income and food security. This has been clarified under Table C of the GEF datasheet (cofinancing sources).

September 1, 2020: Noted Clearance. Thank you

GEF Resource Availability

5. Is the financing presented in Table D adequate and does the project demonstrate a cost-effective approach to meet the project objectives?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS 7/16/2020 - Yes, they are adequate and within the limits of the LoE and agency fee is at 9%. Cleared.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted Clearance. Thank you
Project Preparation Grant

6. Is the status and utilization of the PPG reported in Annex C in the document?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request JS - 7/16/2020 - Yes, cleared.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted Clearance. Thank you
Core indicators

7. Are there changes/ adjustments made in the core indicator targets indicated in Table E? Do they remain realistic?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/9/2020

1- Thank you for the revisions. However, the total of LD-relevant targets set on GEF core indicators is 1,305 ha (core indicator 4.3) when the project requests ca. \$1.7 million from LD STAR. Please revise to ensure some level of proportionality between targets and funding sources.

2- Thank you for the clarification. Please make sure to correct the WDPA entry to reflect the actual PA size as part of the project. Cleared.

JS - 7/17/2020

1- There are currently only targets related to the BD (indicators 1.2 and 4.1) and CCM (6.1) focal areas, when a good share of the funding also comes from the LD focal area and some expected impact is more related to LD outcomes.

Please report part of the surface area currently reported under 4.1 (improved management to benefit biodiversity) under 4.3 (sustainable land management in production systems), at least to reflect the areas related to agroforestry targeted by activity 2.3 .

2- The surface area of the MBNP reported in the WDPA is 87,200 ha, not 79,980 ha. We note that the attached METT tracking tools mentions that there is a discrepancy between the GIS surface of the PA and its official size. Please confirm that the reported size is the actual physical size of the PA and make sure to correct the WDPA entry as part of the project.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020:

1. It is important to clarify that the project has 1.3 million for LD focal area which are contributing to both CI 4.1 and 4.3. the attribution to these sub-indicators was revised based on earlier GEF recommendations to reflect direct support to the agroforestry systems. Kindly note the budget for indicator 4.3 which is only part of the overall LD focal area (overall the LD focal area supports 700,693 Ha which was estimated during the preparation stage), relates the established of 1,305 hectares of agroforestry systems. Costs include not only initial investment and provision of inputs (e.g., purchase of improved seedlings, processing equipment, etc.) but also incentives for communities to maintain plantation and firebreaks, capacity building activities (e.g., technical itineraries, processing techniques, etc.) and other activities supporting the enabling environmental and sustainability of the project's outcomes.

2. Noted clearance. In discussion with the counterparts it agreed that during project implementation the Bank will work with CAR and UNEP-WCMC to update the WDPA entry to reflect the actual size of MBNP.

September 1, 2020:

1. Addressed including the 1,305ha targeted by agricultural investments (Activity 2.2) under Indicator 4.3.

2. The official area was revised in the METT as per WDPA (tab "Section 1"). However, for consistency with other areas captured in the results framework, the MBNP area in the context of the project is the GIS area, i.e. 79,980ha.

Part II – Project Justification

1. Is there a sufficient elaboration on how the global environmental/ adaptation problems, including the root causes and barriers, are going to be addressed?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 7/17/2020

Yes, cleared.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted Clearance. Thank you

2. Is there an elaboration on how the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects were derived?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 7/17/2020 - Yes, cleared. Annex IV of the draft PAD provides an adequate description of the baseline scenario.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted Clearance. Thank you

3. Is the proposed alternative scenario as described in PIF/PFD sound and adequate? Is there sufficient clarity on the expected outcomes and components of the project and a description on the project is aiming to achieve them?

Secretariat Comment at PIF/Work Program Inclusion

JS 7/17/2020

Yes, cleared.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted Clearance. Thank you

4. Is there further elaboration on how the project is aligned with focal area/impact program strategies?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/8/2020 - Thank you for the additions. Please see comment A on the component attribution in comment box I.2.

JS 7/17/2020

See first comment box.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020: Thank you. As above confirmed, the error in component attribution has been corrected in the GEF datasheet.

September 1, 2020: Addressed. See above

5. Is the incremental reasoning, contribution from the baseline, and co-financing clearly elaborated?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 7/17/2020 - Annex IV of the draft PAD provides an adequate description of the baseline investments leveraged by the GEF AF and related incremental reasoning. Cleared.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted Clearance. Thank you

6. Is there further and better elaboration on the project's expected contribution to global environmental benefits or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 7/17/2020

Yes, cleared.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted Clearance. Thank you

7. Is there further and better elaboration to show that the project is innovative and sustainable including the potential for scaling up?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/8/2020

Please note that there are no paragraphs 68 and 69 in the attached PID-SIDS and we failed to find a consolidated elaboration on innovation and potential for scaling-up. Please correct.

JS 7/17/2020

There is currently no elaboration on innovation or potential for scaling up. The approach to sustainability is explained for some of the main interventions (e.g. support to the MBNP includes support to CAR and its technical and financial partners to define a long-term strategy and roadmap for the management and funding of the PA; a value chain approach to promote integration of beneficiaries of component 2 with upstream and downstream actor) but not for the intervention as a whole.

Please correct.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020: The updated PID-ISDS with sections on innovation and scale-up, respectively in paras 48 and 49 is included in the submission. We realize that the correct version uploaded during the last submission was likely not saved in the portal during submission.

September 1, 2020: Addressed. New information included in new paras 17, 68 and 69 in the PID-ISDS.

Project Map and Coordinates

Is there an accurate and confirmed geo-referenced information where the project intervention will take place?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 9/8/2020 - Thank you, cleared.

JS 7/16/2020 - An adequate map is provided. Please provide coordinates in the GEF data sheet.

Agency Response

September 30, 2020: Noted clearance. Thank you

September 1, 2020:

The coordinates were added to the GEF DS (3°55'28.2"N 17°14'27.1"E)

Child Project

If this is a child project, is there an adequate reflection of how it contributes to the overall program impact?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/8/2020- - Thank you for the additions. Please see comment A on the component attribution in comment box I.2.

JS 7/17/2020

Not at this stage, please see first comment box.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020: Noted. See response addressed above.

September 1, 2020: Noted. See response addressed above.

Stakeholders

Does the project include detailed report on stakeholders engaged during the design phase? Is there an adequate stakeholder engagement plan or equivalent documentation for the implementation phase, with information on Stakeholders who will be engaged, the means of engagement, and dissemination of information?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 9/8/2020 -Thank you, cleared.

JS 7/16/2020 -

To improve readability, please spell out NRGF at its first occurrence in the stakeholder table of the GEF data sheet and add explicitly that it is the parent WB project.

Please also modify, in the line corresponding to WWF, "WWF will implement GEF technical assistance" into "WWF will execute [...]" to reflect GEF's distinction between IA and EA.

In the second paragraph of the text below the table, add explicitly NRGF next to "parent project" to avoid confusion with the parent program (Congo IP).

The rest is adequate.

Agency Response

September 30, 2020: Noted clearance. Thank you.

September 1, 2020: Noted and thank you for the recommendations. Revisions have been made to address the points in the GEF data sheet

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Has the gender analysis been completed? Did the gender analysis identify any gender differences, gaps or opportunities linked to project/program objectives and activities?

If so, does the project/program include gender-responsive activities, gender-sensitive indicators and expected results?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 9/8/2020 - Thank you for the revisions. Cleared.

JS 7/17/2020 - A thorough gender analysis is provided with substantial gap identified. The project includes gender-responsive activities and expected results.

However, it seems there is only one gender-sensitive indicator (*Local communities adjacent to MBNP with increased monetary income and non-monetary benefits from improved natural resources management, 50% women*) for the GEF AF, and that it would not capture the project's anticipated contribution on closing gender gaps related to "*enhancing voice and agency that women hold compared to men in 'meaningfully' participating in the management of local resources*". Please clarify how this dimension would be monitored, as well as which "*non-monetary benefits from improved natural resources management*" will be measured and how they relate to gender.

Agency Response

September 30, 2020: Noted clearance. Thank you.

September 1, 2020:

Addressed, noting that the gender analysis and gap follow the WBG gender guidelines. The task team worked with the Bank's M&E and Gender Specialists and revised the results framework to include a sub-indicator to capture women's voice and agency in activities supporting land-use planning and small-scale agricultural & NTFP investment: "Share of women represented in decision-making committees (%)" with 50% target. Revisions have been made to the Project Paper (Results Framework, Gender section page 32), GEF DS (section II. 3. on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, Annex A on Results Framework), and ISDS (A. Summary of Key Safeguard Issues). In the document package (same sections), examples of activities providing non-monetary benefits have been included e.g. technical assistance to women groups on sustainable forest management and conservation, agricultural itineraries (e.g., agroforestry, NTFPs), storage and processing techniques, marketing to address prevalent lack of information and knowledge, and access to markets outside of their own communities. These benefits will be monitored through the proposed disaggregated indicator on "People residing in local communities adjacent to MBNP with increased monetary income and non-monetary benefits from improved NRM".

Private Sector Engagement

If there is a private sector engagement, is there an elaboration of its role as a financier and/or as a stakeholder?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 7/17/2020- Yes, cleared.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted Clearance. Thank you

Risks to Achieving Project Objectives

Has the project elaborated on indicated risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved? Were there proposed measures that address these risks at the time of project implementation?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/8/2020

Thank you for the clarifications and revisions.

1- Cleared.

2- Thank you for the links. However, please provide the ESRS.

3- The ProDoc contains a good elaboration on risks for this project rated as high risk overall. More specifically on Environmental and Social Safeguards Risks, we note the rating provided in the GEF data sheet is moderate.

JS - 7/17-2020

1- An ISDS has been uploaded but does not seem to be up to date. It indeed states that the ESMF is yet to be developed when the draft PAD states that "the existing safeguard documents (ESMF, RPF, PF, IPPF, and IPMF) have been updated and redisclosed both in-country and by the World Bank in July 2020". Please update the ISDS.

2- As per GEF ESS policy and guideline, supporting documentation is required for high risk projects (such as e.g. environmental and social management plans or frameworks, resettlement action plan or frameworks, livelihood restoration plan, indigenous peoples plan, natural resource management plan, and labor management procedure). Please provide the relevant documents that have been prepared.

3- Risks are well elaborated on in section III of the draft PAD but not in the GEF data sheet or the PID/ISDS. Please provide in the GEF datasheet a summary of the risk analysis, including climate change, and the proposed measures to address these risks. Please notably confirm in the GEF datasheet that no resettlement is planned as part of the project and provide the risks and mitigation measures related to Indigenous Peoples. Please also describe how the project is approaching the risks stemming from improved, increased NTFP extraction and value chains, which could have an adverse impact on ecosystems without providing a conservation benefit. Finally, please clarify why the Technical Design of the GEF AF triggered an upgrade of this Risk Category from Moderate for the parent WB project to Substantial.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020:

1. Noted clearance. Thank you.

2. As had been discussed at the Decision meeting and later in the bilateral discussion, the GEF additional financing falls under the WB's old safeguards policies (aligned with the IDA parent project) and not the updated ESF process. Therefore, no ESRS was needed to be prepared as per the Safeguard compliance. We confirm all needed safeguards documents including the PID/ISDS which ensure WB safeguards compliance have been made available through the links provided.

3. Point noted. Risk has been corrected to High in the Portal in line with the Bank's assessment. At the last submission the portal did not allow for revising the ratings (perhaps due to a glitch).

September 1, 2020:

1. The ISDS officially circulated prior to DM was on older version (issue with the Bank's Portal). The latest DM version was circulated to the Bank and GEF Secretariat ahead of the DM. In addition, the ISDS was significantly revised post-DM in collaboration with the Bank's RSA to address the Bank's and GEF Secretariat's comments. Links to documents provided in the GEF data sheet.

2. The project is designed to mitigate environmental and social risks with specific mitigation measures to address potential negative impacts. It triggers seven safeguards policies of the World Bank: OP/BP 4.01 (Environmental Assessment), OP/BP 4.04 (Natural Habitats), OP/BP4.36 (Forests), OP4.09 (Pest Management), OP/BP4.11 (Physical and Cultural Resources), OP/BP4.10 (Indigenous Peoples), and OP/PB 4.12 (Involuntary Resettlement). As a mitigation strategy, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) has been prepared along with an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF), an Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP), a Process Framework (PF) and a Resettlement Framework (RF). All the documents were approved by the WB and subsequently disclosed within the country on 07/09/2020 and on the World Bank external website on 07/09/2020 ([link here : https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentlist?qterm=P171723](https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentlist?qterm=P171723)).

3. The revised ISDS which is part of the official package provides an analysis of the main risks and mitigation measures is cleared/released by the WB as part of its process. As clarified in the ISDS the project is not expected to require land acquisition or involuntary resettlement of people as the AF will not finance infrastructure construction. For activities that result in reducing access to natural resources or potentially create some restriction of access for some households the RPF and/or PF will be applied. The land-use plans will aim to reduce the impact of traditional agriculture on forest cover and other land use and to increase the annual income of households from developing alternative, sustainable small-scale agriculture, and forest-related value chains. Climate risk management will be mainstreamed throughout main project activities. This includes the participative ecological inventory of the project area carried out under Component 1 (assessment of forest carbon stock and HCVs with related climate risk, link with zoonotic diseases) (see Project Paper para 31 page 16) and land use plans which will be developed under Component 2 based on a collective analysis of the current land-use systems, drivers of deforestation, land and environmental degradation (rivers) and climate change risks and that will support the planning of tailored, improved land management practices to ensure long-term sustainability while simultaneously improving livelihoods and prioritizing investments, higher level plans, and related regulatory processes (e.g., municipality, prefecture, etc.) (para 41 page 18). The risk section in the Project Paper has also been revised to clarify these aspects as per the above.

- Please note that the Project Paper was revised post-DM as per OPCS guideline and the Technical risk rating was eventually kept Moderate.

-

Coordination

Is the institutional arrangement for project implementation fully described? Is there an elaboration on possible coordination with relevant GEF-financed projects and other bilateral/multilateral initiatives in the project area?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 9/8/2020 Thank you for the clarifications, cleared.

JS 7/17/2020

Please clarify whether the two Delegated Implementing Agencies (DIA) mentioned in the draft PAD (WWF and one yet to be selected) correspond to "Executing agencies" according to GEF's terminology. That is, confirm that the World Bank has no intention to delegate the role of Implementing Agency and reflect the DIAs as Executing Agency in the GEF data sheet (first page).

Agency Response

September 30, 2020: Noted clearance. Thank you.

September 1, 2020: DIAs are project's contractors under the supervision of the Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries. The MWFHF remains the Executing Agency. There is no delegation of the role of Executing Agency. Compared to another contractor the DIA is being delegated day-to-day tasks (e.g. for fiduciary, safeguards) but the PIU keeps overall responsibility (MWFHF). There is no change at the level of the WB which remains the Implementing Agency.

Consistency with National Priorities

Has the project described the alignment of the project with identified national strategies and plans or reports and assessments under the relevant conventions?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 9/8/2020 - Cleared.

JS 7/17/2020

Although it seems warranted, the alignment of the project with CAR's strategies under the UNFCCC, CBD or UNCCD is not described. Please correct.

Agency Response

September 30, 2020: Noted clearance. Thank you.

September 1, 2020: Section I. F of the GEF DS clarifies the Project is aligned with UNFCCC, UNCCD, CBD and SDG goals. The project will promote sustainable landscape management and increase the resilience of the rural population to climate change (SDG-15, SDG-13). It will contribute to poverty reduction and inclusive and sustainable economic growth (SDG-1, SDG-8). It aligns with 2020 Aichi Targets 1,2,5,7,11, 12, 14 and 15. In addition, the Project Paper was revised to include these aspects (Section I.A para 19)

Knowledge Management

Is the proposed “Knowledge Management Approach” for the project adequately elaborated with a timeline and a set of deliverables?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/8/2020 - Thank you for the clarifications. However, the highlighted paragraphs contain very little specific information beyond the collection of potential elements of a KM plan. There is still no timeline or anticipated deliverables. Please be more explicit on the specific KM approach the project will use.

We note paragraph 72 in Annex 1 mentions that the KM budget will enable "CAR's participation in global and regional learning activities organized by the GEF-7 CBSL regional coordination project". However, the budget provided has a specific KM budget line (\$60,000) and also two lines on "Participation regional component of the GEF CBSL Impact Program" for a total of \$70,000. Please clarify.

JS 7/17/2020 - While the M&E approach is detailed (notably in annex V of the draft PAD), the knowledge management approach is little described beyond a reference to the Congo IP regional project. They seems to be no timeline or set of deliverables.

Please provide your Knowledge Management Approach, which may include:

- an overview of existing lessons and best practice that informed the project's approach
- plans to learn from relevant projects, programs, initiatives & evaluations
- proposed processes to capture, assess and document info, lessons, best practice & expertise generated during implementation
- proposed tools and methods for knowledge exchange, learning & collaboration
- proposed knowledge outputs to be produced and shared with stakeholders
- a discussion on how knowledge and learning will contribute to overall project/program impact and sustainability
- plans for strategic communications

In any case, please specific links with the Congo IP regional project's knowledge management approach.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020:

The project paper (para 58 and Annex I para 72) and PID-ISDS (paras 70-71), have been revised to include more specific information on the scope of the KM activities and these will continue through out the life of the project. Also kindly note that owing to the COVID implications the activities will be adjusted as per the country situation as it evolves and adapted to the context then. The overall KM approach of the project includes KM activities that cut across the project components and broadly will aim to build broader capacity and ensure wider stakeholder engagement in the policy work supported under Components 1 and 2 and overall project coordination with the CBSL program. KM activities as defined for the project scope will aim to raise broad awareness on the project's outputs and emerging knowledge, in particular in-country, and build the related capacities for both national, and regional transboundary cooperation. Specific KM budget under Component 5 (USD 60,000) will finance communication material (e.g. reports, videos etc.), workshops, training and project site visits and will be organized throughout the project's lifetime. In addition, these activities under the KM subcomponent will also directly support outcomes of activity 1.3.2 (component 1) which allows for the project's overall regional transboundary cooperation activities including participation in and selected contribution to the CBSL regional coordination activities. Costs for participation in CBSL conferences and technical inputs are therefore mapped therein.

September 1, 2020: Addressed. Thank you for the recommendations. Please refer to Project Paper (Annex I, para 72; Annex IV para 75-77) which further describes the KM elements

Monitoring and Evaluation

Does the project include a budgeted M&E Plan that monitors and measures results with indicators and targets?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 7/17/2020 - Yes, cleared.

Agency Response September 1, 2020: Noted Clearance. Thank you

Benefits

Are the socioeconomic benefits at the national and local levels sufficiently described resulting from the project? Is there an elaboration on how these benefits translate in supporting the achievement of GEBs or adaptation benefits?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 7/17/2020 - Yes, cleared.

Agency Response September 1, 2020: Noted Clearance. Thank you

Annexes

Are all the required annexes attached and adequately responded to?

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/9/2020

Thank you for the clarification and revisions.

On annex F/core indicators, please see comments in comment box I.7.

In Annex G, please remove "payment for ecosystem services" in the taxonomy.

Thank you for the budget following the new GEF template. We note the budget lines dedicated to the acquisition of \$143,800 of vehicles and recognize that these are necessary expenses to carry out the project. However, please clarify what are the \$455,000 of "Local communities staff salaries". Please also clarify why « Charges for the Project office » are charged on the project component and not as part of the PMC, or consider revising.

JS 7/17/2020

Please see comment box related to risk on missing documents and the need to update the ISDS.

All other necessary annexes are provided but on annex A/result framework, annex B/Council and STAP comments, annex E/maps and coordinates, please see comments below.

Annex C is adequate.

On annex F/core indicators, see comments on core indicators above.

In annex G/taxonomy, please clarify why "land restoration [..]" and "community-based adaptation" have been tagged and consider untagging.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020:

1. Please kindly refer to the response above regarding LD STAR budget and its contribution.
2. In addition, upon GEFSEC recommendation "Payment for ecosystem services" has been removed from the taxonomy worksheet in Annex G.

3. Thank you for the acknowledgement of the project's need related to vehicles. "Local communities staff salaries" was revised to clarify that these budget lines relate to cash incentives for local communities to support implementation of the related activities. « Charges for the Project office » allocated to outcome 1.2 was an error which has been corrected in the revised budget.

September 1, 2020:

- ISDS updated (see earlier response)

- Overall Results Framework (incl. parent project) and indicators updated/created for GEF AF specifically are provided in the GEF DS. The few comments from Council and STAP related to CAR were addressed and provided in the response matrix in the GEF data sheet. Maps are provided and site coordinates have now been included in the GEF DS.

-Addressed. Core indicators have been revised in Annex F as per the above.

- Addressed (untagged).

Project Results Framework

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request
JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS - 9/9/2020

1- Cleared

2- Please revise accordingly the targets set in % in the result framework, which still mentions twice a "20% increase in METT" when the proposed target is now to double the METT score.

3- Cleared.

A. Please add a reference to GEF indicator 4.3 in the result framework along side with 4.1 to be consistent with the revisions on the target set for this project.

JS - 7/17/2020

1- Please clarify explicitly in the GEF data sheet that the GEF-funded project correspond only to years 4, 5 and 6 of the result framework.

2- It seems that the target for MBNP is to go from a METT score of 24 to a METT score of 29 at the end of the project. Given the substantial investment provided by this project in the MBNP the target at the end of the project should be a significantly higher, around 60. Please revise.

3- Please correct the typos on the intermediate target at year 4 for GHG emissions mitigated and on the period over which net carbon sinks have been calculated (it should be 3 years of implementation + 17 years of capitalization).

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020:

1. Noted clearance. Thank you.

2. Thank you. This has been revised in the Results framework (in GEF data sheet and project paper).

3. Noted clearance. Thank you.

4. Thank you. The results framework has been revised accordingly in both the project paper (Table 2, Section VIII) and GEF datasheet (Annex A).

September 1, 2020:

1. Addressed. A sentence was included in the GEF DS to clarify this (Part IV. Annex A)
2. Following consultation with the client and internally with the Banks M&E specialist, the revised target of 48 is proposed. The Results Framework was revised accordingly in all package documents.
3. Thanks. This has been corrected in the Results Framework and core indicator worksheet.

GEF Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Council comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 9/9/2020 - Thank you for the addition of the response matrix. Cleared.

JS 7/17/2020

While no comments were directed specifically to the CAR child project, please add a response matrix for the council comments that were directed to the Congo IP PFD as a whole and are relevant to the development of all child projects. Please in particular to confirm that no logging of primary forests will occur during the implementation of the project, explain the links with CAFI and clarify how the comments from Norway on the risk assessment was addressed (in particular political, institutional, and financial support to the objective of the CBSL IP from national governments, private sector investment; resistance/ complexity related to transboundary collaboration).

Agency Response

September 30, 2020: Noted Clearance. Thank you

September 1, 2020: Thank you noted. Clarifications relating to CAR within the context of the PFD have been provided in the STAP and Council response matrix included in the submission package.

-

STAP comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, October 14, 2020

Cleared.

JS 9/9/2020 - Thank you for the addition of the response matrix. However, there is a typo with the last two rows, which both bear the same entry in the first column. It seems the response in the second to last row is actually a response to the first STAP comment and not to the one shown the second to last row. Please correct.

JS 7/17/2020

Please add a response matrix for the STAP comments that were directed to the Congo IP PFD and are relevant to the CAR child project, notably on the barriers to effective participation of Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLCs) and women in consultations and planning processes. One comment was specifically addressed to the CAR project on its approach between "alternative" livelihoods vs. empowering communities to play a role in managing forests/wildlife.

Agency Response

October 16, 2020: Thank you for the clearance

September 30, 2020: Noted. This was an error which has now been corrected in the response matrix.

September 1, 2020: Please see responses to the STAP comments in the STAP and Council response matrix included in the submission package (GEF data sheet).

Convention Secretariat comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Other Agencies comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

CSOs comments

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Status of PPG utilization

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request Cleared.

Agency Response **September 1, 2020:** Noted clearance. Thank you.

Calendar of expected reflows (if NGI is used)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request NA

Agency Response

Project maps and coordinates

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JS 9/9/2020 -Cleared

JS 7/17/2020 - An adequate map is provided. Please provide coordinates.

Agency Response

September 1, 2020: Noted clearance. Thank you

September 1, 2020: Noted clearance. Thank you. See above for coordinates.

Termsheet, reflow table and agency capacity in NGI Projects

Does the project provide sufficient detail in Annex A (indicative termsheet) to take a decision on the following selection criteria: co-financing ratios, financial terms and conditions, and financial additionality? If not, please provide comments. Does the project provide a detailed reflow table in Annex B to assess the project capacity of generating reflows? If not, please provide comments. After reading the questionnaire in Annex C, is the Partner Agency eligible to administer concessional finance? If not, please provide comments.

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

NA

Agency Response

October 26, 2020: Thank you for the technical clearance. Responses to the PPO comments are provided here as entry is restricted in the section below.

1. On co-financing:

- As requested, the unofficial translation of the minutes negotiations has been provided in the resubmission.
- The EU co-financing (US\$2.8 M) has been removed from the project co-financing plan to avoid any disconnect in the projects GEF incremental leverage. Synergies will be drawn with the program as part of associated baseline actions.
- Overall please note that since 1946 US Foreign assistance to CAR has been only in the form of grants. Therefore we confirm that the cofinancing support from EU, WWF and USAID is in the form of grants. Please also see note sent by email.

2. Safeguards: As had been clarified earlier (kindly again refer to the GEFSEC response matrix provided with the earlier submission), this AF project following WB's old safeguard compliance of the parent project, is designed to mitigate environmental and social risks with specific mitigation measures to address potential negative impacts. It triggers seven safeguards policies of the World Bank: OP/BP 4.01 (Environmental Assessment), OP/BP 4.04 (Natural Habitats), OP/BP4.36 (Forests), OP4.09 (Pest Management), OP/BP4.11 (Physical and Cultural Resources), OP/BP4.10 (Indigenous Peoples), and OP/PB 4.12(Involuntary Resettlement). As a mitigation strategy, an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) has been prepared along with an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF), an Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP), a Process Framework (PF) and a Resettlement Framework (RF). All the documents were approved by the WB and subsequently disclosed within the country on 07/09/2020 and on the World Bank external website on 07/09/2020 ([link here : https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentlist?qterm=P171723](https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentlist?qterm=P171723)). Also there is no section 11 in the portal in the IA view. The above mentioned link to the documents was earlier already provided in the ESS section.

We hope this clarifies the comments and we look forward to the clearance for council circulation.

GEFSEC DECISION

RECOMMENDATION

Is CEO endorsement recommended? (applies only to projects and child projects)

Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement Request

JMS, 10/23/2020: We received an email from the WB's GEF Coordination unit confirming that all cofinancing amounts are grants (email logged in the documents). We also received emails from WWF International, WWF CAR (executing the EU project), and USAID confirming the nature of cofinancing. All the points are addressed and the project is recommended for clearance and Council circulation.

JMS, 10/23/2020, Control Quality: Please, address the following items related to cofinancing and ESS.

1. On co-financing:

- The co-financing letter from the WB is in French. Please provide (an unofficial) translation;
- Co-financing letter from EU makes reference to two activities in support of the GEF project, but the latter (US\$ 2.8M) will be finalized by the time GEF project starts (2019-2021). Please confirm the amount that can be considered in support of the GEF project. As per the GEF co-financing guidelines, the letter should also confirm the type of co-financing (grant);
- As per the GEF co-financing guidelines, co-financing letters from WWF and USAID should confirm the type of co-financing (grant). One way of doing may be to provide the project documents from these partners as evidence, confirming they are indeed grants.

2. On Environmental and Social Safeguards : The project document states the overall risk rating as substantial and WB has attached the “Combined Project Information Documents / Integrated Safeguards Datasheet (PID/ISDS)”. Please, complete section 11 (ESS) in the portal and attach key management frameworks that are relevant for the GEF financing part of the project (many of these, for the parent project, are already posted on the WB website).

JMS, 10/16/2020

The project is recommended for technical clearance, before control quality and the 4-week webposting period.

JMS, 10/14/2020

Please, respond to the pending item I.1 and make information coherent between the portal and the project paper.

JS 9/10/2020- Not at this stage. Please address the few remaining comments and resubmit.

JS 7/17/2020- Not at this stage. Please address comments an resubmit.

Review Dates

	Secretariat Comment at CEO Endorsement	Response to Secretariat comments
First Review	7/20/2020	
Additional Review (as necessary)	9/11/2020	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/14/2020	
Additional Review (as necessary)	10/16/2020	
Additional Review (as necessary)		

CEO Recommendation

Brief reasoning for CEO Recommendations

Cover Memo

GEFID 10357 – Central Africa Republic – World Bank – “Scaling up ecological corridors and transboundary connectivity through integrated natural resources management in the Ngotto Forest landscape and Mbaéré-Bodingué National Park” (GEF: \$7,606,881; cofinancing: \$25.2 million).

Context

This GEF project is processed as an Additional Financing of \$7.6 million to the Natural Resources Governance Project in Central African Republic (CAR) financed by IDA. It is a child project within the context of CAR’s participation in the GEF Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (Congo IP).

The GEF AF targets a specific landscape within the parent project area covering the forest continuum spreading from the Dzanga-Sangha Protected Areas (DPSA) up to the Mbaéré-Bodingué National Park (MBNP) and surrounding Ngotto forest. Despite the ecological potential of its dense and humid forest recognized as Ramsar wetlands of major international importance, the MBNP area remains isolated from the DPSA which limits continuity with the biological richness of the Sangha Trinational (TNS) transboundary landscape. The dependence of communities on natural resources and isolation of the area lead to much poaching and overexploitation of natural resources which severely threatens the MBNP and livelihoods in the Ngotto forest.

Project

The objective of the GEF project is to improve integrated natural resources management and sustainable rural livelihoods in the Ngotto Forest landscape and Mbaéré-Bodingué National Park. The GEF project will scale-up and expand parent project activities to strengthen sustainable management of forest natural resources in CAR and enhance project impact on community livelihoods, resilience, and global environmental benefits.

The project includes a capacity building strategy to reinforce 1) the governance and management frameworks of MBNP to enable landscape integration with DSPA, 2) the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MESD) agents to oversee impacts of economic activities in the DSPA/MBNP corridor, 3) the Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fisheries to oversee the forest concessions' sustainable management plans and monitor anti-poaching in the DSPA/MBNP corridor, and 4) the forest municipalities on local development planning, including Indigenous People issues. The project also includes a KM strategy that will be complemented by the regional project.

The GEF investment will contribute to the components 1, 2, and 5 of the whole operation: 1) Operational support to the forest administration deployed across the four Southwestern Prefectures, 2) Support to forest municipalities on local development planning launched, and 5) project management, monitoring, and evaluation. The GEF is not involved in the components 3 and 4 on mining where other cofinancing partners are present (3) institutional support to strengthen policy and governance in the mining sector and 4) support to artisanal miners' cooperatives in southwest CAR).

Global Environment Benefits

The project will deliver 780,673 ha of landscapes under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (1.2: improved management of the MBNP: 79,980 ha; 4.1: Improved management for BD in the MBNP buffer zone: 699,388 ha; 4.3: 1,305 ha of production landscapes under SLM) and more than 12.5 million metric tons of carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in AFOLU (6.1). 15,880 beneficiaries are targeted, including 7,940 women (50%) and 2,380 indigenous people (15%).

Country Priorities

CAR has made its participation to the Congo IP the main priority under GEF7 assigning most of its STAR allocations. The GEF project supports the decentralization process agreed under the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR. The GEF project will work in synergy with other investments (EU, USAID, WWF, REDD+, CAFI...).

GEF Strategies

The project fits the Congo IP framework and its four main components on land-use planning, forest and species conservation, empowerment of local communities, indigenous people and the private sector, and knowledge generation and sharing.

Innovation, Sustainability & Scaling up

The project proposed an integrated approach that is innovative in the context of CAR. Sustainability elements are included in the capacity building strategy of legitimate stakeholders on the ground, the empowerment of forest dependent communities, and multi-stakeholder platforms at local level. There is a huge potential for replication of this integrated approach mixing land-use planning, conservation, SFM, SLM, and the empowerment of local communities and indigenous people. A complementary support from the regional project is expected to connect this landscape to the transboundary Tri-National of Sangha (TNS).