

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY**ENABLING ACTIVITY PROPOSAL**

Country:	The Republic of Gabon
Project Title:	Gabon's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and Country Report to the COP
GEF Focal Area:	Biodiversity
Country Eligibility:	Convention ratified 14 March 1997
GEF Financing:	US\$ 232,200
Government Contribution:	In kind
GEF Implementing Agency:	UNDP
National Executing Agency: Ministry	Directorate General of the Environment of the of Planning, Environment and Tourism
GEF Operational Focal Point:	None designated
CBD Operational Focal Point: Ministry	Directorate General of the Environment of the of Planning, Environment and Tourism
Estimated Starting Date:	January 1998
Project Duration:	11 months

Background

1. Gabon straddles the Equator line along the Atlantic Ocean by the Gulf of Guinea. Gabon is bordered by Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, and the Congo. The country has a land area of 267,667km². Its population was estimated at around 1,066,359 in 1995, and it is growing at the rate of 2.5% per annum. Seventy three percent of the population live in urban areas, of which 40% in the Capital City, Libreville, which is inhabited by 440,000 people. Gabon's average annual per capita income is estimated at around \$4,788. Oil exploitation, manganese and uranium mining, and timber harvesting constitute the three respective pillars of the economy of the country. Gabon is traversed by the Ogooue River (1,200km long). The country is administratively subdivided into 9 provinces, that can be regrouped into 4 ecological zones (WB 1997, UNDP 1996); that is, the maritime and wetland forests (Estuaire; Ogooué Maritime), the lowland forest zone along the Ogooué River (Moyen Ogooué; Ogooué-Ivindo; Ogooué-Lolo; Ngounie; and Haut-Ogooué), the upland forest zone in the northern panhandle (Woleu-Ntem), and the mosaic of savannas and degraded forests in the south (Nyanga).

2. Gabon lies entirely within the Guineo-Congolean regional center of endemism, and it constitutes one of the most biologically diverse country on the African continent (IUCN, 1992). Swamp forests and mangrove wetlands colonize the coast on the country's western

front, and patches of secondary grassland occur in the south. Rain forests cover 85% of the country and are believed to harbor at least 8,000 species of vascular plants (IUCN, 1990). Levels of endemism are high for various taxa; as an example, in a study of 1,333 plant species 22% were found to be endemic. Also Gabon has 150 species of mammals, and it is believed that the forests of Gabon harbor the most significant populations of elephants, gorillas and chimpanzees on the continent.

3. Gabon is one of the few countries in the world that still offers exceptional potential for conservation. The country is however in need to develop a protected area system to cover its major habitats. In general major habitats are somewhat intact, and large tracts of rain forests remain untouched. Forests and wildlife have traditionally been protected from excessive exploitation, because vast mineral resources such as oil, gas, manganese and uranium have so far provided enough income to drive the economy.

4. Although the pressures on Gabon's biological resources have been less severe than those in many other countries, this seems to be changing. Following a downturn in oil prices from 1986 onwards, increasing unemployment has become a problem. This, for instance, has resulted in an increase in poaching throughout the country. Now there are indications that poaching and commercial hunting would pose serious threats for biodiversity conservation in the near future. The drop in oil prices has also resulted in the decline of the national budget, which is hampering the ability of the country to allocate enough resources for the management of its forests, the environment in general, and biodiversity in particular. Also improvements in timber transportation and changes in logging practices (with new logging companies moving in from Europe and South East Asia) are opening up new forest grounds to the traditional selective logging, but also to clear cutting, which is feared to bring about soil erosions and loss of biodiversity.

5. Gabon does not have a tradition of agriculture or raising livestock, therefore much of the nutritional requirements are met by consuming game meat, fish and imported foodstuff. One of the key strategies of rural inhabitants in dealing with a growing economic crisis has been to commercialize bush meat to supply urban markets unfortunately at unsustainable rates. It is estimated that between 17 and 35 thousand tons of bush meat, representing 2 to 4 millions individual animals, are harvested and consumed each year in Gabon. A UNDP-GEF funded project in Gabon has begun to specifically tackle wildlife trade and devise ways to regulate and manage it in a sustainable manner (UNDP-GEF Brief).

6. Realizing the importance of its biological resources as an indispensable economic supplement to oil exploitation, and in an attempt to provide a means of using them sustainably, Gabon adopted in 1993 a law for environmental protection and improvement (Law 16/93; 29 August 1993), which is complementary to the Forestry Law enacted in July 1982 (Law 1/82). As a result the country has secured a World Bank's loan to support the regulation of the forestry sector in the multimillion project entitled "*Forêts et Environnement*." This project is pushing for the revision of the Forestry Law by the enactment of a suitable Forest Code to account for sustainable harvesting and management of forest products. Also the *Société Nationale du Bois du Gabon* (SNBG) is now established with its own funding mechanism the "*Fondation de la Forêt*." A Forest Action Plan (PAF)

is under formulation, with assistance from FAO and the European Union (EU). The EU is assisting the country in the conservation of forest habitats, such as the management of the Lope Forest Reserve, through its regional ECOFAC (*Ecosystèmes Forestiers en Afrique Centrale*) project. There are also few other forest reserves, such as Moukalaba and Sette Cama. As yet there are no national parks in the country, except the presidential park of Wonge Wonge, which is rather a zoological park.

7. Without much coordination, several public services are in charge of biological resources conservation and management in the country. These are overseen by 4 ministries that keep changing their denomination at frequent cabinet reshuffle. Currently these are: (1) the Ministry of Water, Forestry and Re-forestation (MEFR); (2) the Ministry of Planning, Environment and Tourism (MPET); (3) the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Rural Development (MAED); and (4) the Ministry of Marine Resources and Fisheries (MMP). To improve coordination for environmental management and biodiversity resources conservation, the country has started the formulation of a NEAP with support from UNDP. NEAP is being formulated under a national steering committee, which comprises representatives from the public and private sectors, and the civil society.

8 On 14 March 1997, Gabon ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and ever since the country has decided to formulate a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP), which will be part of, and complement the NEAP. A BSAP will allow Gabon to meet its obligations to the COP and prepare its first national report to the Conference of Parties (COP) of CBD.

Project Objectives and Short Description

9. The principal objective of this enabling activity is to assist Gabon in preparing a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP). The BSAP will define the current status of, pressures on, options for, and priority actions to ensure the conservation, sustainable use, and equitable share of its biological diversity. The project will build on the existing knowledge base to elaborate the BSAP through a process of participatory planning and stakeholder consultation. This will also enable Gabon to meet its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by preparing its first country report to the COP.

10. The Government of Gabon will initially appoint a steering committee to supervise the BSAP process and provide overall direction and policy guidance. Members of the steering committee will be drawn, as a representative sample, from the full range of concerned biodiversity stakeholders. A careful selection will be made to involve within the BSAP Steering Committee representatives from the public sector (government and public institutions), the private sector, NGOs, local communities and the donor community. Also to ensure coordination, some steering committee members of the ongoing NEAP will be co-opted in the steering committee for BSAP. Under supervision of the steering committee, a planning team will undertake the work of the enabling activity. Planning team members will be selected according to their biodiversity and planning expertise. Additional planning team members will be drawn to represent, on the one hand, decision and law makers, and on the other hand, biodiversity resource users.

11. The BSAP process will also draw from different sectors of the society. It will include the organization of 2 national workshops and 4 regional workshops. Regional workshops will be organized for each of the 4 ecological zones that regroup provinces with similar land use patterns in the country. National and regional workshops will be attended by representatives from various ministries, public institutions, private sector, NGOs, tribal and religious leaders, local communities, and the donor community.
12. The planning team will be assisted by one lead national consultant, several national and short term consultants experienced in biodiversity issues. The lead national consultant will coordinate and facilitate project activities. The national consultants will help to run the national workshops, and the short term consultants will run the 4 regional workshops. An international consultant will provide assistance in familiarizing the planning team in biodiversity planning, framing key strategies, drafting the BSAP and facilitating participation by all relevant biodiversity resources' stakeholders.
13. The planning team and consultants will initially undertake a review of WRI/IUCN/UNEP guidelines (Miller and Lanou 1995) for the preparation of national biodiversity strategy and action plan. They will then compile and summarize existing information on the status of, and threats to the nation's biodiversity. This information and other donor financed natural resource activities in Gabon will be presented at the first national workshop.
14. With support from national and international consultants, the planning team will conduct the first national workshop, which will draw together the full range of actors and stakeholders relevant to biodiversity. The workshop participants will analyze the results of the stocktaking and inventory to select objectives, identify key issues and options as well as actors and priority areas for review. In conjunction with the first national workshop and with the help of the lead national consultant, the international consultant will provide familiarization sessions in participatory methods, biodiversity analysis, strategic planning techniques and dissemination techniques to the planning team, particularly to the national and short term consultants.
15. Following the first national workshop, a detailed analysis of the issues and options will be carried out by the planning team with the help of national consultants. As part of this process, 4 regional workshops will put together representatives from local communities and institutions, private sector, government agencies, and donors. The regional workshops will assess various issues and options by region (ecological and land use zones) of the country and involve the full range of local stakeholders in the BSAP process. The regional workshops will be conducted primarily by the short term consultants with assistance from the planning team and the national consultants.
16. The results of the analysis and regional workshops will then be drawn together by the planning team assisted by the short term consultants, and a draft BSAP will be prepared with assistance of the national and international consultants. A second national workshop will invite comment on the initial analysis and draft BSAP. New alternatives and options will be identified and developed to seek consensus among the stakeholders prior to the finalization of the details of the BSAP.
17. Upon approval by the project steering committee and the Government of Gabon, the BSAP will be disseminated widely within Gabon and a country report to the COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be prepared by the planning team. Because the First Country

Report will not be available until November 1998, at the onset of the project the planning team will draft an interim report that the Government of Gabon will present by the COP's deadline for reporting.

Coverage Without Duplication

18. The BSAP will enhance dialogue and consultation among Government ministries on biodiversity issues, and it will build on existing legislation to ensure biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. Also the BSAP will build on existing data to be compiled by national and international consultants under the guidance of the planning team. Significant stocktaking activities will be undertaken to assemble, digest and synthesize the existing information to be fed into the biodiversity strategy planning process. BSAP will fit and benefit from other past and ongoing activities, including donor funded projects. The DGE of the Ministry of Planning, Environment and Tourism (MPET) along with the biodiversity commission (CICB) and the BSAP Steering Committee will ensure that there is no duplication of efforts.

Time Plan and Sequencing

19. The project will follow the sequence of activities recommended in the WRI/IUCN/UNEP Guidelines, with variations as appropriate, based on lessons learned from early country experiences around the world (Miller and Lanou 1995). Activities will start in January 1998 and will last for 11 months.

Activity / Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Establishment of steering committee and planning team	x	x									
Stocktaking, inventory of information (digest)	x	x	x								
Training (familiarization) of planning team				x							
First national workshop				x							
Identification and analysis of options, regional workshops (by ecological zones)					x	x	x				
Preparation of biodiversity strategy, action plan								x	x		
Second National Workshop									x		
Adoption of BSAP by the Government and dissemination										x	x
Preparation of first country report											x

Best Practice

20. The project will follow methodology recommended in the IUCN's "Guide to the Convention on Biological Diversity" (Glowka, et al. 1994) and the WRI/IUCN/UNEP's "Guidelines for Preparing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans" (Miller and Lanou 1995). The BSAP will prepare the grounds and identify priority needs of activities in the fields of biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, and benefit sharing to be undertaken by follow up projects. All nine criteria for best practices will be addressed. The project will enforce the development of participatory approaches in Gabon, by incorporating inputs from all interested sectors of the society and practicing a decentralized multi-sectoral approach to addressing biodiversity issues.

Project Financing

	Product	Process	Total
<i>Stocktaking and Inventory of Information</i>	11,000		11,000
- national consultants	8,000		8,000
- documentation & miscellaneous	3,000		3,000
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options</i>	21,000	90,000	111,000
- national consultants	12,000	13,000	25,000
- international consultant	9,000	11,000	20,000
- first national workshop		24,000	24,000
- training (familiarization)		5,000	5,000
- regional workshops (4)		32,000	32,000
- travel and miscellaneous		5,000	5,000
<i>Preparation of Strategy and Action Plan</i>	23,000	57,500	80,500
- national consultants	12,000	13,000	25,000
- international consultant	9,000	12,000	21,000
- second national workshop		23,000	23,000
- travel and miscellaneous		6,500	6,500
- publication and dissemination	2,000	3,000	5,000
- <i>First National Report</i>	6,500	6,000	12,500
- preparation of first country report	3,000	2,000	5,000
- publication of first country report	3,500		3,500
- dissemination and miscellaneous		4,000	4,000
<i>Coordination and Management Costs (8%)</i>	4,920	12,280	17,200
Total For Enabling Activity	66,420	165,780	232,200

Deviations from Criteria and Norms

21. The project does not deviate from GEF enabling activity criteria and norms.

Institutional Framework and Project Implementation

22. The project will be executed by the DGE with support from UNDP's country office. Under the guidance of the multi-sectoral Steering Committee, an inter-agency planning team will manage project activities with the assistance of national and international consultants. During its early meetings the Steering Committee will agree on the country's biodiversity vision, as well as on methodologies and indicators for assessing progress and performance.

22. The first country report will be prepared following the guidance provided by the Conference of the Parties in November 1996 and in the guidelines by Miller and Lanou (1995). The report will be developed in consultation with diverse governmental and non-governmental agencies,

including both the private sector and community representatives. The report and the BSAP will be disseminated widely upon completion.

Activity Matrix

Enabling Activity	Output	Capacity Building		Public Participat.	Comments
		Inst. Strength	Training		
<i>Stocktaking and Assessment, based on Existing Information</i>					
- biodiversity & biological resources					1
- affected communities (local & indigenous)					1
- cross-sectoral issues					1
- policy and regulatory framework					1
- institutional and human capacity					1
- analysis of root causes of BD loss					1
- technologies for conservation and sustainable use					1
- activities with adverse impacts					1
- existing measures and programs					1
- preliminary statement of objectives					1
- identification of gaps					1
- assessment of existing needs					1
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options to Meet the Objectives of the CBD</i>					
- strategies for conservation	x	x	x	x	
- strategies for sustainable use	x	x	x	x	
- strategies for benefit sharing	x	x	x	x	
<i>Planning and Preparation of a Strategy and Plan</i>					
- national strategy	x	x	x	x	2
- national action plan	x	x	x	x	2
<i>Preparation of the first National Report</i>					
- first national report	x			x	

Notes on the Activity Matrix

1. The BSAP will build on the base of information which exists as a result of the UNDP-GEF wildlife trade project, the joint UNDP and WB supported NEAP, as well as initiatives and projects by the WB, WCS, WWF, IUCN, UNDP, the French Government GTZ, and the EU. However, existing information needs to be digested to fit into BSAP process. Some significant development projects related to biodiversity resources include:

- (a) the WB "Forêts et Environnement" project;
- (b) the WB-GEF regional environmental information management project;

- (c) the GTZ projects on the rehabilitation of training capacities in forestry management (Réhabilitation de l'Ecole Nationale des Eaux et Forêts, RENEF);
 - (d) the EU assistance to the Lope Reserve through ECOFAC;
 - (e) the FAO-French Cooperation assistance for the preparation of a forest action plan (PAF); and
 - (f) the regional fisheries management project (COREP); etc.
- 2 The BSAP will effectively complement and enhance the provisions from existing plans and strategies. There will be no duplication as the MPET will ensure integration of the above mentioned projects and other plans, such as NEAP and PAF, into the BSAP process

References

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Pour Dr Trinta Maganga
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Le Ministre

à
Monsieur TOON Vissers
Représentant Résident du PNUD.

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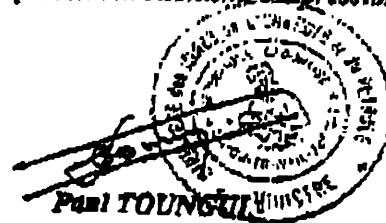
Objet: *Financement du Projet Stratégie Nationale
et Plan d'Action de Conservation de la
Diversité Biologique et du Rapport de Pays
pour la Conférence des Parties.*

Monsieur le Représentant Résident,

*En ma qualité de Point Focal Politique du FEM, j'ai l'honneur de vous faire
parvenir en annexe un projet à soumettre au FEM pour assister le Gabon à élaborer
une stratégie nationale de biodiversité et de préparer le premier rapport national pour
la conférence des parties de la convention pour la Diversité Biologique.*

*Comme vous le savez, le Gabon a adhéré à la Convention sur la Diversité
Biologique depuis le 17 mars 1997. La conservation et l'utilisation durable des
ressources de la biodiversité constituent une priorité pour notre pays.*

*Je vous saurais gré de bien vouloir nous assister à obtenir des fonds du FEM
d'un montant de 232 200 \$US pour la formulation d'une stratégie nationale de la
biodiversité, et vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Représentant Résident, l'expression de
ma considération distinguée./-*


Paul TOUNGUIL Ministre