



PROJECT TERMINAL EVALUATION

“Sustainable Financing of Protected Area Systems in the Congo Basin Project”

UNDP PIMS 3447
GEF ID 2906

TERMINAL EVALUATION: December 2021 – April 2022
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REGION: Africa

COUNTRY: Regional - Africa, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon.

GEF Operational Focal Area/Strategic Program:
BD 1: Improve sustainability of protected area systems

Project Implementing Partner: COMIFAC
Project Implementing Entity: UNDP

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2E	Association Ebyeng Edzuameniene [Ebyeng Edzuameniene Association]
ACODECO	Association Congolaise pour le Développement des Coopératives [Congolese Association for the Development of Cooperatives]
AfDB	African Development Bank
ANDEGE	Amigos de la Naturaleza y del Desarrollo de Guinea Ecuatorial [Friends of Nature and Development of Equatorial Guinea]
ANPN	Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux
APR	Annual Project Report
ASPEC-DC	Association pour la Promotion de l'Épargne, du Crédit et de la Communauté [Association for the Promotion of Savings, Credit and Community]
AWP	Annual Work Plan
BBPP	Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program
CAR	Central African Republic
CBBC	Congo Basin Biodiversity Conservation CBD Convention on Biological Diversity
CJID	Club Jeunesse Infrastructure et Développement [Youth Club Infrastructure and Development]
CODICOM	Comité pour le Développement Intégré des Communautés de base [Committee for the Integrated Development of Grassroots Communities]
COMIFAC	COMIFAC - Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale [Central African Forestry Commission]
CRAD	CRAD - Centre de Recherche et d'Appui au Développement [Research and Development Support Centre]
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EG	Equatorial Guinea
ERUDEF	Environment and Rural Development Foundation
FCTV	Fondation Camerounaise de la Terre Vivante [Cameroonian Foundation for the Living Earth]
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
IA	Implementing Agency
IBONGA	Association pour la Connaissance et la Protection de l'Environnement [Association for the Knowledge and Protection of the Environment]
ACPE	[Association for the Knowledge and Protection of the Environment]
IGA	Income-Generating Activities
IP	Implementing Partner
IW	Inception Workshop
LVG	Low Value Grant
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METT	Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NEX	National Execution
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NTFPs	non-timber forest products

PA	Protected Area
PACEBCO	Programme d'Appui à la Conservation des Ecosystèmes du Bassin du Congo
PAF	Protected Area Finance Specialist
PB	Project Board
PES	Payment for Environmental Services
PIR	Project Implementation Review
PMU	Project Management Unit
PNAN	Altos de Nsork National Park
PPG	Programme Preparation Grant
RAPAC	Réseau des Aires Protégées d'Afrique Centrale
RCGCL	Gran Caldera de Luba Scientific Reserve
REDD	Reducing emission from deforestation and degradation
SNFDAP	Stratégie Nationale de Financement Durable des Aires Protégées
TE	Terminal Evaluation
TEV	Total Economic Value
TFF	Technical and Financial Partners
UEFA	Union pour l'Emancipation de la Femme Autochtone [Union for the Emancipation of Indigenous Women]
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Project Information Table

UNDP PIMS ID	3447
GEF ID	2906
Title	Sustainable Financing of Protected Area Systems in the Congo Basin
Countries	Regional – Africa: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Dem. Rep. of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon.
GEF Operational Focal Area/Strategic Program	BD1: Improve Sustainability of Protected Area System
Project Implementing Partner	COMIFAC
Project Implementing Entity	UNDP
Project Type	Full Size
Evaluation team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Francis Staub, International Consultant• Alain Noël Ampolo, National Consultant, Congo• Dr. Ntoko Vivian Njole, National Consultant, Cameroon• Boniface Nzonikoua, National Consultant, Central African Republic (CAR)

1.2. Project Description (brief)

The regional full sized GEF-UNDP project entitled “Partnerships for Biodiversity Conservation: Sustainable Financing of Protected Area Systems in the Congo Basin” is a NEX 5-year project developed under GEF 4. The project document was signed in October / November 2015 and the inception workshop was held in June 2017 (all the key dates of the project are available in section 3.1. Project start and duration, including milestones).

The executing entity/implementing partner is the Central African Forestry Commission (COMIFAC) and the implementing entity is the United Nations Development Programme. The six participating countries are: Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo, and Democratic Republic of Congo.

The initial total project cost is \$USD 34,583 USD million, comprising a GEF grant of a total amount \$USD 8,181,818 million.

Protected Areas (PA) in the Congo Basin represent a valuable natural asset, which if managed wisely and sustainably will continue to yield these economic values. Altogether, the six countries within the project have thus far established approximately 278 PAs covering some 56.5 million hectares. However, the regional protected areas network is functioning at sub-

optimal level. The level of investment, current expenditures levels and management effectiveness of protected areas are currently low in the six Congo Basin countries¹.

The project design aimed to address barriers to PA financial sustainability within six Congo Basin countries. The project offered an approach and a methodology for addressing the PA financing challenge at local, national, and regional levels. Its objective was to have in place capacities, institutional frameworks, and model mechanisms for the long-term financial sustainability of PA systems and associated ecosystems within six Congo Basin countries. It aimed to achieve this objective through three interconnected and complementary outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Legal, policy and institutional frameworks to support sustainable conservation financing strengthened at regional and national levels.
- Outcome 2: Enhanced /innovative revenue generation, management and disbursement mechanisms piloted.
- Outcome 3: Business planning and cost-effective management tools applied at PAs are being applied and associated landscapes.

The project experienced significant delays even before endorsement having originally been conceived in 2005 (under GEF 4) and only planned to start in 2011 (following CEO approval in June 2011 and GEF agency approval in October 2011). The project was signed in October 2015. However, due to issues related to institutional arrangements, this project only commenced in early 2017 (the inception workshop was held in June 2017). As a result, key project milestones, including the inception workshop and recruitment of the personal for the Project Management Unit (PMU), were delayed. The team (PAF, M&E and communication experts) continued to be in place over 1-year after the inception workshop. The project was only fully operational late 2018/early 2019. Moreover, assessments and findings of the Programme Preparation Grant (PPG) phase (in 2009) were no longer relevant due to national circumstances rapidly evolving throughout the 9-year period.

1.3. Evaluation Ratings Table

Review criteria	Sub criteria	Rating
Monitoring and evaluation	Design at entering	Highly satisfactory
	Implementation	Satisfactory
	Overall	Satisfactory
Project implementation	UNDP implementation oversight	Highly satisfactory
	Implementation partner execution	Satisfactory
	Overall project implementation/execution	Highly satisfactory
Progress towards objective and expected outcome	Objective	Satisfactory
	Outcome 1	Satisfactory
	Outcome 2	Moderately satisfactory
	Outcome 3	Moderately satisfactory
Project design & implementation	Relevance	Satisfactory
	Effectiveness	Satisfactory
	Efficiency	Satisfactory
	Overall outcome	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Finance	Unlikely
	Socio-economic	Unlikely
	Institutional framework and governance	Moderately unlikely

¹ From the ProDoc

Environmental	Moderately unlikely
Overall likelihood	Moderately unlikely

1.4. Concise summary of findings, conclusions and lessons learned

Overall, the project experienced significant delays even before endorsement having originally been conceived in 2005 (under GEF 4) and only planned to start in 2011 (following CEO approval in June 2011 and GEF agency approval in October 2011). The project was signed in October 2015. However, due to issues related to institutional arrangements, this project only commenced in early 2017 (the inception workshop was held in June 2017). As a result, key project milestones, including the inception workshop and recruitment of the personnel for the Project Management Unit (PMU), were delayed. These delays were further compounded by the impact and resultant barriers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these major obstacles, the project demonstrated strong adaptive management mechanisms. To support communities affected by COVID-19 and to build community resilience, the project established a Low Value Grant (LVG) programme to support the generation of Income-Generating Activities (IGA) **enabling communities to remain mobilised in their efforts for the conservation of biodiversity**. This activity which aimed at social and environmental sustainability, and which was not initially planned in component 3 of the regional project. The project evidenced the importance and value of the LVGs and the generation of IGAs, supporting 12 projects across the 6 countries of the project.

Additionally, COMIFAC was strengthened especially with consideration to financial management capacities through the development of anti-fraud, anti-corruption, and conflict interest policies being developed with council members, project implementation and operational procedures developed and increase technical capacity through the establishment of technical teams in biodiversity, climate change, monitoring and evaluation and communication.

As a result of participation in BIOFIN African regional workshops, Gabon joined the BIOFIN programme, becoming a member within preparatory phase. Moreover, **over 75 reports and documents were produced across the six countries**, including the Strategy (SNFDAP/CBD) reports for each country – demonstrating a wealth of produced information.

However, a key finding of the TE is that while each SNFDAP has been produced and provided to countries – there was a lack of implementation of their respective contents, most notably the development, and establishment, of trust funds and sustainable financing mechanisms. While countries have access to the necessary information to test and establish these mechanisms, there is no evidence that these actions will be implemented. Additionally, there is uncertainty in the future actions implemented under the project's timeframe due to the lack of implementation of financing mechanisms, the conclusion of the project and the conclusion of the support for countries. While necessary projects may have been developed, it is unfeasible to assume the necessary actions will be implemented without further support.

Lessons Learned

Based on these findings, the following lessons learned are described:

1. **A strong project management unit and a continuity in the staff:** Although the project has encountered certain obstacles (COVID crisis, very late start), its implementation went well. This is largely due to very good management by the project manager and a team that remained practically the same throughout the project.

2. **The importance of adaptive management:** The adaptive management put in place by the project manager was also a key element. In particular, it has enabled the implementation of Low Value Grants (LVGs) and IGAs in order to overcome the Covid crisis and provide support to the most affected populations.
3. The projects must have field components and undertake (quickly) some concrete and visible actions for the benefit of the populations so that they take the ownership of the project and recognize its usefulness. Thus, the absence of field activities significantly reduces the motivation of the beneficiary stakeholders. It is also important not to "promise" more than what will be possible to realize. In the project of the case, the small grant initiatives were a great success and very well received. As mentioned during several interviews, the project ended "on a very positive note".
4. Validate the political will to formalize the process of the protection, involvement of local populations in the implementation of the protected area and involvement of a project leader. These are conditions for the success of a project.
5. **The need for Government endorsement and support:** from the moment the government has a key role in a project (in this case the adoption of a decree creating a new structure), its support is necessary. Even if everything is put in place by the management team, such as awareness-raising activities **at** the level of the interested parties, without the clear will of the government, the official validation stages of certain documents cannot be carried out.
6. **The Importance of building strong government institution and capacity of internal staff to maximise project benefits:** In order to gather strong buy-in and commitments from the Government, it is important to strengthen governmental institution and build capacities. To this end, the establishment of a national management unit at the level of the ministries (when possible) was an excellent initiative implemented during the project. Indeed, the national management unit were able to provide technical support on other tasks (inputs on new legislation for instance).
7. **The importance of effective consultation, engagement and collaboration with key other influencers (e.g., Ministry of Finance).** The effective management of protected areas and the sustainable financing depends on many stakeholders, and not only those involved in the biodiversity management. It is therefore essential to involve all the relevant stakeholders. There is a need to think strategically at the beginning of the project (even better at design, PPG phase) who the key influencers are, and make them responsible to achieve a certain output.
8. **The importance of adaptiveness and flexibility:** GEF and Implementing Agencies of GEF could consider flexibility in terms of sensitivity to radical shocks affecting the system (e.g. COVID- 19). Where such shocks are at a great scale, effecting the entire project team, stakeholders, and beneficiaries, it is unlikely that the project's achievements will be met. A key consideration will be to develop mechanisms to enable a project to adapt to short-term shocks, while increasing resilience to further shocks while still achieving project outputs. This is an important point to consider for the GEF and the IAs in times of radical change while under the urgent need to meet the SDGs and enhance resilience in the system.
9. **Start the exit strategy as soon as possible.** Despite a lot of activities have been implemented and several useful strategies produced at the national land regional level, an implementation of these is not secured. The project would have benefited from thinking earlier about how such documents will be implemented, and in the absence of budget and support from the project team.

1.5. Recommendations

R1: A lot of very useful information, documents and products have been produced for each of the components and each country (National Strategy for the Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas for the Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity, Evaluation of the benefits and economic values, assessment of economic benefits and values , Business plan...). It would have been useful to organise national events to increase the buy-in from each country and to present the produced documents, especially the national strategies.

R2: The small projects implemented through the LVGs and establishment of IGAs have enabled the realisation of many concrete actions on the ground around the following activities. It would have been very useful to develop a capitalisation document. At the end of the project, integrate the achievements from LVGs and IGAs within a document capitalising the main results obtained, lessons learned and outputs transferable to other PAs [Note – an initial capitalization document was produced just before the closure of the project but was not accessible at the time of the mission since the grants were still being implemented]. Also ensure that the project website is still operational at least one year after project closure.

R3: Over the past years, a lot of UNDP projects have focussed on strengthening protected areas finance at the national land regional scales. It would be useful in future projects to take into consideration lessons learned from previous projects.

R4: The implementation of the project at the start was made very complicated because of the severe delays. It is recommended that UNDP find solutions to reduce delays or otherwise to rethink the most affected components (before the start of implementation).

R5: The development of national / regional strategies, business plans and other documents should always be accompanied with financial proposal for implementation.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Purpose and objective of the Terminal Evaluation (TE)

In line with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Global Environment Facility (GEF) Guidance on terminal evaluations (TE) and as per the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the TE, the objective of the TE is to assess the achievement of project results against what was expected to be achieved and draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. Also, the TE aims at promoting accountability and transparency and assessing the extent of project accomplishments. It allows the assessment of progress made in carrying out the activities planned in each of the three interconnected results regarding the overall objective of the project.

The evaluation serves as a summary assessment as it is carried out at the end of the project implementation phase. This summary assessment is performed to determine whether the anticipated effects have been achieved. It is intended to provide information on the relevance of the program and to be aware of i) the project strategy; ii) progress towards results; iii) implementation of the project in the field; and (iv) the sustainability of the interventions implemented to achieve the overall project objective. The main objectives are:

- To evaluate the achievement rate globally and per outcome.
- To analyse the strengths and weaknesses of project implementation.

- To evaluate the quality (effectiveness and efficiency) of the project in terms of current and future impacts.
- To evaluate the Project Management Unit and its action regarding the implementation of the project.
- To evaluate the level of progress in developing the capacities of stakeholders.
- To evaluate the results obtained from the project and its visibility.
- To evaluate the achievements related to the objectives and results of the project.
- To appreciate the evolution of the indicators of the logical framework of the project.

This evaluation is based on information that is credible, reliable, and useful.

2.2. Scope

The TE covered the full scope of project development, from the design phase in 2009 until the end of December 2021. Activities and targets at the regional and national level were evaluated. The performance of institutions, especially the UNDP as Implementing Agency, and COMIFAC as Executing Agency were evaluated.

The TE assessed project performance against expectations set out in the project's Logical Framework/Results Framework as well as the Results Framework revised and approved by the Regional Steering Committee with regards to changes following the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, it assessed results according to the criteria outlined in the Guidance for TEs of UNDP-supported GEF-financed Projects.

2.3. Methodology, Data Collection & Analysis

The overall approach and methodology of this evaluation have been aligned with the guidelines set out in the UNDP guidance for the terminal evaluation of projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). This assessment was undertaken by an International Consultant and only 2 National Consultants and included the following activities:

- A documentary review concerning all the key documents of the project. The project M&E officer contributed by providing all the documents produced during the project (a list of reports consulted is available in annex).
- The realisation of several field missions:
 - International Consultant in Cameroon (January 2022)
 - Mission of the National Consultant in Congo (December 2021 / January 2022). A report is available.
 - Mission of the National Consultant in Cameroon (November/ December 2021). A report is available.
 - Boniface Nzonikoua, National Consultant, Central African Republic (CAR) (January 2022)
- The consultation (interviews) of main stakeholders of the project.

In addition, the evaluators also took into account the conclusions and recommendations of the mid-term evaluation carried out in December 2019 as well as the Project Implementation Reports (PIR), produced annually. Continuous contact with the PCU was essential to plan the interviews, verify information, request documents, clarify doubts and to ensure the TE requirements were fulfilled).

2.4. Ethics

The highest ethical levels were applied during the evaluation process. Confidentiality and transparency were ensured in accordance with the principles described in the United Nations Evaluation Group “Ethical Guidance for Evaluation”. The respective signed forms of agreement of the Evaluation Team are available in the annexes of this report.

2.5. Limitations to the evaluation

Given the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct meetings in person, nor to visit with all the stakeholders involved in the project, and especially for the pilot sites. Despite Terms of Reference were posted for national consultants for the 6 countries, 3 were unsuccessful. Moreover, due to the impact of the pandemic, the mission of the main consultant could not take place before the closure of the project activities, and the departure of the national team. Moreover, it was highly challenging to undertake an extensive review, in detail, of all the published reports.

Regarding the field visits, the following limitations are to be noted:

For Cameroon and Congo:

- Ten days for two sites was challenging given the short timeframe, especially considering the difficulties to access the sites.
- November is the time of the year when communities go into the forest to collect non-timber forest products (NTFPs) especially the Indigenous Peoples'. This resulted in lower participation of project beneficiaries in group discussions organised.
- The timing of the evaluation was the main limiting factor which affected data collection.
- The unavailability of certain officials who participated in the implementation of project activities, compounded limitations with some appointments either being postponed or not honoured.
- Visiting all villages that have benefited from community support within the framework of subsidies linked to the resilience of local communities in the face of the COVID-19 health crisis was highly challenging.
- The dispersion of actors and stakeholders on the national territory, and the difficulty of communication with certain managers of protected areas, based in areas not covered by the telephone or internet network.

2.6. Structure of the TE report

The TE Final Report is structured to provide complete information on the project, from the design phase to the final ratings. An Executive Summary is presented at the beginning of the report, including the ratings and recommendations tables, as indicated in the Guidance for conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects.

The second section covers the project objectives, scope, and methodology. The third section includes a brief description of the SRF indicators and the context in which the project was implemented.

The fourth section provides findings, organized by (a) project formulation and design, (b) project implementation, and (c) outcomes. The main findings, conclusions, recommendations, and lessons learned are presented in the fifth section. The sixth, and last section, includes the report annexes.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1. Project start and duration, including milestones

The project experienced significant delays even before endorsement, having originally been conceived in 2005 and planned to start in 2011 (Table 1). However, due to issues related to institutional arrangements, this project only commenced in early 2017. As a result, key project milestones including the inception workshop and recruitment of the PMU were delayed. Moreover, assessments and findings of the PPG in 2009 were no longer relevant as national circumstances had evolved rapidly in 9 years.

Table 1. Time frame of the project

Month, Year	Action
February 2009	PIF approval
November 2011	CEO Endorsement
October / November 2015	Project document signatures
September 2016	First disbursement
June 2017	Inception workshop
First semester 2018	National staff recruited (11 out of 12)
April 2018	Technical induction meeting with all the staff and country representation
October 2018	International expert recruited (M&E, communication)
January 2019	Finance Specialist
December 2019	Mid-Term completion date
January 2020	Management response to Mid-Term Review
October 2020	Original planned closing date
December 2020 / January 2021	call for expressions of interest for pilot sites
February 2021	SC meeting / board meeting (online)
June 2021	Expected date of Terminal evaluation
October 2021	Revised planned closing date
December 2021	Project closure - technical activities
January / Mars 2022	Terminal Evaluation
April 2022	Project closure - administrative activities

3.2. Development context: environmental, socio-economic, institutional, and policy factors relevant to the project objective and scope

The economic value of the ecosystem services generated by the natural resources of the Congo River Basin is immense, and the economic costs and losses incurred through ecosystem degradation and loss are therefore substantial. Such costs have far reached implications both for national efforts at sustainable economic development and poverty alleviation and for economic processes in other parts of the world.

Such high values strongly imply a high economic and development value to protected area (PA) conservation in the region. In many cases, this value far exceeds those arising from alternative—and less sustainable—land and resource use options. Increasing global recognition of the value of ecosystem services, together with the development of mechanisms such as REDD+ aimed at their monetisation, are creating new opportunities for capturing and conserving the Congo Basin's natural values. Marginal benefits from investing in capital improvements and on-going management of protected areas—particularly beginning from

current low levels of investment—are therefore likely to be very high. However, current spending levels are low, management effectiveness of existing spending is low, and countries are lacking models and tools to take advantage of new opportunities to improve the situation.

The project addressed regional priorities of COMIFAC and in line with the Plan de Convergence notably with priority strategy 3: Conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and priority strategy 6: Sustainable financing. The project was in line with regional and biodiversity priorities and national protected areas strategies.

3.3. Problems that the project sought to address, threats and barriers targeted

The Congo Basin's unique biodiversity and important climate change mitigation services face several threats. The demand for natural resources in the Congo Basin is greater than at any time in the past. In the case of PAs, buffer zones and corridors, a key threat is the commercial bush meat trade, which is often linked to timber extraction. A second threat is deforestation, which is tied mostly to clearing for agricultural purposes, along with forest degradation due to selective logging. Other threats include overexploitation of non-timber forest resources and, increasingly, large- and small-scale mining operations. Additional threats are from habitat conversion for agriculture, roads, and mining. These activities are allowed – and sometimes even encouraged – to take place in ways and at levels which harm biodiversity because of much broader economic conditions and circumstances. While one of the primary underlying causes of PA biodiversity degradation is inadequate funding, a whole host of other economic policy, price and market failures and distortions also act as economic disincentives / causes. The main barriers that the project sought to address are:

- Barrier 1: legal, policy and institutional barriers to innovative financial mechanisms and cost-effective operations.
- Barrier 2: limited technical knowledge to develop and implement new financing and disbursement mechanisms for conservation of protected areas, buffer zone and corridors.
- Barrier 3: limited human and institutional capacities to absorb and disburse financial resources effectively and in a cost-effective manner.

3.4. Immediate and development objectives of the project

The objective of the project was to provide timely financial and strategic assistance to local communities, NGOs, other civil society groups and governments to achieve long-term financial sustainability and sustainable natural resource management of national PA systems. The project also supported increased local participation with the management of PAs themselves. Also, it aimed at having in place capacities, institutional frameworks, and model mechanisms for the long-term financial sustainability of PA systems and associated ecosystems.

3.5. Expected results

It aimed to achieve this objective through three interconnected and complementary outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Legal, policy and institutional frameworks to support sustainable conservation financing strengthened at regional and national levels
- Outcome 2: Enhanced / innovative revenue generation, management and disbursement mechanisms piloted

- Outcome 3: Business planning and cost-effective management tools applied at PAs and associated landscapes.

3.6. Main stakeholders: summary list

Key stakeholders and roles and responsibilities (as provided in the project document):

Stakeholders	Roles and responsibilities
Protected area management authorities	PA management authorities will have a central role in project implementation and oversight. They will be the main target of technical co-operation and capacity building support, both at national and site levels. They will also have primary responsibility for managing revenue generation and disbursement mechanisms being supported by the project.
Ministries of Finance	Ministries of Finance are responsible for budgetary allocations being made to PA management authorities, for approving various fiscal and implementing various possible fiscal and fee-related measures and for a variety of additional matters pertaining to PA finance. They will be, in particular, a target of awareness raising activities related to the economic importance of PA conservation and the cost effectiveness of investments therein.
Ministries of Tourism	Ministries of Tourism will have a stake in issues such as agreements on entry fees and tourism related concessions and will participate in identifying additional revenue generating options related to the tourism sector.
Private sector	The private sector will play an important role as a partner in the project, including as investors in sustainable biodiversity enterprises, concession schemes, etc.
Municipalities	Municipalities in selected pilot areas will be represented in site-level Local Committees and involved in associated project activities.
International NGOs	International NGOs are expected to be heavily involved in site-level implementation; at least one international environmental NGO is active at each of the project demonstration sites and in many cases that NGO will be involved as an implementation partner for site level activities.
National NGOs	Relevant national NGOs will act as important partners in selected PAs and will be represented on Local Committees.
Local NGOs	Local NGOs based in the selected pilot project areas will be invited to local committees and will be encouraged to take an active role in implementing project activities.
Representatives of local communities	Inhabitants of the selected pilot project areas will be made aware of the issues and invited to take part in the decision-making process. They will be represented in the local committees and actively involved in the project activities. Their cooperation will be sought in project implementation including, alternative income development, awareness raising, etc. Heads of local communities and respected community

leaders will be the main counterparts in linking the project objectives and activities to the needs of the people in the project area.

3.7. Theory of Change

The regional project developed a robust theory of change with a good flow between objective, outcomes, threats, and activities (Fig. 1). The theory of change proposed assumed that PA management systems could secure increased revenue and diversification of revenue streams to meet total expenditures required, management objectives and reduction in financial gaps.

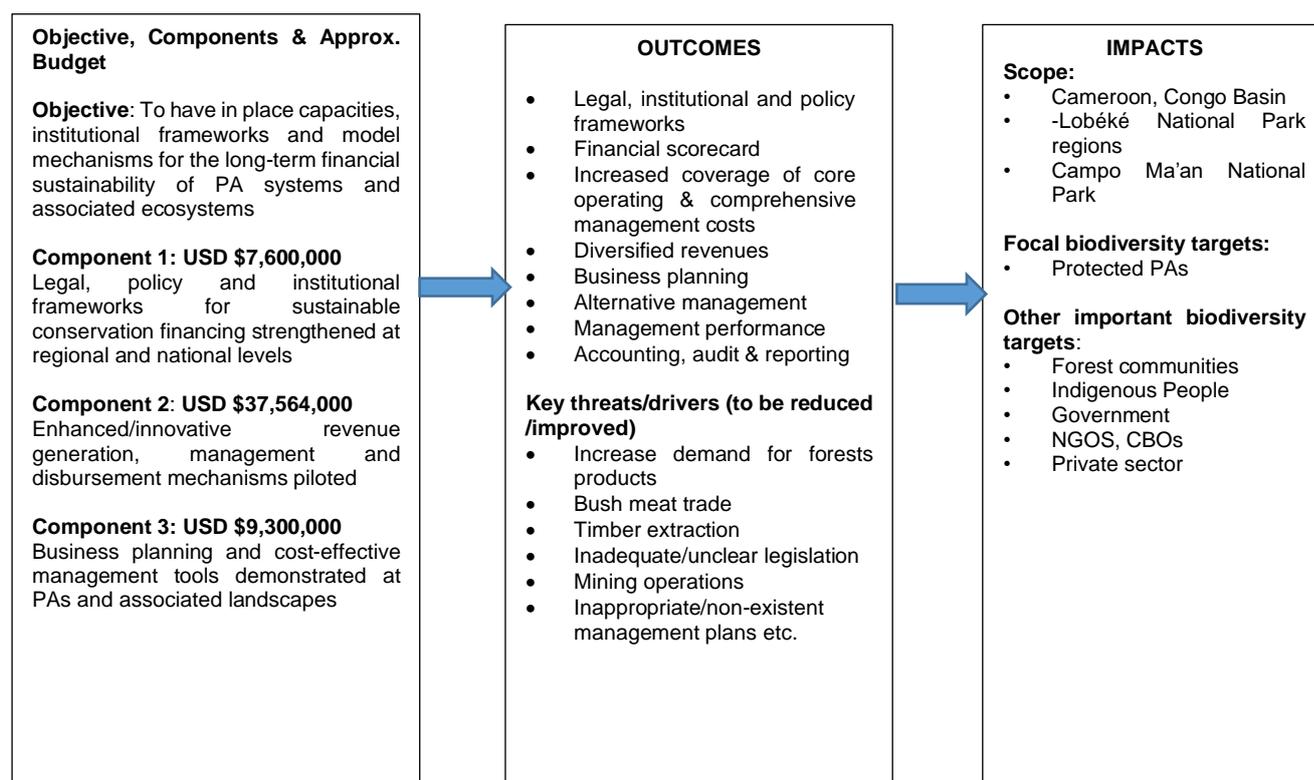


Figure 1. Project Theory of Change (ToC)

3.8. Mid-term review

During the MTR, it was noted that despite these delays, project implementation was underway with significant progress. Key project progress, at the mid-term, included:

- A strong project team is now in place at regional and national level
- Establishment of high-level national multi-sectorial working group on protected areas financing which reviews and validates technical reports produced by the project. It is also an important instrument to mainstream protected areas financing into national and regional decision-making processes.
- Validation of PAs technical assessments related to PAs management status, PAs financing profile, analysis of institutional, legal and policy of PAs financing framework, and capacity needs assessment for PAs managing institutions and action plan.
- Development of draft PA sustainable finance strategies in the six countries.
- Development of knowledge products on potential financial mechanisms for protected areas other than national budget allocation and Official Development Assistance in the

sub-region such as tourism revenues for PA, public private partnership, payment of ecosystems services for watershed, debt for nature swap and carbon sequestration finance for protected areas.

- Validation of awareness and communication strategy and action plan on PA financing and development of the project website to share results and experiences across the subregion supporting the establishment of sub regional community of practice.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Project Design/Formulation

The project was aligned with regional and national priorities and objectives as well as with international commitments on the conservation of biodiversity, and especially with threats and needs identified for the effective management of Protected areas (by addressing the funding gap).

The project identified clear underlying economics drivers of biodiversity degradation in protected areas in the Congo Basin, which include:

- Wealth, poverty and economic needs.
- Disincentives and perverse incentives from domestic economic policies and instruments.
- Global markets and perverse incentives.
- Failure to adequately reflect PA values in economic and financial decision-making.

However, as previously mentioned, severe delays occurred at the start of the project. This NEX 5-year project was developed under GEF 4. The PIF was developed in 2005, the PPG started in 2009, the project received CEO approval in June 2011 and GEF agency approval in October 2011. The project was signed in October 2015 and the inception workshop was held in June 2017. It took 12 years between the concept and official launch of the project. Thus, assessments and findings of the Programme Preparation Grant (PPG) phase in 2009 were no longer relevant as national circumstances had evolved rapidly in 9 years.

For example, the conflict in the Central Africa Republic started in 2012 and in Cameroon in 2017, the financing mechanisms to be developed were pre-identified in 2008 based on the consultation with PACEBco which was already closed at the start of the project in 2017. The project could not build on the results of the assessments undertaken during PPG to develop PA Sustainable Financing System Level strategies.

4.1.1. Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators

Table 2 sets out how the project objective, outcomes and outputs relate to the indicators and targets by which the project results are measured, with Table 3 noting the final achievement of the outcomes against the baseline and targeted financial scorecard results.

Table 2. Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators.

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
Objective: To have in place capacities, institutional frameworks and model mechanisms for the long-term financial sustainability of PA systems and associated ecosystems within the Congo Basin		Annual reports of PA managing agencies	Financial sustainability issues not specifically dealt with in annual reports or plans	Annual reports and plans for PA managing agencies in all 6 countries incorporate financial sustainability planning and reporting elements	Not all the 6 countries have PA managing entities.
		METT scorecard results	Boumba Bek – 66 Lobeke – 73 Monte Alen – 52 Dzanga-Ndoki – 63 Dzanga-Sangha – 67 Virunga – 37 Kahuzi-Biega – 44 Nouabale-Ndoki – 59	Boumba Bek – 75 Lobeke – 80 Monte Alen – 70 Dzanga-Ndoki – 75 Dzanga-Sangha – 75 Virunga – 55 Kahuzi-Biega – 60 Nouabale-Ndoki – 70 Monts de Cristal – TBD Ivindo – TBD Mwagna – TBD	Some baseline data were not available and some of the focus sites have changed during the project timeframe. This impedes review and baseline achievement (where further baselines are not available).

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
			Monts de Cristal – TBD Ivindo – TBD Mwagna – TBD		
		Financial scorecard results (overall)	Cameroon – 31% CAR -26% Congo -12% DRC – 27% EG – 10% Gabon – 22% Regional Mean – 21%	Cameroon – 50% CAR – 42% Congo – 36% DRC – 43% EG – 33% Gabon – 35% Regional Mean – 40%	
		Relationship between level of on-going threats at demonstration sites and site-level	Limited data	Threat assessment to be undertaken at 3-4 pilot demonstration sites. ² Measured changes in threat index, together with	Sites have changes and also the activities to be implemented.

² Sites and methodology to be determined during inception workshop

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
		PA management capacity		data on capacity levels, aimed at demonstrating correlation with increased capacity	
Outcome 1: Legal, policy and institutional frameworks for sustainable conservation financing strengthened at regional and national levels	Output 1.1: PA system-level financial sustainability strategies	Financial scorecard results (outcome 1)	Cameroon – 42%	Cameroon – 61%	
	Output 1.2: PA system level business plan		CAR -27%	CAR – 39%	
	Output 1.3: New / updated laws, policies and regulations required for sustainable financing of protected areas		Congo -12%	Congo – 17%	
			DRC – 31%	DRC – 45%	
			EG – 16%	EG – 23%	
	Output 1.4: Increased awareness and direct support for PA funding and PA financing mechanisms among public and corporate sector financial and economic decision- makers	PA system-level financial sustainability strategies	No financial sustainability strategies	By end of year 2, PA system-level financial sustainability strategies (including targets, policies, tools and approaches) are guiding the work of all six national PA system authorities	PA system-level financial sustainability strategies are not in place/available in all the countries.
	Output 1.5: Institutional responsibilities and commitments for PA revenue retention and distribution procedures agreed and operationalized at national level	System-level PA business plans	No system-level PA business plans	By end of project, system-level PA business plans, providing targets and strategies, have been	PA system-level financial sustainability strategies are not in place/available in all the countries

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
	and in selected demonstration sites			developed in all six countries	
	Output 1.6: Sub-regional-level 5-year conservation financing strategy focused on PAs, corridors and buffer zones approved at national (ministerial) and regional levels	Laws, policies and regulations related to sustainable PA financing	PA laws contain weak or no reference to innovative (i.e. non-government, tourism and donor) sources of financing	By end of project, at least six new financing mechanisms are mentioned and enabled in legal, institutional and/or policy frameworks in at least four countries	This target is also linked to the political will of the government and the steps they are taking to approve laws.
		Active support and participation in PA financing among public and corporate sector financial and economic decision-makers	PA financing carried out with little support or contribution from public and corporate sector financial and economic decision-makers	By end of project, communications and advocacy programmes on PA funding and PA financing mechanisms have been run which include public and corporate sector financial and economic decision-makers from at least ten agencies or organisations, in at least two countries	
		Agreed procedures and formulae in place to earmark	No central system for sharing revenues between	By year 4, agreed procedures and formulae for revenue-	

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
		public revenues for PAs and PA-adjacent communities	PA sites and with centre Limited or no application of community-revenue sharing mechanisms at site levels	sharing between PA sites and centre being applied at national level in at least 3 project countries By year 3, agreed procedures and formulae for community revenue-sharing	
		Regional-level exchange of experience leading to uptake of lessons learned across borders	Structure for cooperation and exchange exists under Plan de Convergence, but actual exchange of experience is limited	At least three documented cases of countries adopting laws, policies or regulations based on sharing of lessons within sub-region	
Outcome 2: Enhanced / innovative revenue generation, management and disbursement mechanisms piloted	<p>Output 2.1: Appropriate and sustainable PA revenue mechanisms developed and demonstrated at pilot sites national levels and within transnational landscapes</p> <p>Output 2.2: Appropriate and sustainable disbursement/allocation mechanisms developed and</p>	Financial scorecard results (outcome 2)	Cameroon – 22% CAR -17% Congo -11% DRC – 16% EG – 6% Gabon – 16% Regional Mean – 22%	Cameroon – 37% CAR – 29% Congo – 19% DRC – 27% EG – 10% Gabon –27% Regional Mean – 37%	
		Use of revenue generating	Over 75% PA funding sourced	By the end of the project, at least one	The pilot sites were selected

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
	<p>piloted at national level and in selected demonstration sites</p> <p>Output 2.3: PA managers and other stakeholders equipped to identify, plan for and implement new revenue generation and disbursement mechanisms</p>	mechanisms at pilot sites	<p>from public budgets and donor assistance</p> <p>PAs unable to cover management costs due to insufficient funds</p>	<p>third of PA funding in pilot sites obtained from non-public budget and donor assistance sources</p> <p>By the end of the project, at least twelve new funding sources being accessed for PA management project pilot sites across the region and bringing in new money.</p> <p>By end of project, at least 4 pilot sites have increased funding by at least a third</p>	<p>very late in the implementation presenting limited time to implement financing mechanisms and source non-public and donor funding sources.</p>
		Trust funds working to deliver long-term financing to PAs	<p>PAs across the region rely on annual budget-allocations or income, or on short-term donor projects</p>	<p>By the end of the project, PA trust funds are functioning effectively in at least two countries or sites</p>	<p>This was a very ambitious target. Creating a PA trust fund is a long and complex process. Thus, creating 2 trust funds during the project was too ambitious. Moreover, the national level “legal” framework</p>

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
					is not in place to create these structures. A more realistic target would have been to assess the feasibility of creating trust, including on the legal side, and propose options, through the findings, and recommendation to move forward.
		Disbursement of revenues to PA centres, PAs and PA-adjacent communities	Negligible quantities of fiscal revenues from other sectors reallocated to PAs No central system for sharing revenues between PA sites and with centre Limited or no application of community-revenue sharing	By year 4, agreed reallocation of at least one new fiscal revenue source to PA agency in at least 2 project countries By year 4, agreed procedures and formulae for revenue-sharing between PA sites and centre being applied at national level in at least 3 project countries By year 3, agreed procedures and	This was also a very ambitious target.

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
			mechanisms at site levels	formulae for community revenue-sharing being applied in at least 3 project sites	
		In-country capacity to identify, plan for and implement new PA revenue mechanisms	PA staff and key stakeholders lack the skills-base and tools to identify, plan for and implement new PA revenue mechanisms	By the end of the project, at least 300 PA staff and key stakeholders from 6 countries trained in revenue generation and disbursement By the end of the project, at least 7 training materials or knowledge products are available and disseminated	
Outcome 3: Business planning and cost-effective management tools demonstrated at PAs and associated landscapes	Output 3.1: Physical and human capacities raised at 13 protected areas across the sub-region Output 3.2: Economic valuation used to define PA financing needs, opportunities and justification to development planners in selected demonstration sites	Financial scorecard results (outcome 3)	Cameroon – 28% CAR -34% Congo -6% DRC – 25% EG – 3% Gabon – 20% Regional Mean – 29%	Cameroon – 38% CAR – 46% Congo – 8% DRC – 34% EG – 4% Gabon –27% Regional Mean – 39%	
		Site-level human resources and	PAs across the region are poorly	By the end of the project, at least 12	Output 3.1 focuses on 13

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
	Output 3.3: Systems and capacities to enable business planning of Pas	infrastructural capacity for PA management planning and practice	resourced and equipped	PAs in 6 countries have well-demarcated boundaries, functioning ranger stations and ecological centres, and trained participants in monitoring, anti-poaching and conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity activities.	PAs, the target notes a minimum of 12.
		Site-level capacity to integrate PA management and business planning	PA staff at the site level lack the skills and approaches to integrate financing aspects into PA management planning PAs across the region do not have coherent financial or business plans	By the end of the project, at least 300-staff from 6 countries trained in PA business planning By the end of the project, manual on PA business planning is available and disseminated By end of project, at least four of the pilot PAs across the region are operating according to an agreed business plan	No indication on the current staffing levels thus it is a challenge to understand if the >300 staff target is feasible. A %-based target of the current staffing levels, and target demographics, would have been more suitable (also preventing weighting within

Project Strategy	Project outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Target	Comments
					specific countries and/or PAs).
		Integration of economic valuation into PA planning and policy-setting	PA financing plans and policies not based on sound economic rationale and information	PA financing plans and policies in at least 3 countries incorporate relevant economic valuation information	
		Monitoring and reporting on financial management performance	Countries across the region lack accounting, auditing and reporting systems in relation to PA finance	Improved accounting systems and associated procedures in place at least in two countries by end of project	This indicator was not smart

Table 3. Analysis of financial scorecard indicator baselines, target and the final scores from 2021.

Country	Component	Baseline	Target	Achieved	Target Achieved?
Cameroon	1	42%	61%	53%	Yes
	2	22%	37%		Yes
	3	28%	38%		Yes
	OVERALL	31%	50%	Yes	
Central African Republic	1	27%	17%	Report available but Scorecard (.xls) not accessible thus the TE is unable to determine the final score.	N/A
	2	17%	19%		N/A
	3	34%	8%		N/A
	OVERALL	26%	36%		N/A
The Congo	1	12%	17%	66%	Yes
	2	11%	19%	58%	Yes

	3	6%	8%	51%	Yes
	OVERALL	12%	36%	59%	Yes
Democratic Republic of Congo	1	31%	45%		N/A
	2	16%	27%	Scorecard is not finalised thus the TE is unable to determine the final score.	N/A
	3	25%	34%		N/A
	OVERALL	27%	43%		N/A
Equatorial Guinea	1	16%	23%	26%	Yes
	2	6%	10%	6%	No
	3	3%	4%	7%	Yes
	OVERALL	10%	33%	15%	No
The Gabon	1	28%	41%	70%	Yes
	2	16%	27%	50%	Yes
	3	20%	27%	44%	Yes
	OVERALL	22%	35%	57%	Yes

The project log frame has a total of 21 indicators, five of which are not SMART:

- **Indicator 4:** Relationship between level of on-going threats at demonstration sites and site-level PA management capacity
- **Indicator 10:** Agreed procedures and formulae in place to earmark public revenues for PAs and PA-adjacent communities; Indicator
- **Indicator 13:** Use of revenue generating mechanisms at pilot sites
- **Indicator 14:** Trust funds working to deliver long-term financing to PAs
- **Indicator 15:** Disbursement of revenues to PA centres, PAs and PA- adjacent communities

Baseline data were missing for several indicators and the baselines provided may have changed at the inception of the project (due to the delay):

1. **Indicator 4:** Relationship between level of on-going threats at demonstration sites and site-level PA management capacity
2. **Indicator 6:** PA system-level financial sustainability strategies
3. **Indicator 7:** System-level PA business plans
4. **Indicator 10:** Agreed procedures and formulae in place to earmark public revenues for PAs and PA-adjacent communities
5. **Indicator 15:** Disbursement of revenues to PA centres, PAs and PA-adjacent communities
6. **Indicator 19:** Site-level capacity to integrate PA management and business planning

The project's results/logical framework places significance importance on the Financial Score Cards, on which 4 indicators are grounded and the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) with indicator 2 under the objective of the project. METT was undertaken at 8 sites during the PPG based on data from 2009-2010. Due to severe delays at the start of the project and a change of circumstances at national level with notably withdrawn of foreseen project partners and increase of armed conflicts in RCA and Cameroon preventing access to some PAs sites, the proposed list of demonstrations had to be revised and the new sites were selected very late during the project implementation (between December 2019 and November 2020), it was not always possible to compare the METT and financial scorecards. However, for Cameroon for instance, the METT was completed for the two pilot sites (LNP and CMNP) and the financial score card finalized.

The project design was overambitious, there key indicators that are developed that are not in the control of the project and thus more assumptions than drivers, this includes the development of trust funds and the political and government will. Several activities were highlighted that seemed unrealistic:

- "Trust funds are functioning effectively in at least two countries or sites". The approach at the site level would have been given priority
- Disbursement of revenues to PA centres, PAs and PA-adjacent communities
 - This was also a very ambitious target. Localised or national efforts, where the appropriate will and structure enables revenue disbursement, would have given priority to developing, and implementing, efficacious disbursement frameworks. This would have enabled replication within other countries, utilising the implemented frameworks at the national-level and project sites to act as a 'flag-ship' – promoting knowledge exchange. This would have decreased the ambitiousness and increased feasibility and success while providing an advantageous and demonstrable example/case of implementation.
- Site-level capacity to integrate PA management and business planning

- The lack of baseline staffing levels with respect to building capacity across the project's focus countries and project sites, presents difficulty in quantifying the feasibility of proposed actions. At least 300 staff from the 6 countries would have been more effectively described through percentile-based indicators enabling a more efficient direction of resources throughout the project's focus region.

Thus, in the context of such an ambitious project, on a very large scale (6 countries), and with limited human, technical and financial resources, better formulation – less ambitious - of the project would have been necessary.

Finally, due to the delay on the project start, the following outputs were not reachable as initially planned:

- **Output 1.6:** Regional-level exchange of experience leading to uptake of lessons learned across borders. The RAPAC project was responsible for this activity
- **Output 3.1:** Site-level human resources and infrastructural capacity for PA management planning and practice - The PACEBCo Project was responsible to deliver on this output, but it closed in 2017.

4.1.2. Assumptions and Risks

The project having benefitted from the GEF cycle 4 funds (GEF 4, 2008-2011) risk management was not a requirement (PIR, 2021). However, the risks/assumptions are clearly enunciated and reflect the threats and challenges which could hinder the attainment of the project objectives and outputs. Before the start of the project, it had to face risks identified during the project design, political instability for example.

The major risks were identified, for instance:

- Political stability maintained
- Social and economic conditions
- Co-financing commitments
- National, regional and local level support
- National-level decision- makers willingness to approve legal amendments
- Legal base enables Trust Fund establishment and maintenance
- Sufficient capital can be raised to capitalise trust funds
- Central government and potential financiers are supportive of a Trust Fund approach

As such, the project was implemented in a risky and challenging context.

Overall, the Project Management Unit led by the Regional Coordinator worked optimally and managed the project for optimal performance of planned activities while managing the day-to-day risks related to COVID19 as well as operational and security risks. Thus, it can be noted that during this period, the team was able to work optimally to achieve the targeted results and reviewed due to COVID19 and new operational, environmental and security risks / constraints associated with this pandemic. The PMU regularly updated the risk log in ATLAS in the following ways:

- Organisational risk related to the weak financial management capacity of COMIFAC. To mitigate this risk, as from 2019, the implementation of (Assisted) NIM started with COMIFAC, while continuing to build its capacities notably by implementing the Plan of

Action issued from their Micro-assessment HACHT. Moreover, strategic risk related to delays in implementation and achievements of expected results were encountered. To mitigate this risk, the project team consulted the Regional Steering Committee of the project in April 2019 and 2020 and requested countries to review expected results of the project and make recommendations related to national priorities and expectations to support project work planning.

4.1.3. Planned stakeholder participation

Stakeholders' engagement was a key element of the project to support the financial sustainability of protected areas. A long list of stakeholders was identified in the ProDoc.

Stakeholders	Roles and responsibilities
Protected area management authorities	PA management authorities will have a central role in project implementation and oversight. They will be the main target of technical co-operation and capacity building support, both at national and site levels. They will also have primary responsibility for managing revenue generation and disbursement mechanisms being supported by the project.
Ministries of Finance	Ministries of Finance are responsible for budgetary allocations being made to PA management authorities, for approving various fiscal and implementing various possible fiscal and fee-related measures and for a variety of additional matters pertaining to PA finance. They will be, in particular, a target of awareness raising activities related to the economic importance of PA conservation and the cost effectiveness of investments therein.
Ministries of Tourism	Ministries of Tourism will have a stake in issues such as agreements on entry fees and tourism related concessions and will participate in identifying additional revenue generating options related to the tourism sector.
Private sector	The private sector will play an important role as a partner in the project, including as investors in sustainable biodiversity enterprises, concession schemes, etc.
Municipalities	Municipalities in selected pilot areas will be represented in site-level Local Committees and involved in associated project activities.
International NGOs	International NGOs are expected to be heavily involved in site-level implementation; at least one international environmental NGO is active at each of the project demonstration sites and in many cases that NGO will be involved as an implementation partner for site level activities.
National NGOs	Relevant national NGOs will act as important partners in selected PAs and will be represented on Local Committees.
Local NGOs	Local NGOs based in the selected pilot project areas will be invited to local committees and will be encouraged to take an active role in implementing project activities.

Representatives of local communities	Inhabitants of the selected pilot project areas will be made aware of the issues and invited to take part in the decision-making process. They will be represented in the local committees and actively involved in the project activities. Their cooperation will be sought in project implementation including, alternative income development, awareness raising, etc. Heads of local communities and respected community leaders will be the main counterparts in linking the project objectives and activities to the needs of the people in the project area.
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4.1.4. Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector

In the project design, several collaborations were planned, especially with the two major, and very relevant, initiatives: RAPAC (the Network of Protected Areas of Central Africa / Réseau des aires protégées d'Afrique centrale) and PACEBCo.

The RAPAC (the Network of Protected Areas of Central Africa) is an implementing and advocacy network that focused on the preservation of natural resources and biodiversity in protected areas of its 9 Central African member countries: Gabon, Congo, Congo DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, São Tome and Príncipe, Rwanda, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic. The network aims to improve the state and management of protected areas, as well as promote knowledge of the value of such areas among the general populace. To inform these efforts, it gathers biodiversity and socio-economic data in the protected areas. Its work comprises the creation of pilot demonstration sites, biodiversity reserves, climate change laboratories, and spatial planning tools for protected areas in its member countries.

The Congo Basin Ecosystems Conservation Support Programme (PACEBCo) was the African Development Bank's response to the concerns voiced by Heads of State during the 2005 Brazzaville Summit on the implementation of the Central African Forestry Commission (COMIFAC) Convergence Plan. PACEBCo supported 4 of the 10 COMIFAC Convergence Plan trust areas concerning the concerted management of Congo Basin forests, namely: (i) ecosystems management; (ii) biodiversity conservation; (iii) development of income-generating activities and promotion of best practices in the exploitation of natural resources; (iv) capacity building, participation, and information.

Over the past years, a lot of UNDP projects have focussed on strengthening protected areas finance at the national land regional scales. It would be useful in future projects to take into consideration lessons learned from previous projects.

4.2. Project Implementation

4.2.1. Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)

The project is characterized by two very distinct moments: delay in the start of the project and the **COVID-19 pandemic**. For both moments, the project management unit has shown great adaptive management, Hence, the project has been able to demonstrate significant adaptive management:

- **Delays at the start of the project:** The project coordinator decided to revise the organization of the project (in terms of staff allocation) and the organigram was changed. 6 national project management unit were created and composed of 2 full time national experts (a management Strategy and Protected Area Funding expert and Socio Economic and Legal Expert). The national teams were in place from 2017. The

recruitment of these experts have been facilitated the UNDP offices in the 6 countries concerned. This set up replaced this initial proposal to have international experts (consultants) per country. National teams (except for Cameroon national team which is currently based in the PMU) were in the office of the national counterpart, which was a great asset not only for the project but also for the country. Indeed, this set up has strength national capacity in terms of protected areas financing, increase information and awareness on protected areas financing issues, ensure engagement of stakeholders and project ownership which would have been more difficult with only the support of part time international technical expertise.

- **New pilot sites:** Following a call for proposal, new pilot sites were nominated by the countries. For the initial list (in the project document), only 4 sites remained the same (marked with *) (Table 4).

Table 4. Table of initiation/pilot demonstration sites throughout the project timeframe.

Country	Sites (in the project document)	Site (following the call for proposal)
Cameroon	Boumba Bek Lobeke (*)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parc National de la Lobéké (TNS) (*) • Parc National de Campo Ma'an <p>(11 March 2020)</p>
Equatorial Guinea	Monte Alen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reserve Scientifique de la Gran Caldera de Luba (GCSR) • Parc National de Los Altos de Nsork (ANNP) <p>(16 January 2020)</p>
Gabon (site selection remains tentative and for this reason no METTs have been provided for these sites at this stage)	Monts de Cristal Ivindo (*) Mwagna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parc National de Loango • Parc National de de l'Ivindo (*) <p>(13 November 2020)</p>
CAR	Dzanga-Ndoki Dzanga-Sangha (*)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aire Protégée de Dzanga – Sangha (APDS) (*) • Parc National de Mbaéré – Bodingué <p>(26 December 2019)</p>
DRC	Virunga Kahuzi-Biega (*)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parc national de Kahuzi-Biega (site héritage du Monde/ Sud Kivu) (*)

Country	Sites (in the project document)	Site (following the call for proposal)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parc Marin de Mangrove (Site Ramsar / Congo Central) <p>(3 March 2020)</p>
RoC	Nouabale-Ndoki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reserve National de Lesio- Louna • Réserve de Chasse de Lefini <p>(16 January 2020)</p>

- **The COVID-19 pandemic:** The virus was first identified from an outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019, and attempts to contain it there failed, allowing it to spread across the globe. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Like everywhere else in the world, the Congo Basin was affected by the pandemic and related consequences. In that context, it was decided to adjust some of the activities. It was – rightly – considered that the direct & indirect (socio-economic) impact of this project will be of great benefit for all local communities and indigenous populations living around and within these networks of national or cross-border protected areas, on which they depend for their survival if some activities were adapted. Thus, the regional project while pursuing its ultimate objective of setting up and testing sustainable financing mechanisms for PAs, will contribute, through its component 3 (Result 3) to address the challenges of building resilience community to reduce their vulnerability to recurring environmental challenges. This is the reason why, with the unforeseen environmental crisis (Safety & security) due to the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), a proposal was made to review and improve the activities planned in year 4 & 5 (2020 & 2021) of the regional project with a view to contribute to the global response to COVID-19 via environmental initiatives financed. Thus, a low impact program was created
- **Low Value Grants:** It is worth noting the adaptive measures undertaken by the project under Component 3 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The regional project supported the implementation of community-based resilience – building projects to improve resilience of local communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to enable them to remain mobilised in their efforts for the conservation of biodiversity through the provision of Low Value Grants (LVG). This activity which aimed at social and environmental sustainability, and which was not initially planned in component 3 of the regional project, was proposed to contribute to the response of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Congo Basin, in particular at the community level through the provision of low value grants.

UNDP defines low-value grants as cash awards – selected via programmatic decisions – to civil society and non-governmental partners to generate and solicit development solutions for which no repayment is typically required. LVGs are typically used to engage with stakeholders who have a unique or distinct perspective on a development

challenge, either because they represent populations excluded from the development process, are able to provide innovative/experimental development solutions or have particular legitimacy or exposure to a development challenge. While grantees often lack “traditional capacity” in some areas, their inclusion in the development and implementation of UNDP projects leverages their technical capacity, relationships, and networks so that UNDP can maximize its development impact.

Funding provided to each grant recipient cannot exceed \$150,000 per grant and \$300,000 on a cumulative basis within the same programme period. To receive multiple grants, the grant recipient must have produced the results agreed to in the prior grant agreement, and a new grant agreement must be approved by the project board or selection committee. The same entity could receive separate grants under different projects with a cumulative ceiling of \$300,000 in the programme period.

On March 11th, 2021, a meeting was held by the Grant committee, under supervision of M. Alassane BA, president of the committee, to select recipients for the 2021-2022 Grants (following a call for proposals launched on the 28th of December 2020). The call for proposals closed on the 22nd of January 2021, **with 49 applications**:

- Cameroon – 14
- Congo – 7
- Gabon – 8
- Equatorial Guinea – 2
- CAR – 12
- DRC – 6

LVGs provide an opportunity to work directly with beneficiaries in which UNDP has a long-term interest. They are not strictly required to a priori prove existing capacity to implement discrete activities, since the grant itself can be intended to strengthen their capacity. To ensure the successful realisation of grants in the pilot sites and taken into consideration the grant period of six months, the project engaged national NGOs.

A clear management response to the Mid-Term Review was provided (in January 2020). A month after the completion of the MTR.

4.2.2. Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements

As mentioned already several times, because the delay in the start of the project, several planned collaborations were not possible, and especially with 2 major regional initiatives: RAPAC and PACEBCo (which was already closed at the start of the project in 2017).

A “project cooperation agreement” with COMIFAC was signed on September 2015.

At regional level, the project has set up a steering committee that includes 2 representatives per country, mostly from institutions managing protected areas and related responsible ministry, and representatives from COMIFAC and UNDP.

The following steering committee meetings were held:

- 14/08/2017 - Partners’ Meeting, Yaoundé, Cameroon
- 09/04/2019, 10/04/2019 - Steering Committee meeting, Douala, Cameroon
- 26/09/2019, 27/09/2019 - 2nd Steering Committee meeting, Brazzaville, Congo
- 08/02/2021 - online steering committee

At national level, the project has set up multi-sectorial working groups composed of a broad range of stakeholder including representative from institutions management protected areas and ministry in line, Members of the National Assembly, Ministry of Budget or Finance, Ministry of Tourism, Civil Society, Private Sector, Donors community etc.

The example from Cameroon

A national steering committee (high level multi sectorial and broad representational working group) was created by decree on the 9th of May 2019 (following decision N°0234). The composition was a below:

President: General Secretary of the Ministry of Forests and Fauna (Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune)

Vice-President: Director of Fauna and Protected Areas of the Ministry of the Forests and the Fauna (Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune)

Rapporteur: Regional coordinator of the project

Members:

1. A representative from the Ministry of Finance (Ministère des Finances)
2. A representative from the Executive Secretariat of The Central African Forest Commission (Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale, COMIFAC)
3. A representative from the Permanent Secretariat of the Organisation for the Conservation of the Wild Fauna in Africa (Organisation pour la Conservation de la Faune Sauvage en Afrique, OCFSA)
4. The National Coordinator COMIFAC Cameroon
5. A representative from UNDP
6. The Focal Point of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the MINEPDED (Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development)
7. The Focal Point for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) at the MINEPDED
8. A representative from a national NGO in the field of conservation
9. A representative from the platform of the Civil Society Organisations
10. A representative from the Technical and Financial Partners
11. A representative from the Sangha Tri-National Trust Fund (FTNS)

The stakeholder participation was good throughout the project with the creation of High level multi sectorial working groups (in each country). To continuously review, validate technical reports and provide useful strategic guidance, the committee met regularly. This proved an important mechanism to mainstream protected area financing issues into the decision-making process while establishing a national dialogue of issues between the Ministry of Finance and concerned technical ministries. However, feedback and communication between the committee and ministries was slow and limited (Ref: Project Progress Report 2019).

Representatives from the 6 Congo Basin countries and COMIFAC participated in 2 BIOFIN African regional workshops in Seychelles and Mozambique to share experiences from the sub-region and learn from other African countries on PA financing mechanisms. This promoted further stakeholder collaboration. BIOFIN is a UNDP managed global collaborative partnership to develop and implement an evidence-based methodology that improves biodiversity outcomes using finance and economics. BIOFIN was developed in response to the 10th

Conference of the Parties (COP-10) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which identified the need for better information on current expenditure and financing needs and for the formation of a comprehensive methodology that helps countries develop resource mobilisation strategies and solutions.

The project allowed the adhesion of Gabon to BIOFIN, which is now on the 40 countries implementing the BIOFIN methodology (<https://www.biofin.org/index.php/biofin-around-world>).

Several other collaborations with the World Bank, USAID, IUCN or WWF took place. This was made facilitated by COMIFAC, which has numerous technical and financial partners. For instance, in Central African Republic (CAR), a collaboration has been developed with the World Bank project on “natural resource governance”.

The implementation of the LVG had a big impact on the implication of local stakeholders in the vicinity of protected areas, reaching 148 groups, representing more than 13,200 people (of whom 45% were women). Indeed, 2 local organizations (3 for CAR) per country were the beneficiaries of the LVG (Table 5).

Table 5. Table of beneficiaries of the Low Value grants (LVG) during the project timeframe.

Country	Site	Beneficiaries
Cameroon	Parc National de Lobéké	ERUDEF
	Parc National de Campo Ma'an	FCTV
Congo	Réserve Naturelle à Gorilles de Lesio-Louna	CJID
	Réserve de Chasse de Léfini	ACODECO
Gabon	Parc National de Loango	IBONGA
	Parc National de l'Ivindo	A2E
Equatorial Guinea	Reserva Científica de la Gran Caldera de Luba	BBPP
	Parque Nacional de los Altos de Nsork	ANDEGE
CAR	Parc National de Mbaéré – Bodingué (PNMB)	CRAD
	Aires Protégée de Dzanga – Sangha (APDS)	CODICOM, ASPEC-DC
DRC	Parc national de Kahugi-Biega	UEFA

The LVG enabled the project to reach an extensive number of local communities:

- In Gabon, 8 groups and community-based organisations acting for the development of beekeeping activities, fishermen, young mothers, and people living with a disability.
- In Congo, it provided support to 31 groups and community-based organisations.
- In the Central African Republic, it supported 44 groups and local organisations for the development of fish farming, pig farming, school rehabilitation, biodiversity infrastructure and raising awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In DRC, funds awarded supported a wide range of activities, including supporting 8 community initiatives, providing agricultural equipment to 10 villages, sewing equipment and training for communities, a community centre for biodiversity.
- In Cameroon, funds awarded to ERUDEF have supported diverse activities, including the support of 25 community groups and microprojects and activities to raise awareness on COVID19 involving over 500 community members.

A complete summary of the capitalisation of the implementation of the LVGs is provided in the annexes.

4.3. Project Finance and Co-finance

The project carried a GEF investment of approximately USD 8.1 million with an initial additional USD 26.3 million in co-financing (Table 6). All the changes in the budget allocation were validated by the steering Committee. Total funds spent across each activity and overall alongside total budget approved and spent are presented in Figures 2 and 3.

Table 6. Table of amount (USD) financed by each donor throughout the project's timeframe.

Donors	Type of financing	Amount (USD)	% =100
PPG	In kind technical support and funds	340 000	1
GEF	In kind technical support and funds	8,181,818	23
Co-financing	In kind technical support and funds	26, 397, 000	76
Total	/	34, 918, 818	100

Two financial audits were undertaken; one in 2019 and the other one in 2020.

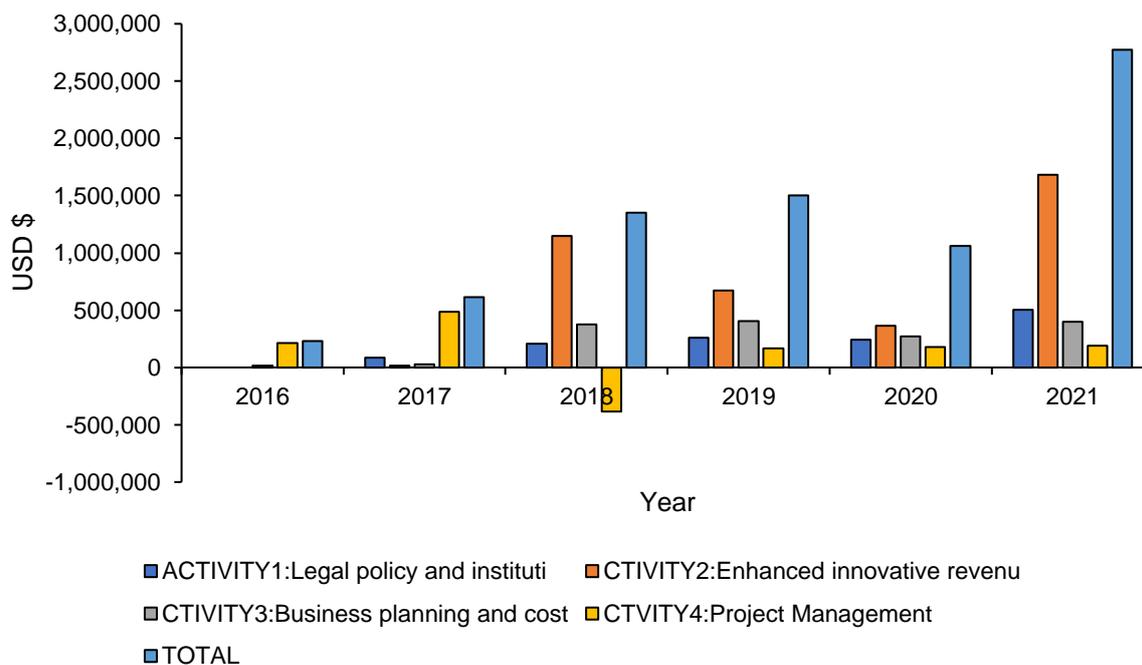


Figure 2. Representation of funds spent in relation to project activities accompanied by total spend during each year.

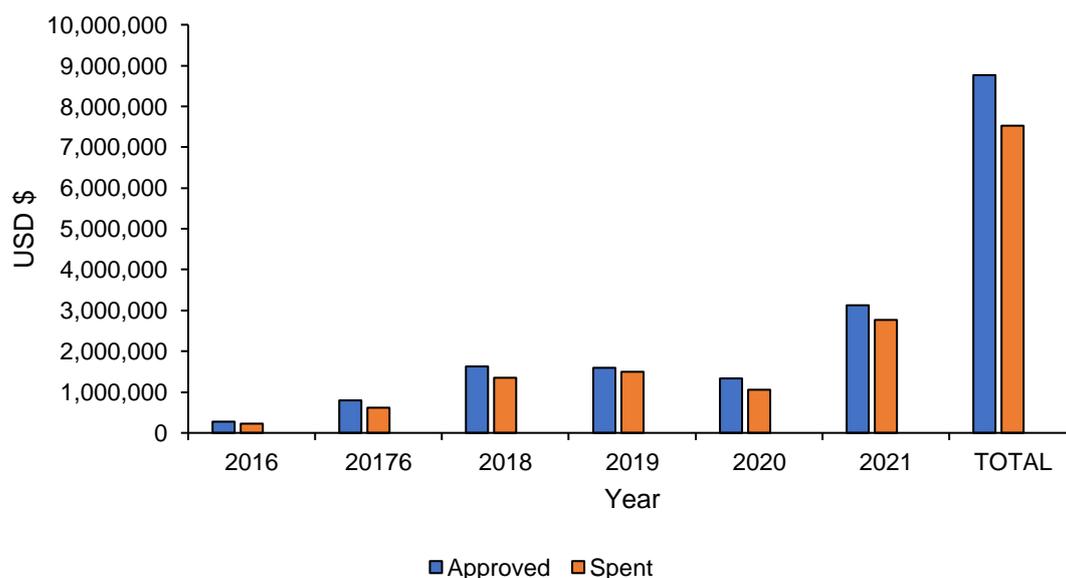


Figure 3. Total approved budget against total spent for the project across each year and overall.

At the time of the TE, USD \$7,523,159 were spent of USD \$8,760,171 approved (85% - below table). Taking into consideration the problems that the project faced, this disbursement rate is very good.

Table 7. Table of total approved budget against total spend through each year of the project and overall. Percentages are provided.

Year	Approved (USD \$)	Spent (USD \$)	%
2016	267,234.00	230,299.00	86%
2017	801,200.00	612,782.00	76%
2018	1,630,364.00	1,351,411.00	83%

2019	1,597,956.00	1,501,302.00	94%
2020	1,331,004.00	1,057,408.00	80%
2021	3,132,413.00	2,770,027.00	90%
Total	8,760,171.00	7,523,159.00	86%

4.4. Co-funding mobilized

The co-funding mobilized at the time of the MTR is presented in table 8. The withdrawal of AfDB initially proposed as implementing agency. As the project PACEBCO was already completed, this reduced by 75 % the amount of expected co- financing to a total amount of 18.1 USD Million.

Table 8. Co-funding mobilised at the MTR

Donors	Type of co-financing	Amount	Investment mobilised
BIOFIN	In-kind technical support and cash	50,000 – 75,000 USD	Recurrent
National government	In-kind technical support and cash	30,000 – 40,000 USD	Recurrent
Others (CNC, OFAC...)	In-kind technical support and cash	10,000 USD	Recurrent

The table 8b is presenting an update version of the co-funding. Since the MTR (December 2019), we can see a significant increase in co-financing (+ 160,000 \$)

Table 8b. Co-funding mobilised throughout the project by each donor with categorisation of co-funding.

Source of co-financing	Name of co-financier	Type of co-financing	Investment mobilised	Amount (\$)
Other	BIOFIN	In-kind	Recurrent expenditure	75,000
Recipient country government	National government	In-kind	Recurrent expenditure	60,000
Other	COMIFAC (CNC, OFAC, others COMIFAC' PTFs..)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditure	30,000
Other	UNDP Country Office (for the 6 Congo Basin participants)	In-kind	Recurrent expenditure	60,000
Civil Society Organisation	12 national Pes from six (6) countries	In-kind	Recurrent expenditure	60,000
			Total	285,000

4.5. Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry (*), implementation (*), and overall assessment of M&E (*)

A regional monitoring and evaluation expert was recruited by the project and a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, linked to the expected results of the project, was implemented (in line within UNDP guidelines).

During implementation, the project produced annual progress reports, project implementation reviews, quarterly progress reports, periodic thematic reports, mid-term evaluation report, technical reports and the final project report have been on time, detailed and informative. The PMU regularly updated the risk log in ATLAS. The TE finds that project implementation was guided by the multi-Year work plan, complemented by Annual Work Plans, which were discussed and shared with the partners and approved by the steering committee. The project had produced an inception report, 4 annual reports (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020), 5 PIRs (June 2017, June 2018, June 2019, June 2020, June 2021), 2 audit reports (2018, 2019), several quarterly reports, mission coordination regional reports and Back to Office Reports (BTOR after monitoring missions). The project used the logical framework as a monitoring tool and effected change on component 3 of the logical framework due to the COVID-19 pandemic which led the project to execute income generating activities in the two-pilot sites to enhance community resilience. A Management response to Mid-Term Review was provided in a timely manner. Moreover, a mid-term evaluation was undertaken for each of the pilot sites, a mid-term evaluation was implemented.

The TE would like to congratulate the M&E officer for the document management system. During the mission, all the documents were available and very well organized. The M&E of the project was considered to be **satisfactory** (Table 9).

Table 9. Summary of the Monitoring & Evaluation

	Monitoring & Evaluation
Design at entry	Satisfactory
Implementation	Satisfactory
Overall assessment of M&E	Satisfactory

4.6. UNDP implementation/oversight (*) and Implementing Partner execution (*), overall project implementation/execution (*), coordination, and operational issues

UNDP Implementation/oversight

The UNDP implementation / oversight can be rated as **highly satisfactory**. Despite delays in the start of the project and the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP delivered effectively on activities related to project identification, concept preparation, appraisal, preparation of detailed proposal, approval and start-up, oversight, supervision, completion, and evaluation.

The project was able to keep a good track of activities through detailed and comprehensive annual reports, update of the ATLAS and good financial management. The PMU regularly updated the risk log in ATLAS.

The regional project manager has always been a force of proposals to move things forward (proposing a new organigramme at the inception of the project, hiring competent staff, modifying the component 3 considering the impact of COVID 19). Moreover, to strengthen the COFIMAC and reduce organizational risk related its weak financial management capacity, several actions were implemented. As of 2019, the implementation of (Assisted) NIM started with COMIFAC, while continuing to build its capacities notably by implementing the Plan of Action issued from their Micro-assessment HACHT. Moreover, strategic risk related to delays

in implementation and achievements of expected results were encountered. To mitigate this risk, the project team consulted the Regional Steering Committee of the project in April 2019 and 2020 and requested countries to review expected results of the project and make recommendations related to national priorities and expectations to support project work planning.

Implementing Partner execution (*)

The Implementing Partner execution can be rated as **satisfactory** (Table 10).

Aligning with the principles expressed by the States Parties in the Yaoundé Declaration March 1999, The Central Africa Forests Commission (COMIFAC) is the only authority in terms of political, technical orientation, coordination, harmonization and decision making regarding the conservation and sustainable management of the Central Africa forests ecosystem and savannas. COMIFAC has elaborated and adopted, in February 2005, a Convergence Plan to improve the preservation and management of the Central Africa forests.

Despite the “project cooperation agreement” was signed in September 2015, and thus before the start of the project, COMIFAC and the PNUD had worked in very good collaboration. Hence, COMIFAC agreed on the proposed changes made by the PNUD to strengthen its capacity.

COMIFAC promoted the project to its partners and always sought for synergies with other on-going projects.

Table 10. Summary of project implementation and execution ratings

	Rating
UNDP Implementation/Oversight	Highly Satisfactory
Implementing Partner Execution (COMIFAC)	Satisfactory
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	Satisfactory

4.7. Risk Management, including Social and Environmental Standards (Safeguards)

The regional project having benefited from GEF cycle 4 funds (GEF4, 2008 - 2011), the social and environmental standards (SES) was not a requirement and in fact a study of the social and environmental impact was not carried out. Therefore, an assessment of social and / or environmental risks was not feasible due to lack of baselines. The TE finds that there was no social or environmental impact to deplore in the pilot PA sites. The TE evaluation finds, either from secondary or primary data, no complaints relating to social and/or environmental impacts (actual or potential) during the project period. However, the project encountered organisational and strategic risks and dealt with issues as follows:

- Organisational risk related to the weak financial management capacity of COMIFAC. To mitigate this risk, as from 2019, the implementation of (Assisted) NIM started with COMIFAC, while continuing to build its capacities notably by implementing the Plan of Action issue from their Micro-assessment HACT (Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers).
- Strategic risk related to delays in implementation and achievement of expected results due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate this risk, the project team consulted the Regional Steering Committee of the project in April 2020 and requested countries to review expected results of the project and make recommendations related to national priorities and expectations to support project work planning.

5. PROJECT RESULTS AND IMPACTS

5.1. Progress towards objective and expected outcomes (*)

A lot of information has already been provided in the Mid-Term evaluation and PIR. Thus, this section provides a focus on the impact of the Low Value Grants (LVG), which were implemented in 2020.

A brief summary of outcomes is provided below:

A substantial number of documents were produced by the project at the national and regional level (Table 11, Annex 2)

Table 11. Summary of available documentation produced and available from each country.

Country	Number of documents produced
Democratic republic of the congo (DRC)	8
Central African Republic (CAR)	12
Equatorial Guinea	14
Gabon	13
Congo	10
Cameroon	21
Total	78

Information exchange and capacity building – Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several activities were held online and the national level to build capacity and exchange information. The below provides a summary of the **28** sharing experiences undertaken from 2019 – 2021 by country:

In 2019, the following activities were held:

- **Congo:** Congo 's experience in mobilizing national stakeholders in the regional project PIMS 3447
- **Cameroon:** Techniques for collection and analysis of data: case of the problem tree
- **Congo:** The design of a guide for the contractualisation of public/private partnership for the management of Protected Areas in the countries of the Congo Basin
- **Equatorial Guinea:** The BIOFIN initiative
- **Democratic republic of the congo (DRC):** Case of the Sustainable Management Strategy and Action Plan for the Binational Lac Télé-Lac Tumba Landscape (BiLTLT)
- **Equatorial Guinea:** Knowledge Sharing Regarding Experience Obtained Durig the Implementation of Equatorial Guinea's 2018 AWP.

In 2020, the following activities were held:

- **Democratic republic of the congo (DRC):** Investing in biodiversity
- **Cameroon:** Importance of the land use plan (PAT) or land use planning (LUP) in the sustainable management and financing of PAs: the case of TRIDOM/Interzone Ngoyl a-Mintom
- **Central African Republic (CAR):** Importance of participatory mapping for the involvement and consideration of the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities in the management of protected areas: case of the Mbaéré Bodingué National Park in the Central African Republic
- **Gabon:** Benefit sharing mechanisms from biodiversity

- **Democratic republic of the congo (DRC):** Mechanism for managing complaints and conflicts in protected areas
- **Gabon:** Approach to institutional management of protected areas: opportunities and challenges
- **Congo:** Economic and legal instruments for sustainable financing of biodiversity
- **Congo:** Importance and issue of Payments for Environmental Services (PES) in favour of PAs and Self-financing of PAs: Case of Nouabalé-Ndoki-Congo National Park
- **Equatorial Guinea:** Sustainable tourism in rural areas as an opportunity for developing small communities from developing countries.
- **Cameroon:** HOW TO INVOLVE FOREST-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES IN CONSERVATION: the case of the BAKA & BANTU - An integrated participatory approach to biodiversity management around the Dja Biosphere Reserve
- **Democratic republic of the congo (DRC):** Development of a Trust Fund for Conservation: Case of the Okapi Fund for the Conservation of Nature in the DRC (FOCON)
- **Cameroon:** The implementation of the CBD in Cameroon

In 2021, the following activities were held:

- **Cameroon:** Total Economic Value (TEV) of Protected Areas: How to assess it optimally to use it to convince policy makers and Technical and Financial Partners (TFP) to sustainably finance the national PA system
- **Gabon:** A successful example of involvement of a community group in the process of conservation, sustainable management of biodiversity and implementation of income-generating activities in Gabon
- **Democratic republic of the congo (DRC):** Methodological guide for the development of Business Plans for a protected area in the DRC
- **Equatorial Guinea:** Existing Distribution Mechanisms in the Scientific Reserve PAs of the Gran Caldera de Luba (RCGCL) and the Altos de Nsork National Park (PNAN)
- **Congo:** Mechanisms for sharing income and managing biodiversity at the scale of the 2 pilot sites in Congo: Lésio-Louna Gorilla Nature Reserve and the Léfini Wildlife Reserve.
- **Cameroon:** 2020 Financial Sustainability Dashboard: For Cameroon's National Protected Areas System.
- **Central African Republic (CAR):** Analysis of benefit-sharing mechanisms for the management of protected areas Central African Republic.
- **Gabon:** Transformation of the ANPN: Towards a new mode of governance of Gabon's national parks
- **Equatorial Guinea:** Training of key PA actors and stakeholders on production techniques and planning of activities in the PAs of the Gran Caldera de Luba Scientific Reserve (RCGCL) and the Altos de Nsork National Park (PNAN)
- **Congo:** Process of inclusion of sustainable financing mechanisms for PAs in Congolese legislation: Case of the revision of the law on wildlife and protected areas of the Republic of Congo

Low Value Grant (LVG) impact – A call for proposals was launched on the 28th of December 2020 as part of the support for the implementation of community-based resilience building projects for local communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, through the promotion of survival alternatives (sustainable income generating activities...), to enable them to continue to remain mobilised in their efforts for the regional project. The call for proposals closed on the 22nd of January 2021, with 49 applications received (Fig. 4).

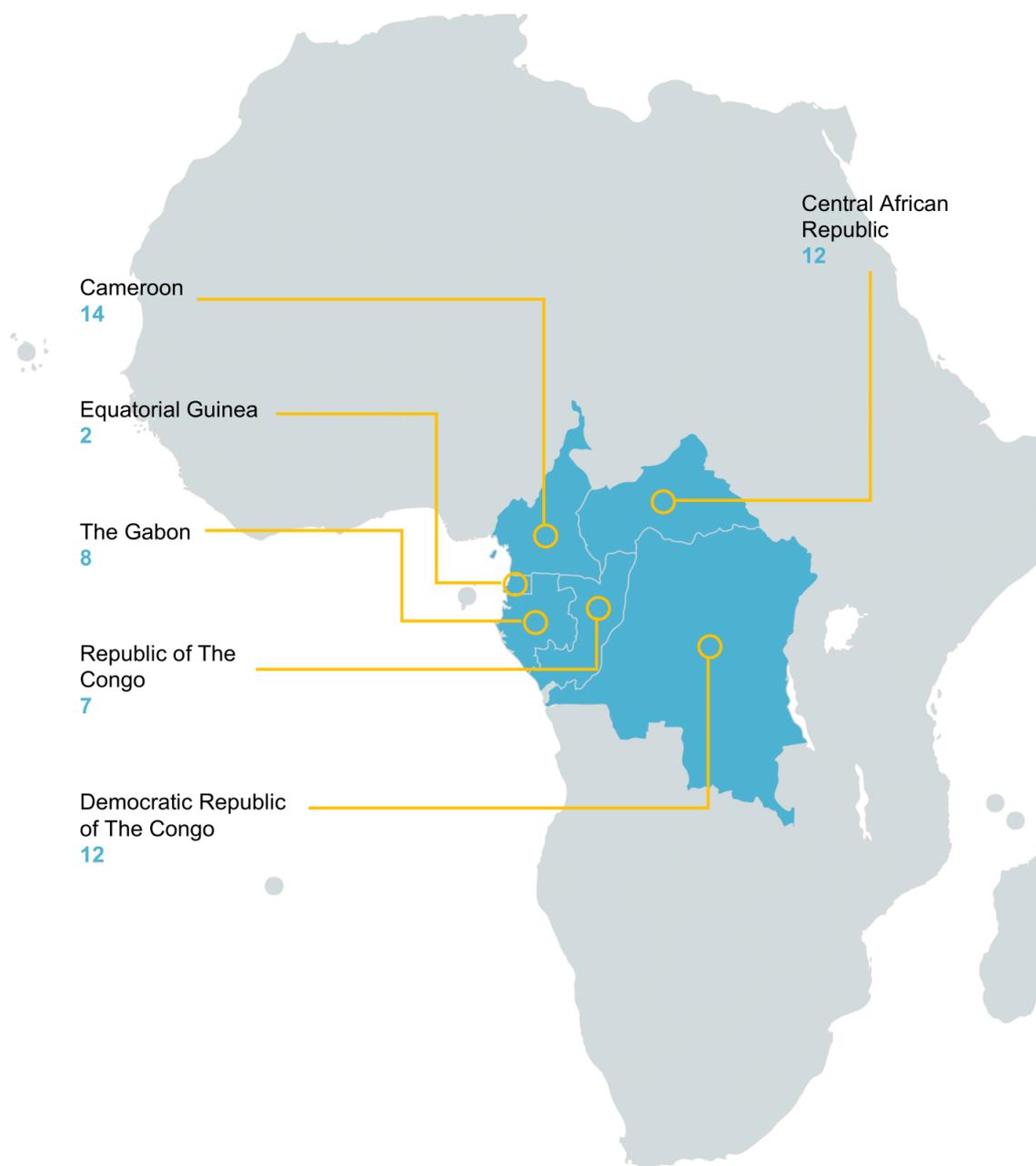


Figure 4. Representation of the total number of applications received for the Low Value Grants (LVG) with respect to each country within the project.

On March 11th, 2021, a meeting was held by the Grant committee, under supervision of M. Alassane BA, president of the committee, to select recipients for the **Low grant impact**. 12 projects, 2 per country, were approved, as listed below (Table 12) with associated implementation partners.

Table 12. Beneficiaries of the Low Value Grants (LVG) within each respective country and site.

Country	Site	Partner
Cameroon	Lobéké National Park	Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERUDEF)
	Campo Ma'an National Park	FCTV Fondation Camerounaise de la Terre Vivante (FCTV) [<i>Cameroonian Foundation for the Living Earth</i>]
Congo	Lesio-Louna Reserve for Gorillas	Club Jeunesse Infrastructure et Développement (CJID) [<i>Youth Club Infrastructure and Development</i>]
	Léfini Hunting Reserve	Association Congolaise pour le Développement des Coopératives (ACODECO) [<i>Congolese Association for the Development of Cooperatives</i>]
Gabon	Loango National Park	Association pour la Connaissance et la Protection de l'Environnement (IBONGA ACPE) [<i>Association for the Knowledge and Protection of the Environment</i>]
	Ivindo National Park	Association Ebyeng Edzuameniène (A2E) [<i>Ebyeng Edzuameniène Association</i>]
Equatorial Guinea	Great Luba Caldera Scientific Reserve	Bioko Biodiversity Protection Program (BBPP)
	Nsork Highlands National Park	Amigos de la Naturaleza y del Desarrollo de Guinea Ecuatorial (ANDEGE) [<i>Friends of Nature and Development of Equatorial Guinea</i>]
CAR	Mbaéré – Bodingué National Park	Centre de Recherche et d'Appui au Développement (CRAD) [<i>Research and Development Support Centre</i>]
	Dzanga-Sangha Protected Area	Association pour la Promotion de l'Épargne, du Crédit et du Développement (ASPEC DC) [<i>Association for the Promotion of Savings, Credit and Development</i>]

Of these LVG's a total of USD \$1,785,620.00 was delivered, presented below (Fig. 5):

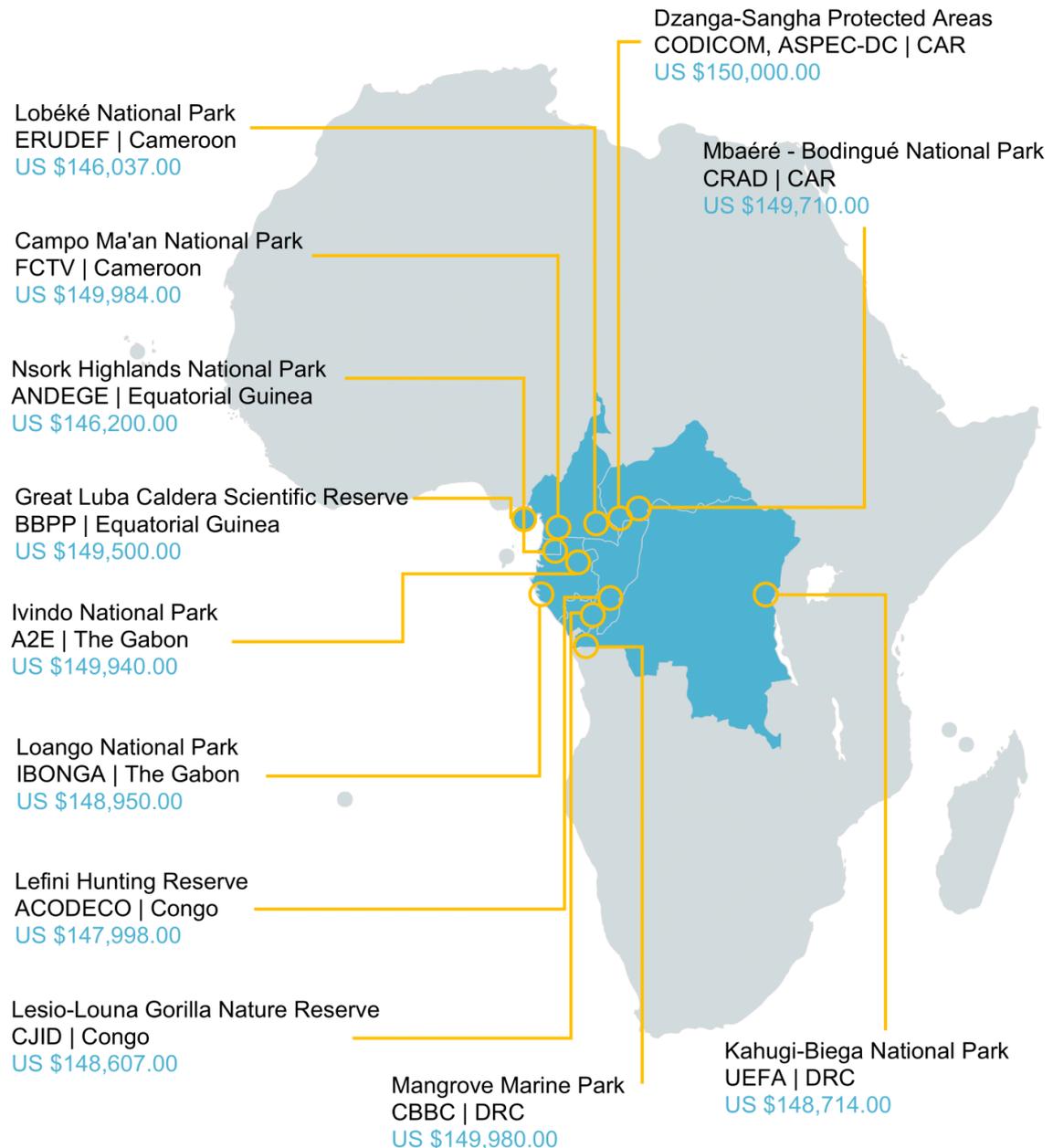


Figure 5. Representation of the total amount funding by Low Value grants (LVG) with respect to each beneficiary country. The pilot site name is provided along with the beneficiary organisation.

Some of the funded activities included:

- **Gabon:** Funds awarded to A2E have enabled the support of over 10 groups and community-based organisations acting for the development of beekeeping activities, fishermen, young mothers, and people living with a disability.
- **Congo:** Funds awarded to ACODECO focused on community resilience, other sources of income and capacity building to improve biodiversity outcomes and the livelihoods of local communities. It provided support to 20 groups and community-based organisations.
- **Central African Republic:** Funds to ASPEC-DC have supported 10 local organisations.
- **Equatorial Guinea:** Funds to BPPP have allowed for the implementation of a wide a range of activities including the creation of management centre for a scientific reserve

and setting up cooperatives helping local communities with income-generating activities.

- **DRC:** Funds awarded to CBBC have supported a wide range of activities, including supporting 8 community initiatives, providing agricultural equipment to 10 villages, sewing equipment and training for communities, a community centre for biodiversity.
- **Cameroon:** Funds awarded to ERUDEF have supported diverse activities, including the support of 15 community groups and microprojects and activities to raise awareness on COVID19 involving over 500 community members.

A complete summary of the capitalisation of the implementation of LVGs is provided in the annexes of the TE.

- **Relevance (*)**

Overall, the relevance of the project was satisfactory in terms of its strategic approach, project design, alignment to GEF Focal area main objective and environment and development objectives within the six focal countries. Its relevance was also noted at the international, regional and sub-regional level. The project was well-aligned to tackle pertinent factors causing the degradation of biodiversity within the Congo Basin, including weak institutional capacity to mobilise financial resources to implement sustainable management plans and other related instruments and the low implementation of sustainable financing mechanisms. Nowadays, the project is still very relevant and in line with the upcoming international agreement such as the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. Thus, in the light of the foregoing, it can be argued that the project was intended to contribute to the achievement of national and international policies and strategies and was **therefore relevant and satisfactory**.

- **Effectiveness (*)**

Overall, the project provided an effective implementation however, specific output-related achievements were hindered by over-ambitiousness within the initial log frame and project planning, as outlined above. Moreover, the project had to face the COVID pandemic which was very well addressed in a very effective manner.

However, where the outputs were well-constructed and feasible, these were quite successful in their achievement (particularly in relation to the realisation of METT scores, financial score cards and relationships between demonstration sites and PA management capacity). The over-ambitiousness being detrimental to the delivery of key project outcomes is most evidenced by Objective 2, Indicator 3 “Trust funds working to deliver long- term financing to PAs” where no Trust Fund was established, despite the choice of 2 AP pilot sites designated by countries to test and implement the Trust Funds. However, the evaluators note the mitigating outputs to support this indicator with all countries all countries have a National Strategy for Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas for the Conservation of Biodiversity with its Action Plan which incorporates models of financial mechanisms including Trust Funds.

Given this, as well as the notable delay because of the COVID-19 pandemic, further hindering project implementation and the momentum of achievements, the project still managed to make some impactful achievements as described in the log-frame.

Overall, many processes were engaged by the project including the validation of the SNFDAP for all countries including action plans and communication and resource mobilisation strategies set for implementation. The project was also able to finalise the Financial Scorecards for all six countries. Two sites per country were selected and declared by the

countries respective governments to act as pilot sites for the project, demonstrating a political will by stakeholders:

- **Cameroon:** PA / site 1: Lobéké National Park; (TNS); PA / site 2: Campo Ma'an National Park.
- **Congo:** PA / site 1: Lesio-Louna National Reserve; PA / site 2: Lefini Hunting Reserve
- **Gabon:** PA / site 1: National Park of Loango; PA / site 2: Ivindo National Park.
- **Equatorial Guinea:** PA / site 1: Scientific Reserve of the Gran Caldera de Luba (GCSR) PA / site 2: Los Altos de Nsork National Park (ANNP).
- **CAR:** PA / site 1: Protected Area of Dzanga - Sangha (APDS); PA / site 2: Mbaéré National Park – Bodingue.
- **DRC:** PA / site 1: Kahuzi-Biega National Park (World heritage site / South Kivu); PA / site 2: Mangrove Marine Park (Sit Ramsar / Congo Central).

It is clear that the effectiveness of the project was significantly impacted by COVID-19, especially with respect to capacity building, exchanges and revenue generating mechanisms, this is most notably highlighted with Outcome 2: Enhanced/Innovative revenue generation, management and disbursement mechanisms piloted, where that, due delays and constraints as a result of COVID-19, multiple targets were not delivered, specifically (by the end of the project):

1. at least one third of PA funding in pilot sites obtained from non-public budget and donor assistance sources;
2. at least twelve new funding sources being accessed for PA management project pilot sites across the region and bringing in new money; and
3. at least 4 pilot sites have increased funding by at least a third.

Overall, most of the activities were implemented and the outcomes were reached thus the project can be rated as Satisfactory for the effectiveness.

- **Efficiency (*)**

The efficiency is the extent to which outcomes have been obtained at a lower cost. In other words, it is the rational use of the means deployed to achieve the desired outcomes.

The project experienced significant delays even before endorsement having originally been conceived in 2005 and only planned to start in 2011. However, due to issues related to institutional arrangements, this project only commenced in early 2017. As a result, key project milestones including the inception workshop and recruitment of the personal for the Project Management Unit (PMU) were delayed. Moreover, assessments and findings of the Programme Preparation Grant (PPG) phase in 2009 were not anymore relevant as national circumstances had evolved rapidly in 9 years.

Despite these delays, the management of the regional project manager was very adaptive and efficient. The quality of the documents produced is very good.

As a result of COVID-19, the project added an additional activity (within component 3) to support communities adjacent to established pilot sites through the provision of Low Value Grants (LVG) with the aim to improve community resilience [in the face of COVID-19]. The LVGs were implemented from August 2021 – January 2022 and were designed to enhance livelihood activities, restructuring and capacity building. The LVG was very efficient, and a myriad of activities were implemented at the site level with high impact. The LVG really improved the visibility of the project at the national level and after the COVID-19.

The evaluation team finds that the use of financial resources (efficiency) was **satisfactory** in relation to the different activities that were supported and in the implementation of the expected outcomes.

- **Overall Outcome (*)**

The overall outcome of the project following the project logical framework was to ensure effective management of environmental and energetic resources to protect environmental and energetic resources in accordance with international convention on climate change. Through the review and the evaluation of the supplied evidence, and given the experienced challenges, it is notable that during the project’s timeframe, the overall outcome of the regional CBSP – PIMS 3447 project was satisfactory (Table 13).

To protect environmental resources within the Congo-Basin, the project addressed two aspects: 1) development and 2) conservation of PAs. The project activities as indicated in the logical framework were aimed at addressing these two features. The activities were implemented as planned besides component 3 that was adapted in the face of the significant delays as a result of COVID-19. The project implemented community-based resilience-building projects at PA pilot sites to improve the resilience of local communities affected the COVID-19 pandemic. These actions enabled local stakeholders to remain mobilized in their efforts for the conservation of biodiversity in across the six countries. These activities which aimed at social sustainability, and which were not initially planned in component 3 of the regional project, were proposed through the provision of LVGs. Despite the many new constraints that have arisen with the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the project team was able to adapt and develop a strategic programmatic review of the activities targeted in the 3 interconnected components (results) of the project with a view to pushing progress within the basin.

At the pilot sites, IGAs directly linked to biodiversity conservation and the well-being of local communities were promoted and initiatives indirectly linked to environmental protection were encouraged. These activities, implemented in communities adjacent to the PA pilot sites in the basin, enhanced the protection of environmental and energetic resources by reducing stakeholder dependence on natural resources through the promotion of community development and well-being. The direct and indirect (socio-economic) impacts of this project will be beneficial to forest dependent communities and Indigenous People living at the periphery of the pilot sites. The new activities targeted and proposed in this component 3 (Result 3) of this project thus helped support local communities and Indigenous People in their efforts to conserve biodiversity while reducing their increased vulnerability due to the consequences of the crisis linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project has produced results that have, and hold further potential to, build the necessary capacity for the improvement of PA management systems in the Congo Basin, especially in the development of the SNFDAP and action plans produced for the six countries, and the proposal on percentage for benefit sharing. Such documents and actions are comprehensive in terms of addressing international, national, regional, sub-regional and local level challenges to PAs sustainable financing and ways to enhance environmental management. Although hindered by delays, overall outcome of the project would not have been rated satisfactory without an effective implementation of the project. The project was implemented following the logical framework and in collaboration with its implementing partners such as COMIFAC.

Table 13. Summary of scores provided for each assessed criterion for the project.

Assessment of outcomes	Rating
Relevance	Satisfactory

Effectiveness	Satisfactory
Efficiency	Satisfactory
Overall project outcome Rating	Satisfactory

- **Sustainability: financial (*), socio-economic (*), institutional framework and governance (*), environmental (*), and overall likelihood (*)**

The sustainability refers to the probability that the benefits of the intervention will be maintained after the end of the intervention.

Financial sustainability

The lack of financial means for PA will remain a problem for effective PA management. Moreover, the recent COVID-19 pandemic seemed to also have hindrance to the investment of technical and financial partners at the moment. As mentioned, many developed activities, and strategies produced will require funding to be finalized and / or implemented. Moreover, no national nor regional funding mechanism (such as Trust Fund) were created. Several activities generating income for the local communities developed within the framework of the LVG should continue.

The financial sustainability of project achievements is therefore considered **moderately unlikely**.

Socio-economic

The LVG had a real impact for local community living in the vicinity of the protected areas. The development of many new activities generating additional income will have a long-lasting effects (for the benefit of the community but also for the biodiversity). **The socio-economic sustainability is therefore likely.**

Sustainability of the institutional and governance framework

To date, and despite many efforts and activities implemented, not all the countries within the project have national entities in charge of Protected Areas. However, a lot of strategies and documents to support the institutional and governance framework have been produced. Moreover, the project has enabled the creation of national working groups that are key instruments for the sustainability of the project and to mainstream protected areas financing in the decision-making process. **The sustainability of the institutional framework and governance is considered likely.**

Environmental sustainability

The project has had the merit of developing numerous documents and reports that now make it possible to better understand the problems relating to PA management, the socio-economic value, which are essential arguments to promote the conservation of biodiversity. At the site level, several activities have been implemented to better project the biodiversity. However, the sites (12 in total) envelope a comparative small spatial area set for the invaluable biodiversity within the protected areas in the Congo Basin.

Again, the implementation of income-generating activities is essential to better conserve natural resources within PAs, but this must be undertaken on a larger scale to have a real impact. At the end of the project, it cannot really be considered that the project has had a real impact on the conservation of natural resources. Moreover, anthropogenic pressures are still

very present in the area and continue to negatively impact natural resources. **Thus, the environmental sustainability of the project can be judged moderately unlikely, but likely at the site level.**

Conclusion on the sustainability

Financial factors (and increasing threats / pressures) continue to pose a significant problem to the management of protected areas in the region. Once protected areas are created, they must be managed effectively (to get results), and most of the time, the main constraint is funding. No search for additional funding was done by the project (which can also be explained by the fact that the context was not conducive to it, COVID). Despite a lot of work has been implemented, and several very good and useful documents produced, the sustainability of the project is therefore considered **moderately likely** (Table 14).

Table 14. Summary of evaluated criterion for the project's sustainability.

Sustainability	Rating
Financial resources	Moderately Unlikely (MU)
Socio-political	Likely (L)
Institutional framework and governance	Likely (L)
Environmental	Moderately Unlikely (MU)
Overall likelihood of sustainability	Moderately Likely (ML)

5.2. Country ownership

The limited number of consultations with national stakeholders during the evaluation mission prevents the consultant from commenting on this aspect. However, the fact that the countries have set-up multi-sectorial working groups composed of a broad range of stakeholder including representative from institutions management protected areas and ministry in line, Members of the National Assembly, Ministry of Budget or Finance, Ministry of Tourism, Civil Society, Private Sector, Donors community etc., is a positive indication of country ownership. Moreover, the fact that some of the National project teams were hosted within national institutions, is also a clearer indication of ownership.

Country	Location of national project team
Democratic republic of the congo (DRC)	COMIFAC
Central African Republic (CAR)	Ministry of Waters, Forests, Hunting and Fishing [Ministère des Eaux, Forêts, Chasse et Pêche]
Equatorial Guinea	Ministry
Gabon	UNDP
Congo	Ministère de l'Economie Forestière et du Développement Durable (MEFDD) [Ministry of Forest Economy and Sustainable Development]
Cameroon	Project management unit office

5.3. Gender equality and women's empowerment

The Gender equality and women's empowerment was not a requirement of the project design for GEF 4 cycle. However, several of the Low Value Grants focused, or emphasised, women's empowerment and well-being.

This project was approved prior to the adoption of the GEF additionality framework (December 2018), and thus the evaluation cannot provide an assessment of the dimensions of GEF additionality that the new guidance stipulates. However, the LVGs has targeted several women's association (for instanced a young mother association in Gabon).

5.4. Catalytic/Replication Effect

The most significant steps taken to catalyse the public good have been the development of demonstration (pilot) sites through the LVG. A summary of the capitalisation of the implementation of the LVGs, that describes the situational status of the LVGs by each country and across community initiatives and community work with LVG impact and lessons learnt has been developed. This is available in Annex.

The summary document describes the lessons learnt throughout the process which are provided below:

- The proper involvement of administrative and local authorities during the implementation of ongoing initiatives is a guarantee of the project's success
- Transparency in the identification of beneficiaries and initiatives, on the basis of consensual criteria have enabled adherence and the involvement of authorities and beneficiaries in the implementation of activities.
- The association of traditional chiefs and leaders within the community made the selection of beneficiaries credible
- Reinforced communication between the Project Management Unit at the GEF/UNDP level and the project implementation team allows for a better understanding of the desired orientations and a concerted implementation of the activities
- Faced with the human-wildlife conflict which is very recurrent around the Campo Ma'an National Park and in Gabon, it is better to invest in other income-generating activity micro-projects than in agriculture.
- Although communities demonstrate their willingness to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, they do not yet have reliable, sustainable and profitable alternatives. Attempts at this stage are not yet part of the value chain approach.
- With all the realities on the ground, the duration of the project implementation is too short (six months): the project has a strong coverage of space and the involvement of communities being a progressive activity over time.
- It is important to work in collaboration with the partners established in the area to avoid any conflicts or duplication in the implementation of activities.
- The prioritization of the actions to be implemented and their planning must be put first for the success of the activities planned within the framework of this project. Also, it is important to align all agricultural activities to the schedule which is very important for the yield of the products.

5.5. Progress to Impact

It is without doubt that the project has added value and can evidence successes that may be further catalysed through ongoing and future processes in some of the countries.

Most of the products developed through the project will be valuable and useful in the future and hold the ability to be adopted as templates for further work within the region.

The LVGs had a real impact at the local level and for the benefits of the local communities (that were very affected by the COVID pandemic).

In terms of progress to impact, some activities implemented could lead to future support and the pathway of outcomes to impact, and in particular, the national financing plan adopted (Table 15, 16). **However, the true measure of real, long-term impact, will depend on the use and implementation of all the products developed within the project by countries.** Overall, the project was considered as **satisfactory**.

Table 15. Summary of 'Progress towards objective and expected outcome ratings.

Sub-Criteria	Rating
Objective	Satisfactory
Outcome 1	Satisfactory
Outcome 2	Moderately Satisfactory
Outcome 3	Satisfactory

Table 16. Ratings provided to each outcome and respective indicator for the project.

	Achievement rate /progress	Justification/Achievement
Objective: To have in place capacities, institutional frameworks and model mechanisms for the long-term financial sustainability of PA systems and associated ecosystems	Achieved	
Indicator 1: Annual reports of PA managing agencies	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level engagement of stakeholders on PA financing with the operationalisation of multi sectorial working group at national level • Assessments of PAs in the sub region carried out • National Sustainable Financing Strategy for Protected Areas and action plan produced • PA managing institutions capacity needs assessment and related capacity building action plan produced • Communication and awareness strategies and action plan on PA financing produced.
Indicator 2: METT scorecard results per sites	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This activity is completed at 80 - 90%: the METT Scorecard document review is available for Cameroon, Congo and Equatorial Guinea and still in progress for CAR, DRC and Gabon.
Indicator 3: Financial scorecard results for Cameroon	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial scorecard finalized
Indicator 4: Relationship between level of on-going threats at demonstration sites and site-level PA management capacity	NA	
Outcome 1: Legal, policy and institutional frameworks for sustainable conservation financing strengthened at regional and national levels	Achieved	
Indicator 1: Financial scorecard results (outcome 1)	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial scorecard finalized.
Indicator 2: PA system-level financial sustainability strategies	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PA system-level financial sustainability is finalized and validated.
Indicator 3: System-level PA business plan	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business plans produced for all of the 12 pilot sites.

Indicator 4: Laws and policies and regulations related to sustainable PA financing	Almost achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lot of awareness targeting policy makers as well as parliamentarians has been raised.
Indicator 5: Active support and participation in PA financing among public and corporate sector financial and economic decision-makers	Almost achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National awareness communication strategy and action plan on PA sustainable financing targeting public, private sector, civil society, and donors were developed and validated. Implementation started in some of counties.
Indicator 6: Agreed procedures and formulae in place to earmark public revenues for PAs and PA-adjacent communities	Not Rated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MTR recommended to review this indicator and target pending results of the selection and prioritisation process.
Indicator 7: Regional level exchange of experience leading to update of lessons learned across borders	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In December 2019, in Bata (Equatorial Guinea) a regional meeting was held to share knowledge and experience on the results achieved in the national PAs, that enable country teams to have a road map with and common approach, • 2 sub-regional workshops were organized with representatives from the 6 countries to share experiences, lessons learnt, and knowledge on financial mechanisms and on the methodological steps to develop the national PA Sustainable financing strategy. • Establishment a sub-regional community of practice on PA financing with the launch of the project website • The project has organised 22 knowledge management /technical capacity building workshops on various thematic on sustainable financing organised between national experts of the six countries of the Congo Basin via zoom. • In addition, representatives from the 6 Congo Basin countries and COMIFAC have participated in 2 BIOFIN African regional workshops in Seychelles and Mozambique to share experiences from the sub-region and learn from other African countries on PA financing mechanisms. Presentations on existing finance mechanisms were made at the regional BIOFIN workshop on experiences of the sub-region on Trust Fund and public-private partnerships in PAs. • However, virtual meeting have their limitations and proved to not be as efficient as face-to-face meetings
Outcome 2: Enhanced / innovative revenue generation, management and disbursement mechanisms piloted	Almost achieved	

Indicator 1: Financial scorecard results (outcome 2)	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial scorecards are available
Indicator 2: Use of revenue generation mechanisms at pilot sites	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the change of activities, the project favoured the implementation of Income Generating Activities (IGAs) in order to help the communities most affected by the pandemic. To this hand, a lot of activities were developed. A few activities were implemented through participatory processes to really support the resilience of local communities and enhance well-being. However, the acceptance, institutionalisation and application of new revenue generating mechanisms at pilot sites certainly requires a change in laws and policies which is a protracted and slow process.
Indicator 3: Trust funds working to deliver long-term financing to PAs	Not achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Strategy for Sustainable Financing of PAs for the Conservation of Biodiversity with its Action Plan which incorporates models of financial mechanisms including Trust Funds No activities have been instigated to set-up Trust funds. However, it was an ambitious objective.
Indicator 4: Disbursement of revenue to PA centres, PAs and PA-adjacent communities	Almost achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The selection process for two pilot sites per country was carried out A revenue sharing document for the pilot sites was finalised and made available. At the site level within, the framework of the low grant, several Income Generating Activities were set-up. For example, in the LNP region (Cameroon), the OR-VERT Cooperative involved in post-harvest management and transformation of bush mango (<i>Irvingia gabonensis</i>) and the Women's Health and Conservation Society (WHCS) involved in soap making and commercialisation The existence of SNFDAP and its related tools. Nevertheless, much is still to be done to achieve this objective. It is still premature to say with certainty that government and other relevant stakeholders will accept and agree on new sources of tax revenues for PA agencies, procedures and formulas for revenue sharing between protected areas and the centre and for the two pilot sites. This requires mobilisation, lobbying, legal reforms, and policies, which are often lengthy and slow. With the extension of the project, it will be able to deliver on this objective.
Indicator 5: In country capacity to identify, plan for and implement new PA revenue mechanisms	<i>Almost achieved (in terms of preparation but no</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each country has assessed national capacity needs for PA financing. A capacity building action plan has been developed and validated.

	<i>implementation yet)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite a lot a key documents, such as national strategies, and manual being developed, the implementation has not started. At the site level within the framework of the LVGs, several Income Generating Activities were set-up (see above example).
Outcome 3: Business planning and cost-effective management tools demonstrated at PAs and associated landscapes	Achieved	
Indicator 1: Financial scorecard results (outcome 3)	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial scorecard available and finalized
Indicator 2: Site level human resources and infrastructural capacity for PA management planning and practice	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme partner PACEBCo closed operations in 2017, which had an impact of the selection of demonstration sites as it was foreseen bringing substantial technical and financial support to the project. PACEBCo was responsible to deliver this output. However, 12 pilot sites were supported within the framework of the LVG. This activity supported communities at the periphery of the pilot sites. Several place Income Generating Activities were set-up.
Indicator 3: Site-level capacity to integrate PA management and business planning	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of capacity needs for management and financial management in PAs at national level in the 6 countries were carried out. An action plan has been developed and validated by the national multi sectorial working group. Manual on PA business planning has been developed At the site level, several funding mechanisms for local community have been put in place (Income Generating Activity)
Indicator 4: Integration of economic valuation into PA planning and policy-setting	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of economic valuations have been prepared including national strategies. Business plan for the pilot sites have been developed. Guidelines (Manual) on developing business plans for PAs have also been developed for countries.
Indicator 5: Monitoring and reporting on financial management performance	Achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has collected data and analysed capacity needs to strengthen PA management and financial management at national level in the 6 countries. Action plans have been developed and validated by the national multi sectorial working group.

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An ME system has been implemented for the LVGs - Site level activities have been implemented within the framework of the LVGs at 12 pilot sites in the 6 countries. |
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6. MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & LESSONS

6.1. Main Findings

The below section summarizes the key findings of the Terminal Evaluation detailed in the content of this report.

6.1.1. Major obstacles and delays

The project experienced significant delays even before endorsement having originally been conceived in 2005 (under GEF 4) and only planned to start in 2011 (following CEO approval in June 2011 and GEF agency approval in October 2011). The project was signed in October 2015. However, due to issues related to institutional arrangements, this project only commenced in early 2017 (the inception workshop was held in June 2017). As a result, key project milestones, including the inception workshop and recruitment of the personal for the Project Management Unit (PMU), were delayed. The team (PAF, M&E and communication experts) continued to be in place over 1-year after the inception workshop. The project was only fully operational late 2018/early 2019. Moreover, assessments and findings of the Programme Preparation Grant (PPG) phase (in 2009) were no longer relevant due to national circumstances rapidly evolving throughout the 9-year period. It was the same with most of the co-funding.

6.1.2. Very good management team and adaptive management

From the start of the project, a change in the organizational chart was proposed (and accepted) to allow for more efficient implementation.

the project demonstrated strong adaptive management mechanisms. The regional project supported the implementation of community-based resilience – building projects to improve resilience of local communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to enable them to remain mobilised in their efforts for the conservation of biodiversity through the provision of Low Value Grants (LVG). This activity which aimed at social and environmental sustainability, and which was not initially planned in component 3 of the regional project, was proposed to contribute to the response of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Congo Basin, at the community level through the provision of low value grants.

All these modifications were made (and proposed) under the strong leadership and work of the regional manager of the project and her team.

- COMIFAC was strengthened with the following activities being implemented to strength COMIFAC's financial management capacities:
 - An anti-fraud, anti-corruption and conflict of interest policies were developed and approved by the Council of Ministers.
 - A project implementation manual and operational procedures were developed.
 - COMIFAC technical capacity was improved as well with the establishment of a technical team in biodiversity, climate change, monitoring and evaluation and communication which liaise regularly with the PMU. There is a good collaboration and communication between the PMU and COMIFAC.

- Gabon became a member of BIOFIN: Representatives from the 6 Congo Basin countries and COMIFAC participated in 2 BIOFIN African regional workshops in Seychelles and Mozambique to share experiences from the sub-region and learn from other African countries on PA financing mechanisms. This promoted further stakeholder collaboration. As a result of this participation, Gabon joined BIOFIN and is currently in the preparatory phase.
- The creation of a regional working group on sustainable finance. this group brings together experts from the 6 project countries and allows the exchange of information and the sharing of knowledge. It mainly works through WhatsApp.
- The project produced many useful documents, reports, and information to support suitable PA financing mechanisms in the Congo Basin. Overall, 62 reports and documents were produced across the six countries, including the Strategies [SNFDAP/CBD] for each country (Table 17):

Table 17. Number of documents produced for each country throughout the project

Country	Number of documents produced
Democratic republic of the congo (DRC)	8
Central African Republic (CAR)	12
Equatorial Guinea	14
Gabon	13
Congo	10
Cameroon	21
Total	78

- The project evidenced the importance, and value, of Low Value Grants and the generation of IGAs. The importance of these grants is best contextualised from first-hand experiences from beneficiaries in Cameroon (CMNP), provided in the Cameroon project review:

The project introduced yams which I have never planted before. I never knew that I could plant and harvest groundnuts in the month of November (Beneficiary Akaka village)

I will continue the yams and groundnut planting introduced by the project because I need them for family consumption and sell for income (Beneficiary, Akaka village).

FCTV gave us groundnuts and maize to plant. I am planting these crops for the very first time in my life (Beneficiary, Afan Essoyeka village).

Famine has reduced in our families. We now have maize, pepper and okro in our farms. We can sell the crops and buy kerosene for our lamps and soap to wash dresses. The project should continue in order to increase farm sizes (Beneficiaries, Afan Essoyeka village).

In general the project is good. There is nobody who will say that the project is not good. We have accepted the project and want it to continue to increase agricultural productivity (Beneficiaries, Afan Essoyeka village).

Health problems have reduced in our communities. The project gave medicines to boost our community pharmacy. We now have medicines to cure wounds, malaria, fever and diarrhea. The medicines have reduced the death rate since

people no longer have to travel over long distances of about 35 kms to Campo for medical treatment (Beneficiaries, Nkoelon village).

We never planted groundnuts in the past due to lack of knowledge. Thanks to the project we now plant groundnuts. They will be used for consumption and commercialisation (Beneficiaries, Nkoe-Melen, village).

- Lack of implementation of the strategies [SNFDAP/CBD] produced for each country: A key finding of the TE is that while each strategy has been produced and provided to countries – there was a lack of implementation of their respective contents, most notably the development, and establishment, of trust funds and sustainable financing mechanisms. Despite the PIR 2021 stating “all countries have a National Strategy for Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas for the Conservation of Biodiversity with its Action Plan which incorporates models of financial mechanisms including Trust Funds. Countries will only have to put it in place and test it, even after the end of the regional CBSP-PIMS3447 project.”, it is unclear if these actions will be undertaken following the conclusion of the project.
- There is uncertainty in the future of the actions implemented under the project’s timeframe due to the lack of implementation of financing mechanisms, the conclusion of the report, and the conclusion of support for countries. While the necessary products may have been produced, it is unfeasible to assume the necessary actions will be implemented without further support.

Table 18. A summary of the ratings for each criterion and sub-criterion within the Terminal Evaluation.

Review criteria	Sub criteria	Rating
Monitoring and evaluation	Design at entering	Highly satisfactory
	Implementation	Satisfactory
	Overall	Satisfactory
Project implementation	UNDP implementation oversight	Highly satisfactory
	Implementation partner execution	Satisfactory
	Overall project implementation/execution	Highly satisfactory
Progress towards objective and expected outcome	Objective	Satisfactory
	Outcome 1	Satisfactory
	Outcome 2	Moderately satisfactory
	Outcome 3	Moderately satisfactory
Project design & implementation	Relevance	Satisfactory
	Effectiveness	Satisfactory
	Efficiency	Satisfactory
	Overall outcome	Satisfactory
Sustainability	Finance	Unlikely
	Socio-economic	Unlikely
	Institutional framework and governance	Moderately unlikely
	Environmental	Moderately unlikely
	Overall likelihood	Moderately unlikely

6.2. Conclusions

Overall, the project experienced significant delays even before endorsement having originally been conceived in 2005 (under GEF 4) and only planned to start in 2011 (following CEO approval in June 2011 and GEF agency approval in October 2011). The project was signed in October 2015. However, due to issues related to institutional arrangements, this project only commenced in early 2017 (the inception workshop was held in June 2017). As a result, key project milestones, including the inception workshop and recruitment of the personnel for the Project Management Unit (PMU), were delayed. These delays were further compounded by the impact and resultant barriers from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these major obstacles, the project demonstrated strong adaptive management mechanisms. To support communities affected by COVID-19 and to build community resilience, the project established a Low Value Grant (LVG) programme to support the generation of Income-Generating Activities (IGA) **enabling communities to remain mobilised in their efforts for the conservation of biodiversity**. This activity, which aimed at social and environmental sustainability, and which was not initially planned in component 3 of the regional project. The project evidenced the importance and value of the LVGs and the generation of IGAs, supporting 12 projects across the 6 countries of the project.

Additionally, COMIFAC was strengthened especially with consideration to financial management capacities through the development of anti-fraud, anti-corruption, and conflict interest policies being developed with council members, project implementation and operational procedures developed and increased technical capacity through the establishment of technical teams in biodiversity, climate change, monitoring and evaluation and communication.

As a result of participation in BIOFIN African regional workshops, Gabon joined the BIOFIN programme, becoming a member within preparatory phase. Moreover, **78 reports and documents were produced across the six countries**, including the Strategy (SNFDAP/CBD) reports for each country – demonstrating a wealth of produced information.

However, a key finding of the TE is that while each SNFDAP has been produced and provided to countries – there was a lack of implementation of their respective contents, most notably the development, and establishment, of trust funds and sustainable financing mechanisms. While countries have access to the necessary information to test and establish these mechanisms, there is no evidence that these actions will be implemented. Additionally, there is uncertainty in the future actions implemented under the project's timeframe due to the lack of implementation of financing mechanisms, the conclusion of the project and the conclusion of the support for countries. While necessary projects may have been developed, it is unfeasible to assume the necessary actions will be implemented without further support.

6.3. Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made following the final evaluation, and lessons learnt identified.

- A. The project was very ambitious both in number of activities but also in geographic coverage (6 countries). Moreover, the timeframe was short (5 years) to allow significant changes.

- B. The implementation of the project at the start was made very complicated because of the severe delays. It is recommended that UNDP find solutions to reduce delays or otherwise to rethink the most affected components (before the start of implementation).
- C. A lot of very useful information, documents and products have been produced for each of the components and each country (National Strategy for the Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas for the Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity, Evaluation of the benefits and economic values, Assessment of economic benefits and values, Business plan...). It would have been useful to organise national events to increase the buy-in from each country and to present the produced documents, especially the national strategies.
- D. The development of national / regional strategies, business plans and other documents should always be accompanied with financial proposal for implementation.
- E. The small projects implemented through the LVGs and establishment of IGAs have enabled the realisation of many concrete actions on the ground around the following activities:
 - Strengthening of community resilience to increase efforts for the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable management of natural resources in the pilot sites of Aires Protected.
 - Support for the creation of income-generating activities (IGAs)/livelihoods in order to support the rapid recovery of local communities and indigenous populations made vulnerable by the crisis linked to the COVID19 pandemic, in PA sites pilots.
 - Cross-cutting component: Support for capacity building of local communities / indigenous populations and vulnerable people affected by the crisis linked to the COVID19 pandemic, mainly the populations living near pilot PAs, particularly in terms of information, advice and guidance in relation to awareness-raising activities...

It would have been very useful to develop a capitalisation document. At the end of the project, integrate the achievements from LVGs and IGAs within a document capitalising the main results obtained, lessons learned and outputs transferable to other PAs [Note – an initial capitalization document was produced just before the closure of the project but was not accessible at the time of the mission since the grants were still being implemented]. Also ensure that the project website is still operational at least one year after project closure. Also ensure that the project website is still operational at least one year after project closure.

6.4. Lessons Learnt

- **A strong project management unit and a continuity in the staff:** Although the project has encountered certain obstacles (covid crisis, very late start), its implementation went well. This is largely due to very good management by the project manager and a team that remained practically the same throughout the project.
- **The importance of adaptive management:** The adaptive management put in place by the project manager was also a key element. In particular, it has enabled the implementation of Low Value Grants (LVGs) and IGAs in order to overcome the Covid crisis and provide support to the most affected populations.

- The projects must have field components and undertake (quickly) some concrete and visible actions for the benefit of the populations so that they take the ownership of the project and recognize its usefulness. Thus, the absence of field activities significantly reduces the motivation of the beneficiary stakeholders. It is also important not to "promise" more than what will be possible to realize. In the project of the case, the small grant initiatives were a great success and very well received. As mentioned during several interviews, the project ended "on a very positive note".
- Validate the political will to formalize the process of the protection, involvement of local populations in the implementation of the protected area and involvement of a project leader. These are conditions for the success of a project.
- **The need for Government endorsement and support:** From the moment the government has a key role in a project (in this case the adoption of a decree creating a new structure), its support is necessary. Even if everything is put in place by the management team, such as awareness-raising activities **at** the level of the interested parties, without the clear will of the government, the official validation stages of certain documents cannot be carried out.
- **The Importance of building strong government institution and capacity of internal staff to maximise project benefits:** In order to gather strong buy-in and commitments from the Government, it is important to strengthen governmental institution and build capacities. To this end, the establishment of a national management unit at the level of the ministries (when possible) was an excellent initiative implemented during the project. Indeed, the national management unit were able to provide technical support on other tasks (inputs on new legislation for instance).
- **The importance of effective consultation, engagement and collaboration with key other influencers (e.g. Ministry of Finance):** The effective management of protected areas and the sustainable financing depends on many stakeholders, and not only those involved in the biodiversity management. It is therefore essential to involve all the relevant stakeholders. There is a need to think strategically at the beginning of the project (even better at design, PPG phase) who the key influencers are, and make them responsible to achieve a certain output.
- **The importance of adaptiveness and flexibility:** GEF and Implementing Agencies of GEF could consider flexibility in terms of sensitivity to radical shocks affecting the system (e.g. COVID- 19). Where such shocks are at a great scale, effecting the entire project team, stakeholders, and beneficiaries, it is unlikely that the project's achievements will be met. A key consideration will be to develop mechanisms to enable a project to adapt to short-term shocks, while increasing resilience to further shocks while still achieving project outputs. This is an important point to consider for the GEF and the IAs in times of radical change while under the urgent need to meet the SDGs and enhance resilience in the system.
- **Start the exit strategy as soon as possible:** Despite a lot of activities have been implemented and several useful strategies produced at the national land regional level, an implementation of these is not secured. The project would have benefited from thinking earlier about how such documents will be implemented, and in the absence of budget and support from the project team.

Annex 1: List of documents and reports produced

- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – 8

Atelier Technique National: Validation des Rapports techniques et Plan d'action holistiques en lien avec le Financement durable des aires protégées / Communiqué final (31/07/2019)

[en] - *National Technical Workshop: Validation of Technical Reports and Holistic Action Plan related to Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas / Final Statement (31/07/2019)*

Plan d'Action Holistique – 4 / Évaluation et renforcement des capacités des acteurs-clés sur la planification des activités, les mécanismes de financement et solutions financières au niveau national (et sous-régional), (05/2019), Guyguy Mangoni & Henri-Paul Eloma

[en] - *Holistic Action Plan - 4 / Assessment and capacity building of key actors on business planning, financing mechanisms and financial solutions at national (and sub-regional) level, (05/2019), Guyguy Mangoni & Henri-Paul Eloma*

Rapport Technique Holistique – 4 / Évaluation et renforcement des capacités des acteurs-clés sur la planification des activités, les mécanismes de financement et solutions financières au niveau national et sous-régional (05/2019), Guyguy Mangoni & Henri-Paul Eloma

[en] - *Holistic Technical Report - 4 / Assessment and capacity building of key stakeholders on activity planning, funding mechanisms and financial solutions at national and sub-regional level régional (05/2019), Guyguy Mangoni & Henri-Paul Eloma*

Rapport Technique – 1 / Aspects politiques, juridiques et institutionnels en lien avec le Financement durable des aires protégées en République Démocratique du Congo (RDC), (05/2019), Henri-Paul Eloma & Guyguy Mangoni

[en] - *Technical Report - 1 / Policy, legal and institutional aspects of sustainable financing of protected areas in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (05/2019), Henri-Paul Eloma & Guyguy Mangoni*

Rapport Technique – 2 / Profil de la finance et de l'économie environnementales axé sur les aires protégées (07/2019), Henri-Paul Eloma & Guyguy Mangoni

[en] - *Technical Report - 2 / Profile of Environmental Finance and Economics with a Focus on Protected Areas (07/2019), Henri-Paul Eloma & Guyguy Mangoni*

Rapport Technique – 3 / Préparation de la Stratégie de financement de la conservation au niveau transfrontalier, axée sur les aires protégées, les corridors et les zones tampons (07/2019), Henri-Paul Eloma & Guyguy Mangoni

[en] – *Technical Report – 3 / Preparation of the Transboundary Conservation Funding Strategy, focusing on protected areas, corridors and buffer zones (07/2019), Henri-Paul Eloma & Guyguy Mangoni*

Rapport Technique – 4 (Annexe Complémentaire), (07/2019), Henri-Paul Eloma & Guyguy Mangoni

[en] - *Technical Report - 4 (Additional Annex), (07/2019), Henri-Paul Eloma & Guyguy Mangoni*

Stratégie Nationale de Financement Durable des Aires Protégées pour la Conservation de la Biodiversité (12/2019)

[en] - *National Strategy for Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas for Biodiversity Conservation (12/2019)*

- **Central African Republic (CAR) – 12**

Analyse approfondie des mécanismes de partage des revenus existants issus de la gestion du parc national Mbaéré Bodingué et des aires protégées de Dzanga Sangha

[en] - *In-depth analysis of existing revenue sharing mechanisms from the management of the Mbaéré Bodingué National Park and the Dzanga Sangha protected areas*

Communiqué Final – Atelier national de présentation et validation des rapports techniques et plans d'action sur les différents aspects liés au financement durable des aires protégées en République Centrafricaine (07/2019)

[en] - *Communiqué Final – Atelier national de présentation et validation des rapports techniques et plans d'action sur les différents aspects liés au financement durable des aires protégées en République Centrafricaine (07/2019)*

Évaluation des bénéfices et valeurs économiques issus des aires protégées de Dzanga Sangha (11/2020) Dr. Boniface Nzonikoua

[en] - *Evaluation of the benefits and economic values of the Dzanga Sangha protected areas (11/2020) Dr. Boniface Nzonikoua*

Évaluation des bénéfices et valeurs économiques issus du parc national Mbaéré Bodingué (11/2020) Dr. Boniface Nzonikoua

[en] - *Evaluation of the economic benefits and values of the Mbaéré Bodingué National Park (11/2020) Dr. Boniface Nzonikoua*

Financement durable des aires protégées : stratégie de communication et de plaidoyer République Centrafricaine

[en] - *Sustainable financing of protected areas: communication and advocacy strategy Central African Republic*

Livrable 2a_Plan d'affaire aires protégées de Mbaéré Bodingué, Jerry Maxime Manza-loti

[en] - *Deliverable 2b_Plan d'affaire aires protégées de Mbaéré Bodingué, Jerry maxime Manza-loti*

Livrable 2b_Plan d'affaire aires protégées de Dzanga Sangha, Jerry maxime Manza-loti

[en] - *Deliverable 2b_Plan d'affaire aires protégées de Dzanga Sangha, Jerry maxime Manza-loti*

Rapport – Atelier national de présentation et validation des rapports techniques et plans d'action sur les différents aspects liés au financement durable des aires protégées en République Centrafricaine (07/2019)

[en] - Report - National workshop for the presentation and validation of technical reports and action plans on the different aspects related to the sustainable financing of protected areas in Central African Republic (07/2019)

Rapport technique d'évaluation des capacités des acteurs clés et autres parties prenantes intervenant dans le système des aires protégées national et transfrontalier et plan d'action de renforcement de leurs capacités (07/2019)

[en] - Technical report on the capacity assessment of key actors and other stakeholders involved in the national and transboundary protected area system and action plan to strengthen their capacity (07/2019)

Rapport technique holistique relatif aux aspects juridiques, réglementaires, institutionnels et politiques (07/2019)

[en] - Holistic technical report on legal, regulatory, institutional and policy aspects (07/2019)

Rapport technique holistique sur le profil de financement et de l'économie environnementale des aires protégées en République Centrafricaine (07/2019)

[en] - Holistic technical report on the financing profile and environmental economics of protected areas in the Central African Republic (07/2019)

Stratégie nationale de financement durable des aires protégées pour la conservation et la valorisation de la biodiversité de la république centrafricaine (11/2019)

[en] - National strategy for sustainable financing of protected areas for the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity in the Central African Republic (11/2019)

- Equatorial Guinea – 14

Action Plan Matrix (Ref. Technical Report on Capacities of Key Players on Environmental Financing and Economic Mechanisms, Finance and Planning, Business Planning, Tracking, Learning Lessons and Adaptive Management in Equatorial Guinea), Demetrio Bocuma Meñe, PhD /National Expert in ELSF

Analyse approfondie des mécanismes de partage des revenus (existants) résultant de la gestion de la Réserve Scientifique de la Caldera de Luba (RSCL) et du Parc National des Altos de Nsork (PNAN), (11/12/2020), Dr. Diosdado Obiang Mbomio Nfono

[en] - In-depth analysis of (existing) revenue sharing mechanisms resulting from the management of the Luba Caldera Scientific Reserve (LCSR) and the Nsork Highlands National Park (NNNP), (11/12/2020), Dr. Diosdado Obiang Mbomio Nfono

Évaluer les bénéfices et valeurs économiques du parc national de Altos de Nsork (PNAN), (10/12/2020), Gaspar Lutero Mengue Ebang

[en] - Assessing the economic benefits and values of Altos de Nsork National Park (PNAN), (10/12/2020), Gaspar Lutero Mengue Ebang

Holistic Technical Report for Target 17: After Data Collection and Analysis for the Evaluation of the Adequacy of Existing Tools (potentially improved) Surveillance (monitoring) and Far-Improved Management and Financial Indicators at National and Sub-regional Protected Areas

in Equatorial Guinea (01/07/2019), Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe & Irene Consuelo Nlang Abeso

Informe técnico relacionado con las finanzas medioambientales, la economía política y la legislación ambiental de G.E. (meta no 10), (05/2019), Irene Consuelo Nlang & Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe

[en] - *Technical report related to environmental finance, political economy and environmental legislation of G.E. (target no 10), (05/2019), Irene Consuelo Nlang & Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe*

Informe técnico relacionado con los perfiles de finanzas ambientales de g.e. (meta no 11), (05/2019), Irene Consuelo Nlang & Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe

[en] - *Technical report related to the environmental finance profiles of g.e. (target no 11), (05/2019), Irene Consuelo Nlang & Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe*

Matriz del Plan de Acción (Ref. Informe Técnico sobre los temas Relacionados con las Finanzas del Medio Ambiente, la Economía Política/Legislación Ambiental de las AP de G.E)

[en] - *Action Plan Matrix (Ref. Technical Report on Issues Related to Environmental Finance, Political Economy/Environmental Legislation of G.E. PAs)*

National Sustainable Financing Strategy for Protected Areas & Action Plan (2020 - 2024) Republic of Equatorial Guinea, MAGBOMA, with the Technical and Financial Support of the Regional Project Sustainable Financing of the System of Protected Areas of the Congo Basin (PIMS 3447 / UNDP / GEF)

[en] - *Stratégie nationale de financement durable des aires protégées et plan d'action (2020 - 2024) République de Guinée équatoriale, MAGBOMA, avec l'appui technique et financier du projet régional Financement durable du système des aires protégées du Bassin du Congo (PIMS 3447 / PNUD / GEF)*

Résumé de la Proposition de Plan d'Affaires de la Réserve Scientifique de la Grande Caldera de Luba. Période 2022 – 2023 (11/2020), Domingo Mbomio Ngomo

[en] - *Summary of the Proposed Business Plan of the Great Caldera of Luba Scientific Reserve. Period 2022 - 2023 (11/2020), Domingo Mbomio Ngomo*

Résumé de la Proposition de Plan d'Affaires du Parc National d'Altos du Nsork (PNAN). Période 2022 – 2023 (11/2020), Domingo Mbomio Ngomo

[en] - *Summary of the Proposed Business Plan for the Nsork Highlands National Park (PNAN). Period 2022 - 2023 (11/2020), Domingo Mbomio Ngomo*

Technical Report Target 2: Regarding Updated Laws, Policies and Regulations in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea (05/2019), Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe & Irene Consuelo Nlang Abeso

Technical Report Target 4: Regarding Institutional Regulations/Commitments Related to the Conservation and Revenue Distribution Procedures from the Management of National Protected Areas for Application in the Demonstration Sites in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea (03/06/2019), Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe & Irene Consuelo Nlang Abeso

Technical Report Target 6: Prepare a holistic technical report for Equatorial Guinea on the legal and regulatory aspects, environmental policy aspects, lessons learned and replication

tests -management mechanisms & funding subsequently put in place in national pas- as well as national funding strategies (10/06/2019), Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe & Irene Consuelo Nlang Abeso

Technical Report for Targets 15: Assessing the Capacities of key Players Working in the SNAP & 1 Holistic Action Plan to Strengthen Their Capacity in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea (19/06/2019), Dr. Demetrio Bocuma Meñe & Irene Consuelo Nlang Abeso

- Gabon – 13

Analyse approfondie des mécanismes de partage des revenus existants issus de la gestion des Parcs Nationaux des Monts de Cristal (Province de l'Estuaire et du Woleu N'tem) et Loango (Ogoouée Maritime) au Gabon, Christy Achtone Nkollo-Kema Kema

[en] - *In-depth analysis of existing revenue sharing mechanisms from the management of the Monts de Cristal (Estuaire and Woleu N'tem Province) and Loango (Ogoouée Maritime) National Parks in Gabon, Christy Achtone Nkollo-Kema*

Analyse des cadres politique, juridique et institutionnel: Financement durable de la conservation de la biodiversité des AP et des mécanismes de génération des revenus au Gabon, Christian Mikolo Yobo & Jean Caristel M'vouna

[en] - *Analysis of policy, legal and institutional frameworks: Sustainable financing of PA biodiversity conservation and revenue generation mechanisms in Gabon, Christian Mikolo Yobo & Jean Caristel M'vouna*

Atelier national d'information et de validation des rapports techniques holistiques – Contexte sous régional et cadre logique du projet - Approche stratégique pour l'atteinte des 3 résultats interconnectées (30/07/2019 – 31/07/2019), Omer Ntougou

[en] - *National workshop for information and validation of holistic technical reports - Sub-regional context and logical framework of the project - Strategic approach to achieve the 3 interconnected results (30/07/2019 - 31/07/2019), Omer Ntougou*

Atelier national d'information et de validation des rapports techniques holistiques – Méthodologie d'élaboration de la stratégie nationale de financement durable (30/07/2019 – 31/07/2019), Omer Ntougou

[en] - *National workshop for information and validation of holistic technical reports - Methodology for the elaboration of the national strategy for sustainable financing (30/07/2019 - 31/07/2019), Omer Ntougou*

Le profil de la finance et l'économie environnementales axés sur les aires protégées (AP), Christian Mikolo Yobo & Jean Caristel M'vouna

[en] - *The profile of environmental finance and economics with a focus on protected areas (PAs), Christian Mikolo Yobo & Jean Caristel M'vouna*

Plan d'Affaire Parc National de Loango

[en] - *Loango National Park Business Plan*

Rapport Final - Atelier national d'information et de validation des Rapports Techniques holistiques (30/07/2019 – 31/07/2019)

[en] - *Final Report - National Information and Validation Workshop on Holistic Technical Reports (30/07/2019 - 31/07/2019)*

Rapport Technique – État de la collecte des données nécessaire à la préparation de la stratégie de financement de la conservation au Gabon, Jean Caristel M'vouna & Christian Mikolo Yobo

[en] - *Technical Report - Status of data collection for the preparation of the conservation financing strategy in Gabon, Jean Caristel M'vouna & Christian Mikolo Yobo*

Rapport Technique – Évaluation des capacités des acteurs clés dans le système des aires protégées national et plan d'actions de renforcement des capacités au Gabon, Jean Caristel M'vouna & Christian Mikolo Yobo

[en] - *Technical Report - Capacity Assessment of Key Actors in the National Protected Area System and Capacity Building Action Plan in Gabon, Jean Caristel M'vouna & Christian Mikolo Yobo*

Rapport Technique – Lois, politiques et réglementations nouvelles ou actualisées nécessaires au financement durable des aires protégées au Gabon, Christian Mikolo Yobo & Jean Caristel M'vouna

[en] - *Technical Report - New or updated laws, policies and regulations needed for the sustainable financing of protected areas in Gabon, Christian Mikolo Yobo & Jean Caristel M'vouna*

Rapport technique sur le profil de la finance et l'économie environnementales axé sur les AP, Jean Caristel M'vouna & Christian Mikolo Yobo

[en] - *Technical report on the profile of environmental finance and economics focusing on PAs, Jean Caristel M'vouna & Christian Mikolo Yobo*

Rendu des missions de collecte des données – (Préparation de la stratégie de financement durable de la conservation au Gabon)

[en] - *Report on data collection missions - (Preparation of the strategy for sustainable financing of conservation in Gabon)*

Stratégie nationale de financement durable des aires protégées (2019)

[en] - *National Strategy for Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas (2019)*

- **Congo – 10**

Analyse approfondie des mécanismes de partage des revenus existants dans la réserve naturelle de gorilles de Lésio-Louna et la réserve de faune de la Léfini, Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga & Brice Saturnin Mowawa

[en] - *In-depth analysis of existing revenue sharing mechanisms in the Lésio-Louna Gorilla Nature Reserve and the Léfini Wildlife Reserve, Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga & Brice Saturnin Mowawa*

Business Plan de la réserve de faune de la Lefini (12/2020), Berlange Goffarte Ndinga

[en] - *Business Plan of the Lefini Wildlife Reserve (12/2020)*, Berlangue Goffarte Ndinga

Business Plan de la réserve naturelle de gorilles de Lesio-Louna (12/2020), Berlangue Goffarte Ndinga

[en] - *Business Plan of the Lesio-Louna Gorilla Nature Reserve (12/2020)*, Berlangue Goffarte Ndinga

Évaluation des bénéfices et valeurs économiques issus de la réserve naturelle de gorilles de Lésio-Louna et de la réserve de faune de la Léfini (11/03/2021), Félicien Nsonsi

[en] - *Evaluation of the benefits and economic values of the Lésio-Louna Gorilla Nature Reserve and the Léfini Wildlife Reserve (11/03/2021)*, Félicien Nsonsi

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[en] - *Holistic technical report on assessment and capacity building of key actors on activity planning, financing mechanisms and financial solutions at national and sub-regional level*, Brice Saturnin Mowawa & Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga

Rapport technique holistique relatif aux aspects juridiques, réglementaires, institutionnels et politiques, Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga & Brice Saturnin Mowawa

[en] - *Holistic technical report on legal, regulatory, institutional and policy aspects*, Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga & Brice Saturnin Mowawa

Rapport technique holistique relatif à l'évaluation et le renforcement des capacités des acteurs clés sur la planification des activités, les mécanismes de financement et solutions financières au niveau national et sous-régional, Brice Saturnin Mowawa & Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga

[en] - *Holistic technical report on assessment and capacity building of key actors on activity planning, financing mechanisms and financial solutions at national and sub-regional level*, Brice Saturnin Mowawa & Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga

Rapport technique holistique sur le profil de la finance et l'économie environnementales axé sur les aires protégées, Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga & Brice Saturnin Mowawa

[en] - *Holistic technical report on the profile of environmental finance and economics focusing on protected areas*, Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga & Brice Saturnin Mowawa

Rapport technique sur l'état de la collecte des données en vue de la préparation de la stratégie de financement au niveau sous-régional quinquennal axe sur les aires protégées, les corridors et les zones tampons, Brice Saturnin Mowawa & Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga

[en] - *Technical report on the status of data collection for the preparation of the five-year sub-regional funding strategy on protected areas, corridors and buffer zones*, Brice Saturnin Mowawa & Guichard Geoffroy Boungou Kibenga

- **Cameroon – 21**

Évaluation des bénéfices et valeurs économiques issus des parcs nationaux de Campo Ma'an et de Lobéké – Rapport Final (03/05/2021), Dr Guy Merlin Nguenang

[en] - *Evaluation of the benefits and economic values of Campo Ma'an and Lobéké National Parks - Final Report* (03/05/2021), Dr Guy Merlin Nguenang

In-depth analysis of existing revenue sharing mechanisms from the management of the Campo Ma'an and Lobéké National Park (09/2020), Ntoko Vivian Njole

Plan d'Affaires du Parc National de Campo-Ma'an et sa zone périphérique – 2021 – 2025 (Document de travail), (12/2020), Dr Paul Donfack

[en] - *Business Plan for Campo-Ma'an National Park and its peripheral zone - 2021 - 2025 (Working Document)*, (12/2020), Dr Paul Donfack

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[en] - *National Strategy for Sustainable Financing of Protected Areas for the Conservation and Development of Biodiversity and for the Protection of Endangered and Endemic Species in Cameroon (SNFDAP/CVB)*, (12/2021), Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF)

Tableau de bord de la viabilité financière: Pour le système national d'aires protégées du Cameroun (09/2021), PNUD

[en] - *Financial Sustainability Scorecard: For Cameroon's National Protected Area System* (09/2021), UNDP

Analyse technique des Problèmes & Flux de Financements. Illustration des Problèmes Majeurs des Sites D'Aires Protégées Visitées – Final (10/2018)

[en] - *Technical Analysis of Problems & Financing Flows. Illustration of the Major Problems of the Protected Area Sites Visited - Final* (10/2018)

Rapport technique sur l'évaluation des capacités des acteurs clés et autres parties prenantes et plan d'action en vue du renforcement des capacités sur les mécanismes de financement, planification et gestion des aires Protégées du Cameroun. (07/2019), Dr Ngandjui Germain & Mr Siméon A. Eyebe

[en] - *Technical report on the evaluation of the capacities of key actors and other stakeholders and action plan for capacity building on the mechanisms of financing, planning and management of protected areas in Cameroon.* (07/2019), Dr Ngandjui Germain & Mr Siméon A. Eyebe

Atelier de formation des gestionnaires d'aires protégées à l'outil IMET: rapport technique final formation IMET: djoum (aires protégées concernées : ngoyla, boumba bek, nki et deng-deng). (07/2018), Siméon ABE EYEBE.

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[en] - *Training workshop for protected area managers on the IMET tool: final technical report IMET training: edea (protected areas concerned: douala-edea, lake ossa, campo ma'an, mont cameroun). (07/2018), Siméon ABE EYEBE*

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6.5. Annex 2: Summary of the capitalization of the implementation of LVGs

6.5.1. The situation

SITES	PARTNER	ACTIVITIES CARRIED	OUT BENEFICIARIES
CAMEROON: 25 groups			
PN Lobeke	ERUDEF	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): maize, production and marketing of artisanal soap, collection and marketing shrimp, production and marketing of honey, animal protein supply centre, peanuts, fishing, beekeeping, cassava, processing of wild mangoes, pig farming, fish farming</p> <p>Community works: rehabilitation of the biodiversity hut, rehabilitation of the health center and construction of 3 wells, operationalization of the multifunctional center of Mambele, Champignonnières,</p> <p>15 awareness sessions against the Covid-19 pandemic and training on the development of business plans</p>	15 groups including 1 group of indigenous people
PN Campo Ma'an	FCTV	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): domestication of NWFPs (mang ue), fish farming, shrimp fishing, okra, market gardening, corn, groundnuts; plantin and banana, potato, yam, pig farming, fish farming, planting fruit trees</p> <p>Community works: construction of the biodiversity hut, 3 village pharmacies installed</p> <p>12 awareness sessions, Awareness raising against the Covid-19 pandemic</p>	10 groups including 2 groups of indigenous peoples
CONGO: 31			
RF groups of	Léfini ACODECO	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): sheep, goats, pigs, cassava, peanuts</p> <p>Community works: construction of the biodiversity hut, repair of the ambulance Nsah Integrated Health Center, Completion of dispensary work, Rehabilitation of the observation lodge</p> <p>7 awareness sessions against the Covid-19 pandemic</p>	23 groups including 2 women's groups, 3 indigenous groups

RN des Gorilles de Lésio Louna	CJID	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): fishing, market gardening, goats, sheep, beekeeping, poultry farming,</p> <p>Community works: con construction of the biodiversity hut, construction of 3 water wells, rehabilitation of 3 health centers with provision of materials and medicines</p> <p>5 awareness sessions against the Covid-19 pandemic and 2 environmental education sessions in schools</p>	8 groups
GABON: 8			
Loango	IBONGA	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): chicken breeding, ecotourism activity with the construction of bungalows, catering service, pastry, turtle hatchery, egg production</p> <p>Community works: construction of an eco- museum, repair of a dispensary,</p> <p>5 awareness sessions against the Covid-19 pandemic</p> <p>Equipment provided by the National Agency for National Parks</p>	4 groups including 1 group of girl-mothers and a group of disabled people
PN Ivindo	A2E	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): fishing, hairdressing, beekeeping</p> <p>Community works: construction of an eco-museum, repair of a dispensary, construction of a water well at</p> <p>5 Awareness sessions against the Covid-19 pandemic</p>	4 groups including 1 group of oviginine women and a group of disabled people
EQUATORIAL GUINEA: 22 groups			
PN Altos de Nsork	ANDENGE	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): pig farming, chickens, fish farming,</p> <p>Community works: provision of materials and equipment for the biodiversity hut housed in the INDEFOR building, rehabilitation of health facilities with provision of medicines, rehabilitation of a water well, provision of school materials for 11 schools around the park</p> <p>2 awareness campaigns against the Covid-19 pandemic</p> <p>Training of park agents on management</p>	12

RC groups of the Gran Caldera de Luba	BBPP	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): ecotourism, fishing, chicken breeding, artisanal bread making, agricultural products,</p> <p>Community works: construction of the biodiversity hut, rehabilitation of 5 health centers with provision of materials and equipment, improvement of 2 water points</p> <p>10 awareness campaigns against the Covid-19 pandemic</p> <p>Development of the RN management plan</p>	10
RCA groups = 44			
AP groups of Dzanga-Sangha	CODICOM	<p>Community initiatives (including AGRs): production of artisanal soap, sewing , petty trade, fish farming, pig farming, market gardening</p> <p>Community works: rehabilitation of a school with development of latrines, water wells</p> <p>3 awareness sessions n against the Covid-19 pandemic</p>	10 groups including 1 group of Muslim women and 1 group of Christian widows
	ASPEC-DC	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): livestock (pigs, goats, sheep), fish farming, market gardening</p> <p>Community works: Construction of the biodiversity hut, with provision of furniture and computer equipment and provision of a small community pharmacy for the sale of essential drugs Road work</p> <p>Raising awareness against the Covid-19 pandemic: Support for building the capacity of communities in terms of information, advice and guidance in order to increase efforts in the conservation of biodiversity & sustainable management of natural resources: this activity was carried out with the community and leaders of associative organizations.</p>	10 groups, including 1 group of

PN women from Mabéré Mbodingué	CRAD	<p>Community initiatives (including AGRs): breeding of goats, chickens, production of artisanal soap, fish farming, local restaurant, sale of palm oil, sale of coconut oil,</p> <p>Community works: Rehabilitation of 2 boreholes in the communities, Construction of the biodiversity hut</p> <p>At least ten awareness sessions against the Covid-19 pandemic</p>	24 groups including 4 exclusively female groups and 1 group of indigenous people
DRC: 18 groups			
Mangroves Marine Park	CBBC	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): fishing, rodent breeding, market gardening, improved stoves, shrimp sales centre, poultry farming, beekeeping, sewing</p> <p>Community works: biodiversity hut, construction of a bridge, provision of medicines for 2 health centers, construction of a school</p> <p>5 awareness sessions against the Covid-19 pandemic in the CLCDs</p>	8
PN Kahuzi- Biega	UEFA	<p>Community initiatives (including IGAs): reforestation/agroforestry - fruit trees, improved stoves, market gardening, guinea pig breeding, beekeeping, mushroom production,</p> <p>Community works: Construction of the biodiversity hut, Construction of a water point</p> <p>5 awareness campaigns against the Covid-19 pandemic</p>	10 groups including 2 groups of indigenous peoples
TOTAL			148 groups representing more than 13,200 people, 45% of whom are women

6.5.2. Impacts / changes in the lives of beneficiaries:

- Local communities educated and sensitized on conservation are aware of the threats to NWFPs in their forests and are beginning to better control their domestication. They engage in the protection of the Reserve, the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable management of natural resources to reduce pressure on biodiversity (hunting, deforestation, bush fires, etc.).
- Social cohesion has been strengthened by the construction and operationalization of biodiversity huts, which have become a space for exchange within the community not only on conservation aspects but also a means of promoting local cultures and crafts for tourists
- The team of certain PAs exercises their profession in better conditions, especially the eco-guards (case of Gabon, Congo and the GE) through the provision of work tools. The equipment received by the ANPN in Gabon, for example, has made it possible to increase the number of anti-poaching missions
- The case of morbidity in the villages around the park has tangibly decreased with the rehabilitation of health centers and the provision of medicines and also thanks to the repair of the ambulance for the case of RF Léfini in Congo (more than 40 people in the Nsah health area were saved thanks to the ambulance already operational)
- Access to drinking water in the villages improves the health of the local populations and their well-being. These wells have also allowed them to save time to engage in other activities
- A marked improvement in the living conditions of local communities through the sale of their agricultural production, livestock, fish, shrimp, soap, honey etc Sustainable mechanisms for generating income likely to finance community initiatives that bring about change and focus on the preservation of local biodiversity have been put in place at all 12 pilot sites
- Pride felt among the members of the groups who see an increase in their cultivated areas. They no longer remain idle and no longer seek to live from hunting and gathering in the forests
- Inclusion is effective with the implementation of specific activities dedicated to indigenous peoples, young mothers and the disabled. The sewing activity carried out by a group composed solely of Muslim women returned to the CAR has enabled social cohesion in the commune of Bayanga, for example. People living with disabilities are gradually becoming independent through their service activity and reducing their craft activities affecting local biodiversity.
- Thousands of young people are introduced to the issue of preserving biodiversity through the operationalization of eco-museums or biodiversity huts. Indeed, computer equipment with an internet connection allows them to access related information.
- A better approach to the process of reproduction of sea turtles on the southern coast of Gabon is made possible thanks to the construction/renovation of 2 hatcheries to protect the nesting sites of sea turtles
- The sustainable harvesting of NWFPs is made possible following the various campaigns of education and awareness-raising on the NWFP among target populations
- The implementation of the project “**Support for strengthening the resilience of local and indigenous populations affected by the COVID-19 pandemic for the conservation of biodiversity and socio-economic recovery in the PNMB** ” in Ngotto has solved many problems between local communities by contributing to the promotion of social cohesion. The communities that did not see each other before the project began to see each other, following the many work meetings organized by the team of implementing partners, in consultation with the local authorities.

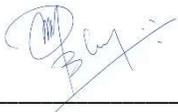
6.5.3. Lessons learned

- The proper involvement of administrative and local authorities during the implementation of ongoing initiatives is a guarantee of the project's success
- Transparency in the identification of beneficiaries and initiatives, on the basis of consensual criteria have enabled adherence and the involvement of authorities and beneficiaries in the implementation of activities.
- The association of traditional chiefs and leaders within the community made the selection of beneficiaries credible;
- Reinforced communication between the Project Management Unit at the GEF/UNDP level and the project implementation team allows for a better understanding of the desired orientations and a concerted implementation of the activities
- Faced with the human-wildlife conflict which is very recurrent around the Campo Ma'an National Park and in Gabon, it is better to invest in other income-generating activity micro-projects than in agriculture.
- Although communities demonstrate their willingness to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, they do not yet have reliable, sustainable and profitable alternatives. Attempts at this stage are not yet part of the value chain approach.
- With all the realities on the ground, the duration of the project implementation is too short (six months): the project has a strong coverage of space and the involvement of communities being a progressive activity over time.
- It is important to work in collaboration with the partners established in the area to avoid any conflicts or duplication in the implementation of activities.
- The prioritization of the actions to be implemented and their planning must be put first for the success of the activities planned within the framework of this project. Also, it is important to align all agricultural activities to the schedule which is very important for the yield of the products.

Terminal Evaluation Report for *(Sustainable Financing of PAs in Congo Basin – PIMS 3447)*
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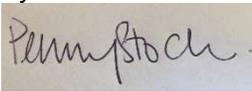
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