



Concept Environmental and Social Review
Summary
Concept Stage
(ESRS Concept Stage)

Date Prepared/Updated: 08/20/2024 | Report No: ESRSC04425

**I. BASIC INFORMATION****A. Basic Operation Data**

Operation ID	Product	Operation Acronym	Approval Fiscal Year
P505923	Investment Project Financing (IPF)	SCBFE	2026
Operation Name	Sustainable Congo Basin Forest Economies		
Country/Region Code	Beneficiary country/countries (borrower, recipient)	Region	Practice Area (Lead)
Multi-Regional	Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of, Congo, Republic of, Gabon	Other	Environment, Natural Resources & the Blue Economy
Borrower(s)	Implementing Agency(ies)	Estimated Appraisal Date	Estimated Board Date
Ministry of Economy	Central Africa Economic and Monetary Union	19-Feb-2025	31-Jul-2025
Estimated Concept Review Date	Total Project Cost		
03-Oct-2024	1,070,200,000.00		

Public Disclosure

Proposed Development Objective

To scale up sustainable forest landscapes management, forest value chains and livelihoods opportunities in Congo Basin Forest countries

B. Is the operation being prepared in a Situation of Urgent Need of Assistance or Capacity Constraints, as per Bank IPF Policy, para. 12?

No

C. Summary Description of Proposed Project Activities

This horizontal MPA will operationalize the Global Challenge Program -Forests for development, climate and biodiversity by focusing on sustainably developing value-added products and services from the forest sector, increasing jobs and improving regional and national capacity for



biodiversity conservation. At the regional level the project will enhance climate benefits and help countries coordinate their climate and forest policies for greater development impact.

D. Environmental and Social Overview

D.1 Overview of Environmental and Social Project Settings

This MPA is focused on the entire Congo Basin Forest (CBF) biome, and will cover the following countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon. The biodiversity of this biome is unique and critical, and while it comprises primarily humid tropical rainforest, it also contains a diversity of 64 different ecosystem types including tropical peatlands, mangroves, and dry forests. About 30% of the species are endemic, like the Bonobo, Okapi, and Mandrill. The CBF biome is also vital for maintaining large freshwater ecosystems, including the Congo, Kasai, Ubangi and Ogooué. Although this biome serves as one of the largest global carbon sink, it is also highly vulnerable to climate change with significant risks to its natural, physical, and human capital. although the CBF has a comparatively low rate of deforestation than other tropical regions, it still witnessed the loss of 2.2 million hectares of forest and the degradation of 1.5 million hectares between 2012-2020 .

The biome supports forest-dependent Indigenous Peoples and other communities from at least 150 different ethnic groups (including around 1 million pastoralist Ba'Aka and Mbororo peoples) and plays an essential social and cultural role in their lives. Another 40 million from urban and peri-urban centers of the region are dependent on this rich resource. The Region is characterized by high levels of extreme poverty, which is particularly focused in the rural (and forest) areas, with countries having wide differences. Cameroon, Central Africa Republic and, Democratic Republic of Congo are in the list of fragile and conflict-affected situations. Fragility and conflict dynamics are rooted in economic, governance and social factors.

The MPA recognizes that with sustainable management, the CBF biome can drive economic growth and employment in the region and increase income and climate resilience of rural populations.

D.2 Overview of Borrower's Institutional Capacity for Managing Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

While all the participating countries have had some experience in implementing project under the ESF, track record of E&S implementation experience continues to be low. At regional level project tasks would be coordinated by a small regional coordination unit in Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), building on the ongoing and past collaboration of Bank with CEMAC commission. To strength regional institutions' capacity and ensure implementation readiness E&S capacity assessment will be carried out to identify capacity gaps and interventions for CEMAC.

At National levels, projects will be managed by the participating countries, through project coordination units in:

- Cameroon has stable E&S institutions, including the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, which focuses on vulnerable populations. However, these institutions lack experience in implementing projects under the ESF, requiring capacity assessment and strengthening.



- In the Republic of Congo, the Directorate General for Environment (DGE) oversees E&S assessments but has limited capacity to monitor ESF projects, necessitating capacity evaluation and enhancement.
 - Gabon has implemented few WB-funded projects, revealing poor institutional and managerial capacity, weak human resources, and moderately satisfactory E&S performance.
 - In CAR, the DGE under the Ministry of Environment (MEDD) manages E&S processes but lacks ESF project experience, requiring capacity assessment and improvement.
 - In DRC, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD) and its technical agency, ACE, oversee E&S monitoring but are understaffed and inexperienced with ESF projects, needing urgent capacity evaluation and reinforcement.
- The capacity needs of these national project coordination units will be assessed and restrengthened.

II. SCREENING OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL RISKS AND IMPACTS

A. Environmental and Social Risk Classification (ESRC)

High

A.1 Environmental Risk Rating

High

Environmental risks is rated high at Concept stage and could be revised when more details on the project locations, design of components and expected activities are available. The high rating is due to the contextual risks associated with high sensitivity of the CBF biome and due to program's extensive scale, encompassing 37million hectares (31 million in forest landscapes, including protected areas, and 6 million degraded forest lands). Converting degraded landscapes into commercial plantations can result in biodiversity loss and soil degradation. These risks are exacerbated by monoculture practices and intensive land use, which can destabilize ecosystems, degrade soil quality, reduce fertility and increase the risk of erosion. Risks associated with impacts resulting from many small and medium scale interventions (such as park management infrastructure, small buildings and forest guard stations, feeder roads and bridges) in various locations with different particularities, can be critical especially for the implementation phase of the project. Barriers like mobile electric fences can have risks for wildlife. There could be a risk of habitat fragmentation and disruption of wildlife movement patterns, if project activities are not well designed. Disturbance of habitats could result in increased human-wildlife conflicts, while increased human activity can also lead to illegal activities like bush-meat hunting, threatening local wildlife populations. While all countries have some experience with implementing projects under the ESF, their track record shows that E&S capacity remains low, as detailed in the previous section. This limited capacity to identify and manage E&S risks and monitor implementation also contributes to a high risk rating. Some of the countries are considered as FCVs with political and security risks in some provinces which can restrict supervision and monitoring.

A.2 Social Risk Rating

High

The overall social risk is High for the following reasons: i) the scope of this project is large, the high diversification of activities, and the history of similar activities in the CBF ii) the stakeholders' engagement challenges, and the iii) management of key issues related to communities' needs (land/tenure, access to resources, benefits sharing). The scope of the



project is very large and complex with the risk of dispersion that could negatively affect project's monitoring. The involvement of those key actors during the design and the implementation of the project will be very challenging in terms of participation, consent on activities to be performed, monitoring, and grievance management. Apart from IPs, livelihoods of local Bantu population are also intimately linked to the CBF. Program activities planned under pillars 2 and 3 are likely to entail significant social risks that may adversely impacts on people, particularly affected individuals, and communities. Example of potential social risks that are likely to be emerged from the program activities includes: failure to properly address community benefit sharing; not paying close attention to the concern of indigenous peoples and undermining women's' access for natural resources; weak site selection criteria for restoration and management of forest landscape which will likely impact livelihoods of rural communities and IPs as well as impacts on tangible and intangible cultural properties; implementation of infrastructure activities involving rehabilitating, upgrading and/or expanding feeder roads and, small bridges which could result to taking away land or restricting access to productive assets which might require livelihood restoration and resettlement; unconducive working relationship and practice including child and forced labor; employment discrimination and wage inequality, GBV/SEA/H are some of the social risks that could likely generate conflict of high consequences.

B. Relevance of Standards and Policies at Concept Stage

B.1 Relevance of Environmental and Social Standards

ESS1 - Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

Relevant

This standard is relevant . The project E&S is rated as high considering the scope of activities, the high dependance of local population and IP to resources of CBF. The project is using a MPA Approach for an 8-years engagement. Considering that at this stage the project locations and activities for small scale infrastructure are not yet defined, prior to appraisal, the participating countries will prepare the following: ESMF, LMP, Cultural Heritage Plans, OHS and Traffic Management, Emergency Response Plans, Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF), Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). When the subproject locations and details are known, countries will prepare relevant site specific E&S instruments (ESIA/ESMPs) RAPs, security management plans, Pest Management Plans and Biodiversity Management Plans if required. A SEA/SH assessment will be undertaken as part of the ESMF. CEMAC will also prepare relevant instruments defining its role in the coordination of the MPA. .

ESS10 - Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure

Relevant

Each country will prepare a very robust SEP to ensure that all key stakeholders (local communities, CBOs, NGOs, Private sector, local administration, IP networks, stakeholders involved in protected areas conservation) are fully involved during preparation and implementation. One the key stakeholders are IP and their representing institutions. The SEP including the GRM be culturally appropriate and accessible to affected indigenous people. Particular attention should be given to the participation of of Indigenous People/ Sub-Saharan



African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities (IP/SSAHUTLC) to ensure that their rights are preserved and to NGOs/Civil Society Organization to ensure that there is an efficient monitoring of project's activities. Each SEP will cover consultations to inform the choice for the proposed management model for subproject(s) and propose strategies for the continuous engagement with stakeholders at regional, national, provincial and local levels.

ESS2 - Labor and Working Conditions

Relevant

Program interventions may involve engagement of direct, contracted and community workers to carry out the project activities. Occupational health and safety risks for workers during civil works include risks associated with rugged or slippery terrain, severe climatic conditions like heavy rain or humidity and biological hazards including allergies, diseases from biological vectors, venomous reptiles and insects and wild animals. These will be in addition to standard construction related risks related to vehicle movement, machinery use, slips and falls, fatigue, dehydration, etc. . Other social risks include use of child and forced labor as well as risks related to wages discrimination and nonadherence to national law and the LMP; discriminatory hiring policy, denial to workers GRM and extended and unpaid working hours. The participating nations will develop a Labor Management Procedures to address these risks.

ESS3 - Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management

Relevant

Construction of infrastructure such as feeder roads, bridges and park infrastructure along with the routine operations carries significant environmental risks in sensitive terrestrial and marine ecosystems of the CBF biome. These include indiscriminate solid and liquid waste management resulting in pollution of water and land. Burning of vegetation can result in air pollution and contribute to GHG emission. Construction activities can result in natural resource overuse. The use of chemicals in commercial plantations can harm soil and water quality. Given the possibility of using such agrochemicals, the project will consider developing Pest Management Plans, wherever required. The project may use resource-efficiency measures such as soil conservation and water usage for plantation activities but there could be potential generation of electronic wastes from the program of modernization of information systems. Mitigation measures will be specified in the ESMF & site-specific ESMPs

ESS4 - Community Health and Safety

Relevant

This standard is relevant the project will finance small infrastructure, services and assets to help remote communities access markets and basic services. Financing could be for rehabilitating, upgrading and/or expanding feeder roads, small bridges and other crossing structures, improving access to public infrastructure needed for livelihoods such as off-grid electrification, clean/renewable energy options for household and community facilities or for small enterprises and buildings as relevant. Potential risks could include injuries and accidents due to movement of vehicles, use of heavy machinery, etc. These risks and mitigation measures for adverse impacts on beneficiaries will be analyzed in the ESMF and detailed in site-specific ESMPs for subprojects including measures to address traffic road and safety and



management and safety of hazardous materials. The project might be implemented in provinces with security concerns. SRA and a SMP will be prepared as needed.

ESS5 - Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement

Relevant

Activities under Pillar 2 and 3 may require land acquisition, especially small infrastructure to be constructed, including feeder roads, buildings, electrification may induct restriction to land use and involuntary resettlement. Each country will prepare a RPF and RAP as needed. In case, some activities resulted in the restriction of access to new protected areas or parks, participating countries may be required to prepare a Process Framework & eventually a social assessment including conducting extensive consultations with affected communities. In case the creation of such protected areas affects IPs, there is need for FPIC. In some of the countries, there are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs, refugees) that have encroached upon forest who are likely to be impacted and possibly displaced from the areas. In this case, they will be treated as people who encroached to the area prior to the census cut-of date and as per ESS5 provisions.

ESS6 - Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources

Relevant

Activities funded under the MPA could pose significant risks to the sensitive habitats and biodiversity of the CBF biome, if they are not managed well and mitigation measures are not well implemented and enforced. Indiscriminate vegetation loss, introduction of non-indigenous species; land degradation, soil erosion, damage to water and soil quality, habitat fragmentation, disruption of water cycles could pose serious risks to indigenous species of terrestrial, avian and marine flora and fauna. Additional increased human activity, including illegal hunting can seriously endanger local wildlife and birds. For infrastructure works, the ESMF can include a screening procedures and generic measures to address these impacts, while the site- specific ESMPs will include detailed measures. For plantation activities, the SESA can include biodiversity assessment and management plan.

ESS7 - Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities

Relevant

Ancestral territories occupied by indigenous people (IP) are located with the CBF. Their survival is inextricably linked those forests. Indigenous people in the CBF comprises numerous ethnic groups. In Cameroon we have the Baka, the Bagyeli & Bedzan. In DRC: The Mbuti, Baka & Batwa. In Congo: The Babongo, Twa, Bakola, Mambenga, Mikaya, Luma, etc. In Gabon : Baka, Babongo, Bakoya, Baghame, Barimba, Akoula, Akwoa, etc. CAR: The AKA & the Litho. In Case the project will cause adverse impacts outlined under paragraph 24 of ESS7 in the ESF, FPIC will be required. Robust IP/SSAHUTLC consultations should be integrated in countries' SEPs. Countries will prepare IP SSAHUTLC Planning Framework and Plan as needed.

ESS8 - Cultural Heritage

Relevant



Since the CBF is home to many indigenous peoples, there is likelihood that the forest biome is imbued with cultural heritage significance, including sacred trees, plants, groves, rocks, streams, rivers, waterfalls etc. It is also likely that the traditional communities in project area have intangible cultural heritage practices. The proposed program activities may impact these sites through land use changes and construction activities. Local communities will be engaged while designing the project activities to identify and protect these cultural heritages. Each participating countries will develop Cultural Heritage Management Plan, if deemed necessary

ESS9 - Financial Intermediaries

Not Currently
Relevant

No Financial Intermediaries required at this concept stage of the project.

B.2 Legal Operational Policies that Apply

OP 7.50 Operations on International Waterways

TBD

OP 7.60 Operations in Disputed Areas

No

B.3 Other Salient Features

Use of Borrower Framework

No

The E&S risk is rated at this concept stage as High. At this stage, none of the participating countries' E&S framework will be used. The four participating countries' experience and knowledge of ESF is determined to be low. Given that the program is E&S High risk project, capacity need assessment of the regional implementing agency as well as those of national PIUs will be conducted. The outcome of the E&S capacity need assessment will be used to develop and deliver need-based capacity building support for the regional implementing agency and national PIUs staff.

Use of Common Approach

TBD

C. Overview of Required Environmental and Social Risk Management Activities

C.1 What Borrower environmental and social analyses, instruments, plans and/or frameworks are planned or required by Appraisal?

Country specific instruments will be prepared by each participating country, before Appraisal; These instruments will build on any existing assessments or studies in the participating countries or CEMAC. These will include Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), which will include Screening tools to specify eligibility of investments and provide templates and guidelines for Labour Management Procedures, Cultural Heritage Plans, OHS and Traffic Management, Emergency Response Plans; and which will identify all key risks and mitigation measures related to their country specific activities - by each Borrower before



Appraisal). When the subproject locations and details are known, countries will prepare relevant site specific E&S instruments (ESIA/ESMPs).

Pest Management Plans will be prepared, if relevant for country specific activities will be prepared after Board approval and before the start of implementation of MPA activities. A Biodiversity assessment and Management Plan for each country- after Board approval and before start of implementation of MPA activities, based on available documentation at the national and/or regional level and/or preliminary assessment of biodiversity risks within the ESMF.

Prior to appraisal the borrower will prepare the following: ESMF, including Labour Management Procedures, Cultural Heritage Plans, IP SSAHUTLC Planning Framework, a RPF and RAP as needed. In case there is an anticipated impact on new protected areas, a process Framework & relevant plants will be prepared after Board approval and before start of implementation of MPA activities.

Stakeholder consultations to identify any types of cultural heritage risks in each country. Prior to appraisal, each country will prepare a SEP.

It is expected that CEMAC will also prepare relevant instruments defining its role in coordination of the MPA. After Board approval, countries will prepare Pest Management Plans, where relevant and Biodiversity Management Plans.

III. CONTACT POINT

World Bank

Task Team Leader:	Madhavi M. Pillai	Title:	Senior Natural Resources Management Specialist
-------------------	-------------------	--------	--

Email:	mpillai3@worldbank.org
--------	------------------------

TTL Contact:	Benjamin Herzberg	Job Title:	Senior Private Sector Specialist
--------------	-------------------	------------	----------------------------------

Email:	bherzberg@worldbank.org
--------	-------------------------

TTL Contact:	Patrice Savadogo	Job Title:	Senior Forestry Specialist
--------------	------------------	------------	----------------------------

Email:	psavadogo@worldbank.org
--------	-------------------------

IV. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT



The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 473-1000
Web: <http://www.worldbank.org/projects>

V. APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s):	Madhavi M. Pillai, Benjamin Herzberg, Patrice Savadogo
ADM Environmental Specialist:	Ruma Tavorath
ADM Social Specialist:	Aime Bertrand Nkouemou