

Safeguards Compliance Memorandum

Project Information

Project Name	Integrated Management of Cameroon’s Forest Landscapes in the Congo Basin
GEF Focal Area	Biodiversity, Multifocal Area Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes IP
Safeguards Categorization	Special Consideration, Category B

Project Description

The proposed GEF-funded project “Integrated Management of Cameroon’s Forest Landscapes in the Congo Basin” is a child project under the global Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes (CBSL). It will be executed by the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) in close coordination with the World Wild Fund for Nature - Cameroon (WWF-Cameroon). The project’s objective is to strengthen the integrated management of Cameroon’s globally important forest landscapes in the Congo Basin to secure its biological integrity and increase economic opportunities and livelihoods for forest dependent people. Over a six-year period, the project will address key barriers and tackle the drivers of deforestation, forest degradation and biodiversity loss through an inclusive, integrated approach that aims to achieve and sustain the effective participation and empowerment of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and reinforce their resilience. The project will be implemented across the Cameroon segments of three transboundary landscapes: (i) the Rio-Campo landscape (769,446 ha), specifically around Campo Ma’an National Park; (ii) the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkebe (TRIDOM) landscape (4,949,174 ha), and (iii) the Sangha Tri-National (TNS) landscape (1,490,552 ha), specifically in and around Lobeke National Park. The project is divided into five components, as follows:

Component 1: Mainstreaming integrated land use planning (LUP) and management. The project will mainstream LUP by applying a bottom-up approach for participatory, informed and integrated LUP and management across the 1.2 million hectares of the Ngolya and Mintom councils of the TRIDOM landscape.

Component 2: Improving management effectiveness and governance of high conservation value forests. The project will directly address barriers associated with the lack of participatory management models for sustainable forest and wildlife management by promoting better governance of protected areas and their peripheries, notably for Campo Ma’an National Park (CMNP) and Lobéké National Park (LNP).

Component 3: Advancing sustainable forest management (SFM) through non-timber forest product (NTFP) and hardwood value chains, in the TRIDOM landscape. The project will address the impacts of unsustainable resource use by local communities and private sector actors by promoting their increased engagement in local-level models for SFM that engage IPLCs and the private sector.

Component 4: Increasing benefit generation from biodiversity through sustainable tourism development. The project will take advantage of the unique set of attractions that can be found in and around CMNP to develop a sustainable tourism value chain in the Cameroon segment of the Rio-Campo Landscape.

Component 5: Project and knowledge management (KM), monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

Project Location and Salient Physical Characteristics Relevant for the Safeguards Analysis

The geographic scope of this project centers on Cameroon's southern trans-frontier forest belt. This belt, which stretches from the Gulf of Guinea in the east to the Central African Republic (CAR) in the west is dominated by tropical humid dense forest and encompasses the Cameroon segments of three transboundary forest landscapes: (i) the Campo Ma'an-Rio Campo (CMRC) landscape (769,446 ha), (ii) the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkebe (TRIDOM) landscape (4,949,174 ha) and (iii) the Sangha Tri-National (TNS) landscape (1,490,552 ha). It also includes a 695,916 ha interzone between the CMRC and TRIDOM landscapes.

In alignment with the Congo Impact Program (IP), the three landscapes within the southern trans-frontier forest belt have been selected as the targets for this project based in part on their transboundary nature, high carbon storage values, the presence of globally endangered species, the presence of forest dependent peoples, and the existence of significant and related baseline investments. In this context, any adverse environmental and social impacts due to project activities are anticipated to be minor and site specific and can be mitigated, as described in the table below demonstrating the risks surfaced through the activities planned for each of the 5 project components.

Safeguards Standard	Triggered	Explanation
Natural Habitats	Yes	The proposed project directly targets protecting and restoring species and their habitats; strengthening local communities' ability to conserve the natural resources they depend on through the strengthening and establishment of integrated land use plans in the TRIDOM landscape; and through promoting access to sustainable harvesting and value chains of non-timber forest products (NTFP) in 30 communities in all three project landscapes.
Indigenous People	Yes	The project area is inhabited by various ethnic groups, including two considered to meet the definition of Indigenous Peoples under WWF's Policy on Indigenous Peoples (SIPP:74). These are the Bagyeli or Bakola living in the western part of the project area and the Baka, living in the central and eastern part of the project area. Their rights are largely not recognized, and they do not have equal access to decision making processes, despite recent efforts and governance structures put in place to support these processes. An Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) has been established in close consultation with the

		affected Indigenous Peoples to a level where it gained the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) and the same will be required for the development of an Indigenous Peoples Plan (IPP) necessary for each of the three landscapes during project implementation.
Restriction of Access and Resettlement	Yes	The project might lead to certain access restrictions. Given that the activities proposed under the project include, but are not limited to, protected area management and the development of integrated land use plans for the Ngoyla and Mintom council areas; the strengthening and establishment of sustainable NTFP harvesting and value chains for 30 communities from all three project landscapes; and the improvement of governance and management practices in both Campo Ma'an and Lobeke National Parks, the requirement under this policy is the preparation of a Process Framework (PF). The purpose of this PF is to ensure participation of Project Affected People (PAP) while recognizing and protecting their interests and ensuring that they do not become worse off because of the project. This, however, will eventually only occur with the consent of the affected people and following a decision made with all required information at hand. Economic displacement or restriction to livelihoods or access to natural resources may occur as a result of project activities including negotiating through highly participatory consultations the establishment of collaborative land use management plans and arrangements for protected areas and other natural resource sustainability approaches, such as establishing sustainable NTFP value chains.
Community Health, Safety and Security	Yes	This standard is being triggered as a precautionary measure since this project will be engaging with numerous stakeholders and partners, who for some groups, have a history of conflicts between them. Certain project activities may increase the potential for these existing conflicts to escalate or for new conflicts to emerge among these groups and lead to violence and abuse targeted at some communities or individuals. Therefore, it is essential to monitor the situation closely during the project life cycle, to ensure that if risks arise, appropriate assessments and mitigation measures and plans are developed to address these risks and reduce any negative impacts that may ensue.
Pest Management	No	

Cultural Resources	Yes	This standard is being triggered as a precautionary measure, since two out of the three project landscapes will be implementing activities that may increase risks of affecting communities' cultural resources, especially those of Indigenous Peoples, namely in the Campo Ma'an and TRIDOM landscapes. Activities in those landscapes involve promoting sustainable tourism and land use planning processes, respectively. Therefore, close monitoring of these activities will be required throughout the project life cycle. In the event risks relating to cultural resources are surfaced during the project implementation phase, appropriate measures will be taken to develop mitigation plans to address those newly identified risks.
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Summary of Key Safeguards Issues

Describe any safeguard issues and impacts associated with the proposed project. Identify and describe any potential large scale, significant and/or irreversible impacts:

The safeguards issues and impacts associated with the proposed activities in the project, as described in the table above, include: potential access restrictions to natural resources which may affect Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities' livelihoods; impacts to natural habitats through the strengthening and establishment of land use planning processes and through promoting access to sustainable harvesting and value chains of non-timber forest products (NTFP); the presence of Indigenous Peoples in all three landscapes requiring the establishment of an IPP for each landscape to ensure their rights and proper FPIC procedures are respected; and the Cultural Resources and Community Health, Safety and Security standards are triggered as a precautionary measure, to ensure close monitoring of the situation and subsequent plan development as necessary, over the course of the project implementation phase.

The project will not create any large scale, significant and/or irreversible impacts. All risks and impacts identified are being addressed through appropriate mitigation plans and a monitoring and evaluation system put in place to ensure proper application of policies, implementation of mitigation plans and adaptive management approaches to address issues and adjust the course of action as necessary.

Describe measures taken by the Project Team to address safeguard policy issues. Provide an assessment of borrower capacity to plan and implement the measures described:

A **Project Management Unit (PMU)** will be co-funded by the GEF and established within MINEPDED. The main functions of the PMU, and under the guidance of the Project Steering Committee, are to ensure overall efficient management, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the project through the effective implementation of the annual work plans and budgets (AWP/B).

The PMU staff will be composed of the following full-time staff: Project Manager (PM); Communications, M&E, and Knowledge Management Specialist; Safeguards Officer; Gender and

Social Development Specialist; Project Assistant; Finance Manager; Procurement Specialist; accountant; two Landscape Operational Assistants; and four project drivers.

The project Safeguards Officer will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the ESMF, including ensuring the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Process Framework, the Indigenous Peoples Plans (one specific to each landscape) which will be developed during project implementation, the Disclosure and Grievance Redress Mechanism standards, and any other mitigation plans that may need to be developed during the project implementation phase. The Safeguards Officer will provide the necessary capacity building and training to the PMU staff and project partners for efficient safeguards implementation, he/she will work closely with the PMU Gender and Social Development Specialist and will receive support as needed by the WWF GEF Agency Safeguards Specialist.

Identify the key stakeholders and describe the mechanisms for consultation and disclosure on safeguard policies, with an emphasis on potentially affected people:

Key Stakeholders and potentially affected people include: Civil society - Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) and their organizations: A detailed Stakeholder Engagement Plan describes that IPLCs were consulted directly and through representative organizations during project design, and will be key stakeholders under each of the project's 5 components. Representatives of the IPLC key group will be members of the Project Steering Committee and Technical Working Group. Additional consultations will be undertaken at the start of the project and throughout its implementation to refine project strategies in collaboration with these key rights-holders. As such, consultations with communities and participatory approaches have been explicitly incorporated into all relevant activities of the work plan, including the development of an Indigenous Peoples Plan for each landscape to ensure IP rights are respected, including the application of FPIC, as relevant. Participatory monitoring systems have also been included in the project design to promote collective assessments of project impacts and build ownership of its actions.

Monitoring and Compliance

Have satisfactory calendar, budget and clear institutional responsibilities been prepared for the implementation of measures related to safeguard policies? Yes No NA

Have costs related to safeguard policy measures been included in the project cost? Yes No NA

Does the Monitoring and Evaluation system of the project include the monitoring of safeguard impacts and measures related to safeguard policies? Yes No NA

Have satisfactory implementation arrangements been agreed with the borrower and the same been adequately reflected in the project legal documents? Yes No NA

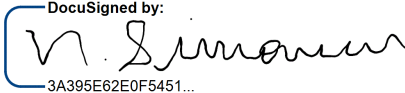
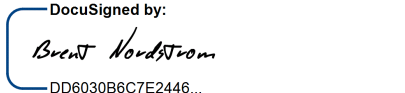
Have relevant safeguard policies documents been sent to WWF-US? Yes No NA

Have relevant documents been disclosed in-country in a public place in a form and language that are understandable and accessible to project-affected groups and local NGOs? Yes [X] No [] NA []

Disclosure Requirements

An Environmental and Social Management Framework which responds directly to the impacts and risks including a Process Framework to address potential access restrictions risks and an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework which will lead to the development of an Indigenous Peoples Plan for each of the three project landscapes; a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Consultations, Disclosures and a Grievance Mechanism are required.	
Date received by WWF-US	9 June 2021
Date Disclosed on WWF-US website	22 June 2021
<i>In Country Disclosure</i>	
Date Disclosed on MINEPDED website	5 September 2021
Date Disclosed in Campo-Ma'an – Rio Campo landscape, TRIDOM landscape, Sangha Tri National landscape	10 September – 25 October 2021

Approvals

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