

WWF Environmental and Social Safeguards - Risk Categorization Memorandum

Version 2.1 November 2020

Project Name: Addressing Outstanding Barriers and Leveraging Durable Financial Mechanisms to Achieve Target 3 in Gabon	Date: March 28, 2023
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Executing Agency/ies: The Nature Conservancy

Landscape Categorization on E&S Risks:
High Risk - (A) ___ and/or (Special Consideration) ___ /Medium Risk (B) X / Low Risk (C)___

Substantive Safeguard Standards Triggered:	Yes/ TBC	No
Natural Habitats	X	
Pest Management		X
Indigenous Peoples	X	
Restriction of Access & Resettlement	X	
Community Health, Safety and Security	X	
Physical and Cultural Resources	X	

In addition to the Substantive Safeguards above, the four Process Standards apply to all projects:

- Environmental and Social Risk Management
- Consultation and Disclosure
- Community Stakeholder Engagement
- Grievance Mechanism

Landscapes categorized as low risk have been screened in accordance to the Standard on E&S Risk Management.

Project Area Context

Gabon is located in the Congo Basin and is the second most forested country in the world harboring rich biodiversity including over 95,000 forest elephants (over 50% of those found in Africa), significant populations of leopards, giant pangolins, mandrills, chimpanzees, and other endemic species. Insufficient long-term financing for protected areas (PAs) management is a key barrier to achieving Target 3 goals in Gabon. A GEF 7 project (“Enduring Earth,” GEF ID 11014), is developing a Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) approach under the Enduring Earth initiative to secure long-term funding for achieving Target 3. Human wildlife conflict (HWC) has been raised by the Government of Gabon (GoG) as a key barrier to effective and inclusive protected area management, and HWC needs to be more fully addressed in the PFP as wildlife impacts on human life, property, and livelihoods may lead to loss of Indigenous Peoples and Local Community (IPLC) support for PAs and inhibit achievement of Target 3 goals.

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Almost all human communities living in or near Gabon's PAs are experiencing HWC. Since 2021, the Gabonese Ministry of Waters and Forests has recorded approximately 5,000 HWC complaints per year as well as 30 deaths and 60 physical attacks. Anecdotal reports suggest that appreciation for wildlife is dwindling in Gabon as evidenced by:

- Killings of elephants, not always in self-defense;
- A resurgence of ivory trafficking;
- Sharing of images/videos of elephants being killed on social networks; and
- The sale of protected species (manatee, hippopotamus) in markets.

The creation of new parks or the extension of the existing parks, part of the goals of the conservation plan of the Gabon PFP, if not carefully undertaken, may exacerbate HWC conflicts and increase distress and frustration in communities. This GBFF project proposes to deliver Target 3 goals by developing a national HWC strategy and integrating HWC into the Gabon PFP (Component 1) and supporting IPLC-designed action on HWC and coexistence in four protected areas (Loango, Minkebe, Mayumba and Monts de Cristal National Parks) that have been experiencing high levels of HWC (Component 2). This integrated, national- to local-level approach will support long-term sustainability for PAs while protecting local livelihoods and allowing wildlife to thrive.

This GBFF project will be co-delivered with the GEF-7 Enduring Earth project, and result in: improved management effectiveness of 1,023,700 hectares of terrestrial PAs and 96,500 hectares of a marine PA. Both projects will be executed by TNC in close coordination with ANPN and other government partners and stakeholders in Gabon, including the Fond pour la Preservation de la Biodiversite du Gabon (FPBG). Together, these projects will complete the design, and start the implementation of a PFP for sustainable financing of the whole protected areas network of Gabon. This GBFF project will ensure inclusion of HWC and coexistence in the PFP approach, for a comprehensive and durable roll out of 30x30x30 in Gabon.

The project's components are as follows:

- Component 1: Enabling Conditions for improved Protected Area conservation and HWC Management in Gabon
 - Outcome 1.1.: Stakeholder and evidence-driven National Strategy on HEW in and around PAs
 - Outcome 1.2.:PFP/CTF strengthened for Protected Area Based Conservation and HWC management
- Component 2: IPLC led HWC solutions
 - Outcome 2.1.: Improved coexistence between humans and key wildlife conflict species in select areas, through IPLC-led evidence-based approaches
- Component 3: Knowledge, Management & Communication
 - Outcome 3.1.: Lessons captured and disseminated
- Component 4: Project M&E
 - Outcome 4.1: Project monitoring and evaluation data contributes to efficient decision making and to adaptive project management.

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Summary of Key Safeguard Issues:

Involuntary Resettlement and Restriction of Access: This standard has been triggered out of an abundance of caution because the project will support activities that might result in some access restrictions to resources presently used by the communities affected by HWC. As the specific activities and locations of the project's activities are not yet defined, a Process Framework will be prepared as part of the ESMF to conform to WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Framework to ensure community rights are respected.

Indigenous Peoples: This standard has been triggered because it is likely that the project sites identified by the Project will entail IPs. Specifically, Gabon is home to a number of self-identifying, highly heterogeneous Indigenous Peoples—including Baka, Akowa, Bekui, Bebinga, Babongo, and Baringa—as well as to a significant forest-dependent Indigenous population, including up to 30,000 Baka and Babongo people. The specific activities and locations of the project's activities are not yet defined and more information on IPs, their physical presence in this geography and their use of natural resources is needed, which is why an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework will be prepared as part of the ESMF to conform to WWF's Environment and Social Safeguards Framework.

Community Health and Security: Human-wildlife conflicts are a major threat to wildlife populations and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers given the prevalence of crop-raiding by different animal species (elephants and monkeys, among others), which can drastically reduce income and food security of rural communities, producing negative perceptions towards wildlife and perpetuating poverty. Although HWC is a contextual risk and not one necessarily derived from this project, the standard has been triggered out of an abundance of caution because these incidents have become increasingly common in Gabon as its human population continues to grow.

Natural Habitats: This Standard has been triggered because the GEF GBFF project will fund activities with on-the-ground impact. As the specific activities and its locations become better defined, further environmental impact assessments will be carried out before development of infrastructure begins.

Pest Management: This has not been identified as a likelihood at this stage of project development.

Physical and Cultural Resources: This standard has been triggered because the forest is important for many Indigenous peoples in Gabon for cultural practices and resources. In fact, IPLC use the forest includes hunting, fishing, and farming; the forest here also contains ancestral villages and ritual sites of invaluable cultural wealth. Moreover, IPLC also have detailed ecological knowledge, traditional conservation practices and a strong spiritual and physical link to the rainforest. As the project's specific activities and locations become better defined, further screening will be conducted to ensure there are no negative impacts on physical and cultural resources at the time of implementation.

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Summary of Cross Cutting Issues; (Human Rights, Gender Equality and Women's Rights, Children's Rights, Conflict Sensitivity and Climate Change).

Human Rights: Historically, the creation of national parks has been found to increase land insecurity (example of Ivindo National Park) and led to human rights violations. This is compounded by the fact that, although many West African countries have moved toward more decentralized systems of land management, in Gabon, all land, waters and minerals are owned by the state, and Indigenous communities have limited tenure security over their traditional lands. To prevent any human rights violations in association with the HWC activities/interventions, a key component will be the development of community engagement mechanisms such as FPIC in the establishment of conflict management strategies

Gender Equality and Women's Rights: According to the 2019 ranking from the Social Institutions and Gender Index, Gabon is ranked as a high inequality country. Domestic violence is also prevalent in Gabon, especially in rural areas. A study shows that domestic violence is most common in the provinces of Ngounié and Ogooué-Lolo, with 67% of women participating in the study responding that they experienced marital violence (emotional, physical or sexual).

At the same time, there are good examples of women leadership and engagement in community governance, and access and management of natural resources. Women village chiefs—a position earned through respect and support of communities—are not uncommon. Furthermore, in September 2021 Gabon adopted new laws designed to reduce the risk of violence against women and prohibit discrimination in the economy, in particular by amending legislation to promote women's financial inclusion and access to more employment.

To ensure gender equity in project activities, a gender analysis will be conducted as well as a gender action plan in a participatory manner, which will include gender-specific indicators to track progress.

Children's Rights: The project is projected to have a low probability of potential negative impacts on children and adolescents.

Conflict Sensitivity: Over the past decade, there has been some growing conflict around elephant raiding of agricultural plots, creating strong resentment in rural population with the healthy / growing population of elephants in some areas, thanks to improved protection work. Rural communities clamor for mechanisms to reduce the conflict and/or repair/compensate for the losses. Moreover, communities surrounding national parks indicated not seeing a direct benefit to their livelihoods, with expectations of new revenues coming from tourism or other PA based activities yet to materialize. That creates a relatively low level of support or engagement with conservation efforts or initiatives in some areas of Gabon.

This GBFF project will engage stakeholders and rightsholders in a participatory manner to co-develop approaches toward HWC management. This approach is intended to improve coordination among stakeholders of Gabon's 30:30:30 vision and take into consideration interests of different sectors of society.

Climate Change: Gabon is considered highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, as current trends include an increase in the number of hot days, a 0.6°C rise in mean annual temperature since the 1960s—particularly during the dry season—and a significant decrease in average rate of rainfall. Gabon's rural populations are especially vulnerable to a changing climate due to a reliance on local natural resources and rainfed agriculture.

Gabon is also expected to experience an increase in extreme weather events, particularly flooding, with life-threatening river floods predicted in the coming decades. The vast majority of Gabon's population lives in coastal areas or along rivers. For example, the Bas Ogooué is a low-lying region and extends to the Atlantic Ocean. Increased flooding and rising sea levels will impact the region's communities and biodiversity.

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The GEF GBFF project in Gabon, together with the GEF 7 PFP activities, are intended to support climate resiliency through outcomes to conserve Gabon's forests (major carbon sink), freshwater resources and biodiversity across oceans, land and freshwater.

Required Actions for Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Mitigation Framework (ESMF):

On-the-ground consultations and validation of the ESS prescreen will be required for this project in order to create an effective Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). The ESMF will also include an Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework and a Process Framework, as well as further screenings on Natural Habitat and Community, Health and Security impacts as necessary once the scope of activities and locations have been finalized.

Additionally, a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, a Grievance Redress Mechanism, Gender Assessment and Gender Action Plan will be drafted and submitted with the ProDoc.

DocuSigned by:
Signature: Soledad Altrudi **Date:** 8/5/2024
AB1F52888E07493...

Name: Soledad Altrudi

Position: ABC Safeguards Specialist

DocuSigned by:
Signature: Brent Nordstrom **Date:** 8/5/2024
DD6030B667E2446...

Name: Brent Nordstrom

Position: Senior Director, Integration and Performance