

INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDS DATA SHEET CONCEPT STAGE

Report No.: ISDSC2196

Date ISDS Prepared/Updated: 03-Mar-2013

Date ISDS Approved/Disclosed: 03-Mar-2013

I. BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country:	Gabon	Project ID:	P143914
Project Name:	GABON - SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CRITICAL WETLANDS ECOSYSTEMS (P143914)		
Task Team Leader:	Carole Megevand		
Estimated Appraisal Date:	23-Sep-2013	Estimated Board Date:	21-Nov-2013
Managing Unit:	AFTN3	Lending Instrument:	Specific Investment Loan
Focal Area:	Biodiversity		
Sector(s):	General agriculture, fishing and forestry sector (100%)		
Theme(s):	Biodiversity (100%)		
Financing (In USD Million)			
Total Project Cost:	7.37	Total Bank Financing:	0.00
Total Cofinancing:		Financing Gap:	0.00
Financing Source		Amount	
BORROWER/RECIPIENT		0.00	
Global Environment Facility (GEF)		7.37	
Total		7.37	
Environmental Category:	B - Partial Assessment		
Is this a Repeater project?	No		

B. Global Environmental Objective(s)

The Development Objective of the proposed operation is to improve management of selected critical wetlands ecosystems, through knowledge creation and capacity building of national entities.

C. Project Description

The proposed project builds three components, described in detail below. In the third Component on

“Strengthening Institutional Framework to support Wetlands Management: resources are provisioned for project management. The structure of the project has been designed to help the Government of Gabon implement the recommendations of the Ramsar Convention and the resolutions of the Conference of the Parties, i.e. (i) improving the level of knowledge on WII Gabon, (ii) the establishment of a system for monitoring ecological characteristics of ecosystems, (iii) the establishment of the conditions necessary for managing an effective network of WII Gabon, and (iv) economic valuation.

The Government of Gabon has already indicated that it would contribute in-kind to the project with provision of staff and offices (the in-kind contribution will be further assessed during preparation of the project). In addition, linkages have already been established with other initiatives:

- the « Arc Emeraude de Libreville » project, implemented by the Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux (ANPN) and financed under the Gabon-France debt relief initiative –C2D- (amount: Euros 11 million). This project will specifically focus on the Ramsar sites of Akanda and Pongara.
- the « Forest Control » project, also financed under the Gabon-France debt relief initiative – C2D- (amount: Euros 12 million) that will pilot forest control in three sites, amongst which two are on the periphery of Ramsar sites (respectively the Birougou forest and the Falls on the Invindo river).

Component 1: Improving Knowledge and Monitoring of Wetlands Ecosystems in Gabon (approximate GEF amount: US\$2.4 million). The global objective of this component is to generate knowledge on wetlands in Gabon and to set up a reliable monitoring system that can produce early warnings on potential alterations of wetlands ecosystems.

Sub-Component 1.1: Knowledge creation on wetlands ecosystems. Gabonese wetlands ecosystems are currently poorly understood; existing scientific literature is fragmented and insufficient, which is highlighted by the very succinct descriptions sent to the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention. So far, research work has been conducted in an ad hoc manner and does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of these ecosystems.

Wetlands ecosystems in Gabon (particularly forested wetlands) however provide –for free- important services, ranging from water purification for drinking water for large urban centers, fish breeding habitats on which the fishing industry directly depends to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration.

This Component aims at supporting research work on biological wealth and socio-economic dimensions of wetlands ecosystems, in order to better document and quantify the multiple ecological services delivered by wetlands. This ultimate goal of this component is to help decision-makers better understand the importance of wetlands and the potential trade-offs with other competing activities in the wetlands (with a specific focus on forested wetlands). The Component will support targeted research work to enhance knowledge: research activities should be conducted jointly between national and international research entities. In order to do so, the project will support the creation of a “Research Grant Mechanism” (the Manual of Procedures for the Research Fund Grant will be elaborated as part of the preparation phase). Some specific research works have already been pre-identified (and will be refined and complemented during preparation of the operation):

- Economic valuation of services delivered by wetlands ecosystems. The economic worth of the ecosystem services provided to society by intact, naturally functioning wetlands has never been quantified in a comprehensive manner in Gabon. The proposed activity will: (i) conduct a comprehensive valuation of economic services provisioned by the wetlands ecosystems in Gabon. This exercise will also help assess the potential trade-offs between wetlands conservation and conversion to ‘more valuable’ intensive land use and (ii) define options to develop “payment for

ecological services” schemes that could support sustainable management of critical wetlands ecosystems.

- Study on the traditional uses of natural resources (including medicinal plants) in wetlands ecosystems and define pilot schemes for the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol.

Sub-Component 1.2: Monitoring system for wetlands ecosystems. Article 3.2 of the Ramsar Convention provisions that "Each Contracting Party shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference." Such a monitoring system is not in place in Gabon

The proposed project will: (i) define and operationalize the most appropriate Monitoring system for ecological and physico-chemical characteristics of the wetlands in Gabon: the system will be defined in accordance with the technical and human capacities and beacons will then be deployed according to a national network system (targeted capacity building will be an integral part of the activity); and (ii) strengthen the cartography laboratory in place in the DGE, to generate maps with human settlements, industrial activities and hydrological systems for the different Ramsar sites.

Component 2: Supporting Sustainable Management of Selected Critical Wetlands Ecosystems (approximate GEF amount: US\$4.0 million). The development and implementation of planning tools are essential to the proper management of WII, but they cannot yield the expected results if not accompanied with appropriate equipment and human resources on the ground: the proposed component will target this two-fold approach in a few targeted sites. The mangrove ecosystems in Gabon are particularly pressured and one priority under this component will be to promote sustainable management of critical mangrove ecosystems.

Sub-Component 2.1: Planning for sustainable management of selected sites. The situation of the Ramsar sites in Gabon are vary widely (legal status, geographical and hydrological features, typology of pressures). As of today, there is no management plan (or any planning tool) that appropriately defines the modalities to support sustainable management of the wetlands ecosystems: these tools need to be developed in a very targeted manner to ensure that the specific challenges and threats are well addressed.

The proposed project will: (i) prepare management plans for selected Ramsar sites: the planning exercise will be based on extensive consultative work in the selected sites (as well as results of the research activities supported under Component 1); (ii) conduct environmental audits for extractive industries operating in and around the wetlands ecosystems and define management plans with private operators.

Sub-Component 2.2: Strengthening surveillance capacities in the selected sites. Unless they are included in a National Park, most of the existing Ramsar sites do not benefit from adequate monitoring activities, mostly because of insufficient staff on the ground and lack of equipment. The proposed project will: (i) acquire the appropriate equipment and build necessary infrastructure to reinforce capacities of local staff to properly implement monitoring activities in the selected sites and (ii) train local staff on monitoring activities (such training has been delivered to eco-guards in National Parks under the previous GEF-financed project and have proven to be efficient). Systems such as MIST/SMART already used by the ANPN for the monitoring of the National Parks will be adjusted.

Sub-Component 2.3.: Environment-friendly community-driven activities in wetlands. Other economic options exist to support sustainable wetlands management. At COP-11 in July 2012, the

Ramsar Convention Secretariat and UNWTO launched a publication that highlights the considerable value of wetlands for tourism and the economic benefits that tourism can bring for the management of wetland sites.

The proposed project will help communities (in partnership with local NGOs) develop revenue-generating activities, including potential viable tourism offer in selected wetlands.

Component 3: Strengthening Institutional Framework to Support Wetlands Management (approximate GEF amount: US\$0.97 million). This Component will aim at establishing an institutional framework favorable to the sustainable management of the WII in Gabon both at the national and site levels. It will also support the daily project management and coordination to ensure that regular monitoring and evaluation is carried out, and the results are fed back into decision making on project implementation.

Sub-Component 3.1: Institutional framework. On one hand, the diversity of the WII in Gabon requires that local governance mechanisms be adjusted to the specific circumstances; on the other hand, there is a need to strengthen the overall governance at the national level.

The proposed project will: (i) conduct an analysis of the institutional schemes in place for the different WII site, taking into account the diversity of the statuses and propose recommendations to strengthen them in each site; (ii) establish the National Ramsar Committee in charge of supervising the management of the WII network in Gabon and reporting back to the Convention.

Sub-Component 3.2: Project Management. This sub-Component will support the day-to-day project management, including handling of procurement and financial management. This sub-Component will support both the Ministry of Environment and the Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux, specific institutional arrangements will be defined during the preparation of the project.

During the Concept note review for this operation, the opportunity to access an additional \$1 million envelop under the Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund (NFIP) was discussed. As a matter of fact, Gabon has clearly led the way in the Africa region, being the first country to ratify the Nagoya Protocol on May 2011 (Gabon was the twenty-second signatory of the Protocol). The political support stands at the highest level; at the operational level, DGE has clearly indicated its interest to get support from the GEF to move forward with the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol.

While this option will be further discussed as part of the preparation of the Project, it was acknowledged that if adopted, a specific component would be dedicated to the implementation of activities related to Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS). Such a Component (Component 4) would include the following activities (in compliance with the requirements under the NPIF): (i) Stocktaking and assessment: ABS provisions in existing policies, laws and regulations, stakeholder identification, user rights and intellectual property rights, and institutional capacity including research organizations adding value to genetic resources (i.e. bio-prospecting). (ii) Development and implementation of a strategy and action plan for the implementation of ABS measures (i.e. policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks governing ABS, National Focal Point, Competent National Authority, Institutional agreements, administrative procedures for ABS Agreements with proper Prior Informed Consent [PIC], Mutually Agreed Terms [MAT], and Benefit Sharing, monitoring of use of genetic resources, compliance with legislation and cooperation on trans-boundary issues), (iii) Building capacity among stakeholders (including indigenous peoples, local communities) to negotiate ABS agreements, including domestic protocols, model contractual clauses, and minimum requirements to secure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits. Countries

may want to consider using some of the financial resources to build institutional capacity to carry out research and development associated with the valorization of genetic resources (bio-prospecting).

D. Project location and salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

Gabon currently has 9 sites registered as Wetlands of International Importance (WII) totaling more than 2.8 million hectares—from greatest to least Area (hectares): Bas-Ogooué (862,700), Birougou (536,800), Petit Loango (480,000), Wonga-Wongué (380,000), Setté-Cama (220,000), Falls on the Ivindo River (132,500), Pongara (92, 969), Falls of Mboundou Badouma and Doumé (59,500), and Akanda (54,000). Strengthening institutional frameworks for sustainable management and improving knowledge and monitoring of wetlands are national activities and will have implications for all wetlands. Establishing management plans and appropriate monitoring mechanisms will target specific sites that will be determined during preparation phase.

Prospects for development of extractive industry activities in wetlands exist and this could create major pressures on the integrity of the ecosystems, jeopardizing on the medium- to long-term their capacity to deliver ecological services. While this could certainly create a risk for the operation, it should be highlighted that the mitigation measure is embedded in the design of the operation itself.

E. Borrowers Institutional Capacity for Safeguard Policies

The proposed classification for this project is a Category B. As per its very nature, the project is not expected to generate adverse social or environmental impacts. The operation will not finance any major investments on the ground (only quarters for rangers have been so far anticipated at Concept stage). At the Concept stage, the presence of Indigenous people in the project areas could not be determined: this will be covered during the preparation of the project (once the priority sites are identified). While it is planned under Component 2 to re-delineate WII boundaries, this will be done in a consultative manner and no resettlement or limitation of access is anticipated. This aspect will be further assessed during the preparation of the operation.

Accordingly, the safeguards policies that have been triggered at the Concept Stage are:

- 1) OP/BP. 4.01 Environment Assessment. The project under sub component 2.2 expects to build necessary infrastructure to reinforce capacities of local staff to properly implement monitoring activities in the selected sites. Under Sub component 3.2 the project expects to develop tourism activities. All these activities may have environmental impacts at a very limited scale;
- 2) OP/BP 4.04-Natural Habitats. The wetlands ecosystems are undoubtedly critical ecosystems, the project will enhance the quality of the management of these critical ecosystems and reduce risks associated with potential economic development;
- 3) OP/BP 4.12 Involuntary Resettlement. The project expects to prepare management plans of selected RAMSAR sites. To ensure appropriate involvement of local communities, a Process Framework will be prepared although no involuntary resettlement or limitation of access is anticipated. This aspect will be further assessed during the preparation of the operation.

The Safeguard policy OP/BP. 4.10- Indigenous Peoples, at the Concept stage, the presence of Indigenous people in the project areas could not be determined. This will be covered during the preparation of the project (once the priority sites are identified).

The Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux (ANPN) has been using, in a satisfactory manner, the following World Bank safeguards instruments under the GEF-financed project on National Parks and Biodiversity: Environmental Management Plan, the Resettlement Policy Framework and the

Indigenous Peoples Development Plan. Since the thematic areas under the new proposed project are very similar, the team is confident that the Borrower has the appropriate capacities to properly prepare and enforce Safeguards Policies. However, during the preparation, a particular attention will be given to identify potential weaknesses and include mitigation measures within the project design (training, technical assistance...).

F. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Paula F. Lytle (AFTCS)

Emeran Serge M. Menang Evouna (AFTN3)

II. SAFEGUARD POLICIES THAT MIGHT APPLY

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/ BP 4.01	Yes	As per its nature, the project is not expected to generate large scale adverse social or environmental impacts. The operation will not finance any major investments on the ground (only quarters for rangers have been so far anticipated at Concept stage). The project under sub component 2.2 expects to build necessary infrastructure to reinforce capacities of local staff to properly implement monitoring activities in the selected sites. Under Sub component 2.3 the project expects to develop tourism activities. All these activities may have environmental impacts even at a very limited scale.
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	Yes	The wetlands ecosystems are undoubtedly critical ecosystems, the project will enhance the quality of the management of these critical ecosystems and reduce risks associated with potential economic development.
Forests OP/BP 4.36	No	The project does not involve forests or forestry.
Pest Management OP 4.09	No	The project does not involve pest management.
Physical Cultural Resources OP/ BP 4.11	No	The project activities will not involve or affect physical cultural resources.
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	TBD	At the Concept stage, the presence of Indigenous people in the project areas could not be determined. This will be covered during the preparation of the project (once the priority sites are identified).
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	Yes	The project expects to prepare management plans of selected RAMSAR sites. To ensure appropriate involvement of local communities, a Process Framework will be prepared although no involuntary resettlement or limitation of

		access is anticipated. This aspect will be further assessed during the preparation of the operation.
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	N/A
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	N/A
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	No	N/A

III. SAFEGUARD PREPARATION PLAN

A. Tentative target date for preparing the PAD Stage ISDS: 30-Apr-2013

B. Time frame for launching and completing the safeguard-related studies that may be needed. The specific studies and their timing¹ should be specified in the PAD-stage ISDS:

The safeguards studies should be initiated by March 2013 and completed by August 2013. The submission of the relevant safeguards documents to the Infoshop is scheduled on September 16, 2013.

IV. APPROVALS

Task Team Leader:	Name: Carole Megevand	
Approved By:		
Regional Safeguards Coordinator:	Name: Alexandra C. Bezeredi (RSA)	Date: 03-Mar-2013
Sector Manager:	Name: Magdolna Lovei (SM)	Date: 23-Feb-2013

¹ Reminder: The Bank's Disclosure Policy requires that safeguard-related documents be disclosed before appraisal (i) at the InfoShop and (ii) in country, at publicly accessible locations and in a form and language that are accessible to potentially affected persons.