

Document of
The World Bank

Report No: ICR16270

IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETION AND RESULTS REPORT
(TF-56592 - P070232)

ON A

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITY GRANT
IN THE AMOUNT OF US\$10.0 MILLION

TO THE

REPUBLIC OF GABON

FOR A

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR MANAGING NATIONAL PARKS AND
BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

December 26, 2013

Environment, Natural Resources, Water and
Disaster Risk Management Unit
Sustainable Development Department
Country Department, AFCC1
Africa Region

CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(Exchange Rate Effective June 2013)

Currency Unit = CFA Franc

US\$ 1.00 = 500 CFAF

FISCAL YEAR

January 1-December 31

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency)
AfDB	African Development Bank
ANPN	Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux (National Parks Agency)
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CCGL	Comité Consultatif de Gestion Locale
CNPN	Conseil National des Parcs Nationaux (National Council for National Parks)
COMIFAC	Conférence des Ministres en Charge des Forêts d’Afrique Centrale (Central African Conference of Forest Ministers)
CPFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CPS	Country Partnership Strategy
DFC	Direction de la Faune et de la Chasse (Wildlife and Hunting Directorate)
DGE	Directorate General for Environment
DPL	Development Policy Loan
EC	European Commission
ENEF	Ecole Nationale des Eaux et Forêts (National Forestry School)
ESI	Environmental Sustainability Index
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFEM	Fonds Français pour l’Environnement Mondial
FMR	Financial Management Report
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEO	Global Environment Objective
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICT	Information and Communication Tool
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
ISDS	Integrated Safeguards Data Sheet
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEFPEPN	Ministry of Forest, Fisheries and Environment
METT	Monitoring and Evaluation Tracking Tool
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OP	Operational Programs
PAD	Project Appraisal Document

PFE	<i>Projet Forêt et Environnement</i> (Forestry project)
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PFSE	Forest and Environment Sector Program
SMF	Sustainable Forest Management
SNBG	State-owned Timber Trade Company
SP	Strategic Priorities
TA	Technical Assistance
TCM	Technical Management Committees
TRIDOM	<i>Tri-national Dja-Odzala-Minkébé</i>
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCS	World Conservation Society
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature

<p>Vice President: Makhtar Diop Country Director: Gregor Binkert Sector Manager: Benoît Bosquet Project Team Leader: Salimata Follea ICR Team Leader : Remi Kini</p>
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REPUBLIC OF GABON
Strengthening Capacity for Managing National Parks and Biodiversity Project

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A. Basic Information			
Country:	Gabon	Project Name:	Gabon: Strengthening Capacity for Managing National Parks and Biodiversity
Project ID:	P070232	L/C/TF Number(s):	TF-56592
ICR Date:	12/23/2013	ICR Type:	Core ICR
Lending Instrument:	SIL	Borrower:	MIN. OF FORESTRY & ENVIRONMENT OF GABON
Original Total Commitment:	USD 10.00M	Disbursed Amount:	USD 9.64M
Revised Amount:	USD 10.00M		
Environmental Category: A		Global Focal Area: B	
Implementing Agencies: National Agency for National Parks Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux			
Cofinanciers and Other External Partners:			

B. Key Dates				
Process	Date	Process	Original Date	Revised / Actual Date(s)
Concept Review:	04/26/2001	Effectiveness:	05/15/2007	12/27/2007
Appraisal:	09/08/2005	Restructuring(s):		04/12/2011
Approval:	03/29/2006	Mid-term Review:	05/17/2010	
		Closing:	06/30/2012	06/30/2013

C. Ratings Summary	
C.1 Performance Rating by ICR	
Outcomes:	Moderately Satisfactory
Risk to Global Environment Outcome	Low or Negligible
Bank Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory
Borrower Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory

C.2 Detailed Ratings of Bank and Borrower Performance			
Bank	Ratings	Borrower	Ratings
Quality at Entry:	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Government:	Satisfactory
Quality of Supervision:	Moderately Satisfactory	Implementing Agency/Agencies:	Moderately Satisfactory

Overall Bank Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory	Overall Borrower Performance:	Moderately Satisfactory
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C.3 Quality at Entry and Implementation Performance Indicators

Implementation Performance	Indicators	QAG Assessments (if any)	Rating
Potential Problem Project at any time (Yes/No):	Yes	Quality at Entry (QEA):	None
Problem Project at any time (Yes/No):	Yes	Quality of Supervision (QSA):	None
GEO rating before Closing/Inactive status	Satisfactory		

D. Sector and Theme Codes

	Original	Actual
Sector Code (as % of total Bank financing)		
Central government administration	20	20
Forestry	65	65
General agriculture, fishing and forestry sector	11	11
Sub-national government administration	4	4
Theme Code (as % of total Bank financing)		
Biodiversity	40	40
Environmental policies and institutions	40	40
Other environment and natural resources management	20	20

E. Bank Staff

Positions	At ICR	At Approval
Vice President:	Makhtar Diop	Gobind T. Nankani
Country Director:	Gregor Binkert	Ali Mahmoud Khadr
Sector Manager:	Benoit Bosquet	Joseph Baah-Dwomoh
Project Team Leader:	Salimata D. Follea	Laurent Debroux
ICR Team Leader:	Remi Kini	
ICR Primary Author:	Remi Kini	

F. Results Framework Analysis

Global Environment Objectives (GEO) and Key Indicators(as approved)

The Global Environmental Objective is: Biodiversity conservation in the Congo basin is enhanced.

The Project Development Objective is : Biodiversity is protected and managed in a sustainable way and contributes to the diversification of the national economy, through strengthened capacities of parks and wildlife authorities

Revised Global Environment Objectives (as approved by original approving authority) and Key Indicators and reasons/justifications

The revised Global Environment Objective is (i) to enhance the conservation of biodiversity in selected National Parks and buffer zones; and (ii) to strengthen the management capacity of selected conservation-related entities in Gabon.

(a) GEO Indicator(s)

Indicator	Baseline Value	Original Target Values (from approval documents)	Formally Revised Target Values	Actual Value Achieved at Completion or Target Years
Indicator 1 :	Hectares (ha) of land with high potential for protection where a biological survey is completed			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	900000		945000
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 2 :	Increase in management effectiveness in 3 national parks (700,000 ha) as per GEF Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (PAMETT)			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	Loango: 57% Mayumba: 50% Moukalaba-Doudou: 58%	65%		Loango: 75% Mayumba: 65.56% Moukalaba-Doudou: 71.91%
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 3 :	Increased surveillance effort (person/day per month) in the three key national parks and buffer zones			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	300	700		748
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				

achievement)			
Indicator 4 :	Number of community members sensitized about biodiversity conservation in the three national parks (of which x% are women)		
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	4,000	4,412 (Women: 45%)
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013	06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)			

(b) Intermediate Outcome Indicator(s)

Indicator	Baseline Value	Original Target Values (from approval documents)	Formally Revised Target Values	Actual Value Achieved at Completion or Target Years
Indicator 1 :	Strengthening of ANPA: ANPN headquarters is established and equipped			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	No	Yes		Yes
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 2 :	Systems for finance and human resources management, monitoring and evaluation are established.			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	Yes		Yes
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 3 :	Biological and socioeconomic surveys conducted in three sites and national database on biodiversity is created.			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	Yes		Yes
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 4 :	Strengthened management of Loango, Moukalaba-Doudou and Mayumba National Parks.			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	3		3

Qualitative)				
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 5 :	Quarters for park rangers built and operational in 3 parks.			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	3		2
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)	Mayumba quarters not rehabilitated due to funds shortfall.			
Indicator 6 :	Increased surveillance efforts (person-day per month) in the three key national parks.			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	300	500		581
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 7 :	Number of consultative committees for local management created			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	3		3
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 8 :	Strengthened wildlife management and law enforcement in the periphery of national parks (Number of trained and equipped staff in mobile brigades)			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	15		15 (5 per mobile brigade in 3 parks)
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				
Indicator 9 :	Increased surveillance efforts (person-day per month) in buffer zones of national parks.			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	204		200
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				

Indicator 10 :	Number of environmental audits conducted by Gabonese administration (extractive industries operating in buffer zones)			
Value (quantitative or Qualitative)	0	5		5
Date achieved	09/08/2005	06/30/2013		06/30/2013
Comments (incl. % achievement)				

G. Ratings of Project Performance in ISRs

No.	Date ISR Archived	GEO	IP	Actual Disbursements (USD millions)
1	10/02/2006	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	0.00
2	12/18/2007	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	0.00
3	05/23/2008	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	0.59
4	11/23/2008	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	1.10
5	12/10/2008	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	1.10
6	03/09/2009	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unsatisfactory	1.10
7	07/21/2009	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	1.10
8	04/08/2010	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	2.18
9	02/09/2011	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	3.65
10	08/02/2011	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	5.26
11	02/23/2012	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	6.90
12	07/09/2012	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	7.93
13	03/20/2013	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	9.16

H. Restructuring (if any)

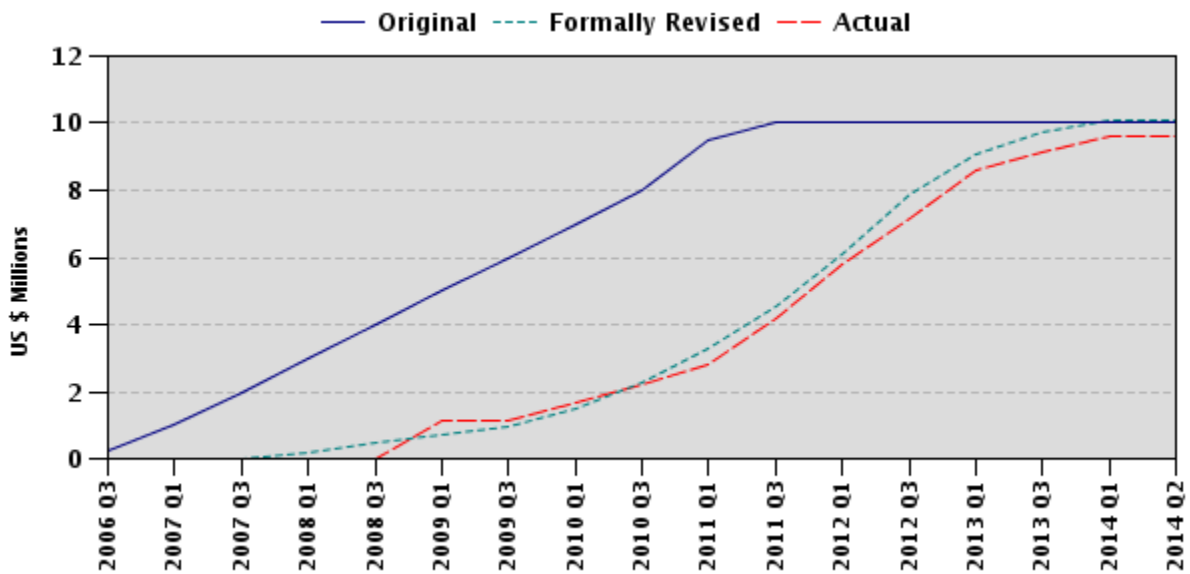
Restructuring Date(s)	Board Approved GEO Change	ISR Ratings at Restructuring		Amount Disbursed at Restructuring in USD millions	Reason for Restructuring & Key Changes Made
		GEO	IP		
04/12/2011	Y	MS	MS	4.35	The GEO were revised to: (i) enhance the conservation of biodiversity in selected National Parks and buffer zones and (ii) strengthen the management capacity of selected

Restructuring Date(s)	Board Approved GEO Change	ISR Ratings at Restructuring		Amount Disbursed at Restructuring in USD millions	Reason for Restructuring & Key Changes Made
		GEO	IP		
					conservation related entities in Gabon.

If GEO and/or Key Outcome Targets were formally revised (approved by the original approving body) enter ratings below:

	Outcome Ratings
Against Original GEO/Targets	Moderately Unsatisfactory
Against Formally Revised GEO/Targets	Moderately Satisfactory
Overall (weighted) rating	Moderately Satisfactory

I. Disbursement Profile



1. Project Context, Global Environment Objectives and Design

1. Gabon has a relatively small (estimated at 1.5 million inhabitants in 2009) and highly urbanized (86 percent) population. It is a resource-rich country. Gabon is well endowed with forest resources (which cover 85 percent of its land area) and is the second-largest timber producer after Cameroon. The Strengthening Capacity for Managing National Parks and Biodiversity project was prepared when Gabon was the fourth-largest petroleum producer in Africa. However, the fluctuation of oil prices and a declining trend in oil production presented major economic challenges for the country at that time. These conditions further raised the profile of the non-oil sector in the Government development agenda.

2. The project was designed in the context of Gabon's Interim PRSP and prospective economic development study "Gabon 2025". The priorities of the Government as reflected in these documents were: (i) to improve efficiency in the use of public resources to increase the quantity and quality of basic services, and (ii) to improve the business environment for private-sector-led investment in the non-oil sectors of the economy. The 2005 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) was articulated around these two priorities with the specific goals of (i) strengthening the management of public resources (both natural and financial), and (ii) improving the investment climate to foster sustainable private sector non-oil growth. The promotion of private sector investments in non-oil sector targeted non only the sustainable development of the timber industry, but also fisheries and Gabon's biodiversity wealth.

Importance of Gabon's Biodiversity for the Global Environment

3. Gabon contains three terrestrial ecoregions, which are defined by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) as the world's most outstanding examples of each major habitat type: *the Congolian Coastal Forest, the Northwestern Congolian Lowland Forests, and the Western Congolian Forest-Savanna Mosaic*. In addition, there are significant stands of Central African *mangroves* along the coast and patches of *Congolian-Zairean swamp forests* in the northeast. Furthermore, several significant freshwater systems are to be found within the country, as well as 850 km of coastline and highly productive marine systems. In recognition of the ecological integrity of these ecosystems Gabon recently was placed 12th out of 146 countries evaluated (and first in Africa) in the 2005 Environmental Sustainability Index (ESI), which was announced in January 2005 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. This unique combination of exceptionally abundant and diverse natural resources presents a favorable context for implementing a sustainable development strategy that improves the welfare of Gabonese population and enhances the provision of global environmental benefits.

1.1 Context at Appraisal

4. *Threats to Non-oil Natural Resources:* The project was appraised when the country's non-oil natural resource sector was facing numerous degradation threats that reduced its potential to contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction efforts. The forest subsector, which was the country's largest employer, was making a sub-optimal contribution to the economy due to a range of factors including (i) inappropriate pricing and taxation policies leading to low rates of revenue collection, (ii) insufficient local value-added activities, and (iii) inadequate forest law enforcement. Uncontrolled marine and inland fishing were depleting the resource base with little contribution to public revenues. Biodiversity resources were under severe and increasing threats due to the persistence of unregulated logging activities, increased commercial poaching of wildlife, and ineffective systems for biodiversity conservation.

5. *Positive National Policy Development:* In order to address the above-mentioned threats to the natural resource base, the Government of Gabon started the implementation of targeted reforms, particularly, in the forest sub-sector. A new Forest Code adopted in 2001 required all forests from public estates to adopt sustainable management plans by December 2005. A new forest policy and a new forest taxation system were enacted to support the implementation of this Code.

6. Upon his return from the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, the late president Omar Bongo Odimba instructed his Government to create a network of 13 national parks covering 10.6 percent (28,371 square kilometers, km²) of the country's land area. An inter-ministerial committee was established to oversee the effective management of this network of protected areas.

7. In May 2004, the Government adopted a Letter of Sector Policy, which set out the governance and policy reform agenda for increasing the contribution of natural resources to economic diversification and to poverty reduction. The Letter of Policy emphasized greater transparency and law enforcement for forest, biodiversity, and fisheries. This Letter of Policy aimed to provide a collaborative framework for the preparation of Gabon's Forest and Environment Sector Program (PSFE).

8. The long-term objective of this multi-donor program was to help the country to diversify its economy through the sustainable management of its forest, fisheries, and biodiversity resources, thereby reducing its oil dependency. The PSFE objectives were articulated around five components:

Component 1: Sustainable forest management, including wildlife and biodiversity management in production landscapes.

Component 2: Fisheries and coastal zone management.

Component 3: Development of the national parks network.

Component 4: Valorization of other environmental goods and services.

Component 5: Institutional strengthening, research, and training.

9. *Catalytic Role of the World Bank and GEF:* The World Bank and the GEF were already major players in forest sector reforms in Central Africa and played a key role in coordinating the donors' priorities (French cooperation, the European Commission, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the African Development Bank (ADB), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)) during preparation of the PSFE. The Bank and the GEF also helped leverage support from international conservation nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to support implementation of this sectorwide program.

10. The Strengthening Capacity for Managing National Parks and Biodiversity Project was consistent with the national priorities expressed in the Letter of Policy and the PSFE. It supported component 3 (development of national parks) and component 1 (wildlife management in production landscapes) of the PSFE. It also aimed to complement an IBRD loan in support of components 1 (forest), 2 (fisheries), 4 (environment), and 5 (institutional capacity building) of the PSFE. Given the PSFE's emphasis on policy reforms, this IBRD operation was packaged as a development policy loan (DPL). Both the GEF and IBRD operations fit within the framework of the overall PSFE program—they are mutually reinforcing and complement other donor investments in the sectorwide program.

11. The project also aimed to lay the foundation for ecotourism development, thereby seeking to create jobs and revenue-generating activities in rural areas. Finally, it sought to strengthen the capabilities of government agencies to manage protected areas effectively. These objectives were consistent with the CAS's two pillars of strengthened natural and financial resource management, and private-sector-led non-oil growth. This contribution to the higher-level objectives of the CAS provided the rationale for the Bank's assistance.

12. *Regional and Global environment focus:* The project was also aligned with priorities at the regional level as it builds on the unprecedented political commitment expressed in the Yaoundé Declaration on Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forests, signed by the heads of state of six Central African nations including Gabon. The project also was consistent with the framework of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) launched by the United States and South Africa at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 and supported by 29 public and

private partners. The CBFP focused on 11 landscapes of high biodiversity value, five of which are within Gabon.

13. From the global environmental perspective, this addressed the objectives of the GEF's Operational Programs (OP) 1: "Forest ecosystems"; and OP 2: "Coastal, marine, and fresh water systems." It was consistent with the objectives of the two OPs by supporting threat-remediation activities at selected protected sites of high global significance, and by promoting the broad-based participation of local communities in site management activities. It facilitated the adoption of management practices that would mainstream biodiversity into production landscapes. It also contributed to the GEF's Biodiversity Strategic Priority (SP) #1: "Catalyzing Sustainability of Protected Areas," as well as SP #2: "Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation in Production Systems." These contributions to the goals of the GEF's operational programs justified its support.

1.2 Original Global Environment Objectives (GEO) and Key Indicators (*as approved*)

14. The project's original Global Environment Objective (GEO) was: "Biodiversity conservation in the Congo Basin is enhanced". This GEO was to be measured using one indicator linked to the CAS objective of economic diversification, and three indicators related to the expansion and effective management of protected areas. These key indicators were:

- Effective implementation of the Gabon National Parks Agency's (ANPN's) management plans for key national parks—leading to socioeconomic benefits such as employment generation and ecotourism—by year five (CAS).
- One million hectares of areas suitable for biodiversity protection status identified and proposed for formal gazettelement by year five.
- One million hectares of key national parks with 80 percent increase in the management effectiveness score (as measured by the Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool)—leading to biodiversity conservation, employment generation, and ecotourism development—by year five.
- Five million hectares of production landscapes in buffer zones with increased wildlife management effectiveness—as measured by indicators of surveillance efforts and levels of wildlife offtake—by year five.

15. In addition to the GEO, the project had a Development Objective stated as follows: "Biodiversity is protected and managed in a sustainable way and contributes to the diversification of the national economy, through strengthened capacities of parks and wildlife authorities".

1.3 Revised GEO (*as approved by original approving authority*) and Key Indicators, and reasons/justification

16. Following completion of the midterm review (MTR) in May 2010, the Government of Gabon and the World Bank agreed to a level-one restructuring of the project. The revised GEO is as follows: “*The Project Development Objective is to (i) enhance the conservation of biodiversity in selected National Parks and buffer zones; and (ii) strengthen the management capacity of selected conservation- related entities in Gabon*”.

17. The project restructuring aimed to better align the formulation of the development objectives, as stated in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD), with those agreed by the Bank and the Recipient and included in the Grant Agreement. The restructuring was also said to respond to emerging biodiversity conservation needs in Gabon, and to the operational capacity of the implementing agencies. Finally, some of the original performance indicators were found to be too ambitious and not adequately aligned with the project objectives, and therefore needed to be readjusted. The revised key performance indicators were:

- Number of hectares of land with high potential for protection where a biological survey has been completed.
- Increase in management effectiveness in the three national parks (700,000 hectares), as per the GEF’s Protected Areas Monitoring and Evaluation Tracking Tool (PAMETT).
- Increase in surveillance efforts in the three national parks and buffer zones.
- Number of community members (including percentage of women) sensitized to biodiversity conservation in the three national parks.

18. The scope of these changes affected noticeably the original development objective in three areas. First, a key activity supported by one of the original performance indicators was to identify one million hectares suitable for biodiversity conservation and to propose these areas for formal gazettelement by project year five. The revised indicator related only to completing a biological survey in areas (measured in hectares) with high biodiversity potential for protection. The project no longer planned to support the creation of additional conservation areas (see revised indicator 1 above).

19. The second area where these changes had an impact is the adoption of an integrated and participatory biodiversity conservation approach involving management interventions in national parks and in production landscapes. The aim was to help the private sector, including logging, oil and mining companies, to integrate biodiversity conservation safeguards into their activities. The adoption of collaborative wildlife management agreements with local communities was also an important activity of this

integrated approach. The targeted area to be covered by this integrated conservation approach was 5 million hectares of buffer zones.

20. The restructured activity deals only with enhanced wildlife law enforcement in the buffer zones of the three targeted national parks. The associated intermediate result indicator would be measured by the number of environmental audits conducted in logging concession sites. However, the benefits (increased local ownership and stewardship of wildlife, sustainable supply of animal protein to local communities, reduced conflicts, a higher level of corporate social responsibility of extractive industry companies, etc.) of the integrated landscape conservation approach were lost or reduced significantly in this new design.

21. The last area where the restructuring of the project affected its original ambition is the development objective. Although the new design maintained the phrase “project development objective”, the original PDO was dropped altogether. The restructured project has only a GEO (misabeled PDO in the Project Restructuring Paper).

1.4 Main Beneficiaries

22. The project has three main categories of beneficiaries. The first group consists of the two public agencies whose technical and institutional capabilities were strengthened by the project: the newly created National Parks Agency (ANPN) and the Ministry of Forests, Fisheries and Environment (MEFPEPN). The core capacity areas covered are biodiversity and protected area management (law enforcement, formulation and implementation of management plans, and so on), financial management, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, and personnel management.

23. The second category consists of private extractive industry companies (timber, oil/gas, minerals). These companies are required by law to ensure the sustainable management of non-timber forest products (especially wildlife in forest concessions), but most of them (especially the domestic ones) lacked the capacity to comply with this requirement effectively. The project would help them adopt good practices for integrating wildlife and biodiversity conservation into their operations.

24. The third category consists of the communities living in the buffer zones of the targeted national parks. These communities were a major beneficiary group targeted in the original design of the project. The expected benefits accruing to these communities in the original design included employment and income generated by private sector eco-tourism-related activities.

1.5 Original Components *(as approved)*

25. The design of the original project included four components, as follows.

Component 1: Institutional strengthening of the ANPN. This agency was created shortly before the project effectiveness. The main objective of this component was to help the newly created institution execute its mandate of national park management and biodiversity conservation as efficiently and effectively as possible. Key activities included:

- Selection and training of a core of key staff (eight senior staff).
- Establishment of administrative, financial, and human resource management structures.
- Establishment of capacities to coordinate conservation, law enforcement, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities.
- Establishment of an effective communications/public awareness strategy.
- Implementation of the ANPN's replication plan.
- Definition of a sustainable funding strategy and establishment of a foundation or other sustainable funding mechanisms.
- Construction and equipping of the ANPN's head office in Libreville.
- Support of the project's day-to-day management, implementation of the M&E tracking tool, and implementation of the project's social and environmental management plan—all for activities under the responsibility of the ANPN.

Component 2: Expanding Gabon's protected area coverage. Gabon has committed to protecting 4 million hectares by the year 2010, that is, 1 million hectares more than its current coverage. This component is designed to help Gabon move toward this goal. Inputs include:

- The training and equipping of protected area assessment survey teams.
- The implementation of a nationwide survey of sites to identify and prioritize areas with potential for protected area status.
- Extensive consultation with local stakeholders.

Component 3: Direct support to selected national parks. Taking into account other donors' interventions, direct GEF support within the parks is limited to Loango, Mukalaba, and Mayumba National Parks. The GEF support for production landscapes surrounding protected areas (component 4) covers these three parks plus Lopé and Batéké.

Key inputs include support to:

- Establishment of key park infrastructure, including headquarters and guard posts.
- Training and equipping staff to carry out effective park management and law enforcement.
- Developing a long-term ecological and patrol-based monitoring program.
- Activities aimed at improving the sustainability of onshore and offshore fishing.

- Development of ecotourism and other revenue-generating activities with private operators.
- Implementation of the project’s social and environmental management plans.
- Development of participatory management structures with local populations.

Component 4: Wildlife management in production landscapes. This component aims to mainstream biodiversity in production landscapes (logging concessions, community forests). It targets the buffer zones of Loango, Mukalaba, Mayumba, Lopé, and Batéké national parks. Key inputs include support to:

- Training, equipping, and deploying mobile units operating out of Tchibanga, Iboundji, and Lekoni.
- Extensive consultation with private sector operators (logging, oil), local communities, and politico-administrative authorities for the implementation of collaborative mechanisms for wildlife management
- Efficient day-to-day management of the project, implementation of the M&E tracking tool, and implementation of the project’s social and environmental management plans—all for activities under the responsibility of the Ministry of Forests.

1.6 Revised Components

26. Although the Project Restructuring Paper (paragraph 15, page 3) states that “the four components will remain as approved in the initial project design”, it acknowledges that components 2 and 4 were changed. The Paper provides justification for these changes.

27. *Component 2.* Original: “*Expanding Gabon’s protected area coverage.*” Revised: “*Enhanced knowledge on critical natural habitats for the expansion of the network of national parks.*” This change is said to reflect new national priorities in biodiversity expressed by the Gabonese authorities at the MTR of the project. The authorities mentioned that other international partners would conduct biological surveys in targeted areas where future national parks could be established. The total area covered by these surveys would equal the original target of 1 million hectares. The Government priority is to enhance the knowledge of the total biological wealth and the socioeconomic conditions prevailing in and around these potential conservation sites.

28. *Component 4.* Original “*Wildlife management outside national Parks.*” Revised: “*Improved wildlife management, monitoring and law enforcement in the periphery of the national parks.*” The change is said to “reflect the variety of activities that are needed in the buffer zones.” In reality, two main activities are conducted under this revised

component: (i) increased law enforcement (as envisaged in the original design); and (ii) the conduct of environmental audits in five extractive industry concessions (logging, mining, and oil), and development of remediation plans, as necessary.

29. The environmental audits are geared toward ensuring the enforcement of the regulations pertaining to environmental impact assessment. Their aim was to ensure that private sector investments in the buffer zones comply with such regulations, as opposed to the original goal of working with the logging and other extractive industry companies to mainstream biodiversity conservation practices in their concession areas. The rehabilitation of conservation field facilities that was mentioned in the Grant Agreement was also dropped.

1.7 Other significant changes

30. In addition to the changes described above, adjustments were made in the following areas:

- *Scope*: The construction of the ANPN headquarters office in Libreville was cancelled early in the project implementation stage. The Project Restructuring Paper stated that this infrastructure was not seen as a high priority.
- *Institutional arrangements*. To reduce transaction and coordination costs, a streamlined and simplified institutional arrangement for implementation was adopted. The responsibility of the Ministry of Forests for implementation of project components 2 and 4 (and associated activities) was transferred to the ANPN, which was now responsible for implementation of the entire project.
- *Reallocation of project costs*. The details of the reallocation are included in the table below: The budget allocated to component 1 (institutional strengthening) and component 3 (support to selected national parks) increased by 16.6 percent and 6.2 percent, respectively. The budget for [revised] component 2 (enhanced knowledge on critical natural habitats for the expansion of the network of national parks) and [revised] component 4 (improved wildlife management and law enforcement in the periphery of national parks) decreased respectively by 3.4 percent and 32 percent.

Project costs (US\$m)		
Components/Activities	Allocation at appraisal	Reallocation at restructuring
Component 1: Institutional strengthening of ANPN	1,832,878	2,137,000 (+16.6%)
Component 2: <u>Appraisal</u> : Expanding Gabon's protected area coverage	1,121,568	

<u>Restructuring</u> : Enhanced knowledge on critical natural habitats for the expansion of the network of national parks		1,083,000 (-3.4%)
Component 3 : Support to selected national parks	5,218,012	5,544,000 (+6.2%)
Component 4 : <u>Appraisal</u> : Wildlife management outside national parks	1,817,547	
<u>Restructuring</u> : Improved wildlife management and law enforcement in the periphery of national parks		1,236,000 (-32%)
Total	10,000,005 ¹	10,000,000

2. Key Factors Affecting Implementation and Outcomes

2.1 Project Preparation, Design and Quality at Entry

31. *Collaborative approach and lessons learned and applied*: The project was prepared within the framework of the sectorwide multidonor PSFE. The preparation of this program was based on thematic studies and national action plans developed by multidisciplinary working groups on forests, biodiversity, the environment, and tourism (funded by the GEF-UNDP). Component 2, “expanding Gabon’s protected area coverage,” was built on the results of the three-year biological and socioeconomic evaluation conducted by the Government with assistance from the World Conservation Society (WCS) in 13 newly created national parks and their buffer zones.

32. Preparation of the project also integrated the lessons learned from two previous Bank operations. Drawing from the Forestry and Environment Project (closed in FY2003), the project strengthened involvement of the private sector and nongovernment stakeholders, and emphasized building the capacity of the decentralized national park management units. That partners must coordinate closely from the outset was a lesson learned from the implementation of the Regional Environmental Information Management Program.

33. The project also applied lessons learned from other donor projects. The European Commission–funded Forest Ecosystems Project demonstrated how charismatic “flagship” species ought to be the cornerstone of any successful ecotourism endeavor in Central Africa. The CBFP (USAID and South Africa) was the first to introduce the landscape

¹ Figures in Project Restructuring Paper do not add up to US\$10 million.

approach to biodiversity conservation in Central Africa through innovative alliances involving community-based conservation and partnerships with the private sector. The WWF's Minkéké project in Gabon successfully used this approach in pursuing conservation goals in logging companies' concession areas. Component 4, "wildlife management outside national parks," also uses the same approach.

Project Design

34. *Project design fits the country-driven collaborative and multi-donor framework:* The project was designed with the framework of the sectorwide multi-donor PSFE. It complemented an IBRD Development Policy Loan (DPL) in support of components 1 (forest management), 2 (fisheries management), 4 (environmental services), and 5 (institutional capacity strengthening) of the PSFE. Both the project and the DPL complemented the interventions of other donors (the African Development Bank [ADB], Agence Française de Développement [AFD], European Commission, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], USAID).

35. The objective was highly relevant as it responded to the Government of Gabon's need to fill the capacity gap for the effective management of the newly created network of national parks, and to lay the foundation for a more diversified economy. The number and sequencing of components were appropriate and covered the basic elements of capacity strengthening (manpower, equipment, training, learning by doing) while contributing to the expansion of the national park network. The pursuit of the innovative landscape approach to mainstream biodiversity conservation into production landscapes through a tripartite partnership among local communities, extractive industry companies, and the national park agency added significant value to the project.

36. *Ambitious project objectives:* Overall, the design of the project does not appear to be complex. That said, in retrospect, to (i) conduct a nationwide survey of sites to identify and prioritize areas with potential for protected areas, (ii) define a sustainable financing strategy and establishing a foundation (or other sustainable financial mechanism), and (iii) generate revenue from ecotourism in a country that does not have any established experience with national park management and meaningful ecotourism management seem to be too ambitious as objectives.

37. *NGO technical assistance incorporated into project design:* The appraisal of the project determined that Government institutions' lack of adequate operational capacity for national park and biodiversity management would constitute a major implementation risk. Consequently, it was agreed that, while the newly created ANPN was acquiring the requisite operational capacity, the technical assistance services of international conservation NGOs, namely the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for conservation and the

World Conservation Society (WCS) would be contracted to help implement parts of components 2, 3 and 4 of the project. These NGOs were to assume a key role in the early years of project implementation. These two NGOs had vast experience in conservation work (including investments) in Gabon prior to the project.

Government Commitment

38. The Government showed strong commitment and leadership as exemplified by the range of policy development and reforms undertaken during the preparation and appraisal of the project (see sub-section 1.1). Also, the commitment to create a national park agency and to adopt a framework law for national parks management was a sign the Government's strong leadership. Finally, the participatory approach, involving local communities, local authorities, and the private sector (oil/gas and logging companies, tours operators), showed a strong commitment of the Government to initiate a new policy and business model for sustainable development, especially for biodiversity conservation.

Assessment of Risks

39. The overall assessment of the major risks affecting implementation and outcomes was adequate, but some risk factors could have benefited from further attention by strengthening the proposed mitigation measures (table in Section C5 of PAD).

Risk factors where more robust mitigation measures would have added value are:

- Project development objective
 - *Lack of coordination among PSFE donors in the area of biodiversity conservation generates overlaps and divergence in project approaches, and fails to bridge critical funding gaps.* More robust mitigation measure: to modify project scope if any donor (s) does not cooperate (instead of “All donors agreed to work within the overarching PSFE framework”).
 - *Contracted NGOs fail to build capacity of public institutions.* More robust mitigation measure: to introduce clear indicators (or proxy thereof) and accountability mechanisms for measuring transferred knowledge (instead of “[...] All activities will be planned, carried out and monitored jointly by DFC/ANPN and their NGO partner following the principle of co-management” [...]).
 - *Failure to develop ecotourism, which undermines Government and local communities' commitment to biodiversity conservation.* To bring about the enabling conditions described in the risk column seems to be beyond the project's means (policy reform is not part of project).
- Components
 - *Threats to biodiversity due to the government allocation of logging or mining and/or oil exploration/production rights.* More robust mitigation measure: to add the option of creating biodiversity-offsets. Allowing for

exploitation to take place provided a new and equivalent area is set aside as a national park or other type of protected area would be a reasonable mitigation option because the direct economic benefits of extractive industries and associated lobbying are likely to prevail over conservation concerns.

2.2 Implementation

40. *Capacity constraints of implementation agencies:* Weaknesses in the skill level of the some of the original staff and a lack of understanding of World Bank procedures (especially of those for procurement and financial management) resulted in frequent changes of the teams of both implementing agencies (ANPN and the Ministry of Forests, Fisheries and Environment--MEFPEPN). During the first 18 months, the project was managed by three different teams in the ANPN and two in the Ministry of Forests. These technical shortcomings and the instability of the implementing agencies had an adverse effect on the implementation progress, especially during the first year and half of the project life.

41. *Ineffective implementation arrangement:* The Gabonese institutional framework for managing forests and protected areas evolved rapidly during the preparation and appraisal of the project. An important change was the creation of a national agency for national parks (i.e., the ANPN). This agency was located in the President's Office, whereas other protected areas were managed by the Ministry of Forests. This Ministry was also responsible for biodiversity and wildlife outside of national parks. In order to ensure the effective management of biodiversity inside and outside national parks, it was thought that the both ANPN and MEFPEPN should be entrusted with project implementation.

42. This institutional arrangement, however, increased transaction and coordination costs between ANPN and MEFPEPN, thereby slowing down the pace of implementation. The adverse operational effects of this arrangement were aggravated by the lack of clarity in the description of roles and responsibilities of each implementing agency in the project implementation manual. At the MTR it was decided to entrust the ANPN with full responsibility for managing the project, and to retain the important contribution of the MEFPEPN through a signed memorandum of understanding (MoU).

43. *Effects of the political transition:* To some extent the passing away of the president in June 2009, and the subsequent political campaign, followed by elections were also detrimental to the pace of project implementation.

44. Due to all these reasons, the project was rated “unsatisfactory” during the 9 months prior to the May 2010 MTR (the disbursement rate was only 23 percent). The MTR thoroughly reviewed the causes of the slow progress of implementation. The Bank and the Government agreed to restructure the project in order to improve its performance. The Board approved the restructured project in April 2011.

45. An implementation specialist (international consultant) was hired to further accelerate the pace of project execution. A few months after the restructuring of the project, the implementation pace increased, and the project rating improved to “moderately satisfactory.” This rating was maintained until the closing of the project.

46. *An unfulfilled multi-donor sectorwide intervention and co-financing framework:* The project was conceived within the framework of the multi-donor PFSE, and was to complement or be complemented by donor interventions. In fact, the project was to receive \$13.15 million in co-financing from other donors including the European Commission, UNESCO, WCS, WWF, and USAID.² This amount was allocated to component 1 (\$5.85 million), component 3 (\$2.25 million), and component 4 (\$3.1 million).

47. Unfortunately, this co-financing did not materialize. The effect of this lack of external co-financing on the project achievements is unclear because the scope of the activities of three (1, 2, and 4) of the four original components of the project changed before or at the restructuring of the project. The reasons for this lack of co-financing remain unclear because neither the implementation support aide memoires nor the MTR mentioned the co-financing identified at appraisal. During the ICR mission, WCS and WWF mentioned that they contributed financial resources to the activities of the three national parks targeted by the project. However, the amount of this contribution and the specific activities supported were not acknowledged and confirmed in project financial management reporting system and in the Government completion report.

48. *Technical assistance by NGO and consultants:* The award of technical assistance (TA) contracts to WWF and WCS was one of the conditions for project effectiveness. These two NGOs had detailed terms of reference covering conservation management (including planning and evaluation), research, and on-the-job training of ANPN and MEFPEPN staff, communication and administrative management. These NGOs planned, carried out and monitored their respective activities jointly with the Government agencies.

² See PAD annexes 4 (for detailed project description), 5 (for summary of currently secured external funding), and 15 (for incremental cost analysis).

They reported either to the ANPN (for components 1 and 3) or to the Ministry of Forests and National Parks (for components 2 and 4). Fiduciary responsibility rested with the NGOs the activities mentioned in their terms of reference.

49. As expected, the two international NGOs played a key role in the project implementation, especially from project effectiveness until the MTR. During this period, they procured and managed some of the project equipment, managed most of the field operations (e.g., payment of per diems to field missions, allocation of transport equipment, etc.).

50. In addition to the NGOs, the implementing agencies also received technical support from two international consultants for an extended period of time after the MTR. These include a so-called implementation specialist and a monitoring and evaluation specialist. A local extended term consultant was also hired to assist the implementing agencies in the coordination of day-to-day activities and the implementation of tasks requiring specialized technical skills.

2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Design, Implementation and Utilization

Design

51. *Appraisal stage:* The METT, a recommended tool for monitoring and evaluating the performance of conservation projects was retained as the main means for monitoring and evaluating the conservation outcomes of the three targeted national parks. While the features of the METT were appropriately designed to capture the conservation outcomes within the national parks, the overall design of the project M&E system had some shortcomings that may have reduced the effectiveness of the project result framework.

52. Unclear and Weak Articulation of the Project-Level M&E: The description of the M&E system included in the PAD was mainly devoted to the arrangements, methods, and tools that the project would put in place to ensure that the M&E function would be performed effectively during the implementation of the project. While this description provided a useful conceptual framework for establishing a good result monitoring and evaluation system, it also had weaknesses.

53. In particular, the PAD (annex 3) provides very little information on the key operational elements of the project M&E system. It states that a “detailed M&E *program* will be established at the start of the project.” It also mentions that “the monitoring *strategy* developed at the beginning of the *program* will determine (a) the nature (level of analysis) of the information transferred, and (b) the procedures for transferring information to the national level”.

54. This description does not include the specific activities, key actors and responsibilities, and resources necessary to implement the project-level M&E system successfully. This lack of operational clarity made it difficult for the implementing agencies to monitor and evaluate project performance effectively right from the start of the project implementation.

55. Shortcomings in the Selection of Indicators: Some of the results and outcome indicators of the PAD were not appropriately aligned with the PDO and the GEO. The statements of the PDO in the Results Framework and Monitoring (annex 3) and in the Project Description (section B2) are different, as are the outcome indicators used to measure the achievement of the PDO.

56. Some indicators of the PAD (for example, systems of finance and human resource management, M&E, communication, ecotourism development, and sustainable funding) could have benefited from further elaboration to increase their measurability and degree of pertinence. Some of the performance indicators of the restructured project that do not exhibit a strong causal link with the expected development outcomes include: (i) increased surveillance efforts in the three key national parks and buffer zones; (ii) number of community members sensitized to biodiversity conservation in the three national parks; (iii) number of sites with high biodiversity potential covered by biological inventory; and (iv) number of environmental audits conducted by the Gabonese administration (Project Restructuring Paper, annex 1).

57. Weak alignment of PDO with project components and activities: Based on the content of the planned project activities, the stated PDO of contributing to the diversification of the national economy through strengthened capacities of parks and wildlife authorities does not seem achievable. The ecotourism activities supported by the project consisted in assessing the ecotourism potential of the targeted national parks, and developing mechanisms for capturing a share of the associated revenue that would result to support conservation activities. Undertaking these activities was dependent on the elaboration and adoption of national legislation for ecotourism development in national parks. However, the activities leading to the adoption of such legislation were not contained under any of the project components. Therefore, the economic diversification outcome expected from ecotourism development could not be achieved by the project.

58. *Shortcomings in the Results Framework at the project restructuring stage:* The Level-1 restructuring of the project resulted in changes in the name of some project components and in the scope of activities. The names of all four components as stated in section C (Proposed Changes, page 2) are different from those mentioned in the table of results framework and monitoring (annex 1); and the latter are different from those

presented in the financing and project costs table (page 11). 1 and 2 mentioned on page The Project Restructuring Paper did not articulate clearly the objective of each the component (although the activities are described). In fact for component 1, the Paper only mentioned the name and a list of indicators (page 3).

59. The pertinence of some of the revised performance indicators appeared weak because of the insufficient clarity of the objectives of the restructured components. For example, it is unclear how increasing the surveillance efforts from 300 person-days per month to 700 person-days would suffice to ensure the protection and integrity of biodiversity in the three national parks and their buffer zones. While raising local communities' awareness to biodiversity conservation is certainly appropriate, it is unclear why 2000 females and 2000 males would be the target numbers of local community members to be sensitized about biodiversity conservation in the three national parks. These two key performance indicators might be appropriate; however, the evidence base supporting this pertinence was lacking. Finally, merely conducting five environmental audits would not necessarily yield desirable and effective results unless they were satisfactorily conducted by qualified auditors, and their recommendations were implemented.

Implementation

60. The lack of specificity in the description of the M&E system in the PAD and the technical capacity constraints of the implementing agencies made the establishment of the project M&E system a challenging task. Unfortunately, the Bank implementation support Teams were not able to correct for the lack of clarity in the design of the M&E system at the lending stage and to provide timely assistance to the Government implementing agencies.

61. The aide memoire of the first implementation support mission (February 15–March 11, 2008) encouraged ANPN to use the M&E section of the project implementation manual as a guide for putting in place its M&E system. Five months later (August 2008) ANPN expressed the need to have an international expert help put in place the agency's M&E system. Although the Bank approved this request and suggested key tasks for the terms of reference for the international expert, the aide memoires of the next two missions (June 2008 and November 2008) continued to urge ANPN to draw from the implementation manual and put in place its M&E system.³

³ The November mission offered to provide M&E technical support to ANPN in the coming weeks.

62. Meanwhile, the February 2010 mission determined that the project did not have an M&E system (at least not a viable one), and advised the implementing agencies to take stock of the project achievements and to put in place an M&E system. The project M&E officer was hired at the time of the MTR (that is, 30 months after project effectiveness). The M&E officer for ANPN was hired a year later. The international M&E expert was hired at the end of 2011, that is, more than 3 years after ANPN first expressed the need to have one.

63. These events show that although the Bank teams were aware of and, in fact, emphasized the importance of an effective M&E system in achieving and measuring results on the ground, the level of their support to the implementing agencies was not adequate. The teams' repeated advice to set up an M&E system seemed unproductive, and this wasted valuable time at the beginning of the project. The M&E system of the project was put in place only after the MTR. Also, good practice would be to apply the METT tool before or immediately after projects become effective so that it would capture the baseline biodiversity conservation status adequately. However, the initial application of the METT to the three targeted national parks only took place two years after the project was declared effective.

64. A more proactive stance from the Bank could have permitted the implementing agencies to put in place an effective M&E system at the beginning of the project's activities. This would have helped to track the performance of the project components more effectively, and to take appropriate corrective actions, especially during the first half of the project life.

Utilization

65. Three years after the beginning of the project, the extended missions of an international consultant helped the project-level M&E officers to enact an effective M&E system at the project level and within the ANPN. This helped improve the quality of implementation noticeably, through better monitoring of activities and timely corrective actions. Data and information from the project-level M&E were used to improve the annual planning of the Action Plan derived from the restructured project. The information generated by the project's M&E system also helped to tailor the technical assistance provided by the conservation NGOs to the needs of each national park and the associated buffer zone.

66. It also helped to establish benchmarks for assessing the performance and contribution of the NGO service providers. Finally, the M&E data and information helped to reduce the inefficiency associated with frequent over-commitment of funds to planned activities. The introduction of information and communication (ICT) tools, GPS,

and adapted software into ANPN's M&E system helped to generate data and information that significantly increased the efficiency of conservation actions and law enforcement within and outside the targeted national parks. Overall, the METT tool was used appropriately to assess the conservation outcomes in the targeted parks.

67. The M&E system of ANPN, which was derived from the project's system, seems to be operating satisfactorily. But its full potential and effectiveness will only be known when all the relevant field staff are trained to use the software effectively. The M&E software was acquired in May 2013, and the relevant staff in the ANPN office in Libreville was trained in June 2013. The training of the field staff in the national parks was yet to be conducted at the time of the ICR mission (four months after the project closed).

2.4 Safeguard and Fiduciary Compliance

Environmental and Social Safeguards

Appraisal stage

68. The Task Team acknowledged in the appraisal-stage ISDS and in the Safeguards Annex of the PAD that the project would not generate adverse environmental and social effects that are irreversible. Rather than selecting a safeguard category consistent with this profile, the Team adopted the safeguard category "A" and the associated instruments that were developed by the sector-wide PSFE. Perhaps this choice was due to the fact that the project envisaged expansion of Gabon's national parks network through the creation of new protected areas (original component 2). In any case, the A category set the stage for an unnecessarily high burden of environmental and social mitigation work during implementation.

69. While the Safeguards Annex described the mitigation measures that needed to be implemented, it did not provide a clear indication of how and who would implement these measures. The PAD (Section D5) mentioned that implementation of the social safeguards instruments would be "monitored in the context of the IBRD Natural Resources DPL," without indicating how this would be done effectively since the implementation schedule of the DPL and that of the project were different. This lack of specific implementation arrangements and accountability lines further increased the safeguards risks during the implementation phase.

Management of the Safeguard Issues

70. The aide-memoire of the MTR mentioned that no environmental and social mitigation measure was implemented due to the slow progress of project execution. The aide-memoire also stated that no financial resources were allocated for safeguard

mitigation measures. The MTR helped to initiate and prioritize corrective actions in this area. A recommended training session in Bank environmental and social safeguard policies was delivered to the project staff by a Bank technical team in May 2011.

71. *Environmental safeguards.* The restructured project introduced environmental audits of extractive industries (forest and mining concessions, and oil exploration and exploitation) in the buffer zones of the national parks under project component 4. This multisectoral undertaking was led by the Directorate General for Environment (DGE), and included ANPN and the ministries of forests, mining, and hydrocarbons. Conservation NGOs were also involved in the process. The disappointing quality of the first audit reports led to a search for a more effective means of conducting these environmental audits. At the time of project closing, no viable technical solution had yet been found. Coordination issues and the weak technical capacity of the DGE seem to be the main causes of this failure.

72. *Social safeguards issues.* The restructuring of the project following the MTR offered a good opportunity to readjust the environment and social safeguard category of the project (from A to B) to reflect the level of its actual potential environmental and social effects. This readjustment was necessary for two reasons. First, the potentially high social safeguard risks perceived to be associated with the creation of new national parks under the original design of the project were removed because the restructured project dropped this activity (see section 1.6). The failure to adjust the environment category created expectations for the scope and depth of the mitigation measures to be implemented.

73. Second, the national parks law adopted after the effectiveness of the project included mechanisms that seemed to provide a reasonable assurance about the traditional use rights of local populations. One such mechanism is the the *Comités Consultatifs de Gestion Local (CCGL)*, a consultative platform that includes local populations, local authorities, local NGOs, and the private sector (extractive industry). The CCGL constitutes the main mechanism for negotiating and securing the co-management arrangement rights and responsibilities under the park management plan.

74. *Mitigation of the social safeguards risks:* The compliance with social safeguards followed a two-pronged approach. For the areas identified as suitable for inclusion in future national parks, socioeconomic studies (including the recording of human settlements) were commissioned. The results of these studies were supposed to help to minimize the disruption of local livelihoods in the delineation of the boundaries of future national parks.

75. For the three parks supported by the project, it was reported that no physical resettlement of the households living within these protected areas took place. Nonetheless, the Bank recommended preparation of a resettlement policy framework for all the affected peoples within and outside these national parks, and the integration of the policy frameworks into the management plan of each national park. According to the original implementation schedule, the management plans of the targeted national parks were to be adopted by year 3. This would have allowed for time to assess their effectiveness on the ground and to make adjustments, where necessary (including safeguard aspects). However, these management plans had not been adopted by the close of the project.

76. In the meantime, the project chose to rely on the CCGL for assuring compliance with social safeguards. There two reasons why the CCGL are not likely to be an effective mechanism for mitigating the potential social safeguards risks associated with project activities. First, the CCGL is a multi-stakeholder consultative rather than a deliberative body, and the balance of bargaining power may not favor local communities.

77. Second, the national parks law and the forestry code do recognize the traditional rights of local populations to use the natural resources of national parks and their buffer zones, but these rights can only be negotiated in the context of the CCGL and secured in a local land-use contract (*contrat de gestion de terroir villageois*), subject to ANPN's approval. No local land-use contract between ANPN and the local communities was ready by the time the project closed. Therefore, there was no opportunity for the Task Teams to assess the potential of this instrument to address Bank safeguards policies adequately and effectively.

78. Because the objective function of the CCGL platform (a key instrument of the park management plan) is to ensure the effective conservation of biodiversity, the extent to which local populations' social and economic interests are maximized in the land-use contract would vary and would tend to be constrained by the conservation objective.

79. Although the Task Teams maintained the original environment category at the restructuring stage, the selection and implementation of the safeguard measures did not correspond to the requirements of this "A" category. In fact, these measures did not even meet the mitigation requirements for a category "B" (which should have been the appropriate environment category) project. The main shortcomings in the implementation of the social safeguards are summarized below:

- Although the MTR acknowledged that there was no capacity and no budget for implementing environmental and social safeguard measures, the planned safeguards training did not take place until one year later (May 2011);

- A guide for the so-called simplified templates for the Resettlement Action Plan and for the Indigenous People Development Plan was developed without a clear assignment of responsibilities for developing and implementing these instruments;
- The Task Teams strongly advised the implementing agency (ANPN) to prepare and use the Process Framework as an input to the formulation of the management plan of each targeted national park, but little follow-up action and oversight was provided;
- In the end, the project chose to rely on untested Government mechanisms (i.e., CCGL) for the management of social safeguard risks.

80. These shortcomings would mean that residual social safeguard risks of unknown magnitude could be associated with the implementation of the park management plans approved after the closing of the project. The need to monitor the potential socioeconomic risks associated with the implementation of the national park management plans, and to mitigate any adverse impact on local communities (or members thereof) promptly and effectively was discussed with the Government during the Implementation Completion Report (ICR) mission.

Financial Management

81. Throughout the implementation period, the performance of the project's financial management function improved from unsatisfactory to moderately satisfactory. The weak financial management performance impacted negatively on the disbursement rate which remained low for an extended period of time at the beginning of the project implementation. The main shortcomings included late and unreliable withdrawal applications, delayed transfer of funds to field offices of the national parks, late payment of service providers, and ineligible expenses.

82. The quality of internal controls improved and the financial management risk level decreased from "substantial" to "moderate" following the MTR. The contributing factors to these improvements included strong support from Bank supervision missions and timely remedial actions, which led to the replacement of the financial management specialist. The effective use of the TOMPRO software, the training sessions provided by Bank technical teams, and the external consultant helped to improve the quality of financial management. The quality and timeliness of financial management reports and withdrawal applications also improved subsequently.

Procurement

83. The local procurement specialists' limited knowledge of Bank procedures contributed to some of the implementation delays at the beginning of the project. Ineffective internal control, erratic publication of bidding outcomes, and poor

recordkeeping were the main weaknesses of the procurement at that time. The moving of the first procurement specialists to new jobs also affected the pace of the procurement early in the implementation phase. The situation improved noticeably with the recruitment of new procurement staff. The level of skills of the procurement staff was adequate. Overall, the procurement function conformed to the Bank's procurement guidelines, and the Bank supervision missions did not uncover any issue in this area. The overall rating of procurement was "satisfactory."

2.5 Postcompletion Operation/Next Phase

84. The creation of a network of 13 national parks in 2002 provided Gabon with its first-ever national parks. This project, designed barely three years after the creation of these national parks, helped the country to lay a strong foundation of the institutional and technical capabilities necessary to manage these parks effectively. No follow-up operation is envisaged at this stage.

85. In the absence of a direct follow-up operation, a new GEF project dealing with the management and conservation of critical wetland ecosystems is under preparation. In addition to capacity-building investments, this project will support the sustainable management of three critical ecosystems, including one of the national parks that received financing from the closed project. ANPN, which managed the closed project, will manage two of the three sites of the new project.

86. These two sites are national parks that include critical wetlands. This will not only strengthen the capacity established by the closed project, but it will also provide the Bank with the opportunity to follow up on the implementation of the national park management plans prepared under the closed project. The Bank implementation support will strengthen the execution of these plans, and help to make necessary adjustments that would benefit the implementation of the management plans of the other national parks.

3. Assessment of Outcomes

3.1 Relevance of Objectives, Design and Implementation

Rating: the objectives of the project retain **High Overall Relevance**.

87. The project's objective, design, and implementation remain highly relevant for Gabon's current development challenges and priorities. The Government's economic development vision, the 2009 Plan Stratégique Gabon Emergent (PSGE), emphasizes economic diversification and non-oil economic growth, as does the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper supported by the 2005 CAS. As part of its economic diversification agenda, Gabon gives high priority to the sustainable management of natural resources including forests, fisheries, biodiversity, mining, and agriculture—

which are all part of the “Gabon Vert” pillar of the PSGE. This priority is consistent with the GEF’S Biodiversity Strategic Priorities, and with the objectives of the GEF’s Operational Programs on forest ecosystems (OP 1) and coastal, marine, and fresh water ecosystems (OP 2).

88. The 2012 Country Partnership Strategy (CPS FY2012–16) of the World Bank Group (WBG) will provide support to Gabon’s PSGE through two strategic themes: (i) competitiveness and employment, and (ii) vulnerability and resilience. Under the latter, the WBG will continue to assist the Government in diversifying the economy while taking steps to ensure that renewable natural resources are protected and sustainably managed. This outcome will be achieved by building on the achievements of the Natural Resource Management Development Policy Loan through transparent reforms in the natural resource sector. An important element of these reforms is the future Congo Basin regional REDD+ mechanism which presents a tremendous opportunity to generate substantial resources from the sustainable management of Gabon’s forests. This mechanism could help biodiversity conservation and finance, thereby providing additional funds to Gabon’s national parks and protected areas.

89. Under the competitiveness and employment theme, the WBG will build on the ecotourism development efforts started by the Government during the preparation of the project in 2004. In particular, a value chain will be promoted to guide and contribute to growth in the ecotourism industry. Assistance to the industry will include a matching grant scheme for technical learning at the firm level. The effective management of the national parks that received project support would constitute an important lever for the competitiveness and growth of the ecotourism industry.

90. The core theme of capacity building of Government agencies responsible for biodiversity and national park management responds to the CPS’s need for addressing the long-term foundations of growth including improved governance, strengthened public sector capacity, and enhanced quality of human capital. In particular, the capacity that the project helped to create will help to implement the transparent and sustainable natural resource management practices that are supported by the Government PSGE and the CPS of the WBG.

91. Similarly, the collaboration between public agencies and the private sector operating in the buffer zones of the national parks sets the stage for increased public-private partnerships (PPPs) currently promoted for non-oil, natural-resource-based economic diversification. Finally, the Consultative Committees for Local Management put in place by the project could serve as a community-based safeguard and governance model for the implementation of the REDD+ mechanisms.

3.2 Achievement of Global Environmental Objectives

Rating: Satisfactory

92. The PDO, as stated in the Project Restructuring Paper, was to “(i) enhance the conservation of biodiversity in selected national parks and buffer zones, and (ii) to strengthen the management capacity of selected conservation-related entities in Gabon.” The achievement of this objective was measured through four key performance indicators (KPIs).

93. Based on the assessment of the extent to which these indicators (including the intermediate indicators) are achieved (as shown below), the overall achievement of the GEOs is satisfactory.

Achievement of Key Performance Indicators (see annex 2 for outputs per component)

94. *KPI 1: Hectares of land with high potential for protection where a biological survey is completed.* Gabon’s unique combination of exceptionally abundant and diverse natural resources presents a favorable context for implementing a sustainable development strategy that not only contributes to the diversification and sustained growth of its economy, but also benefits the global community. In this regard, the creation of 13 national parks in August 2002 was seen as the first phase in the expansion of Gabon’s network of national parks. Given budget constraints, the creation of the next set of national parks should focus on areas with the highest conservation values to ensure the highest possible returns on conservation investments, and to yield cost-effective conservation outcomes.

95. A biological survey and socioeconomic studies were conducted in pre-identified areas to establish the basis for conservation priority setting. Three areas covering a total area of 945,000 hectares were pre-identified and surveyed (biological and socioeconomic surveys): (i) the Woungoué-Evaro Complex (approximately 690,000 hectares), (ii) the Mayumba-Mayombe Complex (approximately 250,000 hectares), and (iii) the Mondah Forest (5,000 hectares).

96. *KPI 2: Increase in management effectiveness in three national parks (700,000 hectares), as per the GEF Tracking Tool for Protected Area Management (Protected Areas Monitoring and Evaluation Tracking Tool—PAMETT).* This tool was used to track and report progress taking the year 2010 as baseline. Table 1 shows that the targets were exceeded for all national parks.

Evolution of PAMETT scores in the three targeted national parks

	Baseline 2010 (MTR)	Target June 2013	Score in 2011	Score in 2013
Loango	57%	65%	60.67%	75.00%
Moukalaba-Doudou	58%	65%	61.63%	71.91%
Mayumba	50%	65%	60.47%	65.56%

97. *KPI 3: Increased surveillance efforts in the three key national parks and buffer zones.* Conservation and wildlife law enforcement were seen as crucial investments for reducing the threats facing the three targeted national parks and their buffer zones. To assure effective enforcement, the project supported the creation of joint ANPN-Ministry of Forest mobile brigades in these national parks. The NGOs helped to implement a system of law enforcement monitoring to record, evaluate, and plan wildlife law enforcement efforts. This system helped to ensure the effectiveness and accountability of law enforcement personnel. The targeted level of surveillance effort was set to 700 man/days. The law enforcement monitoring determined that the level of surveillance efforts increased from 300 man/days in 2010 to 748 man/days in 2013, thereby exceeding the target.

98. *KPI 4: Number of community members (organized by gender) sensitized to biodiversity conservation in the three national parks.* The project recognized the importance of local communities' participation as a crucial condition for the success of conservation activities within the parks and in their buffer areas. To lay the foundation for the genuine and active participation of these communities in conservation efforts, the project conducted awareness-raising and sensitization campaigns in the relevant communities. The target was 5,000 individuals sensitized or exposed to awareness-raising events.

99. Available performance information shows that the sensitization activities reached 5,123 individuals in 2011, and 2,656 individuals in 2012–13. It is unclear whether these are two complementary groups of individuals, that is, a total of 7,779 individuals reached, or if some individuals were exposed to sensitization and/or awareness-raising more than once. In any case, the project exceeded the performance target.

3.3 Efficiency

Rating: **Satisfactory**

Cost-effectiveness

100. The project adopted a strategic (three-pronged) planning and resource allocation approach that helped to ensure that the GEF funds were used in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. First, this approach involved spatial strategic planning that combined biodiversity conservation at the landscape level to enhance biodiversity

conservation in the three terrestrial ecoregions that occur in Gabon. These included the Congolian coastal forest, the Northwestern Congolian lowland forest, and the Western Congolian forest-savanna mosaic (as defined in the WWF's ecoregion definition). On this basis, two landscapes were selected: (i) the Loango, Mukalaba, and Mayumba and their buffer zones, and (ii) the buffer zones of Lopé and Batéké.

101. Second, a site-level assessment was conducted using four criteria: (i) biodiversity value; (ii) ecotourism potential; (iii) potential for transborder collaborative biodiversity conservation; and (iv) potential for rapidly achieving concrete results (for example, because of existing structures/partners). The following priority sites emerged from this assessment: the Gamba Complex (Loango and Moukalaba), Mayumba, Lopé, Minkébé, and Batéké. In addition, the existence of clear demarcation between park boundaries and production landscapes was taken into account.

102. Third, an analysis of the funding gap for each site was conducted to determine where the GEF funds could make the highest contribution to the conservation of biodiversity in the representative ecoregions. Following this analysis, Minkébé was eliminated from the list because it benefited from substantial funding from other donors.

103. A decision was then made to allocate a substantial proportion of the funds to a single landscape comprising an uninterrupted block of three national parks and their buffer zones (that is, Loango, Moukalaba, Mayumba), and to target the zone between Lopé national park and Batéké which would complement ongoing park management support provided by other donors. The following characteristics of the selected sites will ensure that the project maximizes *in situ* protection of biodiversity per dollar spent:

- The Loango, Mukalaba, and Mayumba national parks, together with their buffer zones, include terrestrial, coastal, and marine ecosystems with an exceptionally high level of biodiversity.
- The Loango-Mukalaba Complex and Mayumba present the highest ecotourism potential in Gabon, followed by Lopé and Batéké.
- Intervention in the Loango, Mukalaba, and Mayumba landscape will help to address marine pollution by offshore production, an important threat to biodiversity in Gabon.
- Mayumba and Batéké are contiguous with national parks in neighboring Congo, and will help to control cross-border threats to biodiversity (especially poaching), while fostering regional conservation efforts within the Central African Forest Commission (Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale, COMIFAC).
- The high degree of habitat connectivity due to the landscape approach will maximize conservation effectiveness across the targeted national parks.

3.4 Justification of Overall Outcome Rating

Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory**

104. The intervention met the GEO indicators and the intermediate outcome indicators of the restructured project satisfactorily. The spatial, biophysical, and financing criteria used in the selection of the three targeted national parks ensured that conservation outcomes were achieved at the least cost. The project objective was and remained highly relevant to the country's priorities and the Bank's assistance strategy.

105. This being said, the successful completion and satisfactory achievements of the restructured project also have to be assessed against the original project objectives. The original key performance indicators were:

- Effective implementation of the Gabon National Parks Agency's (ANPN's) management plans for key national parks—leading to socioeconomic benefits such as employment generation and ecotourism—by year five (CAS).
- One million hectares of areas suitable for biodiversity protection status identified and proposed for formal gazettelement by year five.
- One million hectares of key national parks with 80 percent increase in the management effectiveness score (as measured by the Protected Area Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool)—leading to biodiversity conservation, employment generation, and ecotourism development—by year five.
- Five million hectares of production landscapes in buffer zones with increased wildlife management effectiveness—as measured by indicators of surveillance efforts and levels of wildlife offtake—by year five.

106. When the restructured project was formally approved almost three and half years after effectiveness, little progress had been made toward meeting these performance targets. Some progress was made in implementing Components 1 and 3, with limited increase in the capacities of ANPN. Only a few activities had started under Components 2 and 4 and no real progress could be reported on the two outcome indicators related to these components, i.e., *“Identification of an additional one million hectares of areas suitable for protection status and formal gazettelement”* and *“increase in wildlife management effectiveness in 5 million hectares of production areas”*.

107. In fact, the performance of the project was rated “Unsatisfactory” during the nine months preceding the MTR that led to the restructuring of the project. The restructured project dropped two of the four original key performance indicators, and significantly changed one of them. While the restructuring helped to accelerate the pace of implementation, it also reduced the scope of the project.

108. OPCS guidelines for rating the outcome of projects with formally revised objectives recommend separate ratings (against original and revised objectives) weighed in proportion to the share of actual disbursements made in the periods before and after approval of the revised objectives. To assist in deriving these ratings, the following method is proposed:

- Rate project outcome against the original project objectives and against the revised project objectives, respectively;
- Assign a value for each rating: Highly Satisfactory (HS)=6, Satisfactory (S)=5, Moderately Satisfactory (MS)=4, Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)=3, Unsatisfactory (U)=2, Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)=1;
- Derive the actual total Bank/IDA disbursements before and after the date when the project revised objectives were formally approved;
- Arrive at an overall rating by weighting the two ratings by the proportion of actual total disbursement in each period, and rounding to the nearest whole number (1 to 6).

109. Prior to the formal revision, the rating of the original project objective was U=2, and the amount of the grant disbursed was US\$ US\$2,180,000, i.e. 23% of the total disbursements of US\$9,643,061.81: $2 \times 0.23 = 0.46$. The rating of the revised project objective was S=5 with a disbursement amount of US\$7463061.81, or 77% of total grant disbursements: $5 \times 0.77 = 3.85$. Adding the respective weights of original and revised objectives would give the rating: $0.46 + 3.85 = 4.31$; rounding to the nearest whole number gives 4 corresponding to a MS rating. Therefore, the overall outcome rating of the project is **MS**.

3.5 Overarching Themes, Other Outcomes and Impacts

(a) Poverty Impacts and Social Development

110. The project achieved significant results both in terms of enhanced national park management capacity and biodiversity conservation. The landscape approach used and the selection criteria for the targeted parks helped to achieve these results in a relatively efficient manner. But this approach and the design of the project did little to secure positive poverty and social development impacts.

111. The original design of the project envisaged employment benefits to local communities from the development of private sector-led ecotourism (though no project activities supported such a claim). In reality, the design of the project (before or after restructuring) did not include any area/community development activities. The NGOs reported two community-level investments consisting of a cassava-processing equipment and a village bakery, both with dubious direct poverty impacts.

112. Meanwhile, some project activities—in particular, increased law enforcement (for example, the installation of a mobile ecoguards (i.e., park rangers) field unit supported by a military squad at one site)—seemed to have adverse poverty and social impacts, at least in some areas. For example, the sudden prohibition of traditional gear in subsistence fishing areas near the Mayumba national park was said to have resulted in the short-term loss of earnings and a fish shortage. Some villages in the vicinity of the parks were abandoned due to persistent crop damage by elephants.

113. It is reported that in one of the villages, women refused to sell foodstuffs to the ecoguards and told them to “to go and eat the elephants.” This anecdote is a sign of the local populations’ increasing frustration at the deterioration of livelihoods and living conditions. For the moment, the implementing agency does not seem to have a solution to this problem. It is necessary to find an acceptable solution—and soon—for two reasons. First is the issue of fairness and consideration for the needs of local communities. Second, discord is detrimental to the development of trust in the on-the-ground relationships and collaborative mechanisms needed to bring about biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use and livelihoods in the three national park areas.

Institutional Change/Strengthening

114. Gabon had no experience in the management of national parks prior to the creation of the network of 13 national parks in 2002. The project made a significant and lasting contribution to institutional change and strengthening in this area. The creation of the country’s agency for national parks management (ANPN) was a condition of the project’s effectiveness, and helped to design the organizational chart and recruit key start-up staff, including (i) the executive secretary—head of the agency, (ii) the head of the technical department, and (iii) the head of the administrative and financial department.

115. The project also assisted the agency in the competitive recruitment of technical specialists for these departments, including geographic information system (GIS) and environmental impact assessment (EIA) specialists for the technical department; procurement and accounting and financial management specialists for the headquarters and field offices of the targeted national parks; and a labor law specialist for the administrative and financial department. These technical specialists—who were all consultants to the project coordination unit—are now all ANPN staff.

116. The project also helped to recruit and to train 45 ecoguards (park rangers) divided into three mobile brigades located in the three targeted national parks. The field posts of these three national parks led by park wardens were rehabilitated and provided office equipment and vehicles. These ecoguards are now part of the ANPN’s field staff. Finally, the project helped to train the staff of the Ministry of Forests (responsible for the

management of the buffer zone), and to prepare the implementation decree of the national parks law adopted in 2008.

Other Unintended Outcomes and Impacts

117. The project raised the profile of biodiversity conservation in the country's national parks, an achievement that will help to build a strong conservation constituency in the public and private sectors, and hopefully in the rural areas. Despite shortcomings in certain areas, the CCGLs provide a platform for local communities to voice their opinions on the implementation of biodiversity conservation policies. If managed effectively and provided with adequate technical support, they will be an invaluable tool for building a broad rural constituency for biodiversity conservation.

118. The achievements of the project, especially the database on the fauna and flora resulting from the inventory work in high biodiversity areas, will add value to Gabon's biodiversity atlas, and contribute to the operationalization of the COMIFAC's M&E plan. The database also contributes to the coordination and implementation of the COMIFAC's programs on biodiversity conservation.

119. Undoubtedly, the most important unintended benefit is the private business interest in ecotourism generated by the effective protection of biodiversity resources in two of the three national parks targeted by the project. This emerging ecotourism potential is a strong testimony of the successful development outcome of the project, and ANPN's promising business orientation.

120. Over the past three years ANPN has been working to formalize two major tourism investment projects. In the first project, Aman Gabon, a PPP over two phases between Aman Luxury Green Resorts and the Gabonese Sovereign Fund (Fonds Gabonais des Investissements Stratégiques, FGIS), will put small resorts/camps in Pongara, Loango, Lopé, Ivindo (2 sites), and Plateau Batéké in addition to a hotel in Libreville. The first phase includes Libreville, Pongara, and Loango and is a \$85 million investment. The second phase investment is likely to be \$100 million. It is estimated that the first phase will create 350 direct jobs. Construction will begin in March 2014 and the opening of the first-phase hotels is planned for December 2015. Concessions are currently under negotiation.

121. The second project relates to SFM Safari Gabon, another PPP between SFM Africa and the CDC du Gabon, which will invest in Libreville, Pongara, and Loango in a first phase, followed by Moukalaba, Mayumba, and Lopé. The first-phase investment is estimated at \$25 million. Three tourism concessions have been approved by ANPN's board and signed, guaranteeing at least revenues in the amount of about US\$194,000 per

annum, or 10 percent of turnover, whichever is greater. Construction is due to start before the end of 2013. It is estimated that when these two projects are finalized annual revenues in excess of \$1 million will be generated for ANPN.

122. These ecotourism concessions are a welcome and crucial mechanism that will generate revenue to support the effective management of Gabon's network of national parks, and to secure a sustainable source of finance for ANPN. However, it is important to be mindful that, in order to fulfill their full revenue potential (and jobs and income streams for local communities), ecotourism concessions must be procured, negotiated and executed in ways that guarantee these potential benefits. In addition to the capital necessary to build the baseline park infrastructure and to manage visitor services effectively, entrepreneurial and organizational skills are critical for a successful exploitation of ecotourism concessions. Finally, the effective control and management of the potential adverse impact of visitors on the natural resource base are important conditions for the long-term financial and economic viability ecotourism concessions.

123. The future Congo Basin regional REDD+ mechanism could also be a source of conservation finance provided there is a global willingness to pay (e.g., through premium price) for carbon sequestered by protected area forests harboring globally important biodiversity resources. The exploitation of this potential source of revenue would require even greater and broader technical skills (monitoring, reporting and verification activities, community benefit sharing schemes, etc.) from ANPN, the Ministry of Forests and other Gabonese institutions.

4. Assessment of Risk to Development Outcome

Rating: **Negligible to Low Risk.**

124. The satisfactory capacity-strengthening results and the global environment outcomes achieved by the project are lasting ones. The overall low level of risk to the development outcome rests on solid institutional, technical, and financial foundations.

4.1. Strong institutional and technical foundations

125. ANPN, created under the project, is now a well-established and viable organization. The agency is backed by a national park law adopted in 2008. It has a clear mission statement⁴ and a management committee representing a range of stakeholders. It has well-established procedures for developing an annual budget and work program. The

⁴ The mission statement is: "To protect, value and manage the natural and cultural resources of the national parks in a sustainable and responsible way in order to contribute to the diversification of the national economy."

implementation is driven by an effective M&E system that the project helped to put in place. The decentralized accounting and financial management system in the targeted national parks has now been replicated in the remaining 10 national parks.

126. Thanks to a *strong Government commitment*, the core management team and specialists (that the project helped to recruit after the creation of ANPN) expanded to allow the institution to replicate the project approach and investments in the remaining 10 national parks (and 2 other protected areas). The number of technical departments of ANPN increased from three (executive secretariat, technical, administrative and financial) to five, which included a communication department and a field operations department. The number of ecoguards for conservation and wildlife law enforcement increased from 68 (including 45 recruited by the project) in 2010 to 324 in 2013, and the total ANPN staff increased from 195 in 2010 to 574 in 2013. Most of the technical specialists of the closed project coordination unit are now under ANPN's payroll.

4.2 A robust financial viability framework

127. The size of ANPN and its work programs require substantial investments and operating costs not just for sustaining the development outcome of the project (in the three national parks), but the whole network of the country's national parks. Fortunately, the strong commitment and ownership that the Government demonstrated during the preparation and implementation of the project are being continued through adequate budgetary allocations to the agency.

128. The 2012 budget allocated to ANPN was CFAF 4.4 billion, equivalent to \$8.8 million. In 2013, when ANPN was expected to take over the core activities and staff of the project, the budgetary allocation doubled to \$17.6 million equivalent. The budgetary provisions for 2014 amount to \$20.4 million (a 16 percent increase from the previous year). The rapid increase in ANPN's budgetary allocation during the past two years is aimed to replicate—incrementally—project investments and management approaches across the entire network of Gabon's national parks.

129. In addition to the Government's financial support, the leadership of ANPN initiated decisive resource mobilization efforts, as is seen by the promising PPP initiatives for ecotourism concessions. The process for creation of a conservation trust fund is also well advanced. In sum, the current financial flows and the viability of future flows seem robust enough to shield the development outcome from any financial risk.

4.3. Increased attention to social impacts

130. ANPN and the Government will need to focus greater attention on the potential adverse socioeconomic effects of the expanding network of national parks on the

communities living near and within these conservation areas. Including community livelihood activities in the conservation programs of ANPN will be consistent with the Government's poverty reduction objective, and help to strengthen local ownership of conservation efforts. Greater local stakeholder ownership will help to reduce monitoring and enforcement costs, thereby contributing the greater cost-effectiveness of conservation management.

5. Assessment of Bank and Borrower Performance

5.1 Bank

(a) Bank Performance in Ensuring Quality at Entry

Rating: **Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)**

131. The design of the project had three major strengths. First, it responded to the Government's emerging priorities in the area of sustainable natural resource management, especially the biodiversity conservation goals highlighted in the 2004 Letter of Sector Policy. Second, to ensure maximum quality at entry, the Task Team drew on lessons learned from previous or ongoing projects. In addition, the composition and skill mix of the Task Team was adequate—it included high-level and lead specialists in key technical areas such as forestry, conservation and natural resource law, procurement, and environment and social safeguards. Third, the Task Team helped the Government to develop a country-driven participatory process and multi-donor platform to mobilize co-financing from a range of donors.

132. These strengths at the design and preparation stages, however, were overshadowed by a range of weaknesses that emerged at the appraisal stage, and at the restructuring stage of the project. The Moderately Unsatisfactory rating is based on these weaknesses. Further details about these shortcomings are presented below.

133. *Weaknesses of the design at appraisal stage:* The original design of the project had three major weaknesses that generated shortcomings at the implementation phase. First and foremost, endorsing an economic diversification PDO through ecotourism development was too ambitious and inappropriate given the content of the component (see sub-section 2.3).

134. Second, the PAD did not provide a clear indication of how and who would implement these safeguards mitigation measures associated with this category A project. Also, the PAD (Section D5) relied partly on a separate operation with a different implementation schedule and different implementation arrangement to address the safeguard issues of this project. This lack of specific implementation arrangements and accountability lines further increased the safeguards risks at the implementation phase.

135. Third, the M&E framework of the project suffered from many shortcomings. Weak indicators (low robustness, weak pertinence, lack of clear targets, and unclear implementation arrangements) pointed to a low level of implementation readiness (see sub-section 2.3 above for more details).

136. *Weaknesses of the design at restructuring stage:* The Results Framework of the restructured project also had weaknesses in the indicators (e.g., pertinence). There was a lack of clarity and consistency in the statement of component objectives, and in the name of these components. Although the project activities that justified the original environment category were dropped at restructuring, the restructuring stage ISDS failed to adjust the environment category (from A to B). Maintaining the original A category called for appropriate safeguard mitigation measures that were not met during the implementation of the restructured project (see below).

(b) Quality of Supervision

Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**

137. The Bank carried out 14 implementation support missions led by two different Task Team leaders from the Bank headquarters during the six years of the project life. Taking into account the suspension of missions during the political transition period, and during the continental soccer tournament hosted by Gabon in 2011, this average of 2.3 implementation missions per year is adequate. Overall, the skill mix of the supervision team members seemed adequate, although the lack of a biodiversity specialist in these teams was a noticeable shortcoming.

138. Overall, the Bank's supervision missions were able to identify key implementation bottlenecks and to draw the authorities' attention to the necessary remedial actions. The joint Bank and Government's aide memoires and the Bank's Implementation Status and Results reports (ISRs) provide detailed accounts of the key technical and institutional problems (especially financial management and procurement) that the project faced throughout its life, and the appropriate recommendations that the Task Teams made to help solve these problems. The Bank Teams made important decisions that helped to accelerate the implementation of the projects and allowed the achievement of the GEO outcome.

139. Despite these achievements, the quality of Bank supervision was Moderately Satisfactory. This rating is due to the fact that there were areas where the support provided by the Bank supervision missions fell short of the required operational standards, especially during the first 30 months or so of the life. Some of these areas are highlighted below.

140. *Supervision of NGO service providers:* The decision to contract WWF and WCS through single source procurement to provide technical assistance to the implementing agencies and to make the award of the contracts a condition for project effectiveness was a major decision for the project implementation. These NGOs were given sufficient control (at least as described in the PAD) over the financial resources necessary to fulfill their mandate, which consisted in helping the implement and to coordinate specific activities of the project effectively, while the capacities of the implementing agencies were being developed (see sub-section 2.2 for details).

141. The differentiated performance of the project before and after the MTR could provide the basis for learning from this NGO-public implementation arrangement. Unfortunately, the implementation support records (aide memoires and ISRs) do not make any reference to the performance of the NGOs. Evaluating and reporting on the performance of the NGO service providers would have generated useful lessons not only for the Bank, but also for the Government.

142. *Results framework and monitoring:* Bank supervision failed to remedy the shortcoming of the result framework of the lending stage, and to provide timely technical support for the implementation of the project M&E system. Implementation of the M&E system only started in the third year of the effectiveness.

143. *Social safeguards:* The implementation of the social safeguard management plan started during the MTR. The simplified social safeguard instruments fell short of the Bank standards, not only for the maintained environment A category, but also for a lower environment B category which should have been the correct category. Relying on the Government's own mechanisms and national park legislation created safeguard risks that remained after the close of the project.

(c) Justification of Rating for Overall Bank Performance

Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory (MS).**

144. Bank performance had many strengths in terms of the project design and the implementation support provided by the supervision Teams to the borrower, although there were also some shortcomings particular in terms of quality at entry. Thus, the quality of the overall Bank performance was Moderately Satisfactory.

145. This rating, more specifically, is based on the following shortcomings:

- Quality at entry of the project suffered from:
 - A disconnect between the PDO and the core project activities;

- Lack of clarity regarding the implementation arrangements for the potential adverse environmental and social impacts of this category A project;
- A weak Results Framework.
- Supervision had weaknesses:
 - A weak Result Framework;
 - A disconnect between the potential environmental and social impacts of the project and the environmental and social safeguards category;
 - Delays in the implementation of the project M&E system and social safeguards;
 - Weak due diligence for social safeguards.

5.2 Borrower

(a) Government Performance

Rating: **Satisfactory**

146. *Preparation.* The performance of the Government of Gabon during the preparation was satisfactory. The preparation of the project started barely two years after the creation of Gabon's first set of national parks, and the Government was cognizant of the crucial contribution that this operation would play in assuring the successful management of these newly created protected areas. The strong Letter of Sector Policy helped to establish inter-ministerial project preparation groups whose members worked effectively with the Bank's technical teams from identification to appraisal. These multidisciplinary groups developed effective participatory processes (involving national stakeholders and donors) that helped them contribute high-value inputs to the design and appraisal of the project.

147. *Implementation.* The performance of the Government during the implementation of the project was satisfactory. Except for the delayed effectiveness, the Government of Gabon (including the Prime Minister's Office) showed a strong commitment to ensuring the project met its objectives. When the teams from the two implementing agencies had persistent performance issues at the beginning of the project, the authorities did not hesitate to replace them as many times as necessary.

148. In addition to these proactive measures, the Government provided timely counterpart funds throughout the life of the project. In fact, the Government budget financed most of the operating costs and investments of ANPN, the main implementing agency of the project. Based on arrangements agreed during project implementation, ANPN absorbed most of the qualified staff who are now on the Government payroll.

Implementing Agency's or Agencies' Performance

Rating: **Moderately Satisfactory**

149. The project was implemented by two government agencies: ANPN for components 1 and 3, and the Ministry of Forests for components 2 and 4. The implementation delays registered at the beginning of the project were mostly due to the weak technical and administrative capacity of these two agencies. In addition to the limited knowledge of the Bank's fiduciary procedures, poor coordination within and between these agencies was detrimental to the progress of implementation in the early years of the project.

150. The following statements illustrate these coordination issues and their operational effects: "There also appears to be a lack of team work inside the Secretariat (ANPN)" (ISR sequence 3, May 2008); "However, poor coordination within the ANPN team prevented the implementation of the action plan and procurement plan, as agreed during the June 2008 mission. Many activities, particularly in the national parks could not be launched, as planned." The same coordination and technical issues also resulted in a very slow implementation pace of the components by the Ministry of Forests. This situation led to the replacement of the technical teams of the implementing agencies (three different teams for ANPN, and two different teams for the Ministry of Forests).

151. The implementation rearrangement introduced at the restructuring of the project, whereby ANPN became responsible for the implementation of all the project components, increased the implementation pace and disbursement rate noticeably. This change also included an MoU with the Ministry of Forests to have the latter carry out agreed-upon activities. Thanks to these new arrangements, and to increased implementation support by the Bank's technical teams (supplemented with external consultants), the performance of the project improved substantially. The satisfactory implementation performance sustained since the MTR and restructuring helped the project to achieve its development objectives.

(c) Justification of Rating for Overall Borrower Performance

Rating: **Satisfactory**.

152. The performance of the Government (during the preparation and implementation of the operation) and of the implementation agencies made a significant contribution to the achievement of satisfactory outcomes of the project. Based on this assessment, the overall performance is rated satisfactory.

6. Lessons Learned

6.1 Core Technical Capacity Versus Project Management Capacity

153. A strong rationale for Bank assistance through a lending operation that fits well in the country's overall strategic development objectives and/or GEOs is a critical factor for a successful development outcome. Other important factors for a successful outcome include: (i) the technical capacity to execute the core activity of the project (for example, agricultural intensification, hydropower, tertiary education, and so on); and (ii) the capacity to manage to manage the project.

154. In the case of this project, the Task Team determined that ANPN, created at the time of the project effectiveness, might not have the technical capacity necessary to implement the core biodiversity conservation and national park management activities satisfactorily. Justifiably, it was determined that two international conservation NGOs with proven experience and knowledge of biodiversity conservation in Gabon would assume these activities, at least during the early years of implementation.

155. But the appropriate timing, phasing, and ultimate success of these conservation-oriented activities depended critically on the capacity of the project implementing unit to coordinate and manage other critical activities satisfactorily. Fundamentally, a project is a set of contracts of various types and duration linking government employees, staff of the implementing units, short-term consultants, and diverse service providers and contractors.

156. All these depend on a higher-level contract (that is, the project, financial, or grant agreement) that links the Bank (or other donor) to the country. This overarching contract includes a range of covenants and clauses with which the client country has to comply for the project implementation to proceed. Managing these contracts and processes efficiently and satisfactorily requires specialized skills. The availability of these skills is a critical element of project implementation readiness.

157. As shown in sections 1 and 2, the weak capacity of the various teams (that were eventually replaced) was one of the major causes of the low disbursement rate and implementation progress during the first half of the project life. Despite goodwill and the high level of commitment of the managers, understaffing, lack of competent staff, poorly trained staff, and high staff turnover all contributed to technical deficiencies, low-quality outputs, and unnecessary implementation delays. These constraints meant that the capacity assessment of the country's structures responsible for implementing the project was not carried out effectively.

158. Since the way investment projects are implemented is a major determinant of their impact and success, evaluating potential implementation problems and assessing implementation readiness candidly should be an important task at the appraisal stage. Fortunately, since the approval of this project (FY07), implementation readiness has

become a required step in project preparation. The importance of this task for Task Teams should not be understated.

6.2 Effective Capacity Strengthening is a Long-Term Endeavor

159. The aim of the project was to strengthen the capacity of the relevant institutions of Gabon in the areas of biodiversity conservation and national park management. The achievement of the selected set of measurable results indicators signals a successful outcome for the project. It is important to understand that this outcome does not mean that Gabon's institutions (including ANPN) have acquired all the capabilities necessary to manage the country's newly created network of national parks. Capacity strengthening is a long-term and incremental process, especially in the area of environment and natural resource management.

160. The objectives of the Gabon Forest and Environment Project (PFE), which closed in FY03, included: (i) strengthening the monitoring and operational capacities of the ministries of forests, environment, tourism, and national parks; (ii) providing training that matched the needs of the private sector and the conservation objectives; and (iii) assisting the Government in creating protected areas and maintaining their fauna and flora among other objectives. The PFE was implemented over a nine-year period. Needless to mention, most of these institutions were found lacking the necessary capacity for managing national parks, and were therefore included in this project.

161. This situation is not uncommon. The 2008 IEG report evaluating the support of the WBG to environmental sustainability concluded that it would be unrealistic to expect a single five-year operation to be sufficient because capacity building is a long-term process. The limited duration of Bank support is identified as one of the reasons for uneven results in this area. The report mentioned that assistance through one or several operations over a 10–15 year period was a major success factor in the projects for building environmental management capacity in Brazil, Ghana, Madagascar, and Uganda.

162. This lesson was shared with the Government during the ICR mission. In addition to allocating the adequate budgets to ANPN, the authorities were advised to pursue and develop effective partnerships with other donors including bilateral aid agencies and international conservation NGOs who operate in the country (and who have participated in the project). These efforts will help to sustain the capacity development efforts.

163. An important factor to keep in mind is the cost-effectiveness or efficiency of this long-term endeavor of conservation capacity building. While ANPN has developed a reasonable level of capacity to define its own operational objective appropriately, and to develop work annual programs focused on achieving these objectives, it seems that work

remains to be done in assessing how well the agency is doing relative to its own set of standards and to those of other more advanced agencies (for example, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa), especially in terms of unit cost of operations.

164. One area where efficiency issues are paramount is in the use/hiring of TA. Technical assistance played an important role in the implementation of the project right from the beginning. In addition to international and national NGOs, a local extended-term consultant and a so-called international implementation consultant were hired. The additional resources made a noticeable contribution to the successful completion of the project.

165. But it seems that in some case cases the unit cost of TA interventions was relatively high. The use of TA should produce benefits well in excess of the associated cost, including the opportunity cost of the funds invested in it. Ensuring effective coaching and transfer of technical knowledge are important elements for increasing the cost-effectiveness of TA. These cost-reducing matters were discussed with ANPN during the ICR mission.

6.3 Effective Inter-Agency Collaboration is Crucial for Success

166. The lack of effective collaboration between the two implementing agencies, and between these agencies and other public institutions was one of the factors that impeded progress during the early years of project implementation. This obstacle led to a change in arrangement that transferred the implementation responsibility for all project components to one of the agencies (ANPN). Even after this transfer, weak interagency and intersectoral collaboration remained a challenge that hindered the smooth implementation of project activities at the central level and in the field. This shortcoming was particularly detrimental to the success of project component 4, where effective collaboration between the ministries of forests, mining, hydrocarbons and environment was a necessary condition for strengthening environmental aspects and mainstreaming biodiversity conservation into private-sector-led production landscapes.

167. While weak intersectoral collaboration is a concern in many client countries, this phenomenon emerged as a key challenge to development interventions in Gabon. This constraint needs to be factored into the design and institutional arrangement of investment projects, not as a given but as an opportunity to implement innovative institutional reforms that not only enhance the developmental impact of projects, but also increase the effectiveness of public institutions. Applying this recommendation could have alleviated the intersectoral problems that impeded the progress of the project's implementation.

168. The lessons learned from the 2005 CAS suggest that simpler project design and clear coordination and accountabilities (preferably assigned to one ministry) should facilitate timely project implementation. In the case of multi-sectoral project components, high-level coordination is indispensable. In addition to these recommendations, one could add that the sectoral composition of a high-level coordination body such as a steering committee, and the balance of decision-making power within this committee are key enabling factors.

169. The creation of ANPN was one of the effectiveness conditions of the project. This was delayed due the battle for the sectoral location of this agency. From the Ministry of Tourism to the Ministry of Forests, the agency ended up in the Office of the President. When the composition of the project steering committee was discussed, it was determined that since there are similarities between the composition of ANPN's management committee and that of the envisaged steering committee, the former would also serve as the project steering committee.

170. The transfer of full implementation responsibility to ANPN following the restructuring of the project, completed the concentration power within this agency. Despite this power, it seemed that this newly created agency did not have the leverage to mobilize the relevant line ministries who oversee powerful extractive industry sectors (forests, hydrocarbons, mining) of the economy.

7. Comments on Issues Raised by Borrower/Implementing Agencies/Partners

(a) Borrower/implementing agencies

171. The implementing agency's comments were recorded in meetings discussing the draft ICR during the ICR mission, and from the borrower's draft completion report. These comments expressed appreciation of the way the ICR accounts for the project achievements. The head of ANPN and representatives of the Ministry of Forest highlighted the fact that the achievements of the project go far beyond the results indicators recorded in the ICR, to embrace a range of multifaceted technical and institutional capacity gains. They thought that these broader project achievements ought to be emphasized in the final version of the ICR. This concern is addressed in detail in section 3 of the ICR.

172. The borrower and implementing agency agree that the project played a critical role by laying a strong foundation for the effective management of national parks in Gabon. But they thought that a follow-up operation would have helped to consolidate this foundation and to strengthen further the technical, managerial, and financial building blocks to support Gabon's biodiversity conservation efforts. The necessity to adopt a long-term perspective for capacity-building interventions is acknowledged in the Lessons

Learned section, and in the absence of a follow-up operation, the practical and effective steps that would help to sustain the achievements of the project were discussed with the borrower (see “Capacity Strengthening” subsection in section 6).

173. While the borrower and implementing agency found that the ICR describes accurately the implementation challenges encountered in the first two years of the project effectiveness, and agree with the causes of the low implementation progress during this period, it is their belief that some aspects of the Bank’s procurement procedures played a role in slowing down the pace of the project’s activities.

174. The implementing agency appreciates highly the contributions that the international conservation NGOs made to the successful implementation of the field activities (recruitment and training of ecoguards, fauna and flora inventories, technical oversight of field activities, and so on). In hindsight, it believes that service benchmarks and a more accurate cost accounting could have enhanced the value and impact of this contribution.

(b) Cofinanciers

N/A

(c) Other partners and stakeholders

175. The two international conservation NGOs—WCS and WWF—who provided TA throughout the duration of the project provided a full account of their activities. They filled a crucial capacity gap at the beginning of the project. During the first half of the project their contract included procurement of goods, recruitment of field staff, execution, or oversight of part of the activities of project components 2, 3, and 4.

176. After the MTR the NGOs relinquished the procured equipment and other durable goods to ANPN as the agency increased its staff and technical skills. They also transferred the management of field activities to the agency. In their new contracts, the international NGOs joined by national NGOs focused on selected technical areas (including handling relations with local communities) within national parks and in the buffer zones.

177. Overall, they expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their accomplishments, especially their contribution to: (i) the recruitment, training, and coaching of the ecoguards mobile brigades; (ii) the preparation of the park management plans; and (iii) the creation of the three CCGLs (consultative committees for local management). They also believe that their contribution to a broader and deeper knowledge through the fauna and flora inventories in areas that could be high-biodiversity national parks was a rewarding undertaking.

178. The NGOs stressed that their most valuable experience without any doubt was the new business model their contracts initiated. The usual business approach followed by NGOs is to raise funds from a donor, and use these resources to support their agenda in a client/country. For the two international NGOs, this was the first time that they were contracted by Government agencies in Gabon and had to report and account for the output and use of funds. Though this business model was not immune from difficulties (for example, late approval/validation of deliverables and payments, weak intersectoral coordination in the field operations), they maintained that the learning experience was extremely valuable for future operations. They believed that these accomplishments and lessons learned should be highlighted in the ICR.

Annex 1. Project Costs and Financing

(a) Project Cost by Component (in USD Million equivalent)

Components	Appraisal Estimate (USD millions)	Actual/Latest Estimate (USD millions)	Percentage of Appraisal
Institutional Strengthening of the National Parks Agency	1.80	2.02	112
Expanding Gabon's protected area coverage	1.20	1.08	90
Direct support to selected national parks	5.20	5.38	103
Wildlife management in production landscapes	1.80	1.16	65
	10.00	9.64	
Total Baseline Cost			
Physical Contingencies	0.00		
Price Contingencies	0.00		
Total Project Costs			
GEF Project Preparation Grant (PDF-B)	0.295	0.226	76.6
	0.00		
Total Financing Required			

(b) Financing

Source of Funds	Type of Cofinancing	Appraisal Estimate (USD millions)	Actual/Latest Estimate (USD millions)	Percentage of Appraisal
Borrower		3.60	3.80	105.5
Global Environment Facility (GEF)		10.00	10.00	100
Foreign Multilateral Institutions (unidentified)		27.10	0.00	0.00

Annex 2. Outputs by Component

Component 1: Institutional Strengthening of the ANPN (National Agency for National Parks)

Objective: To strengthen ANPN's technical and managerial capacity for the effective management of national parks and biodiversity. The performance of this component was measured through two intermediary result indicators.

Intermediate Results Indicator One: "ANPN headquarters is established and equipped": ANPN headquarters is established in Libreville, and is staffed adequately".

The project provided ANPN's headquarters with vehicles necessary for the effective implementation and monitoring of field operations. The project also procured office furniture, computers and conservation-related field equipment and software (GPS devices, computer-based systems for monitoring law enforcement efforts, etc.).

Intermediate Results Indicator Two: "Systems for finance and human resource management; monitoring and evaluation are established".

Human resource management: The project helped to recruit the 8 core staff (salaries paid by Government) of ANPN shortly after the creation of the agency. Today, the agency has about 500 employees (about a quarter of the staff is associated with externally-funded projects). The agency has a merit-based recruitment policy. For example, following the closing of the project, only the consultants of the project coordination unit who had a good performance record were retained by the agency. The agency also has a staff career development and training plan. It has a system for evaluating staff performance. The process for staff performance evaluation takes place from November to December every year.

Financial management: ANPN adopted the fiduciary standards, procedures and tools used during the project implementation. These procedures and tools (e.g., internal control processes, the effective use of the TOMPRO software, and quarterly financial reporting) help to minimize financial management risks at the agency. ANPN also adopted the decentralized financial management system that the project helped to put in place in the three national parks. This system is now replicated to all the country's national parks.

Monitoring and evaluation: ANPN has a robust computer-based M&E system that the project helped to put in place. The introduction of ICT tools, GPS and adapted software for monitoring law enforcement efforts into the ANPN M&E system helped increase the efficiency of conservation actions and law enforcement within and outside the targeted national parks. The M&E system also includes benchmarks for assessing the performance and contribution of NGOs and other service providers. Because the M&E system was

put in place at the end of the project, its full effectiveness will materialize only when all the field staff who play a major role its implementation are trained.

During the ICR mission, ANPN management reported that the agency will enhance the effectiveness of the M&E system further by linking it to the accounting and financial management system. This innovation would help to increase the cost-effectiveness of park management operations.

To sum up, ANPN is a well-established, credible and adequately staffed institution with a clear statement of mandate (see section 4). It has a strong and adequately funded annual work program that supports its operations in all the 13 national parks.

It is impotent to mention that the project also helped to strengthen the technical and organizational capacity of the Ministry of Forests in charge of wildlife and protected areas (other than national parks). This Ministry made a strong contribution to the surveillance and law enforcement efforts through the establishment of three pilot mobile brigades of ecoguards.

Component 2: Enhanced Knowledge on Critical Natural Habitats for the Expansion of the Network of National Parks (with WCS technical assistance)

Objective: To enhance the knowledge base on biological wealth of pre-identified sites where future protected areas could be established. The performance of this component was to be measured through two intermediate result indicators.

Intermediate Results Indicator One: “Number of sites with high biodiversity potential covered by biological surveys”.

The project financed biological and socioeconomic surveys in three pre-identified sites (where other donors had already conducted preliminary biodiversity inventories): (i) the “Wonga Wongue-Evaro” complex (about 690,000 hectares), (ii) the “Mayumba-Mayombe” complex (about 250,000 hectares) and (iii) the Mondah Forest (5,000 hectares).

Extensive biological inventories and socioeconomic surveys were conducted on these sites. The combined biological and socioeconomic surveys helped (i) to determine the distribution and magnitude of the baseline biological wealth on these sites, and (ii) to inform policies for the effective management and sustainable use of Gabon’s biological and genetic resources.

Key results of the survey in the Wonga Wougué-Evaro complex

Fauna survey: The complex consists of the Ogooué River and lakes system and the eastern part of the Wonga-Wougué Presidential Wildlife Reserve. Two major fauna surveys were conducted in this area: (i) a survey of large mammals in the entirety of the Wonga-Wougué Reserve, and (ii) a night-time survey of crocodiles over 260 km of three

lakes and two rivers. Due to budget constraints, indirect methods (e.g., survey in local bush-meat markets, in villages) were used to complement the field surveys.

The results of these surveys show a high level of threat to, and a declining population for the hippopotamus and the Nile crocodile, whereas, manatees, great apes and monkeys (*C. cephus* and *C. nictitans*) are relatively abundant. There seems to be widespread hunting/poaching in most of the Wonga-Wongué Presidential Reserve.

Ornithological survey: The survey uncovered 190 species of birds around the Gomé-Dakar Lake, and in the Wonga-Wongué Presidential Wildlife Reserve. Birds species that are known to be associated with Gabon's wetlands and water bodies were relatively scarce in the area.

Flora survey: The survey revealed 374 species including 10 species that are endemic to Gabon. The main characteristic of the vegetation is the wide range of habitats observed in a limited spatial range. These include (i) in-land forests, (ii) swamp forests (Evaro area), (iii) flood forests, (iv) savanna moist forests, and (v) aquatic prairies. Each of these vegetation formations includes variations depending on hydro morphology, soil types, slope, altitude and anthropic activities.

The highest floral diversity was found in inland forests located near lake shores. The Evaro area was found to be of high floral value due the presence of (i) the *Pandanus* swamp forests which are relatively rare in the region, and (ii) mature forests which include the largest number of endemic plant species. This area would be a good candidate for the conservation of Gabon's high value flora. Despite the prolonged presence of industrial logging operations in the area, there are still some tracks of pristine forest formations. These would also be a good candidate for conservation.

Socioeconomic survey: The socioeconomic study covered 16 villages with a total population of 1421 permanent residents. The number of seasonal residents could be as large as that of permanent inhabitants. The questionnaires and structured group discussions covered 426 households. There are very few employment opportunities, and fishing in the lakes and rivers is the main source of income for the majority of households. The majority of farmers are subsistence producers, and the overall agricultural output is small due to the small size of cropped areas.

Subsistence hunting is prevalent in the area (but some bush meat is sold in local markets). Commercial hunting is practiced by some employees of the logging companies operating in the area. However, there is very limited mechanized timber exploitation activity, except along the Ogooue River. During the participatory survey, local populations, especially women, took a keen interest in delineating the areas that are of vital interest to their livelihood activities. The presence of populations living in the Wonga-Wongue Presidential Reserve presents a challenge to conservation managers. The lack of an

adequate solution acceptable to all parties involved is seen as potentially destabilizing factor for current and future conservation initiatives.

Conservation policy implications

The main finding of the biological and socioeconomic surveys is that high-value biodiversity sites in this area overlap with areas that are important for the local economy, and are currently used by local populations. Consequently, the types of protected areas that the Gabonese biodiversity conservation law and regulations recommend may not be adapted to this area. The approach proposed by this law is particularly unsuitable for the areas around the lakes and along the rivers where high biodiversity values and economic activities overlap strongly. A two-stage approach is recommended for the sustainable conservation and use of the biodiversity resources in this area.

Stage 1: Short-term measures aimed to stop the unsustainable use of natural resources:

- ✓ To increase law enforcement in order to stem the poaching of keystone species, including, elephants, manatees, and hippopotamuses;
- ✓ To adopt a moratorium on the award of timber concession until an appropriate environmental impact assessment is conducted;
- ✓ To undertake additional surveys that would help to recommend appropriate land use plans;
- ✓ To develop and adopt participatory fisheries management plans.

Stage 2: Long-term biodiversity conservation efforts through the creation of a multiple-use conservation area (e.g., a IUCN Protected Area Management Category V). This multiple-use protected area would include smaller key biodiversity areas where enhanced protection will be enforced through IUCN Categories I, II and III. This proposal is a viable alternative to the one recommended by the Ministry of Forests. It would include all the lakes and the inland forests of the southern part of the area. This multiple-use conservation would cover about 385,000-400,000 hectares located within the Lower Ogooué Ramsar site.

Key results of the Mayumba-Mayombe complex

Fauna survey: The survey covered 80.62 km of transect, 106 km of recces and 1,800 night-camera photo traps uncovered 16 species of mammals including five which are on the IUCN Red List (of threatened species): Forest elephants, gorillas, chimpanzees, and mandrills.

Elephant density was found to be relatively low: 0.34 individual/km² (CI 95% 0.24-0.47). This level of density is similar to that of other mountain forest ecosystems of Gabon. The results of the survey show a large population size of great apes: 0.69 individual/km² (CI 95% 0.38-1.26). The results of this survey helped to confirm the global importance of

this area as a prime habitat for great apes at the regional workshop on great apes held in Brazzaville, republic of Congo in May 2013.

Ornithological survey: No ornithological survey was undertaken.

Flora survey: 322 plant species were found in the complex, including two previously unknown species. The survey identified 1,348 plant species (88 endemic to Gabon) and sub-species representing 717 genera and 150 families in the Mayombe mountains area. About 25-30% of all plant species of Gabon are represented in the area. The combination of a rich vegetation and a diverse landscape of mountain crests, slopes and valleys results in rich habitat types. The type of vegetation (sub-endemic species with very limited distribution range) of the coastal forests of the eastern slopes of the mountains can only be found in this area of the country (can also be found on the western slopes in the republic of Congo).

Socioeconomic survey: The socioeconomic study covered 12 villages. The total size of the population of each village is less than 100 inhabitants, but the size of the transient population is much larger. Twelve meetings with 327 participants took place, based on the results of a questionnaire filled by 289 households. The majority of the population practice slash-and-burn subsistence farming on relatively small-size farms.

However, the role of farming as a source of household income is increasing rapidly, as is the influx of migrants. Most of the farms are located along roadways and around the Banio lagoon. It was the view of the local populations that farm land is increasingly scarce. They were worried that the survey would lead to the Government taking away their ancestral land for conservation purposes.

Subsistence hunting is practiced throughout the area. However, it appeared that urban dwellers provide local populations with hunting equipment and ammunitions for the though an arrangement that secures the supply of bush meat to cities.

Conservation policy implications

Currently, the impact of local economic and livelihood activities on the areas' natural resources is very limited. This situation provides an opportunity for the creation of a traditional protected area (i.e., IUCN Protected Area Management Categories I or II). An area as large as 160,000-200,000 hectares of the coastal forests could be protected effectively, provided that sufficient precaution is taken to spare village community lands (*terroirs villageois*) for agriculture and other uses. The western low altitude forests also host a rich wildlife, and a rich and diverse flora. However, many timber concessions are active in this area.

While recommendations derived from the biological diversity and socioeconomic surveys of the Wonga Wongue-Evaro complex and the Mayumbe-Mayombe complex await policy actions, the results helped to prepare the following management plans:

- ✓ The sustainable development and multi-purpose area use plan of the “Greater Mayumba” area with links to the Concouati-Douli inland and marine national park in the Pointe-Noire area of the republic of Congo;
- ✓ The management plan of the Wonga-Wongue Presidential Reserve;
- ✓ The management plan of the Lower-Ogooue Ramsar site located in the Evaro wetlands.

The Mondah Forest

The Mondah National Forest (Foret classée de la Mondah) was already well-known and relatively well-studied before the project; so little additional field survey was required, though complementary but limited biological and socioeconomic field work was conducted. Instead, the project helped to develop a sustainable management plan for the approximately 5,000 hectares of rainforests.

The project also supported a review of the legal status of the protected area. This work helped to transform the forest into an arboretum: the Raponda Walker Arboretum. ANPN envisages the creation of a rain forest recreation and information center in or next to this arboretum. ANPN established a small technical team for the management of this protected area. The main activities of this team consist in delineating the boundaries of this forest, anti-poaching and law enforcement, and sensitization of local communities to the need to protect the natural resources of this forest. ANPN envisages the creation of a rain forest recreation and information center in or next to this arboretum.

Intermediate Results Indicator 2: “A national database on biodiversity is created”.

The results of the above-mentioned biological surveys and the exploitation of existing information derived from previous surveys and studies helped to develop distribution maps for Gabon’s fauna and flora. These maps describe (i) the distribution of elephant and great ape populations, and (ii) the distribution of 53 endemic plant species of Gabon’s coastal eco-region. These maps will be integrated into the Gabon’s Forest Atlas under preparation.

Rezoning of the Gamba complex

The Gamba complex is located along southwestern Gabon along the Atlantic coast. It covers 12,281 km² including a unique mosaic of habitats covering seashores, mangroves, rainforests, savannas, lagoons and swamps with a high level of biodiversity. The complex consists of an ensemble of overlapping protected areas, production landscapes, and human settlements. Anthropogenic activities affected some parts of the protected areas noticeably. The creation of the Loango and Moukalaba-Doudou national parks located in this complex increased the confusion about the legal status, the allocation of uses and boundaries of these different types of land uses.

The project helped ANPN and the Ministry of Forests to conduct extensive consultations with local authorities, local populations, and the private sector (timber concessions, oil and mineral industries) about a realistic rezoning plan that takes into account economic interests, local livelihood and conservation objective. The agreed rezoning plan provided the basis for conducting a legal review in order to clarify the status of different sites within the complex. The project helped to prepare decrees confirming the new boundaries of the protected areas of the complex. These new boundaries were integrated into the management plans of the Loango and Moukalaba-Doudou national parks.

Component 3: Support to Selected National Parks

Objective: To establish effective management of the Loango, Moukalaba-Doudou and Mayumba National parks. The performance of the component is measured through four Intermediate Result Indicators.

Intermediate Results Indicator One: “Loango, Moukalaba-Doudou and Mayumba National Parks management plans are finalized through a participatory process”.

A strong technical team consisting of specialists from WCS, WWF and the US Forest Service is helping the Government of Gabon prepare the management plans of the network of 13 national parks. This team helped ANPN to prepare the management plans of the Loango, Moukalaba-Doudou and Mayumba national parks. The formulation of these plans followed a participatory process involving the Consultative Committees (CCGL) for Local Management.

These management plans identify the key conservation values, and set out the medium and long-term management goal and objectives (and associated resources for each park). They included five annexes dealing with (i) conservation strategy, (ii) surveillance and anti-poaching, (iii) zoning and planning, (iv) community participation, and (v) ecotourism development. The draft plans were reviewed by ANPN and the CCGL of each park before their adoption by the Conservation Committee.

Intermediate Results Indicator Two: “Quarters of park rangers built and operational”.

The project financed the rehabilitation and/or expansion of rangers’/ecoguards’ quarters for Loango and Moukalaba-Doudou. The rehabilitation of the infrastructure for Mayumba was not financed due to lack of funds. The operational effectiveness and impact of the ecoguards in these quarters increased because of the equipment procured by the project: (i) vehicles, (ii) a speed boat (Mayumba), (iii) computer hardware, software and associated equipment, (iv) information technology equipment and software (GPS, and other GIS equipment), etc.

Intermediate Results Indicator Three: “Increased surveillance efforts in the three national parks”.

The rehabilitation of infrastructure, the provision of equipment, the creation of a surveillance and conservation law enforcement unit in each park, and the recruitment and training of eco-guards helped to increase the surveillance and conservation law enforcement efforts. The target of 500 man-days per month (from a baseline figure of 300 in 2010) was exceeded by the end of the project (581 man-days per month on average).

Intermediate Results Indicator Four: “Number of Consultative Committees created”.

The creation of a Consultative Committee for Local Management (CCGL) is a requirement under the new National Park law of Gabon. This committee serves as a platform for the discussions and collaboration among all the stakeholders of the creation and management of every national park. Its membership includes representatives of local communities (majority), local authorities, private sector (extractive industries) and ANPN. It is expected to play an important role in accommodating the interest of local communities by safeguarding village territories and communal land through a land co-management arrangement. The CCGL of each of the three national parks was created and approved by a dedicated general assembly held following the schedule below:

- ✓ Moukalaba-Doudou National Park: August 3, 2012 at Tchibanga
- ✓ Loango National Park: September 21, 2012 at Gamba
- ✓ Mayumba National Park: April 20, 2012 at Mayumba.

Component 4: Improved Wildlife Management, Monitoring and Law Enforcement in the Periphery of the National Parks

Objective: To improve wildlife management in the periphery of national parks. The performance of this component was measured through three Intermediate Result Indicators.

Intermediate Results Indicator One: “Number of trained and equipped staff in mobile eco-guard brigades”.

The project helped to train 5 eco-guards in each of the 3 mobile brigade posts created at Leconi, Iboundji and Tchibanga. These 5-member teams are part of larger brigades equipped with: (i) vehicles, (ii) a speed boat (Mayumba), (iii) computer hardware, software and associated equipment, (iv) information technology equipment and software (GPS, and other GIS equipment), and other types of equipment.

Intermediate Result Indicator Two: “Increased surveillance efforts in the buffer zones of national parks”.

In addition to the eco-guards that the project helped to recruit and train, the Ministry in charge of Environment and Forests (responsible for resource management and law enforcement in buffer zones) created 3 mobile brigades as pilot units for controlling the

illegal exploitation of wildlife resources in the buffer zones (these units are meant to be replicated in all the national parks of the country).

These mobile brigades collaborated actively with the ANPN eco-guards in the buffer zones of the Loango, Moukalaba-Doudou and Mayumba National Parks. The targeted level of efforts by the end of the project was 200 man-days per month from a baseline of zero (2010). While the level of efforts increased rapidly in 2011 to an average of 290 man-days per month, this achievement was not sustained. By the end of the project, the level of effort dropped to 127 man-days per month. Coordination and resource issues seemed to be the main causes for the decreased efforts.

It is important to mention that these brigades also conducted very useful sensitization work and dialogue with the private sector actors operating in the buffer zones in order to help the latter to protect and manage wildlife in their concession areas. This work was well appreciated by the timber concession and oil exploitation companies. This collaboration resulted in an agreement whereby one of the timber concession companies (CBG) is contributing resources for the control of illegal wildlife exploitation in its operations areas.

Intermediate Results Indicator Three: “Number of environmental audits conducted by the Gabonese administration”.

The project aimed to promote environmental compliance and enforcement in the extractive industries (logging, mining and oil) operating in the buffer zones in order to reduce the threat to the biophysical integrity of the national parks. This objective was pursued through the conduct of environmental audits. These audits were performed by collaborative technical teams including representatives of ANPN and these of the Ministries in charge of Environment, Forests, Mining & Oil. The targeted number of audits to be conducted was 5. All 5 were conducted by the end of the project.

Annex 3. Bank Lending and Implementation Support/Supervision Processes

(a) Task Team members

Names	Title	Unit	Responsibility/ Specialty
Lending			
Giuseppe Topa	Lead Specialist	EASER	Forestry
Laurent Debroux	Sector Leader	ECSSD	Task Manager
Francois Rantrua	Country Manager	ECCU5	Operations
Robert A. Robelus	Consultant	AFTA1	Safeguards
Dan Aronson	Social Safeguards Specialist	AFTEN	Safeguards
Etienne NKoa	Sr Financial Management Spec.	AFTME	Finances
Francesco Sarno	Sr. Procurement Specialist	AFTPC	Procurement
Gilles Veillot	Consultant	SASDE	Legal
Mohammed A. Bekhechi	Sr. Counsel	LEGAF	Legal
Yvette Djachechi	Sr. Social Scientist	AFTS3	Social Safeguards
Kieran Kelleher	Sr. Fisheries Specialist	ARD	Fisheries
Pacome Kossy	Consultant	AFTS3	Operations
Supervision/ICR			
Carole Megevand	Sr. Natural Resources Mgt. Spec.	LCSAR	Task Manager
Salimata Follea	Natural Resources Mgt. Spec.	AFTN1	Task Manager
Mohammed A. Bekhechi	Consultant	AFTN2	Legal/Safeguards
Patrick Bongotha	Consultant	AFMGA	Financial Mgt.
Yvette Laure Djachechi	Senior Social Development Spec	AFTCS	Safeguards
Ningayo Charles Donang	Senior Procurement Specialist	AFTPW	Procurement
Daria Goldstein	Senior Counsel	LEGLE	Legal
Idriss Martinez-Deffry	Consultant	AFTN1	Operations
Emeran Serge M. Menang Evouna	Senior Environmental Specialist	AFTN1	Technical
Kouami Hounsinou Messan	Senior Procurement Specialist	AFTPW	Procurement
Etienne NKoa	Sr Financial Management Spec.	AFTME	Finances
Ernestine Ngobo-Njoke	Senior Program Assistant	AFTSW	Administrative
Virginie Vaselopoulos	Senior Program Assistant	AFTN1	Administrative
Leoncie Niyonahabonye	Office Manager	AFTN3	Administrative
Andrianirina Michel Eric Ranjeva	Finance Officer	CTRLA	Finances
Pooshpa Muni Reddi	Program Assistant	LEGAM	Administrative
Robert A. Robelus	Consultant	AFTA1	Safeguards
Rick Emery Tsouck Ibounde	Senior Economist	AFTP3	Economy
Rémi Kini	Senior Environmental Economist	AES	ICR Task Manager

(b) Staff Time and Cost

Stage of Project Cycle	Staff Time and Cost (Bank Budget Only)	
	No. of staff weeks	USD Thousands (including travel and consultant costs)
Lending		
FY00	0.90	12.27
FY01	6.10	40.82
FY02	6.76	35.21
FY03	3.43	29.87
FY04	14.59	64.50
FY05	15.34	112.68
FY06	13.96	89.77
FY07	0.24	17.26
Total:	61.32	404.39
Supervision/ICR		
FY07	7.58	45.02
FY08	11.12	51.67
FY09	12.64	54.50
FY10	9.18	56.58
FY11	5.28	40.31
FY12	5.83	56.49
FY13	6.03	70.64
FY14	5.94	26.77
Total:	63.60	402.08

Annex 4. List of Supporting Documents

World Bank Country Documents

1. Strengthening Capacity for Managing National Parks and Biodiversity Project: Project Appraisal Document. Report No. 34714-GA, March 6, 2006.
2. GEF: Trust Fund Grant No. TF056592-GA dated June 14, 2006.
3. Strengthening Capacity for Managing National Parks and Biodiversity Project: Project Restructuring Paper. Report No. 59701-GA, April 12, 2011.
4. GEF: Amendment to GEF Trust Grant No. TF056592-GA dated June 15, 2011.
5. Strengthening Capacity for National Parks Management and Biodiversity project: Integrated Safeguards Datasheet- Appraisal Stage. Report AC1668, September 8, 2005.
6. Strengthening Capacity for National Parks Management and Biodiversity project: Integrated Safeguards Datasheet- Restructuring Stage. Report AC 5896, March 29, 2011.
7. Natural Resource Management Policy Loan: Program Document. Report No. 33786-GA, October 19, 2005.
8. Natural Resources Management Development Policy Operation: Implementation Completion and Results Report (IBRD-73550). Report No.: ICR00001627, December 27, 2011.
9. Implementation Support Aide Memoires (AM): 14 AM from February 2008 to June 2013.
10. Implementation Status and Results (ISRs): 14 ISRs from October 2007 to June 2013.
11. Forestry and Environment Project: Implementation Completion Report. Report No. 24900, December 11, 2002.
12. Country Partnership Strategy (FY2012-2016). Report No. 67343-GA, February 23, 2012.
13. Country Assistance Strategy (FY05-FY09). Report No. 31882-GA, May 2, 2005.

Government Project Documents

1. Projet de Renforcement des Capacités des Parcs Nationaux et de la Biodiversité: Rapport de Fin de Projet. Version provisoire du 5 juin 2013.
2. Cellule de Coordination du Programme Sectoriel Forêts et Environnement : Plan de Développement des Peuples Autochtones. Rapport Final. Ministère de l'Economie Forestière, des Eaux, de la Pêche, de l'Environnement chargé de la Protection de la Nature. Cabinet du Ministre. Juillet 2005.
3. Cellule de Coordination du Programme Sectoriel Forêts et Environnement : Evaluation Environnementale et Sociale Sectorielle du PSFE. Rapport Final. Ministère de l'Economie Forestière, des Eaux, de la Pêche, de l'Environnement chargé de la Protection de la Nature. Cabinet du Ministre. Juillet 2005.

4. Application des Politiques de Sauvegardes de la Banque mondiale dans le Cadre du Projet GEF-Parcs (document non daté).
5. WWF/WCS : Rapport Fina composante 4 du Projet : Appui au renforcement des capacités de gestion de la faune en dehors des parcs nationaux. Période de janvier 2010 à décembre 2011.
6. ANPN : Plan de Suivi-Evaluation de l'Agence National des Parcs Nationaux. ANPN. Janvier 2012.
7. WWF/WCS : Projet d'Appui au Renforcement des Capacités de Gestion des Parcs Nationaux et de la Biodiversité. Rapport Technique Final de la période de novembre 2012-juin 2013. Contrat No. 18/SC/ED/2012/ANPN/WWF. Juillet 2013.
8. WWF : Projet d'Appui au Renforcement des Capacités de Gestion des Parcs Nationaux et de la Biodiversité. Rapport Technique Final. Parc national de Loango, secteur sud. Période: juillet 2012-mars 2013. Contrat No. 08/SC/ED/2010/ANPN/WWF. Avril 2013.
9. WWF : Rapport Technique composante 3 du projet. Période de septembre 2008 à août 2010. (document non daté).
10. WCS/Gabon Program: Rapport Technique Final du Contrat d'assistance à la composante 2 du projet. Juillet 2013.