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Ref. TF010048 Reporting Period: 08/02/2011 to 06/30/2015

Printed On: 12/02/2015 Report Type: Completion

Report Status: Approved

Assignment: TF010048

Capacity Building for Regional Coordination of Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin

GEFIA - GEF-IBRD AS IMPLEMENTING AGENCY

Task Team Leader: 00000244431 - Loic Jean Charles Braune

Approving Manager: 00000086169 - Benoit Bosquet

Summary Information	
TF Status	ACTV
Recipient Country	Africa
Executed By	Recipient
Managing Unit	9061 - GENDR
Grant Start Date / End Date	08/02/2011 to 06/30/2015
Program Manager	Karin Shepardson
Original Grant Amount	815,000.00
Grant Amount	815,000.00
Outstanding Commitments	0.00
Cumulative Disbursements	815,000.00 as of 06/30/2015
Disbursed 08/02/2011 to 06/30/2015	815,000.00
Donor	TF602001 - MULTIPLE DONORS

This GRM report includes the following sections: Overview, Outcome, Components/Outputs, Execution, Program(GEFIA), Completion, Processing, Attached Documents, Disbursements.

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OVERVIEW

Overall Assessments and Ratings

Grant Objectives:

To strengthen COMIFAC's capacity for regional coordination in line with the objectives of the Convergence Plan and with specific focus on the GEF Congo Basin Strategic Program.

Overall progress from 08/02/2011 to 06/30/2015 with regard to Achieving Grant Objectives:

Rating: Satisfactory (Previously Rated Moderately Satisfactory on 06/30/2014)

Comment:

Achievement of TF Development Objective

With project support and in coordination with GIZ and other partners, the project successfully achieved its two planned objectives: (a) building capacity within COMIFAC to better perform a coordination role of sustainable forest management activities in the Congo Basin and (b) actively supporting the implementation of regional programs in connection with the Convergence Plan. Through the project support, COMIFAC was able to successfully coordinate 8 meetings/workshops in different Congo Basin countries around forest management that consolidated and shared experiences on sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation and enabled COMIFAC countries to learn from one another, develop synergies among the countries for greater conservation and development impacts through forest management initiatives and enhance the coordination of Congo Basin countries at international events. COMIFAC has also been more efficient in organizing meetings remotely between headquarters and national offices through enhanced audio-visual capabilities. This has improved their ability to ensure monitoring and evaluation of regional programs, improve the frequency of coordination as well as disseminate information quickly. Through the support of the grant, COMIFAC has been able to consolidate information and analysis on SFM practices in all of the Congo Basin countries, retain a virtual repository of information on SFM that is accessible to all and has increased access to data on the Congo Basin countries and also maintain regular communication with interested stakeholders virtually through a quality web based platform.

Overall progress from 08/02/2011 to 06/30/2015 with regard to Implementation of Grant Financed Activities:

Rating: Satisfactory (Previously Rated Satisfactory on 06/30/2014)

Comment:

At mid-term review in October/November 2012, implementation was rated satisfactory, despite delays in procurement needed to start some activities. At that time, it was agreed that extending the project#s closing date was advisable to ensure achievement of primary outcomes. As a result of COMIFAC#s request, subsequent detailed discussions, and a handover mission in May 2013, the Bank and COMIFAC agreed on a 12 month-extension of the closing date to allow planned activities to be fully implemented and achieve expected outcomes. This extension to 30 June 2014 was formally completed (Level 2 Restructuring) in June 2013, and then another extension was granted until 12/31/2014.

COMIFAC has implemented this grant according to the World Bank procedures.

At project completion, the final disbursement is over 97%. However, the execution took 18 month longer than initially expected and the grant had to be extended twice.

Grant follow-up and structure

Description and context of Grant:

In 2010, the government of Cameroun proposed to grant COMIFAC access to a new building. However, during the project implementation, the negotiations did not move forward and COMIFAC preferred to upgrade its existing building instead of moving into a new building as planned... Resources made available from this change were thus reallocated to other activities in a simple and efficient fashion and within the parameters of the development objectives and within the parameters of the expenditures stipulated in the Grant Agreement. Equipment for a network for the Executive Secretariat offices and four key internet connections were acquired in December 2012 for interconnection with the Management Unit of the Regional REDD + Project. This led to improved efficiency in the existing building.

Expected follow up (if any): Expanded capacity

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Comment on follow up:

The MSP project has been designed to help COMIFAC set up critical systems (M&E, Communication, ...) that will then help it work more efficiently and better coordinate activities at the regional level. There are no follow-up activities planned but the objective is to make sure that the systems put in place during the lifetime of the project will remain entirely operational.

End Date of Last Site Visit:

Restructuring of Grant:

The Project Development Objective was approved originally as #to strengthen COMIFAC#s capacity for regional coordination in line with the objectives of the Convergence Plan and with specific focus on the GEF Congo Basin Strategic Program# and approved under restructuring as #to contribute to capacity building of the COMIFAC to (i) assist in its role as a regional coordination of sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin and (ii) to help coordinate the implementation of regional programs in connection with the convergence plan under a GEF Parent Program, Strategic Program for Sustainable Forest Management in the Congo Basin (CBSP)#.

Two restructurings were approved for a cumulative extension of the closing date of 18 months, at which time the PDO and activities were slightly modified. As the project was being implemented successfully, the PDO and activities reflect a greater level of precision as the activities were further along in their implementation. There were no significant changes in the PDO or activities and the restructuring could be considered opportunistic restructuring rather than a result of any problematic issues.

As COMIFAC did not move to a new building, there was a decision to renovate/rehabilitate the building that COMIFAC was occupying which slightly changed the amounts available for activities. For example, as a result of the cost savings incurred from the decision not to relocate additional resources were available to upgrade the conference room of COMIFAC and to acquire audio visual equipment for the different COMIFAC offices in the region and not just at the headquarters. It was also decided to develop a web-based knowledge repository portal rather than a physical library as it would make the resources more widely available.

Activity Risk

Rating: Negligible or Low Risk (Original Risk Rating is Modest Risk)

Comment:

The risk associated with this operation remains modest.

Critical Issues and Pending Actions for Management Attention

There are currently no issues and actions for Management attention.

OUTCOME

Comments on outcome achieved from 08/02/2011 to 06/30/2015

The project has successfully delivered on all of the objectives. There were several issues related to project implementation that led to delays in achieving project objectives and led to the aforementioned project closing date extensions. However, these issues were duly resolved and did not hinder overall implementation results.

Grant Outcome Indicators

Grant outcome indicators are listed below.

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COMIFAC ES is operational in the new building and has increased its day-to-day work efficiency with all partners.

Baseline COMIFAC ES cannot work efficiently with its partners due to scattered locations.

Value:

Date: 04/07/2011

Progress to COMIFAC finally stayed in the same building - the budget was redirected to improving the virtual presence (on

Date: Internet) and the work efficiency

Date: 12/31/2014

Target Value: COMIFAC teams have gained efficiency and visibility through an improved website and portal that increase

collaboration with the partners

Date:

ES COMIFAC has increased its capacity in Monitoring and Evaluation for the Convergence Plan.

Baseline M&E system is not operational.

Value:

Date: 04/07/2011

Progress to Various technologies have been deployed to improve communication and coordination on the Convergence Plan

Date:

Date: 12/31/2014

Target Value: National COMIFAC focal points have been trained and received equipments to improve communication and

coordination; COMIFAC presence and visibility has increased; their knowledge bank is more accessible.

Date:

COMPONENTS/OUTPUTS

Output and Implementation by Component

Support for the coordination, sharing of knowledge and communication activities for sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin

Implementation Satisfactory

Rating:

Status: Completed
Planned Output: see below
Actual Output: see below

Capacity Building the Executive Secretariat of the COMIFAC

Implementation Satisfactory

Rating:

Status: Completed
Planned Output: see below
Actual Output: see below

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Project Management

Implementation Satisfactory

Rating:

Status: Completed

Planned Output: Project is implemented according to the Bank procedures

Actual Output: Project has been implemented according to the Bank procedures

Comment on planned and actual Output

Comment on component implementation progress

The project consisted of three components and achieved the planned outputs as follows:

Component 1-Support for the coordination, sharing of knowledge and communication activities for sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin (Satisfactory)

Sub-Component 1.1 Strengthening coordination and communication

- Operationalization of monitoring and evaluation of the Convergence Plan.

COMIFAC developed a monitoring and evaluation platform for implementation of the Convergence Plan. The platform has been designed and is already active and can be found online at http://convergence.comifac.org. The indicators and the result validation process were defined with all 10 COMIFAC National Coordinator, and a user manual has been elaborated. The M&E reporting system can be visited at the following address: http://www.suiviconvergence.sympho.fr/connexion. However, this was only the first phase of the deployment and 2 other phases are being financed by GIZ and AfDB.

- Equipment and audio conferencing system. Equipment was purchased and is in place. The system depends strongly on the quality of the Internet connection and the connection has been improved at the end of 2014.
- Implementation of the communication strategy. COMIFAC developed and adopted a new logo, which gave it higher visibility at international events, such as the Rio+20. The organization has published and widely distributed (approximately every four months) newsletters and electronic news releases about important events and has distributed a brochure on progress made and lessons learned at international conferences. Communication media such as calendars and agendas for 2013 and 2014 were published to promote the image of the institution. Similarly, during the African Model Forest Conference held in March 2013, COMIFAC hosted an exhibition stand.

Sub-Component 1.2 Strengthening knowledge management

- Review portfolio SFM and forest biodiversity conservation projects: experiences and lessons learned. A Report on the experiences, lessons and good practices for sustainable forest management through the implementation of the Convergence Plan was developed, consisting of over 127 pages, 400 pages in annexes as well as an executive summary. The study provided details from SFM projects from all 10 countries of the Congo Basin and an excellent source of data and information to build on. This report was complementary to the first one released on June 2012 based on the study on the experiences, lessons learnt of the implementation of Agenda 21 and widely distributed during Rio+20.
- Organizing workshops to exchange experiences on different thematic conservation and sustainable forest management. COMIFAC organized several workshops and conferences to exchange experiences on several topics related to the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems, including:

A workshop for an interim review of the stocktaking study on sustainable management of forests and implementation of Agenda 21, May 2012 in Brazzaville; A review and validation workshop on the study of good practices and SFM implementation in Convergence Plan, June 2014 in Douala; A workshop to exchange experiences on forest inventories, December 2013 in Douala; 8th meeting of the working group of the Convention on the Fight against Desertification, June 2014 in Sao Tome and Principe; Workshop of the Working Group of COMIFAC on forest governance in July 2014 in Douala; COMIFAC National Coordinating capacity building workshop, May 2014 in Brazzaville; The special session of the Council of COMIFAC Ministers, November 2013 in N'Djamena; The special session of the COMIFAC Council of Ministers, June 2012 in N'Djamena.

-Development of a web portal. COMIFAC developed a web portal to provide higher visibility for their interventions and to strengthen the image of the institution. The portal went live in December 2014 following the acquisition of needed equipment and infrastructure, including increased server capacity for COMIFAC (acquisition of the hard disk and RAM memory) and

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increased bandwidth.

Component 2-Capacity Building the Executive Secretariat of the COMIFAC (Satisfactory)

Sub-Component 2.1 Strengthening efficiency of daily work of COMIFAC

- Equipment for improving the communication with the CNC. Virtual conferencing equipment was acquired and sent to the various CNC member countries in order to enable more effective virtual communication and coordination. For the CNC of Congo and Cameroon, official ceremonies were organized in July 2014 on the sidelines of the special session of the Council of Ministers in Brazzaville and in November 2014 the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The list of such equipment is attached. For the COMIFAC ES it was decided to rehabilitate their offices rather than seek out a new build which provided significant cost savings. Thus, instead of acquiring equipment for a new building, equipment for the existing building was acquired, including a network for the Executive Secretariat and internet connections for the Management Unit of the Regional REDD + Project. The savings enabled the ES to upgrade a meeting room and purchase new furniture.
- Support to the overhaul of the convergence plan; COMIFAC organized and co-financed the launch workshop of the Convergence Plan review process in November 2013 in Douala, organizing a retreat for reviewing the draft of the revised document 0 Convergence Plan in Kribi, Cameroon in May 2014, and the organization of the validation forum of the revised Convergence Plan in June 2014. The second phase of the Convergence Plan for the period 2015-2025 was approved by Ministers at their extraordinary session in July 2014 in Brazzaville, Congo. The Plan has been sent for adoptions to Heads of State of the Congo Basin countries at the forthcoming Summit on Conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems.

Sub-Component 2.2 Reinforce COMIFAC#s Fiduciary Capacity

- Installing Financial Software. TOMPRO software has been acquired for use in management accounting for both the MSP Project and for the Regional REDD + Project. Training in use of this software was provided to key users. The MSP project (and indeed the REDD+ Project, too) is now using TOMPRO in an efficient manner to prepare financial reports.

Component 3-Project Management (Satisfactory)

EXECUTION

Bank project related to the grant

Project ID / Name: P116805 - Strengthening COMIFAC Coordination role

Project Status: Lending

Global Focal Area: Multi-focal area

Product Line: GM - GEF Medium Sized Program

Implementing agency and contact details

Agency: COMIFAC

Contact: Martin TADOUM

Address: BP 20 818 Yaoundé Cameroun

Phone: +237 2221 3510 Email:

Website:

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Implementation performance ratings from 08/02/2011 to 06/30/2015 with regard to:

Project Management: Moderately Satisfactory (Previously Rated Moderately Satisfactory on 06/30/2014)

Brief Comment:

Delays in the various procurement activities led to the need for an extension of the closing date by 6 months.

Financial Management: Satisfactory (Previously Rated Satisfactory on 06/30/2014)

Brief Comment:

No FM issue until closing

Counterpart Funding: Not Applicable (Previously Rated Not Applicable on 06/30/2014)

Brief Comment:

None

Procurement: Moderately Satisfactory (Previously Rated Satisfactory on 06/30/2014)

Brief Comment:

Procurement performance has improved over time but remains fragile

Monitoring and Evaluation: Not Rated (Previously Rated Satisfactory on 06/30/2014)

Brief Comment:

None

Additional Comments on Implementation Performance:

PROGRAM

Program Specific Ratings

- 1. Please rate public involvement Satisfactory
- 2. Please rate government commitment Highly Satisfactory
- 3. Please rate safeguard performance Not Applicable
- 4. Please rate arrangements for sustainability Moderately Satisfactory

Program Specific Questions

1 .Please comment on additional resources leveraged

GIZ has been an excellent partner, as well as the PACEBCo project (AfDB). Donors' coordination has been excellent, allowing most of the activities to be co-financed by multiple partners.

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COMPLETION

Overall Assessments and Lessons Learned

Main lessons learned:

Lessons learned from this grant are both technically related to Sustainable Forest Management practices in the Congo Basin as well as operational in terms of working with clients on implementing World Bank operations.

Technical

A cursory summary of lessons from SFM practices in the Congo Basin include the following:

- The low capacities of local, national and sub-regional actors are a strong limit because it creates a dependence on partners# technical and fiduciary support. While it can help quickly resolve issues and efficiently implement activities, those resources are usually very limited in time and scope and cannot create the consistency that would be necessary for an efficient long term oriented coordination at sub-regional level. The decision to extend the MSP over 3 years was also motivated by this observation that sub-regional coordination needs time if long-lasting effects are expected.
- The time required for the establishment of a viable initiative seems to be often underestimated and therefore it is critical to lay emphasis on the planning stages. Workplans and milestones established at the beginning of a project should include milestones not only in the medium term of the project but also early on. This will provide an indication early in the project life cycle as to whether there are problems that are arising or if things are moving according to schedule. Lack of familiarity with procedures or operations seem to be often quickly remedied if identified quickly. Participatory approaches are recommended for the design, management and monitoring of SFM initiatives, to include programs that address not only conservation priorities but also development imperatives of local populations. Participatory approaches should also incorporate practicality and feasibility into the design and as much as possible include local stakeholders in monitoring to encourage understanding and ownership.

Operational

- Organizing and coordinating logistics among multiple countries is challenging but important, the level of coordination needed is predictably cumbersome. As a result of this grant it is considerably easier to communicate between national offices as well as with the regional coordination team.
- A focus on strengthening "administrative and financial management" of projects deserves greater attention to allow for more efficient and effective implementation. Understanding the FM and procurement capacities of the implementation unit, and/or carrying training or refreshers on the expected processes to be followed at the outset of a project may help avoid delays in implementation.

Overall outcome (and its Sustainability): Rated Likely

Comment:

Financial Sustainability of COMIFAC remains a substantial risk. COMIFAC faces a recurrent issue of financing because, even if funding for the COMIFAC secretariat has been promised from countries within the Congo Basin, the allocations are not paid on time. Not having a secure source of funding for the future is a substantial risk. Resolving this risk was not part of the scope of the project since other donors (GIZ and PFBC) are coordinating the agenda to set up a sustainable financing system for COMIFAC

Bank Performance: Rated Satisfactory

Comment:

No specific comment.

Additional Assessment

Development / strengthening of institutions: Rated Substantial

Comment:

The purpose of the grant was to build capacities within COMIFAC and the project has been successful.

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Mobilization of other resources: Rated Modest

Comment:

The additional resources have been estimated at US\$ 2.7 million for a GEF amount of 0.8 million. It is a little less than expectd because the government of Cameroun did not give the building to COMIFAC as planned.

Knowledge exchange: Rated Substantial

Comment:

Component 1 was mostly focusing on coordination and knowledge exchange.

Client's policy / program implementation: Rated Substantial

Comment:

COMIFAC Financial Management capacity has been built by the project - accountants have been trained and dedicated software have been set-up (TOMPRO). This helped also COMIFAC setting up their own FM procedures

Efficiency: Rated Satisfactory

Comment:

As of June 2015, 99.7% of the Grant was successfully disbursed and justified (US\$812,773). The project was implemented over a longer period than anticipated and has been extended twice (one year and six months). During project lifetime, audit reports were provided on time and did not show major issues. Procurement and FM supervisions were carried out without significant irregularities. At the time of the Disbursement Closing Date, the remaining money (US\$2,226) was reimbursed to the World Bank with a little delay. The final audit report had minor recommendations of the closing which were implemented as relevant.

Without GEF resources COMIFAC would have largely remained an institution with a mandate for coordination but few resources and limited capacity to carry out this function. By supporting internal capacity in the Executive Secretariat in Financial Management, Procurement and Monitoring and Evaluation particularly the organization has been able to provide guidance to national offices. COMIFAC ES has taking greater initiative in consolidating and hosting studies, outputs, analysis in Congo Basin countries and also sharing these works. Without the GEF support the information would remain largely limited to a few people and now it is more widely accessible. Through GEF support COMIFAC is better able to coordinate regional meetings, but also more efficiently organize regular virtual meetings, providing more effective monitoring and updating of the Convergence Plan objectives and also more readily identify problems or issues. Without this support monitoring and information sharing would be carried out predominantly at regional gatherings which are expensive, less frequent, and not always attended by all principal actors. The more regular and cost-effective meetings and coordination built through this project have also enabled COMIFAC to highlight any slippages in the implementation of the Convergence Plan and provide guidance for resolving some issues in a timely manner.

Replicability: Rated Not Applicable

Comment:
Not Applicable

Main recommendations to stakeholders:

None

Main recommendations to Bank Management:

None

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PROCESSING

Manager's comments on this GRM report:

Date:09/24/2015 User ID:WB86169 Name:Mr Benoit Bosquet Operation performed:Approved by Manager Approved

GRM report history - Requested on 07/08/2015, due on 08/31/2015

Action	Name	Status	Date
Created	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/02/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/02/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/02/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/02/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/02/2015
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Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/02/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/02/2015
Mail sent to Reviewer	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/02/2015
Changed	Virginie A. Vaselopulos	Draft	09/03/2015
Changed	Virginie A. Vaselopulos	Draft	09/03/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/17/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/17/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/17/2015
Changed	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Draft	09/17/2015
Submitted for Approval	Loic Jean Charles Braune	Submitted	09/18/2015
Approved by Manager	Benoit Bosquet	Approved	09/24/2015

DOCUMENTS

List of documents attached to this GRM

- 1) Output report Best practices
- $2) \ ICM_GEF_MSP_Regional Forestry Congo Basin_revised_ewr 30 June \ \ final 2$
- 3) GRM Report 20150630

DISBURSEMENTS

Disbursements Summary in USD

Date From	Date To	Planned Cumulative	Planned Period	Actual Cumulative	Actual Period
07/01/2011	12/31/2011	0.00	0.00	164,084.12	164,084.12
01/01/2012	06/30/2012	0.00	0.00	253,309.55	89,225.43

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07/01/2012	12/31/2012	0.00	0.00	303,651.53	50,341.98
01/01/2013	06/30/2013	0.00	0.00	379,514.42	75,862.89
07/01/2013	12/31/2013	0.00	0.00	437,082.65	57,568.23
01/01/2014	06/30/2014	0.00	0.00	635,199.54	198,116.89
07/01/2014	12/31/2014	0.00	0.00	815,000.00	179,800.46
01/01/2015	06/30/2015	0.00	0.00	815,000.00	0.00

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