

Terms of Reference for Evaluation of Central Africa Regional Forest Program, 9F085701/40000212-400276-313180

Background

The WWF Central Africa regional forest program vision aimed at addressing the driver of forest lost and what is needed to save the Congo Basin forests for environmental services, people and wildlife. The regional forest programme has benefitted from the financial support of WWF NL since 2011? The budget for the last cycle (FY18-FY20) closing at the end of FY 20, with a total budget of 900,000 euro (300,000 euro/year).

The overall objective of the project is that by 2030, 97% of lowland dense forests of Central Africa are maintained and ensure connectivity of wildlife habitats and benefiting forest dependent communities. To achieve this goal, the project worked on four thematic strategies including influencing the development and effective implementation of conducive forest policies in the region, promoting and supporting responsible forest management both by private companies and community owners, strengthening civil society organisations of the Congo Basin for a better participation in forest governance processes, and supporting REDD processes in the countries. In addition to these four thematic strategies, a cross cutting strategy related to communication has supported the dissemination of progress and achievements of the project as well as facilitated lessons learnt and experience sharing both internal within WWF network and globally.

The geographic scope of the programme covers five countries of the Congo Basin, including Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon and Republic of Congo (RoC), although the DRC has not received any funding for its activities. The project activities focused on the low land dense forest of the Congo basin, which cover an estimated 160 million ha, and particularly they will primarily target forests under corporate and community Management, including FSC certified and non-certified forests, especially those that are close or within WWF priority landscapes (TRIDOM, TNS, Campo Ma'an, etc.). Along with the conservation of these forest ecosystems, the project will also contribute to the protection of other threatened biodiversity targets, like elephants, great apes.

The vision of the regional forest program is stated as follows *“From its coastal waters, across the extensive forest, along the freshwater lifelines, people and biodiversity thrive in the Congo Basin, where ecological integrity and local and global ecosystem services are ensured through sustainable management and inclusive green economic growth.*

The net deforestation rate has evolved from 0.09% during the decade 1990 – 2000, to 0.17% [Between 2000 and 2005¹](#), unevenly distributed across the region. Higher in Cameroon and DRC compare to Gabon and Congo for instance. Illegal logging is said to be widespread in the region. Unfortunately, there are not consistent and uncontested data on illegal logging in the Congo. The main sources of the level of illegal logging and associated trade are Chatham House reports that indicates that in 2013 more than 90% of timber produced in DRC was from illegal source. In Cameroun the level is at 65%, and 70% for the Republic of Congo².

¹ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/12477/9780821398272.pdf>

² <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/20150715IllegalLoggingHoareFinal.pdf>

Sustainable forest management has demonstrated by FSC certification have decreased over the years in the region and especially in Cameroon.

The Congo basin countries have a vibrant and active civil society but their technical and financial capacities are still to be strengthened for more influence in the forest and environment sector. WWF has established formal and informal partnerships with a number of organisations and network organisations in the region and wish to reinforce the partnership and the synergy for more and better impact³.

Goal, Objectives and Strategies

The project goal, aligned to that of the global forest practice and its outcomes as well as the goal of the forest component of countries conservation strategy, is defined as follows: “By 2030, 97% of lowland dense forests of Central Africa are maintained and ensure connectivity of wildlife habitats and benefiting forest dependent communities”. In order to attain this goal, the project had four thematic strategies with objectives assigned to each of them. They include;

Strategy 1: Policy development for forest conservation, that pursued a triple objective of (1) contributing to policy and legal framework review in the region, (2) reducing illegal logging and (3) contributing to the improvement of forest governance enabling environment in the countries of the region

In collaboration with regional bodies (especially COMIFAC and based on its revised Plan de Convergence), national governments, civil society organisations and other stakeholders, the Programme highlights the needs for new texts/revision of texts as well as their harmonisation. Based on WWF’s positions, it contributes to improvement of the forest sector policy and legislation at both regional and national levels. It also helps ensuring these improvements are accomplished via transparent participatory processes where civil society contribute efficiently to ensure local and indigenous peoples benefit from the economic development in their surroundings and forests continue to supply ecosystem services for future generations.

Objective A.1: By 2020, illegal logging is reduced by 25% in each of the four countries of the Congo basin as per 2016 baseline.

Objective A2: By 2020 at least two forest laws and three implementation texts are adopted

Objective A.3: By 2020, good governance principles as identified by the EEAT (Accountability, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Equity, Inclusiveness and Transparency) have improved by at least 25% compared to the baseline of 2018 that will be established at the inception of the project. The baseline for this objective was base of Chatham house reports of 2015 that indicated, illegal logging as a percentage of timber production was 65% for Cameroon, 90% for DRC, 70% for RoC and 70% for Gabon according to Interpol. Unfortunately, during the course of the project no systematic report was produced neither by the Chatham House, nor by Interpol to assess the evolution of illegal logging in the Congo Basin.

Strategy 2. Responsible forest management.

The thematic scope of this strategy includes work on responsible forest management with several actors. The *first category* of actors includes the most responsible companies that hold FSC certificates that need to be strengthened. The programme also works with those companies interested in FSC Certification and those who have made any commitment. The objective with this last category is to remind them what their gaps are in terms of legal compliance and eventually provide support to comply with this and other principles. The forest program, through responsible forest management work with FSC regional office to support the

³ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/2016_Africa_CSOSI_-_508.pdf

development of FSC national standards. At the time of the development of the program, the statistics of certified forest concessions were as follow:

Country	Total Area (ha)	Number of certificates
Cameroon	411,976	2
The Republic of Congo	2,410,693	4
Gabon	2,042,616	3
Total	4,869,685	9

As far as national forest Stewardship standard development, SDG were set in 4 countries (DRC, Congo, Gabon and Cameroon) and were up and running. However, no NFS were submitted to the FSC PSU (Performance and Standard Unit) for approval. The regional forest program in this strategy worked to establish and strengthen dialogue between forest companies and communities and help the latter negotiate rights to resources and ensure that they benefit from the economic activities in their area. The programme also aims at creating conditions where policies and forest governance promote responsible forest management that is getting extra leverage from markets demanding products from responsibly managed forests.

Strategy 3: Strengthening of civil society.

This strategy contributes to strengthening the capacity of civil society and is tightly linked to the strategies on policy dialogue and responsible forest management. Capacity building efforts are supplied on topics such as lobbying, communication, fundraising, administrative and financial management etc., with the aim to get stronger conservation partners speaking up for the rights and needs of local and indigenous peoples. Support is provided to civil society to allow it to participate in an effective manner in the development of certification standards and opportunities for civil society to promote multi-stakeholder processes are promoted. By strengthening civil society, it will be able to tell its government what reforms are needed (example: priority reforms planned under the VPA in CAR) and what changes should be made. Strong civil society groups will further be able to support communities negotiating rights from forest companies and act as independent observers of forestry operations (strategy 2). WWF in his previous work helped establish CSO platforms that need to be strengthened in order to be more influential in policy development and practice in the region. For example, in DRC, the national coalition to combat illegal logging is the largest civil society platform in the region with more than 100 members. In CAR, WWH supported the establishment of the network of environmental NGOs and the local community forest governance group that are still at the early stage of their development. In RoC, there are several platforms of CSOs work on various issues including REDD+, Forest governance notably. The picture is very similar in Cameroon and Gabon but the interaction between WWF and national CSOs varies according to Countries' priorities.

Strategy 4: REDD+ and forest carbon.

Under this strategy the Forest Programme works on climate change, mainly with reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, forest conservation, sustainable forest management and activities to enhance forest carbon sinks (known as REDD+). REDD+ is a UN-backed scheme for combating climate change by providing incentives for people for reducing carbon emissions by keeping forests standing for forest ecosystem services. The work is done at several levels: global (participation in international working groups bringing lessons from the field), regional (supporting COMIFAC and countries ahead of big international meetings), national (helping governments prepare their REDD+ strategies and action plans) and local. The work is tightly linked to strategy 1 on policy development. This stream of work has been so far implemented by a dedicated regional coordinator, with a strong focus on REDD+. The bulk of REDD+ work is in DRC, which has the required capacity at national level. In Cameroon, it is planned to recruit a national REDD+ coordinator.

Little work is needed in CAR and Gabon. As a result, this position will no longer exist as from FY15. The Regional Forest Programme Coordinator will act as focal point for REDD+ related issues. He will act as a relay between countries where REDD+ is implemented but will not undertake specific additional work.

It is worth noted that only the first three strategies of the program were supported under NL and Norad projects. The fourth strategy has received sporadic support and have been mostly country specific with very little regional coordination.

Communications

The Forest Programme has clearly felt the need to improve its communications, with a stress on the impact of government policies and laws, and lack of coordination of these on forests, people and wildlife. There is need to talk more about good progress made by responsible forest companies and to draw attention to irregular or irresponsible practices.

WWF Project Team

The core project team structure includes five forest officers/forest programme coordinators in, respectively, Cameroon, CAR, DRC, Gabon and RoC and one project officer in DRC in charge of civil society strengthening, as well as a Regional Forest Programme Coordinator based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, responsible for the coordination of the “Forest Programme”. The national forest officers each answer to a local supervisor: in Cameroon to the Conservation Director, in CAR to the Country Coordinator, in DRC to the national Forest Programme Coordinator, and in Gabon to the Field Programmes Manager. In RoC, given the size of the in-country programme, the forest officer is directly supervised by the Regional Forest Programme Coordinator.

The Regional Forest Programme Coordinator and the respective country supervisors work together to strengthen not only the individual capacity of the team members but also to contribute to increase capacity of the national offices under Africa Vision 2020.

Objective and scope of evaluation

The following points (in random order) provide guidance on the focus of the:

1. **Impact:**
Has the project achieved its planned impact (also referring to the indicators), especially at goals level, after 9 years of support? Why or why not?
Was there any unintended impact from the project, either positive or negative? What impact was most valuable to the goals? Why?
2. **Effectiveness:** How well have the three main strategies in the program been covered/implemented, have they all been covered and if so, have they been covered equally well? How did the three main strategies contribute to the goal?
3. **Added value:** Has the program enabled the team to work towards a more regional and programmatic approach, a coherent forest program and improved program management (monitoring, financial management etc.)? Has the program succeeded in strengthening country Forest programs/approaches?
4. How efficiently is the program implemented, has the regional program been efficient able to mobilise additional funds for regional/national activities?

5. Relevance and Quality of Design: To what extent the regional forest program, design represents a necessary, sufficient, appropriate, and well-founded approach to contribute to address the drivers of forest lost in the Congo Basin?
6. Sustainability: What is the likelihood that the .. will be able to sustain the impact of the project? How do you know?
7. Given the fact that the funding base from WWF NL will be reduced (to €500,000), what are relevant scenarios for effective funding?
8. Recommendations for identified weak points and shortfalls.

Methods and Setup of evaluation

Due to time constraints and fund, the evaluators might have to travel to Cameroon and Gabon, organise e-meetings with forest officers and relevant stakeholders in the three other countries of the region. During his/her stay in the region the consultant will have interviews with key partners, including logging companies, forestry ministry officials, professional organisations like ATIBT, research organisations (CIFOR, ICRAF, ...), local stakeholders (NGOs, CBOs, etc.), local communities and indigenous peoples groups as well. The logistics around these meeting will be facilitated by Cameroon and Gabon offices. The e-meetings with the countries not visited will be facilitated by the RFO in collaboration by countries' forest officers.

The consultant is expected to assess previous evaluation reports, the monitoring and evaluation plan, biannual technical progress reports for the program (an extra technical progress report will be produced after the first quarter of the financial year 2019 to give the consultant access to the latest information), as well as various reports and other documents, especially baseline and impact data which will be compiled for him/her. Any other documents such as reports from meetings, travel reports, previous evaluation reports and management responses, etc. will be supplied on request. The consultant is also encouraged to meet with or contact partners by phone/Skype.

Duration

The consultant is expected to:

Spend 3 days preparing for the evaluation, reading documents and preparing questions for the team. This would be done from home.

Spend 5 days including travel time meeting with the regional team in Yaoundé, interviewing the project manager (regional forest officer), Cameroon forest officer, ROA management, staff working for other programs, partners etc.

Spend a week including travel time visiting Gabon, interviewing forest program staff, partners (NGOs, FIB, IPOs, community representatives, etc.) and visiting at least one project sites where NGOs conducted independent monitoring.

Spend 2 weeks writing a draft report and a revised final report upon feedback from Central Africa offices, WWF-NL and WWF Norway.

Draft timeline:

Deliverables

An evaluation report in English of maximum 25 pages (without annexes).

Main qualification of evaluator

The consultant is expected to have broad knowledge of forests and forestry in the Congo Basin and general knowledge of adjacent land use issues is also important (mining, palm oil etc.). The consultant will need proven evaluation experience (reference to reports), good English writing skills and good knowledge of French. Most of the interviews required will preferably be done in French. Reports and other documents are in French or English. Cultural sensitivity is crucial.

Request for Technical and Financial Offer

The consultant should submit a letter of motivation including, in particular:

- (a) a description of his/her experience doing similar tasks, and
- (b) a confirmation of his/her availability to conduct the evaluation within the timeframe referred to in the Terms of reference.
- (c) an Annex including the following evaluation matrix presenting the consultant's proposed methodology

Issues	Key Questions	Specific Research Questions	Data Sources	Methods / Tools	(Indicators)
1					
2					
3 etc					
(other key issues as necessary)					

(d) A proposed itinerary and detailed budget (all inclusive, i.e. including visas, tickets, per diems, consultancy fees, etc.).

This offer, together with the CV should be submitted on recruit-cam@wwfcam.org and the Subject should read "Consultancy - Evaluation of Central Africa Regional Forest Program" by the 08th March 2020.

Annex 1. Part A: REPORT SAMPLE TEMPLATE

The following provides a basic outline for an evaluation report. While this should be easily applied to evaluations of simpler projects or programmes, adaptation will be needed to ensure reports of more complex programmes (e.g., Country Offices, multi-country regions, eco-regions, Network Initiatives) are well organized, easy to read and navigate, and not too lengthy.

Title Page

- ♦ Report title, project or programme title, and contract number (if appropriate), Date of report, Authors and their affiliation, Locator map (if appropriate)

Executive Summary (*between 2 to 4 pages*)

- ♦ Principal findings and recommendations, organized by the six core evaluation criteria
- ♦ Summary of lessons learned

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Body of the report (*no more than 25 pages*)

A. Introduction (max 3 pages)

- Concise presentation of the project/programme characteristics
- Purpose, objectives, and intended utilization of the evaluation (reference and attach the ToR as an annex)
- Evaluation methodology and rationale for approach (reference and attach as annexes the mission itinerary; names of key informants; a list of consulted documents; and any synthetic tables containing project/programme information utilized in the exercise)
- Composition of the evaluation team, including any specific roles of team members

B. Project/Programme Overview (max 5 pages)

- Concise summary of the project or programme's history, evolution, purpose, objectives, and strategies to achieve conservation goals (attach conceptual model, results chain or logical framework and project monitoring system as annexes)
- Essential characteristics: context, underlying rationale, stakeholders and beneficiaries
- Summarize WWF's main interest in this project or programme

C. Evaluation Findings (5-8 pages)

- Findings organized by each of the six core evaluation criteria, including sufficient but concise rationale.
- Tables, graphics, and other figures to help convey key findings

D. Conclusions and recommendations (5-8 pages)

- Conclusion and recommendation organised each of the six core evaluation criteria, including sufficient but concise rationale – recommendations should be specific, actionable and numbered.
- Project/programme performance rating tables to provide a quick summary of performance and to facilitate comparison with other projects/programmes (see Annex A, Table B)

E. Overall Lessons Learnt (max 3 pages)

- Lessons learned regarding what worked, what didn't work, and why
- Lessons learned with wider relevance, that can be generalized beyond the project

Annexes

- ♦ Terms of Reference
- ♦ Evaluation methodology detail
- ♦ Itinerary with key informants
- ♦ Documents consulted
- ♦ Project/programme logical framework/ conceptual model/ list of primary goals and objectives
- ♦ Specific project/programme and monitoring data, as appropriate
- ♦ Summary tables of progress towards outputs, objectives, and goals
- ♦ Maps
- ♦ Table Annex 1 Part B

Annex 1. Part B. EVALUATION SUMMARY TABLE - SCORING OF THE PROJECT/PROGRAM AGAINST THE SIX CORE EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluators are to assign the project/program a Rating and Score for each criterion as follows:

- **Very Good/4:** The project/program embodies the description of strong performance provided below to a *very good* extent.
- **Good/3:** The project/program embodies the description of strong performance provided below to a *good* extent.
- **Fair/2:** The project/program embodies the description of strong performance provided below to a *fair* extent.
- **Poor/1:** The project/program embodies the description of strong performance provided below to a *poor* extent.
- **N/A:** The criterion was *not assessed* (in the 'Justification,' explain why).
- **D/I:** The criterion was considered but *data were insufficient* to assign a rating or score (in the 'Justification,' elaborate).

Evaluators also are to provide a brief justification for the rating and score assigned. Identify most notable strengths to build upon as well as highest priority issues or obstacles to overcome. Note that this table should not be a comprehensive summary of findings and recommendations, but an overview only. A more comprehensive presentation should be captured in the evaluation report and the management response document.

Rating/Score	Description of Strong Performance	Evaluator Rating/Score	Evaluator Brief Justification
Relevance	The project/program addresses the necessary factors in the specific program context to bring about positive changes in conservation targets (i.e., species, ecosystems, ecological processes, including associated ecosystem services supporting human wellbeing).		
Quality of Design	The project/program has rigorously applied key design tools (e.g., the WWF PPMS).		
Efficiency	1. Most/all program activities have been delivered with efficient use of human & financial resources.		
	2. Governance and management systems are appropriate, sufficient, and operate efficiently.		
Effectiveness	1. Most/all intended outcomes—stated objectives/intermediate results regarding key threats and other factors affecting project/program targets—were attained..		
	2. There is strong evidence indicating that perceived changes can be attributed wholly or largely to the WWF project or program		
Impact	1. Most/all goals—stated desired changes in the status of species, ecosystems, ecological processes—were realized.		

	2. Evidence indicates that perceived changes can be attributed wholly or largely to the WWF project or program.		
Sustainability	1. Most or all factors for ensuring sustainability of results/impacts are being or have been established.		
	2. Scaling up mechanism put in place with risks and assumptions re-assessed and addressed.		
Adaptive Management	1. Project/program results (outputs, outcomes, impacts) are qualitatively and quantitatively demonstrated through regular collection and analysis of monitoring data.		
	2. The project/program team uses these findings, as well as those from related projects/ efforts, to strengthen its work and performance		
	3. Learning is documented and shared for project/program and organizational learning		