| Part I: Project Information | | Response |
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| GEF ID | | 10208 |
| Project Title | | The Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (CBSL IP) |
| Date of Screening | | 22-May-19 |
| STAP member Screener | | Rosie Cooney |
| STAP secretariat screener | | Virginia Gorsevski |
| STAP Overall Assessment | | Minor |
| | | STAP welcomes the submission of the Program Framework Document for the Congo Basin Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (CBSL).  The Basin is the Earth's second largest area of contiguous moist tropical forest, but the services it provides are under increasing pressure from deforestation, fragmentation, and infrastructure and other economic activities. There have been numerous conservation activities in the Congo Basin in recent years (outlined in detail in the Baseline section), this program offers a number of important policy and institutional innovations. For example, the use of integrated land use planning (iLUMPs) and the application of natural capital accounting (NCA) is innovative for this region, as is strengthening indigenous and local community tenure and management rights.  For all of these innovations, it will be important to incorporate lessons learned from similar projects as well as from the CBSL program as it advances. The program builds strongly on multi-stakeholder partnerships, which should help promote durability of project benefits. Risks are well articulated at a general level, but lack specificity or convincing responses in some cases. Note that there are real barriers to effective participation of Indigenous People and Local Communities (IPLCs) and women in consultations and planning processes. To overcome these barriers, proactive strategies and targeted expertise will be required to mitigate. There are two particular deficiencies:  identifying and addressing the barriers to scaling and transformation, particularly with regard to vested interests; and articulating a clear theory of change (TOC) that links drivers of deforestation/forest degradation and their root causes to project structure, outcomes and overall objective, and which identifies critical assumptions.  STAP recommends further clarification of barriers and how to address them, along with the development of a clear, detailed TOC with a clear logical sequence of the steps and assumptions required. In the PPG phase, the CBSL should provide detailed and realistic objectives that can be monitored and measured (and adjusted if necessary) over time. |
| Part I: Project Information | What STAP looks for | Response |
| B. Indicative Project Description Summary | | |
| Project Objective | Is the objective clearly defined, and consistently related to the problem diagnosis? |  The objectives are vague, and say little about what state is aimed for in terms of actual global environmental values (biodiversity, carbon storage, etc). The overall objective is "To catalyze transformational change in conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin through landscape approaches that empower local communities and forest dependent people, and through partnerships with the private sector". But this says very little about what such change should look like, or how it relates to biodiversity/carbon/land degradation goals.  The "long term solution" put forward is that "The six basin countries need to work together to undertake national and cross-border actions that stabilize forest cover, peatlands, and wildlife populations so that the Congo Basin forest ecosystem remains healthy and thriving" (p. 36); and later on p 44 it is said that realising the overall objective will lead to "an intermediate state wherein the Congo Basin forest ecosystem is healthy and thriving with stable forest cover, peatlands, and wildlife populations". But this could involve stable forest cover/biodiversity etc at levels much lower than today - is it possible for objectives to actually set out what the project seeks to achieve in terms of forest/biodiversity/climate outcomes, being realistic about the coming pressures? |

| Project components | A brief description of the planned activities. Do these support the project's objectives? | Overall yes, though the categorisation of activities into components is conceptually fuzzy, and the links between each components and how these address drivers/threats/root causes is not clearly explained. |
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| Outcomes | A description of the expected short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention. | Program Outcomes are provided for each Component; however, they are not broken down into specific short term and medium term effects. For Component 1 - the main output is the number of ILUMPs developed and the area they encompass. Component 2 has to do with improved management effectiveness (METT) and connectivity. Component 3 focuses on forest-related value chains and the extent to which communities are engaged and empowered. And Component 4 refers to CB, KM and regional cooperation. |
| | Do the planned outcomes encompass important global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits? | Yes |
| | Are the global environmental benefits/adaptation benefits likely to be generated? | It is hard to assess this without a clear TOC that identifies how the outputs of each component affect outcomes and the objective, and identifies critical assumptions. On the whole the activities do indeed appear appropriate and likely to generate these GEBs, but the complexity of the program and the large number of potential risks make this difficult to assess. |
| Outputs | A description of the products and services which are expected to result from the project. Is the sum of the outputs likely to contribute to the outcomes? | As discussed above, outputs are not specifically outlined for each of the Components. Rather indicators are provided for each Component which seem to serve the same purpose. |
| Part II: Project justification | A simple narrative explaining the project's logic, i.e. a theory of change. | |
| **1.     Project description. Briefly describe:** | | |

| 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description) | Is the problem statement well-defined? | Key points are generally well covered in the problem statement, although this is not written clearly and needs much stronger organisation - for instance, there is no explicit discussion of root causes, although some of these are highlighted earlier in the program rationale. |
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| | | Specific points: |
| | | *A general point throughout is that the term "PA" is used without definition, and it is not clear whether it includes zones such as community-managed hunting zones/community forests and state-run trophy hunting concessions etc? Different uses seem to imply that PA either does or doesn't include these at different points.  So this is hard to interpret. |
| | | Cultural and socio-economic significance: |
| | | *Great to see the analysis of the underlying problems with tenure here, though these could be helpfully pulled out as a root cause. |
| | | *Important to recognise that conservation and PAs have also been a major cause of eviction and dispossession of forest peoples from their land, not just granting of concessions for agriculture/forestry etc. |
| | | *Discussion of peoples is somewhat inadequate, and in particularly doesn't highlight the difference between forest peoples generally recognised as indigenous ("Pygmies"), who are primarily hunter-gatherer and marginalised in land policy/politics etc, and the agricultural ("Bantu") groups. C African states (including Gabon - see http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/504451468251730621/Programme-Sectoriel-Forets-et-Environnement-PSFE-Plan-de-developpement-des-peuples-autochtones) have recognised the need to recognise indigenous peoples - see e.g. work of African Commission https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications//African_Commission_book.pdf. |
| | | Legislative and policy context: |
| | | *It may be helpful for this to include key characteristics of legislative/policy contexts operating at national level in region:  there are high-level characteristics across the region that are extremely relevant to understanding current situation e.g. highly centralised state ownership of land, in general with little capacity, inadequate enforcement capabilities and often patchy environmental regulatory frameworks, etc. |

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| | Are the barriers and threats well described, and substantiated by data and references? | Threats and Root causes:<br>*Recent publication on deforestation in region could helpfully be cited https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/4/11/eaat2993.full<br>* The connection made here to lack of tenure of indigenous/forest dependent people is puzzling - presumably it is not indigenous people (generally reliant on hunting/gathering) that is responsible for this? Or if this is intended to imply that it is because of lack of tenure that forest people can't keep the farmers out of their lands, this should be clarified.<br>* Discussion of some drivers is superficial e.g. discussion of poaching and trafficking focused on lack of law enforcement rather than highlighting underlying drivers of poaching/IWT, which can include dispossession, lack of incentives to conserve, lack of legal rights to sustainably use etc (see e.g. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/conl.12082), as highlighted in earlier discussion.<br>*There is no clear integrated discussion of root causes here - proximate drivers are discussed (spread of agriculture, poorly managed forestry, poaching etc), sometimes with reference to root causes like population growth, and sometimes without .<br>Annex D, which apparently has a diagram showing root causes, is missing.<br>Barriers:<br>* This section is not clearly and coherently organised - a clearer and more logical breakdown of broad context; proximate threats; root causes; and barriers to change would be really helpful.<br>*Much of this material reads as articulating drivers of harm, rather than barriers to change (and indeed much is phrased as drivers e.g. "Conflicting and isolated sectoral developments....lead to habitat loss...").<br>* Each barrier has a lot of rather unrelated points lumped in together, without a clearly articulated conceptual grouping. For example, in the first, the lack of community rights to manage land does not fit well under the heading "Conflicting and isolated sectoral developments..". While lack of these rights does raise conflicts over land use, it is a much broader point that also leads to other issues, so this is not a good fit. This barrier might be better named something like "Lack of integrated land use planning" and be one of the root causes of deforestation etc. In the third barrer, too, there are many disparate elements lumped together. Most of it appears to be linked by being about lack of incentives for biodiversity-friendly livelihood/economic activities. But the title as written is extremely broad and cover so much more - such as that for communities many potentially sustainable uses are simply illegal.<br>*Barrier 3: Note that there are some models of community management in the region - it is an overly strong statement to say their engagement in PA management and benefit-sharing is lacking. Rather, perhaps better to highlight there is a need for strengthening, scaling up and learning from positive examples. Important to note that the major, or at least very important, benefits of sustainable use for forest dependent communities will generally be subsistence use - food, medicine, cultural uses etc, rather than commercial (though recognition of scope for these is welcome). |
| | For multiple focal area projects: does the problem statement and analysis identify the drivers of environmental degradation which need to be addressed through multiple focal areas; and is the objective well-defined, and can it only be supported by integrating two, or more focal areas objectives or programs? | |

| 2) the baseline scenario or any associated baseline projects | Is the baseline identified clearly? | *The baseline section does not give a clear picture of the current trajectory of environmental change in the region, but rather of what is being planned or underway in the region. If this is what is intended by the baseline here this is fine, but it would be helpful to have a clearer baseline on the actual on-the-ground biodiversity/forest/climate parameters that are the subject of the program. As written here it is mainly a list of what various donors/agencies are currently planning to do, without enough detail to understand how these affect the situation on the ground, although some of the country baselines (e.g. for CAR and ROC) do give a clearer idea of the on-the-ground baseline. There is more useful comment on the baseline on p45 which could be incorporated here, and in the section on Incremental/additional cost reasoning - these sections are more helpful to the reader in understanding the baseline situation. |
| | Does it provide a feasible basis for quantifying the project's benefits? | No, but this detail will be developed through child projects. |
| | Is the baseline sufficiently robust to support the incremental (additional cost) reasoning for the project? | Baseline information for the overall program lists numerous programs and ongoing activities, organizations, etc. as per usual. As part of the CBSL IP, it would be very useful if the coordination grant in developing a platform could provide detailed information on all of these programs in a spatially explicit manner to show how they related to each other and how this project will add value in terms of overall global (and local) benefits. |
| | For multiple focal area projects: | |
| | are the multiple baseline analyses presented (supported by data and references), and the multiple benefits specified, including the proposed indicators; | |
| | are the lessons learned from similar or related past GEF and non-GEF interventions described; and | No lessons from past work are described, and drawing such lessons would be extremely helpful. |
| | how did these lessons inform the design of this project? | It is not clear any past lessons have informed this. |

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| 3) the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project | What is the theory of change? | Annex 5, a diagram of the TOC, is not included. The TOC is described to some extent in the text, but as there is no logic of how each program component will address the key drivers described, it is hard to work out exactly what the TOC is. The program logic does not clearly and convincingly link root causes and proximate threats to program structure and outputs, or clearly identify critical assumptions in the logical chain. The components of the program (which are confusingly given substantively different names at different points) (e.g. (i. integrated land use planning ii. Maintaining/enhancing connectivity in key landscapes iii. Sustainable use outside PAs) are articulated in terms of how they address the four identified barriers, without linking this back to underlying drivers/root causes that were identified earlier. For example, the document states "The single most important national policy issue related to biodiversity conservation is land and resource ownership", but there are no program components that clearly link to and address this driver. While assumptions and risks for program success are articulated at a general level, it would be helpful to integrate these into a graphic TOC, to identify critical assumptions that underlie particular causal pathways in the TOC – this would indicate what parts of the program are dependent on what assumptions.<br><br>One important assumption/risk is about forest-dependent, particularly indigenous, people, being able to participate effectively in consultations/planning, should be highlighted – there are substantial barriers to this and a long history of marginalisation in such deliberations. This underpins achievement of much of the program's desired outcome (particularly given small scale conversion to agriculture is a key driver of forest loss), so deserves explicit and careful attention. |
| | What is the sequence of events (required or expected) that will lead to the desired outcomes? | The PFD indicates the four program components will address the four barriers, with (it is implied) each addressing one barrier. But how the components link back to the drivers and root causes is not well articulated. This comes back to the unclear articulation of the drivers and root causes to begin with. And the linkage of each program component to its corresponding driver is weak. For example, component (ii), "the long-term viability of forests providing important habitat... is improved by maintaining/enhancing connectivity... " is linked to overcoming barrier (ii) "forest landscape sustainability is compromised by poor governance of protected areas, buffer zones and corridors". But improving connectivity doesn't address poor governance. This seems rather conceptually confused. The diagram may help.<br><br>The discussion on p45 under integration is much clearer in indicating how exactly the program is intended to shift the baseline (in relation to integrated planning at least). Including a similar description for the other components would be extremely helpful in clarifying the TOC and enabling assumptions and risks to be articulated. |
| | ·     What is the set of linked activities, outputs, and outcomes to address the project's objectives? | |

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| | ·    Are the mechanisms of change plausible, and is there a well-informed identification of the underlying assumptions? | Overall the mechanisms of change are plausible, but underlying assumptions are not well articulated. For example, the program highlights throughout the inclusion of forest-dependent people, but the assumptions around being able to do this effectively (and the barriers to doing this effectively) are not recognised anywhere.<br>*Component 1 is well described, and the text on p45 under integration makes clear how it is expect to address a key driver of degradation, the lack of integrated land use planning. It seems that empowering communities to manage forests/wildlife is part of the thinking here, from some of the language, but if this is among the objectives of this component it should be stated - otherwise they are likely to be politically marginalised in the process ("involvement" in practice can mean just being told what is going to happen, unless it is really clear that one of the aims is to entrench a legally-recognised management role). There needs to be a focus in this section on implementation as well as planning, and some sort of process to adaptively review and support implementation in the face of inevitable roadblocks. This may be inherent but it may be good to make it explicit to ensure the focus is on effective implementation, not just the planning phase. Or if this is done in component 4 perhaps indicate that clearly.<br>*Component 2 is clearer here. Re the indicators here, it is perhaps a bit concerning that these focus so narrowly on protected areas, as there is so much important biodiversity outside of current PAs. Note that many aspects of this component and others actually contribute to addressing wildlife crime (the benefits, better governance, inclusion) - addressing wildlife crime goes well beyond "catching poachers".<br>*Component 3 is extremely broad, but the logic of combining all "use" activities together is clearer here. Note, however, that this component is sometimes spoken of as being about empowering communities (see e.g. p 51, para beginning "Furthermore"..), whereas it is much broader than this and is about shifting private sector patterns of exploitation also. Note that text is rather inconsistent as whether it is trying to shift communities away from using the forest or to trying to use it sustainably (important to encompass both - former where uses are unlikely to be able to be made sustainable (e.g. primate hunting, high populaiton growth), latter where they can (most subsistence uses, NTFPs, community forestry etc)). The indicators here need work though - what about area under sustainable subsistence use? area under management where communities have decision-making role? reduced deforestation by private sector? Reduced overexploitation of subsistence resources? Reduced IWT involving communities? Would be good to get beyond Output indicators to Outcome here. |
| | ·    Is there a recognition of what adaptations may be required during project implementation to respond to changing conditions in pursuit of the targeted outcomes? | |
| 5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEF trust fund, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing | GEF trust fund: will the proposed incremental activities lead to the delivery of global environmental benefits? | Yes, this seems clear. Note that in the CAR section we seem to have moved from the project's approach of empowering communities to play a role in managing forests/wildlife to "alternative" livelihoods  - is making subsistence use sustainable not important here? In the DRC section, where it says "private" land - is this intended to mean community land? Nothing on wildmeat in Gabon, where it is a major issue (NTFPs and wood won't feed people) (see e.g. CIFOR work https://www.jstor.org/stable/26267975?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)? |
| | LDCF/SCCF: will the proposed incremental activities lead to adaptation which reduces vulnerability, builds adaptive capacity, and increases resilience to climate change? | |

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| 6) global environmental benefits (GEF trust fund) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF) | Are the benefits truly global environmental benefits, and are they measurable? | Yes, reasonably. |
| | Is the scale of projected benefits both plausible and compelling in relation to the proposed investment? | Yes. |
| | Are the global environmental benefits explicitly defined? | |
| | Are indicators, or methodologies, provided to demonstrate how the global environmental benefits will be measured and monitored during project implementation? | Yes, although many indicators currently measure only outputs rather than outcomes (see above for example). |
| | What activities will be implemented to increase the project's resilience to climate change? | |
| 7) innovative, sustainability and potential for scaling-up | Is the project innovative, for example, in its design, method of financing, technology, business model, policy, monitoring and evaluation, or learning? | There are some important innovations here. Applying NC accounting. Integrated land use planning is innovative in this region at least. Incorporating lessons learned on how it has helped, AND what goes wrong in such processes, would be extremely reassuring. Strengthening indigenous/LC tenure/management rights is innovative in the region (though it has been ongoing for thirty years elsewhere), but likewise it would be reassuring to see some lessons learned from experience incorporated here in term of where/how this works and how it can go wrong. These are the main innovations - the rest appears to be about scaling up and coordinating what is already going on. |
| | Is there a clearly-articulated vision of how the innovation will be scaled-up, for example, over time, across geographies, among institutional actors? | Yes, fairly clear, and effort and resources devoted to this. |
| | Will incremental adaptation be required, or more fundamental transformational change to achieve long term sustainability? | Transformational change will be needed (i.e. through NCA or other means) to provide an attractive alternative to large scale logging, mining, forest concessions, etc. that are planned for the Congo Basin and which are expected to contribute to much needed economic growth and poverty alleviation. |
| 1b. Project Map and Coordinates. Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place. | | Was unable to locate map or georeferenced data. |
| **2. Stakeholders.** Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase: Indigenous people and local communities; Civil society organizations; Private sector entities.If none of the above, please explain why. In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement. | Have all the key relevant stakeholders been identified to cover the complexity of the problem, and project implementation barriers? | Yes |
| | What are the stakeholders' roles, and how will their combined roles contribute to robust project design, to achieving global environmental outcomes, and to lessons learned and knowledge? | Fairly clear |

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| **3. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.** Please briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis). Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment? Yes/no/ tbd. If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality: access to and control over resources; participation and decision-making; and/or economic benefits or services. Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes/no /tbd | Have gender differentiated risks and opportunities been identified, and were preliminary response measures described that would address these differences? | Strongly recognised, although assumptions and risks here not clearly articulated (e.g. structural barriers to women's participation (family responsibilities, male opposition etc)) |
| | Do gender considerations hinder full participation of an important stakeholder group (or groups)? If so, how will these obstacles be addressed? | |
| **5. Risks.** Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the project design | Are the identified risks valid and comprehensive? Are the risks specifically for things outside the project's control? | *Risks are generally well articulated. Note that there are real barriers to effective participation of IPLCs and women in consultations (people with little political power often unable to speak out clearly in support of their own interests, unable to attend meetings, language barriers, may be subject to (violent) reprisals from others, etc.) These risks will need proactive strategies and targeted expertise to mitigate. The mitigation measure for Risk 2 re divergence of economic interests is unconvincing. Several of the risks appear to justify the existence of the program itself (for example R8 on coordination and R 11 on duplication. A very real risk is R10 on conflict (medium to high) but the mitigation measure doesn't seem to account for how projects might be designed differently as a result (see Ratner, B.D. 2018. Environmental security: dimensions and priorities. Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel to the Global Environment Facility. Washington, DC.) |
| | Are there social and environmental risks which could affect the project? | |
| | For climate risk, and climate resilience measures: | |
| | ·        How will the project's objectives or outputs be affected by climate risks over the period 2020 to 2050, and have the impact of these risks been addressed adequately? | |
| | ·        Has the sensitivity to climate change, and its impacts, been assessed? | |
| | ·        Have resilience practices and measures to address projected climate risks and impacts been considered? How will these be dealt with? | |
| | ·        What technical and institutional capacity, and information, will be needed to address climate risks and resilience enhancement measures? | |

| 6. Coordination. Outline the coordination with other relevant GEF-financed and other related initiatives | Are the project proponents tapping into relevant knowledge and learning generated by other projects, including GEF projects? | There is little evidence of this. |
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| | Is there adequate recognition of previous projects and the learning derived from them? | " |
| | Have specific lessons learned from previous projects been cited? | " |
| | How have these lessons informed the project's formulation? | " |
| | Is there an adequate mechanism to feed the lessons learned from earlier projects into this project, and to share lessons learned from it into future projects? | " |
| 8. Knowledge management. Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project, and how it will contribute to the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations. | What overall approach will be taken, and what knowledge management indicators and metrics will be used? | This is good. |
| | What plans are proposed for sharing, disseminating and scaling-up results, lessons and experience? | |
| **STAP advisory response** | **Brief explanation of advisory response and action proposed** | |
| 1.    **Concur** | STAP acknowledges that on scientific or technical grounds the concept has merit.  The proponent is invited to approach STAP for advice at any time during the development of the project brief prior to submission for CEO endorsement. | |
| | * In cases where the STAP acknowledges the project has merit on scientific and technical grounds, the STAP will recognize this in the screen by stating that *"STAP is satisfied with the scientific and technical quality of the proposal and encourages the proponent to develop it with same rigor. At any time during the development of the project, the proponent is invited to approach STAP to consult on the design."* | |
| 2.    **Minor issues to be considered during project design** | STAP has identified specific scientific /technical suggestions or opportunities that should be discussed with the project proponent as early as possible during development of the project brief. The proponent may wish to: | |
| | (i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; | |

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| | (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development, and possibly agreeing to terms of reference for an independent expert to be appointed to conduct this review. | |
| | The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement. | |
| 3.     Major issues to be considered during project design | STAP proposes significant improvements or has concerns on the grounds of specified major scientific/technical methodological issues, barriers, or omissions in the project concept. If STAP provides this advisory response, a full explanation would also be provided. The proponent is strongly encouraged to: | |
| | (i) Open a dialogue with STAP regarding the technical and/or scientific issues raised; (ii) Set a review point at an early stage during project development including an independent expert as required. The proponent should provide a report of the action agreed and taken, at the time of submission of the full project brief for CEO endorsement. | |