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**CARPE Final Report: October 1, 2003 – September 30, 2006**

Project / Sub-Project No.	CONGO BASIN FOREST PARTNERSHIP
Agreement	Cooperative Agreement 623-A-00-03-00064-00 under leader with Associate Award LAG-A-00-99-00048-00
Sub-Project Title	Gabon CARPE Focal Point
Reporting Period	1 October, 2003 – 30 September 2006
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**1. INTRODUCTION**

It has to be recognized that the first eighteen months of this project were not successful, and the Gabon CARPE Focal Point finally left in November 2005. However, since April 2005, the Country Team worked closely together to: (1) design the policy objectives of the Country Matrix so that these objectives would directly contribute to the needs of field operations in the landscapes, and (2) implement proactively the tasks of the Country Matrix in collaborations with other partners in the country to ensure success through complementary efforts. Given the difficulty to find a suitable candidate to replace the previous Gabon CARPE Focal Point, it was also finally agreed with CARPE that a consultant would be hired with the mandate to help the Country Team in some specific areas during the four last months of the period under review.

This combination of (1) close synergy of efforts both within the Country Team and with partners, and (2) assignment of clearly identified deliverables to a qualified consultant has proven very fruitful, and most of the benchmarks were reached:

*Indicator 2.1:*

- (a) the adoption of the Law on National Parks,
- (b) the adoption of the National Parks Network Management Plan (“Plan Cadre de Gestion”),
- (c) the initiation of a national policy on control of hunting in logging and oil concessions,
- (d) the proposal for an implementation decree of the Forests Code,

*Indicator 2.2:*

the initiation of a national-level advocacy initiative addressing natural resources governance issues,

*Indicator 3.2*

the implementation of a strategy to build capacity in biodiversity or socio-economic monitoring to improve coordination of data collection and analysis at the national level.

**Total Cost of Agreement:**

	USAID	Cost Share	Total
WWF	\$571,654.43	\$79,857.54	\$651,511.97

<b>2. MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESULTS</b>
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**Intermediate Result 2: Natural resources governance (institutions, policies, laws) strengthened**

Indicator 1: Number of key new laws or policies for PAs, logging concessions, and CBNRM passed or old laws and policies reformed compared with a list of recommended or promoted reforms

The following achievements can be noted with respect to this indicator:

- The draft *Law on National Parks*, completed in August 2005 through a large participatory process including governmental and non-governmental partners, as well as the donor community, was reviewed and approved by the Council of State (“Conseil d’Etat”) and approved by the Government Council in early January 2006, then presented to the Parliament (Assembly and Senate) in August and September 2006. It is hoped that the Law will be adopted in November 2006. Draft implementation decrees for the Law are already available. The draft Law - a first of its kind in Central Africa - provides a very strong legal framework for the future development of the National Parks Network, including the creation of a National Park Service (Agence Nationale des Parcs Nationaux), the creation of a trust fund to ensure long-term funding of the national parks, the possibility to grant tourism concession rights to private investors in the parks, etc.
- A draft *National Parks Network Management Plan* (“Plan Cadre de Gestion”) prepared with support from the EU-funded PSVAP project (“Programme Sectoriel de Valorisation des Aires Protégées”) was reviewed by all actors concerned and adopted by the National Parks Council in June 2006. The full version of the Plan is complemented by a summary version for marketing purposes. It is expected that both versions of the Plan will be officially circulated by December 2006. This is also, to our knowledge, the first document of its kind in Central Africa and should form the basis for sound development of the Parks once the National Park Service is created, hopefully in early 2007.
- Through collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Forestry Economy, the French logging company Rougier and WWF, an innovative scheme leveraging improved financial contribution by the logging company to the control of hunting was put in place. A cooperation agreement implementing this scheme was agreed upon, and efforts will now be focusing on getting this scheme adopted at the national level as a *policy on financial contribution by logging companies to hunting control* so that it would gradually be implemented in other logging (and ultimately oil and mining) concessions in the country. In addition, based on an analysis of the various initiatives undertaken in Gabon to generally control hunting in logging and oil concessions (Rougier, CBG, Shell) and further consultation of a number of actors, the CARPE Focal Point consultant provided a brief paper

with overall recommendations for a national policy on this issue, to be discussed and finalized during the next phase of CARPE.

- The CARPE Focal Point consultant also produced a report assessing the current status of the implementation regulations of the Forest Code and providing recommendations on specific issues on which the next phase of CARPE should focus its policy and lobbying support, e.g. the negotiation / compensation process when rights to extract natural resources have been granted in protected zones.

Indicator 2: Number of NGO (and other civil society organizations) advocacy initiatives & activities

The consultant hired at the end of the project successfully mobilized a platform of local NGOs called “Environnement Gabon”, grouping together 15 NGOs. They met several times to discuss and design a project proposal (for US\$75,000 over twelve months) with the overall objective to: (a) improve the availability and circulation of environmental information (building upon the work already done at the level of the CARPE Resource Center), and (b) build the capacity of local NGOs to actively participate in the review process of environmental impact assessments (EIA). The proposal was submitted to the small grant program of the French Fund for the Environment (Fonds Français pour l’Environnement Mondial – FFEM), and it is expected that, subject to some minor adjustments, it will be funded in early 2007. This initiative will allow local environmental NGOs to intervene as credible partners in the EIA processes, and this is more than crucial at a time where the number of proposed forest, oil and mining operations is significantly growing in many protected and non protected areas of high biodiversity in the country.

**Intermediate Result 3: Natural Resources Monitoring Institutionalized**

Indicator 2: Assessment of capacity of Congo Basin (African) institutions (e.g. government agencies, universities and research institutions, NGOs, regional institutions) to collect and analyze information of adequate quality for decision-making.

In April 2006, a nation-wide workshop provided concrete action points and recommendations on a large number of issues related to data collection/analysis and research in the National Parks. It also provided the basis for the design and implementation of a strong strategy to build capacity in biodiversity and socio-economic monitoring in the Parks. The Country Team played a key role in the success of this workshop, thereby complementing the concrete ongoing training efforts undertaken over the entire period under review by their field projects in the various landscapes, especially at the Centre Educatif Alphonse Mackanga Missandzou (CEDAMM) in Lope National Park and through mentoring each year of about 30 students from the National Forestry School (ENEF).

**3. SUCCESS STORY**

The collaborative efforts undertaken by all partners engaged in park management in the country to draft a Law on National Parks that provides a very strong legal framework for the future

development of the National Parks Network can definitely be considered as a major accomplishment, especially in the region, but it seems premature to highlight it as a “success story” at this stage pending full completion of its adoption process.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Given the difficulty in finding a qualified CARPE Focal Point, no systematic communications tools were prepared and / or disseminated to specifically highlight the content and objectives of CARPE. This has led, in some circumstances and especially during the first half of the project, to some misunderstanding with government partners. However, as indicated above, the members of the Country Team worked closely together, both at the headquarters and the field levels, on some clearly identified targets. This has proven quite effective to achieve the policy objectives set in the Country Matrix and to promote CARPE generally, especially since this strong collaborative approach at the technical level extended to governmental partners, the private sector such as Rougier, and donors such as the EU-funded PSVAP project (“Programme Sectoriel de Valorisation des Aires Protégées”) that was also providing institutional, financial and technical support to the National Parks Council, in the drafting of the Law on National Parks, National Parks Network Management Plan, and strategy on capacity building in biodiversity or socio-economic monitoring in the Parks.

#### 5. LESSONS LEARNED

The main lessons learned include:

- The fact that the Country Matrix was designed with a limited number of specific benchmarks and tasks greatly facilitated the planning, efficient implementation and reporting processes over the last eighteen months.
- The fact that work was carried through close partnerships and ongoing dialogue, both within the Country Team and with other partners, was key to success.

#### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Our main recommendations for the next phase of CARPE is that the Focal Point, together with the members of the Country Team, should focus on lobbying for improved harmonization and integration of all land uses processes taking place at various levels in the country under the responsibility of the Ministries of Plan, Forests, Mines, Transport, etc. CARPE Focal Point, in particular, should play a key role in catalyzing the creation and action of multi-disciplinary platforms of actors addressing through a very concrete and open dialogue the growing important issue of finding the balance between the interests of biodiversity conservation with those of economic development by forest, oil, mining, and infrastructure projects.