



**Preparation of the "Regional Programme for Integrated Water
Resource Management in the Transboundary Ubangi River Basin
between the DRC and the CAR"**

**Recruitment of two individual consultants for studies on
gender mainstreaming and institutional capacity
assessment**

TERMS OR REFERENCE

March 2026

1. BACKGROUND

The Ubangi is the largest right-bank tributary of the Congo River. Its catchment area covers 643,900 km², shared mainly between the Democratic Republic of Congo (39%), the Central African Republic (55%) and the Republic of Congo (6%). The basin is home to more than 25 million people, 60% of whom live in rural areas and depend directly on water and land resources for their livelihoods. The basin is home to the most diverse rainforest in the world, with more than 10,000 plant species and 2,500 animal species, two-thirds of which are primate species. It is a major carbon reservoir on a global scale, storing about 46 billion tons of carbon. The basin influences regional and global climate systems.

However, the Ubangi River Basin is increasingly threatened by extreme weather events, artisanal and industrial mining, siltation, deforestation and weak institutional frameworks. These pressures have reduced navigability, degraded water quality and increased risks to biodiversity and local communities.

Aware of the challenges of water resources management in the region, Cameroon, Congo, the Central African Republic and the DRC signed in 1999 the agreement establishing a uniform river regime and creating the International Commission of the Congo-Oubangui Basin (CICOS) for the improvement of the navigability conditions of the basin's watercourses in compliance with the principles of freedom of inland navigation. In 2007, Member States signed an addendum extending CICOS' mandate to include the promotion of integrated water resources management (IWRM). However, its institutional capacity and technical resources are insufficient.

In order to address these challenges, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has approved a project entitled: "Regional Integrated Water Resources Management Programme in the Transboundary Ubangi River Basin between CAR and DRC", with a grant of \$8 million.

2. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The GEF intends to finance, through the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the preparation of a project entitled "Regional Programme for Integrated Water Resources Management in the Transboundary Ubangi River Basin between the CAR and the DRC", the objective of which is to "strengthen transboundary cooperation and the management of water resources and associated ecosystems in order to improve resilience Climate and Livelihoods in the Ubangi River Basin" through institutional capacity building to support basin-wide, cross-sectoral planning in a transboundary river basin.

The project aims to strengthen cooperation between CAR and DRC on integrated water resources management, improve the institutional capacities of CICOS and national agencies, demonstrate climate-resilient watershed management and service delivery solutions, and improve knowledge management, monitoring and communication.

The main environmental challenges in the basin result from the combination of the recurrence of extreme weather events and the increasing pressure on natural resources from an ever-increasing population, due to over-dependence and unsustainable use of these resources. Despite the apparent pressure of degradation of the basin's ecosystem, the nature and extent of the underlying problems remain poorly understood.

In addition, a comprehensive framework to address the challenges observed at the basin scale is still insufficiently developed, in particular because cooperation and harmonization of basin countries' interventions remain largely ineffective, the required capacities of key actors are largely non-existent, and awareness of innovative and sustainable solutions to these challenges remains largely unknown and therefore generally unexplored. To address the

current challenges, basin institutions and stakeholders therefore need to strengthen their technical capacities, increase their knowledge of the basin's resources and environmental issues, and consolidate the normative framework and transboundary management instruments for more effective and sustainable management of the basin. The proposed project aims to help the institutions of the basin achieve this goal by improving cooperation at the regional, national and local levels.

The project will support the conduct of cross-border diagnostic analyses and strategic action plans specific to the Ubangi Basin (distinct from the Congo Basin), bring stakeholders together and help them formulate strategies to address common challenges. To ensure social inclusion and promote a holistic approach, the project will deploy community-based nature-based solutions for better watershed management and rehabilitation, and showcase innovative and sustainable approaches to watershed management, erosion and siltation control, data sharing, and improved services. The project will encourage private sector participation, mainly targeting local small and medium-sized enterprises. Positive steps will be taken to strengthen the role of women in basin management and develop the skills of young people through targeted training in IWRM and shared river management. Lessons learned from the implementation of the project will be disseminated to a wider audience, beyond the project area and the sub-region.

The overall impact of the project's combined interventions will be the improvement of the cooperation framework and effective and integrated transboundary management to reduce the risks of exposure to climate change and anthropogenic pressures in the Ubangi Basin. The proposed GEF project has four components:

Component 1: Strengthening cooperation mechanisms for transboundary water resources management and socio-economic planning between the CAR and the DRC

This component aims to improve governance and cooperation mechanisms in the Ubangi Basin by fostering consensus on the basin's priorities, strengthening gender mainstreaming and encouraging the participation of policymakers in the management of the basin. It will reduce some of the institutional and organisational challenges faced in the basin, including gaps in data and information systems, as well as gender mainstreaming. This component will be led by IUCN.

Component 2: Institutional and technical capacity building for collaborative basin management

This component will strengthen CICOS' institutional capacities, coordination and cooperation among member countries, while supporting actions contributing to the ratification and implementation of framework agreements in the basin. It will also address the basin's institutional challenges, including policy incoherence and technical capacity. This component will be led by IUCN.

Component 3: Demonstration of solutions and technical capacity building for climate-resilient transboundary IWRM

This local-scale component of pilot interventions illustrating innovations and technical capacity building for the large-scale deployment of sustainable and nature-based approaches, thereby contributing to the resolution of cross-border problems at the local, national and regional levels. The project's actions will build on the national and regional consultation platforms created in 2014 by CICOS (composed of representatives of public bodies from riparian states, the private sector and civil society) to ensure the effective participation of all stakeholders in water management. This component will therefore focus on "societal" approaches to strengthen water resources management and reporting systems involving communities, especially youth, to foster ownership of the system. It will help minimize problems related to siltation of rivers, pollution and general degradation of watersheds. This investment-oriented component will be led by the AfDB.

Component 4: Knowledge management, monitoring, evaluation and communication:

This component will enable learning and knowledge sharing by ensuring that results and lessons learned are documented, integrated and disseminated at national, basin, regional and international levels. Particular attention will be paid to gender-responsive monitoring. In addition, South-South cooperation and information exchange at the basin level will be promoted through direct linkages with GEF-supported initiatives in the Amazon basin. [Consultancy for the monitoring and evaluation plan]

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE MISSION

The two consultants to be recruited will support IUCN, AFDB, CICOS, CAR, and DRC in the preparation of project documentation for GEF approval. Their specific mission will be to carry out studies on gender mainstreaming and to assess the institutional capacities of key actors in the project's target countries.

Notwithstanding the terms of these ToRs, the consultants shall abide by the coordination arrangements for the delivery of this PPG as presented in the annex to these ToRs: ToR Annex.1: ADDENDUM ON COORDINATION, GOVERNANCE, AND INTEGRATION OF PPG ACTIVITIES.

4. TASK OF THE CONSULTANTS

Consultants are expected to contribute to the analysis, advisory and design tasks necessary for the development of bankable project documentation, taking sufficient account of the gender dimension, an effective monitoring and evaluation framework as well as well-assessed institutional capacities.

Consultant for the study on gender mainstreaming, data gap assessment and development of the monitoring and evaluation framework

- 1) To review the available literature and relevant sources of information on the Ubangi Basin, water resources, and climate data in CAR and DRC that can support the documentation of gender and institutional analysis.
- 2) Review and critically analyse the approved GEF-IFP, taking into account the information gathered, to verify the relevance of the proposed interventions, make recommendations for modification, as well as activity indicators as appropriate, without changing their overall scope.
- 3) Collect, compile and review all available and relevant project documents and reports, as well as existing management and development plans for the Ubangi Basin, to identify the context of the project.
- 4) Collect gender-specific data on roles, needs, and knowledge in the basin.
- 5) Analyze gender dynamics in IWRM, participation and benefits related to economic activities, in order to identify structural, social, economic and cultural barriers that hinder equitable participation.
- 6) Conduct inclusive consultations with relevant government institutions in CAR and DRC, CICOS, CSOs, the private sector, and local communities.
- 7) Propose solutions and strategies for better gender mainstreaming.
- 8) Conduct field visits to interact with key local actors, including local communities, and collect information and data from the field to verify the information obtained from the desk review and initial consultations with stakeholders.
- 9) Organize regular follow-up meetings with IUCN to inform it of the progress of the project and to discuss any difficulties encountered. The consultants are responsible for drafting and disseminating the minutes of these meetings.

Consultant in charge of the assessment of institutional capacities

- 1) To review the available literature and relevant sources of information on the Ubangi Basin, water resources, and climate data in CAR and DRC that can support the documentation of gender and institutional analysis.
- 2) Collect, compile and review all available and relevant project documents and reports, as well as existing management and development plans for the Oubangui Basin, to identify the context of the project.
- 3) Examine the organizational structure of the actors, as well as the distribution of their roles and responsibilities in the basin.
- 4) Assess the institutional capacities of each type of organization, and analyze their level of development, and the different types of services developed in the basin.
- 5) Identify and assess the capacity building needs of key actors.
- 6) To analyse the validity, effectiveness, applicability and gaps of IWRM-related policies, procedures and protocols in the Ubangi Basin.
- 7) Conduct inclusive consultations with relevant government institutions in CAR and DRC, CICOS, CSOs, the private sector, and local communities.
- 8) Conduct field missions to interact with key local actors, including local communities, and collect information and data from the field to verify the information obtained from the desk review and initial consultations with stakeholders.
- 9) Organize regular follow-up meetings with IUCN to inform it of the progress of the project and to discuss any difficulties encountered. The consultants are responsible for drafting and disseminating the minutes of these meetings.

5. DURATION AND DELIVERABLES

The mission will be carried out over a period of four (4) months at most.

After **three (3) weeks**, each of the consultants will produce a inception report presenting the preliminary findings of the literature review, the refined mission strategy, the detailed methodology and data collection tools, identifying the key stakeholders and defining the work plan of the project design phase, the necessary consultations and the budget lines. This report should not exceed 50 pages.

After **two (2) months**, each of the two (2) consultants will produce the drafts of their deliverables and its annexes.

After **three (3) months**, the Consultant in charge of the Institutional Capacity Assessment will submit his/her final report for validation.

After **four (4) months**, the Gender Mainstreaming Study Consultant will submit his/her final deliverables for validation.

Expected deliverables of the mission

Consultants	Available	Mission Duration
Consultant for the study on gender mainstreaming, data gap assessment, and development of the monitoring and evaluation framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Start-up report- Report of the Gender Study + Gender Action Plan	4 months

	- Data Gap Assessment and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Report	
Consultant in charge of the assessment of institutional capacities	- Start-up report - Institutional Capacity Assessment Report in the Oubangui Basin	Three months

6. IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES AND COORDINATION

The two (2) consultants will be recruited by IUCN and will work under the direct supervision of the IUCN Regional Water Focal Point. The latter will approve all the deliverables of the consultants.

In addition, the consultants will work in close collaboration with the International Consulting Firm (recruited by the AfDB), which is responsible for drafting the project document. The work plan and the final timetable of the mission of the two consultants will be defined in collaboration with the international firm.

The consultants will report regularly on the progress of the work to the international firm and CICOS, which will contribute to the review of the deliverables.

The consultants will carry out missions to the riparian countries, to CICOS, the CAR, and the DRC, as well as to the offices of the other competent authorities in the wider basin of the Republic of Congo, in order to facilitate exchanges with the actors of the riparian countries and the basin and to collect the necessary information.

The consultants will strictly follow the final IUCN-approved work plan set out in the inception report and will judiciously apply the provisions set out in these Terms of Reference.

The consultants are nevertheless required to carry out the studies and activities of the mission in accordance with international best practices, including by assessing compliance with the national laws and regulations of the riparian countries.

All studies and activities of this mission must meet the requirements of IUCN and other international partners.

The consultants will be expected to remain available to respond to any comments made by IUCN and other partners during the duration of the contract.

The payouts are distributed as follows: 20% Start-up Report, Interim Reports 40% and Final Report 40%.

7. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND DATA

IUCN, AFDB, CICOS, and the National Implementing Agencies in CAR and DRC will provide the consultants with the GEF guidance, as well as all available official documents, data, and relevant studies, including the PIF, the PIF Examination Sheet, the STAP, and the GEF Council's comments, as well as the PREDIRE project documents.

It is the consultants' responsibility to seek out all relevant data and information necessary to carry out their assignments. This literature search will focus in particular on:

- Past and ongoing projects in the Ubangi Basin and the Congo Basin at large.
- Publications from recognized institutions such as the World Bank and United Nations agencies.

- Academic articles and publications from recognized educational and research institutions.
- The opinions of experts who have worked or are still working in the Oubangui basin.

8. LOGISTICS

Consultants are responsible for the provision of office space, equipment, consumables, and communication facilities, as well as the costs of all support staff.

Consultants are required to rent, to the extent possible, vehicles and equipment for fieldwork and workshops in the country, or to import the equipment at their own expense. It also covers all the operating and maintenance costs of these vehicles, equipment, and facilities.

It is the responsibility of the consultants to obtain all permits and authorizations from the relevant government authorities. IUCN, AfDB, CICOS, and government implementing agencies in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo will provide assistance to the extent possible, but are not obligated to.

Consultants are required to comply with all of their tax obligations or obtain applicable exemptions, in accordance with the laws and regulations in force in CAR and DRC.

9. REQUIREMENTS FOR CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS

The implementation team should include at least the key international and national professionals listed in the table below, which also indicates the minimum number of person-months of experts expected.

The consultants will be recruited by IUCN in accordance with its guidelines for the use of consultants. The selection of the team will be based on the quality-cost selection method (with an 80/20 quality/cost weighting).

Skills required for the consultant to carry out the "Gender Mainstreaming Study, Data Gap Assessment, and a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Study":

The qualifications required for this mission are as follows:

- Advanced university degree (Master's/PhD) in a relevant field such as: Economics, Environment, Geography, Hydrology, Management Sciences, Development Studies, or other related fields
- Previous experience with projects funded by multilateral and/or bilateral donors, and specific experience with GEF-funded programmes and projects
- At least 10 years of proven experience in the preparation of multi-country regional projects
- Strong knowledge of project development and results frameworks
- Mastery of the principles, concepts, approaches, methods, and tools of strategic and operational planning and monitoring, and evaluation of public policies and development strategies
- At least 10 years of experience in conducting participatory consultations, including with vulnerable groups (women, youth, rural communities).
- Experience in designing gender-sensitive and socially inclusive interventions in the areas of water and natural resource governance
- Knowledge of socio-economic analysis, gender indicators, and project monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- Previous experience in the Congo Basin or similar African cross-border settings will be considered an asset

- Knowledge of the local languages of the Ubangi basin will be an asset.
- Fluency in French and English.

Competencies required for the "Institutional Capacity Assessment" Consultant

The qualifications required for this mission are as follows:

- Advanced university degree (Master's/PhD) in economics, political science, management science, public policy or other related fields
- At least 10 years of experience in conducting institutional capacity assessments and analysis
- Experience with projects funded by multilateral and/or bilateral donors, and specific experience with GEF-funded programmes and projects
- Mastery of the principles, concepts, approaches, methods and tools of strategic and operational planning and monitoring and evaluation of public policies and development strategies
- Ability to anticipate and understand stakeholder needs, formulate clear capacity-building actions
- Previous experience in the Congo Basin or similar African cross-border contexts will be considered an asset.
- Knowledge of the local languages of the Ubangi basin will be an asset.
- Fluency in French and English.

Other skills

- Good writing and communication skills;
- Excellent interpersonal and teamwork skills;
- Excellent analytical problem-solving and writing/writing skills;
- Ability to accept input and receive guidance from multiple sources and create a synthesis necessary to achieve concrete results;
- Have a keen attention to detail and have an ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines;
- Have professional integrity;
- Ability to ensure ownership of multiple issues and produce measurable and consistent results.

10. APPLICATIONS

Composition of the application file

The application will consist of a technical offer and a financial offer.

The technical offer, which will have a weight (Pt) of 70%, will include:

- **Understanding of terms of reference;**
- **The approach, methodology, and work plan;**
- **The technologies/computer languages/tools that will be used;**
- **The composition of the team, the description of the profiles, and the assignment of tasks;**
- **Supporting documents for experiments.**

The financial offer, which will have a weight (Pf) of 30%, will include the details of the costs according to the different components mentioned, with taxes and amounts excluding taxes, the method of payment, and the deadlines.

Selection criteria

The selection of consultants will be made on the basis of the quality/cost ratio. First, a technical assessment will be conducted, and the consultants will be ranked using the rating system below.

Criteria	Notes
Quality of presentation of the offer	5
Understanding the Mission	10
Proposed methodology/technologies	20
Knowledge of the terrain	10
Diplomas	10
Experiences	15
Total	70

Each compliant proposal will receive a technical score (T). The technical scores will be standardized according to the following formula: $Tn = \frac{TM}{Tc}$, where Tn represents the candidate's standardized technical score in %, TM is the maximum technical score obtained, Tc is the technical score of each candidate. Standardized technical scores will be ranked in descending order, and any standardized technical score below 70% will be eliminated.

Then, technical proposals that have received a standardized technical score of 70 or higher will be submitted for financial evaluation. After verifying that the financial proposals are compliant and free of errors, the financial offers (F) will be normalized according to the following formula: $Fn = \frac{Fm}{Fc}$, where Fn is the standardised financial score of the candidate, Fm is the minimum financial offer received for the successful candidates after the technical evaluation, and Fc is the financial offer of each candidate of the successful tenders after the technical evaluation.

Finally, an overall score will be assigned to each successful tender after the technical evaluation by applying the following formula: where NG represents the overall score of the candidate, and Tn, Pt, Fn, and Pf as previously determined. The candidate with the highest overall score will be selected. $NG = (Tn * Pt + Fn * Pf) * 100$

11. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION FILES

Applicants should submit their proposal to IUCN no later than midnight on 25/03/2026 at 00:00 (GMT+1) by email to: andre-marie.tine@iucn.org cc procurement-paco@iucn.org.

The subject of the email should be "**Consultant _ Gender Study and évaluation_Ubangi Monitoring Framework**" or "**Consultant_ Capacity Assessment institutionnelles_Ubangi**"

Electronic copies must be submitted in PDF and native format (e.g., MS Word). Applicants may submit multiple emails (properly annotated – e.g., email 1 out of 3) if the attached files are deemed too large to be suitable for a single email transmission.

IMPORTANT: Submitted documents must be password-protected so that they cannot be opened and read before the submission deadline. Please use the same password for all submitted documents. After the deadline has passed and no later than **8:00 am (GMT+1) on 27/03/2026**, please send the corresponding password to the same email address used to

submit your Proposal. This will ensure a secure bid submission and opening process. Please DO NOT email the password before the proposal submission deadline.