

CAFI Multi-Partner Trust Fund

CAFI Preparatory / Feasibility study grant



Country: All CAFI partner countries	Implementing Organization(s): Wildlife Conservation Society
Project Contact: Christopher HOLMES – Regional Director Address: Regional office for Central Africa and the Gulf of Guinea, 44 KG 28 Avenue, Kigali, Rwanda Telephone: +250 790 927 294 E-mail: sdirou@wcs.org	Implementing Partner(s) – name & type (Government, CSO, etc): N/A
Project Description: <i>One sentence describing the project's scope and focus.</i> This project will map high integrity forests in CAFI partner countries, to inform potential of a new financial mechanism to incentivize the protection of high integrity forests (HIFOR).	CAFI Fund: 467 836 USD Other source: Government Input: Other: Total Project Cost: 467 836 USD Proposed Project Start Date: April 1st, 2025 Proposed Project End Date: September 30, 2027 Total duration (in months): 18 months
Expected outputs: Map of potential for HIFOR implementation, Identification of priority sites, Technical input on mapping process, Final report	
Recipient Organization(s)	On behalf of the CAFI Executive Board
Name of Representative Joe Walston DocuSigned by: F8F546103539410... Signature Executive Vice-President, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Date 10-Mar-2025	Name Berta Pesti DocuSigned by: DAFEB0CC65A412... Signature Head of CAFI Secretariat Date 09-Mar-2025

PROJECT COMPONENTS:**A. CONTEXT** (*1 paragraph*)

High-integrity forests are ecosystems that have experienced relatively little anthropogenic degradation, thus retaining original forest cover, structure, and composition, and maintaining significant ecosystems services. From a climate perspective, high integrity tropical forests absorb approximately 2.5 billion tons of the CO₂ that is emitted to the atmosphere annually and provide additional biophysical cooling that reduces global warming by approximately 50% beyond the impact of their carbon absorption and storage¹. Without forests' CO₂ removals the world would already be around 0.4°C hotter than it is today, placing us above the goal of the Paris Agreement to prevent warming greater than 1.5°C. Forest integrity also correlates strongly with biodiversity measures, hence high integrity tropical forests embed biodiversity as well as climate benefits. These forests also harbor substantial socio-economic value, especially for resident Indigenous Peoples and local communities that depend on them.

Despite their importance, high integrity forests are mostly excluded from policies, financial valuations, and investment schemes that could fund their maintenance and ongoing conservation. Climate finance for forests has evolved around REDD+, which inherently prioritizes areas of high historic deforestation. High integrity forests that are not at the deforestation frontier are largely excluded from financing opportunities that could fund their ongoing conservation. Instead, support for the conservation of high integrity tropical forests has been limited mainly to philanthropic donations, tourism income, and the resources afforded by domestic government budgets.

¹ <https://www.wri.org/research/not-just-carbon-capturing-benefits-forests-climate>

How to finance the protection of high integrity forests: The HIFOR initiative

Among other initiatives and to support the conservation of high integrity tropical forests the goal of WCS's High Integrity Forest Investment Initiative (HIFOR) is to fill the finance gap for high integrity forests by developing and scaling a dedicated stream of climate finance.

The HIFOR finance instrument is designed as an ecosystem service payment to the stewards of largely undegraded tropical forests for maintaining the climate regulation and biodiversity conservation roles that these forests provide. Through the creation of an investable asset representing an environmental service, the HIFOR Initiative seeks to (1) maintain critical "natural climate infrastructure" and (2) protect biodiversity, while (3) unlocking finance to incentivize developing country governments and Indigenous Peoples and local communities to protect their high-integrity forests while developing sustainable, low-carbon rural economies and livelihoods.

Central Africa a priority for the HIFOR initiative

A first HIFOR partner has been found in Brazil: the State of Amazonas has agreed to work with WCS Brazil to develop the first pilot HIFOR projects. The agreement was signed at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (CoP) in Egypt at the end of 2022.

Central Africa has also been identified by WCS as a global priority for exploring the potential of the HIFOR initiative to incentivize conservation because it has the highest average rate of CO₂ absorption of any tropical region, and it supports some of the largest expanses of high integrity forests in the world. Within CAFI partner countries there are more than 150 million hectares of high integrity forests (Figure 1). At the end of 2023, at CoP-28 in Dubai, the Republic of Congo Ministry of Forest Economy agreed to work with WCS on the development of an initial HIFOR pilot in the Nouabale-Ndoki National Park, where the Ministry and WCS-Congo have a longstanding collaboration.

The proposed project will take a regional, systematic approach to assess and map high integrity forest landscapes and the potential for HIFOR implementation in CAFI partner countries. This builds and expands on WCS experience in developing the initial pilot in Amazonas and our nascent work on HIFOR in Republic of Congo.

Alignment between CAFI and HIFOR Initiative

As part of the proposed project, WCS will explore how high integrity forest and potential HIFOR eligible landscapes relate to other key conservation approaches in the region. This

includes comparison to High Conservation Value (HCV) landscapes, High Carbon Stock (HCS) landscapes, Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA), and areas potentially eligible for REDD+ financing – to inform potential complementarities and synergies between HIFOR and these existing designations. This project will therefore be a perfect opportunity to explore these complementarities and synergies as CAFI and some countries have signed Letters of Intent where land use planning should protect High Conservation Value (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) forests -Gabon and RoC) or high value forests (DRC) and target degraded forests instead (DRC).

Indeed, the data that will be produced by the study will support countries' ongoing efforts on mapping high value forests by bringing a complementary set of data on high integrity forest tacking into account national definitions and ownership.

In addition to this technical comparison exercise, there is strong alignment between the HIFOR objective to scale finance for the conservation and sustainable management of high integrity forests, and CAFI's broad goal to recognize and preserve the value of forests in the Central African region to mitigate climate change, reduce poverty, and contribute to sustainable development. The project also supports CAFI's broad goal of supporting implementation of investment frameworks for low-carbon development.

HIFOR also has the potential to provide financial support for several CAFI partner country goals. This includes, for example, national goals to prevent encroachment into protected areas in cases where these areas encompass high integrity forests. Similarly, HIFOR funding can support goals to prevent conversion of and sustainably manage high value forests, high conservation value (HCV) forest and high carbon stock (HCS) forests, many of which are also high integrity forests eligible for HIFOR financing to support their conservation and effective management.

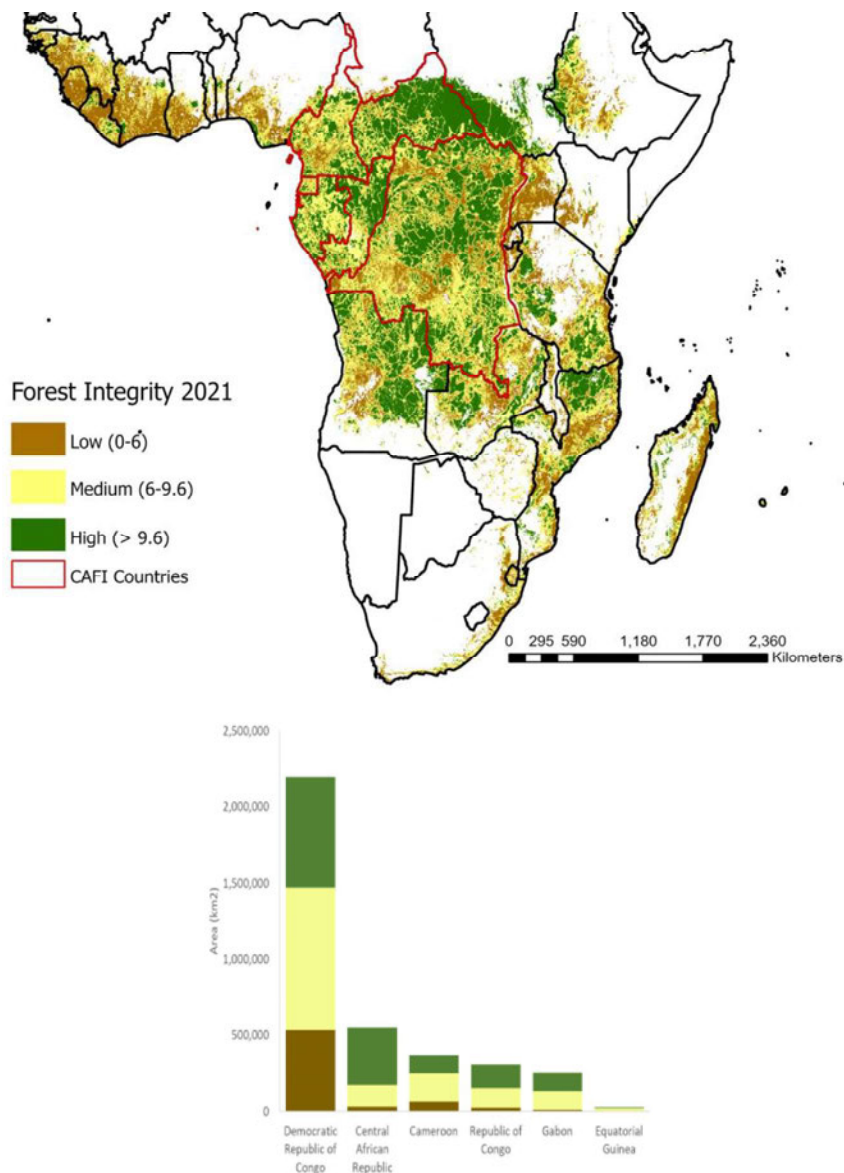


Figure 1. Forest Landscape Integrity mapped by Grantham et al. 2020 (above), and quantity of forest by integrity category in each of the CAFI partner countries (under)

Alignment with other mechanisms

Our proposed work links specifically to the FCLP Action Area 6, which aims to build international partnerships and incentives to preserve high-integrity forests, in recognition of the essential services that these forests provide. Under the proposed CAFI prep grant, WCS will identify potential opportunities for developing and implementing financial incentives to protect high integrity forests in CAFI partner countries. This will lay the groundwork for directing incentives to the protection of these critical high integrity forest ecosystems in the CAFI region, in line with the FCLP goal.

Developed at the One Forest Summit in 2023, the Libreville Plan outlines several fundamental priorities for African forests. Our proposed scope of work links directly to an articulated priority on protecting vital carbon and biodiversity reserves that warrant high levels of protection, which includes high integrity primary forests that play an outsized role in supporting carbon, biodiversity, and livelihoods. Our project will identify and delineate these landscapes, and will lay the foundation for attracting financial incentives to safeguard these areas over the long term.

During 2022, WCS had regular conversations with the Facilitator of the CBFP in the context of the working group on fair levels of climate finance support for Congo Basin forest countries (but these have not been continued during 2023 due to turnover of key personnel). In the framework of this proposal, we aim to resume those conversations.

B. PURPOSE OF THE PREPARATION GRANT AND EXPECTED OUTCOME (*Rationale for this proposal: This section summarizes briefly why this project is the best way to achieve/contribute to the relevant Outcome/Outputs.*)

The purpose of this preparation grant is to assess the feasibility and the operationalization of the HIFOR initiative in the Congo Basin by:

- Identifying and mapping high integrity forests and HIFOR eligible areas in the Congo Basin (Output 1)
- Identifying priority landscapes for HIFOR development within these eligible areas (Output 2)
- Identifying the necessary steps to operationalize the initiative (legal feasibility, financial feasibility and technical feasibility). (Output 3)

The mapping will focus on high integrity forests regionally. By integrating additional relevant regionally specific spatial data, it will develop a set of spatial criteria linked to the likelihood of project success in the context of each target country (Gabon, Congo and DRC) in order to identify areas with HIFOR potential and to prioritize sites for HIFOR technical implementation.

The whole process will be developed and implemented in collaboration with the CAFI Secretariat, the different CAFI national partner institutions, some bilateral donors, the related CAFI program implementers, scientific and technical stakeholders such as CIRAD, WRI, local and international Universities, Woodwell Climate Research center, CIFOR, FAO etc., other relevant organizations with relevant data, expertise and potential interest in the implementation of such an initiative (IPCL organization, community forests representative/supporters, Conservation NGOs, etc.), but also the private sector (such as forest concessionaires, financial institutions, etc.).

This will enable WCS to engage with potential beneficiaries but also to ensure the different outputs of this project to be as comprehensive, applicable to the national contexts and as suitable to the expectations of stakeholders as possible.

- C. COHERENCE WITH EXISTING INITIATIVES** *(This section lists any other projects which are supporting the same Outcome, outputs and activities and explains how coherence/ complementarity between them will be ensured. Using Table 1, the section then provides a list of other (Non-CAFI) activities in the same outcome area and identifies any gaps.)*

The project is linked to many different existing regional and national initiatives.

The main complementarity of this project with regional and national CAFI goals and programs is with all the on-going/future efforts to define and map High Conservation Value Forests and High Carbon Stocks landscapes (In RoC and Gabon) and High Value Forests (DRC) and degraded forests (DRC). These efforts are outlined in the respective Letters of Intent of each country, planned national land use processes (PUDT in RoC and in Gabon), and other programs including PNAT in DRC and its forest capital assessment.

WCS is a partner for the implementation of the PUDT in RoC, it will therefore be easy to inform the process about the evolution of the HIFOR project. The different project managers in other countries (like the national herbarium in Gabon or FRM in DRC) will also be consulted and informed about the findings of the project.

Milestone	Number (year)	Country
HCS and HCV forests are defined and identified, in accordance with national specificities and in line with the emerging international consensus and best practices in defining low-emission development, and a legal framework is adopted to ensure their protection and sustainable management.	1.5 (2023)	Congo
Development and adoption of national guidelines and definitions to ensure that forests with High Carbon Stocks (HCS) and High Conservation Value (HCV) will not be converted to other land uses, in accordance with emerging international consensus and best practice	Land use C (2018)	Gabon
Define by 2025, by means of a participatory and multi-sectoral process: (i) the concept of high-value forests and peatlands;	Forest F (2025)	DRC
The concept of high-value forests and peatlands is defined through a participatory and multisectoral process, taking into account local, national, and international good practices on the consideration and	Forest K (2023)	DRC

valuation of the carbon stocks and biodiversity values by the [end of 2023]		
The concept of degraded forests will be defined and identified for various types of forests in the DRC, in the framework of a national participatory and multisectoral process, by end 2023	Forest J (2023)	DRC

High integrity forests may be priorities for protection within land use planning frameworks and the development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs, or 30x30 initiatives). Our proposed assessment has the potential to inform these ongoing initiatives by providing maps that quantify forest landscape integrity and identify places with the highest potential to benefit from HIFOR financial incentives for protection and maintenance of climate regulatory services and biodiversity conservation.

The relationship between the envisioned HIFOR financing mechanism and REDD+, warrants particular attention including analysis of how HIFOR potential may align with the CAFI funded Provincial integrated REDD+ programs (PIREDDs) in seven provinces in DRC. The potential for HIFOR financing will likely be limited to areas that do not have potential to be included in REDD programming because, by design, HIFOR areas are not at near-term risk of deforestation. In the proposed study delineating areas with potential for HIFOR will be informed by available maps of deforestation risk and/or REDD+.

We will also assess the relationship between HIFOR potential and rural development initiatives currently ongoing in DRC, including emerging Payments for Environmental Services (PES) programs. HIFOR financial incentives have the potential to support alternative livelihood options in rural areas where natural resource extraction is one of only a few viable revenue generating activities. The map of HIFOR potential will inform the extent to which HIFOR could support rural development in the current CAFI portfolio.

WCS has been developing the concept of HIFOR through different grants for several months. None of these funding sources have the objective of identifying a regional framework for the implementation of HIFOR outside of the WCS portfolio. The CAFI grant is the sole grant with this objective.

Table 1 – Mapping of complementary initiatives and gaps based on NIF or programming framework

Output/ activity	Source of funding (Government/ development partner)	Key Projects	Duration of Projects	Budget in \$	Description of major programmatic or financial gaps
HIFOR pilot projects	Private foundation	Intact Forest Protection: The Congo Basin Priority	2022 - 2025		Focuses on pilot development of 2-3 HIFOR pilot projects within an existing set of WCS focal landscapes. Does not systematically identify HIFOR potential at regional scales and priority areas for pilot projects outside the WCS portfolio.
HIFOR Measurement, Reporting and Verification system	Private foundation	Ongoing monitoring of carbon stocks and fluxes for pilot sites in the portfolio of the High Integrity Forest Removals initiative	2022 - 2027		Develops and tests a system for tracking carbon removals from HIFOR project landscapes, as the underpinning for quantifying tradeable assets under the HIFOR financing mechanism. Does not identify locations where monitoring needs to be carried out.
Development of national CBD '30x30' plans.	Multiple donors	National projects funded in, at least, DRC, RoC and Gabon.	Various		Information on HIFOR potential not yet available to be incorporated into plans.
Identification and mapping HCV-HCS forests or high value forests	CAFI-AFD	PUDT in RoC National Land use Programme in Gabon	5 years (various dates)		Information on HIFOR potential not yet available Impossible to identify the relevance of HIFOR to IFL, HCV2, HCS, KBA according to Criterion C
DRC Forest capital assessment	CAFI-UNDP	PNAT in DRC	1 year		Information on HIFOR potential not yet available
KBA Criterion C (ecological integrity)	KBA Secretariat through the Bezos Earth Fund	KBA identification in Gabon RoC and DRC	2 years (2022-2023)		Information on HIFOR potential not yet available

D. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES COVERED BY THE PREPARATORY GRANT

Output 1 – Map of high integrity forests and potential for HIFOR implementation

OBJECTIVE: Identify and map high integrity forests and the areas eligible for HIFOR finance. These areas include, at minimum, large contiguous areas of forest with high integrity, supporting a sufficiently large carbon sink, and which are not at near-term risk from climate change or anthropogenic land use change. The mapping exercise will cover all six CAFI partner countries.

We will also compare, in the target countries (DRC, RoC and Gabon), maps of high integrity forests with available maps High Conservation Value (HCV) landscapes, High Carbon Stock (HCS) landscapes, Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL), Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA), and areas potentially eligible for REDD+ financing – to inform potential complementarities and synergies between HIFOR and these existing designations. High integrity forests are those that are largely undegraded by human activities, and are therefore much more likely to be characterized as high value and/or high conservation value. We will report areas of overlap among these various conservation priorities, to inform complementarities and to support ongoing processes related to defining and mapping high value (in DRC) and high conservation value (in Congo and Gabon).

Mapping of HIFOR potential and priority will be carried out independent of commercial value of forests.

DELIVERABLES:

- ✓ raw GIS data collected and the HIFOR eligible sites
- ✓ a report presenting
 - the methodology to produce the map: the code or processing steps to analyze the data including a discussion of the final product.
 - a synthesis of the key outcomes of the consultation meetings with the stakeholders.
 - a report presenting the results of the comparison and complementarities with spatial data on other conservation approaches and initiatives prioritized by CAFI partner countries (HVC-HCS, REDD+ programmes, etc.).

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1.a. Initial map of high integrity forests and HIFOR potential, and initial stakeholder engagement

We will start by developing a preliminary map of high integrity forests, using the Forest Landscape Integrity Index (Grantham et al. 2020), as well as other published maps of forest integrity and condition including the Intact Forest Landscapes map (Potapov et al. 2017), and Forest Condition mapped in the Congo Basin (Shapiro et al. 2021).

In addition to the mapping of high integrity forests, we will integrate several spatial datasets required for the assessment of HIFOR implementation potential. We propose to initiate our assessment using available data and will integrate and refine our assessment using new data sources as they are identified via engagement with CAFI and others. Regionally and globally available data options include:

- Estimates of the average annual rate of carbon stock change over the 2000 – 2021 period at a 30 x 30 meter pixel scale (Harris et al. 2020²)
- Presence of land use change risk factors including permits (e.g., logging, mining, plantation agriculture, oil & gas), and potentially modelled risk of deforestation due to population pressure and infrastructure expansion (e.g Hewson et al. 2019³)
- Maps of High Conservation Value (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) forests and peatlands based on best available global datasets representing HCV criteria (Leitjen et al.⁴) and carbon stocks (Santoro et al. 2021⁵), supplemented as possible with nationally- and regionally- specific maps as they become available.
- Presence of protected areas (Protected Planet 2023⁶), other effective conservation measures (OECMs) (Protected Planet 2023⁷), and Indigenous Peoples and Local Community lands (potentially Garnett et al. 2018⁸, Olivero et al. 2016⁹, WWF 2022¹⁰, Landmark¹¹, Shrestha et al. in prep)

² <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-020-00976-6>

³ <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-445X/7/3/90>

⁴ <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ab8158>

⁵ <https://doi.pangaea.de/10.1594/PANGAEA.894711>

⁶ <https://www.protectedplanet.net/en/thematic-areas/wdpa?tab=WDPA>

⁷ <https://www.protectedplanet.net/en/thematic-areas/oecms?tab=OECMs>

⁸ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-018-0100-6>

⁹ <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0144499>

¹⁰ https://wwflac.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/report_the_state_of_the_indigenous_peoples_and_local_communities_lands_and_territories_1.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.landmarkmap.org/>

- Areas vulnerable to the effects of climate change (Elsen et al. 2021¹², Uribe et al. 2023¹³, Réjou-Méchain et al. 2021¹⁴).
- Presence of carbon market projects related to land use (e.g., using VCM project methodologies VM0006, VM0007, VM0009, VM0015¹⁵) and jurisdictional carbon programs.

To conduct stakeholder engagement, WCS will:

- Identify, in collaboration with the regional CFI Secretariat and the national CFI partners, the relevant regional and national stakeholders to which the HIFOR approach will be presented and discussed.
- Discuss and agree on data sharing agreements with government and relevant key stakeholders.
- Then organize discussion (one-on-one) meetings with the identified stakeholders to explain the HIFOR concept and approach, synergies between HIFOR eligibility and High Value and HCV/HCS, and preliminary findings. These conversations will be an opportunity to explore potential data improvements using regionally-, nationally- or locally- specific data, where available and accessible.

We will solicit input and feedback from a range of stakeholders across the CFI partner countries within the target countries (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Congo and Gabon).

We will organize meetings to explain the purpose of the project, the methodology of the mapping exercise and to define partner roles, responsibilities, and cross institutional mandate and data sharing agreements. Initial stakeholder engagement meetings will result in the development of clear MOUs which define the country specific program governance framework as well as define data sharing agreements and protocols; particularly where additional data (not already publicly available) is relevant for the design of the candidate HIFOR areas (including extractive activities permits/concessions, existing carbon market projects and jurisdictional carbon programs, etc.).

Agreements for defining the process for sharing data from national and regional institutions (and/or independent researchers) as well as those produced by this project will be put in place before mapping activities with non-publicly available data begin implementation (see activity 1.b on refined HIFOR Map). Moreover, to support

¹² <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gcb.15962>

¹³ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-023-01600-z>

¹⁴ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-021-03483-6>

¹⁵ <https://registry.terra.org/>

interventions in each country as well as alignment with national partnerships and other CAFI supported projects, for each country, WCS will collaborate closely with CAFI Sec and government representative in charge of the partnership (FONAREDD for DRC, Permanent Secretariat for Congo, etc.) through regular exchange and co-organization of/participation to all national consultations.

Post-mapping meetings and workshops are anticipated to provide a national forum to receive feedback to improve and refine the map and to answer any questions or concerns. This feedback and questions might pertain to relevant data, the HIFOR methodology and the initial results, the prioritization criteria (output 2), as well as the feasibility and practicalities of such an initiative (Output 3), etc.

We will also explore opportunities to share information with important technical initiatives in the region, for example the work of the Observatory of Central African Forests (OFAC), the Science Panel for the Congo Basin, the African Sustainable Commodities Initiative, consultations on sustainable finance being coordinated by the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, the One Vision science initiative announced recently at the One Forest Summit, the FAO-led CAFI-funded project 'Assessment of deforestation and forest degradation and related direct drivers using SEPAL' and the implementer of the DRC Forest capital assessment (FRM).

N.B.: While we propose to map high integrity forests and HIFOR potential in all CAFI partner countries, we will engage in more depth with counterparts in the target countries (DRC, RoC and Gabon).

Activity 1.b. Development of a refined high integrity forests and HIFOR potential sites map and presentation of the map to stakeholders

To produce the refined map of potential HIFOR sites we will use available data described above and incorporating more refined detail and data where available, as well as the relevant input collected from stakeholders.

This process will comprise filtering by and testing different required criteria, which include minimum levels of forest integrity. Then, we will rank the resulting area by factors linked to likely success of HIFOR, including climate vulnerability and land use change pressure.

We will additionally explore how the resulting map of HIFOR potential sites relates to land use allocation categories, to landscapes classified as HCV or HCS (if any), as well as existing REDD+ carbon market projects, etc. These relationships will not constrain the extent of HIFOR potential but will inform how HIFOR may relate to other ongoing initiatives.

The presentation of and discussion on the final draft of the map of potential for HIFOR implementation will be done in a final workshop organized in each country (along with the presentation of the results from output 2 and 3).

If needed a refined version of the map after this workshop will be produced.

Output 2 - Identification of priority HIFOR sites.

OBJECTIVE: Across the eligible HIFOR locations identified via the mapping process described in the output 1, we will assess a set of criteria that may inform prioritization of HIFOR project development (subject to community consents and government approvals that will be addressed in later phases).

This prioritization exercise will be carried out in Gabon, Republic of Congo and/or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

DELIVERABLES :

- ✓ geospatial data of HIFOR prioritization.
- ✓ a report with:
 - the methodology to prioritize potential HIFOR sites, include the prioritization criteria, relationship to HCV and HV forests designations, and a discussion of the final product.
 - a synthesis of the key outcomes of the consultation meetings with the stakeholders.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 2.a. Definition of prioritization criteria

We will identify and develop a set of criteria and factors that should be considered when prioritizing potential HIFOR locations. This may include, for example, the presence of a particular type of management unit with institutional capacity for managing HIFOR implementation and transactions, security considerations, climate risks, or areas that have the potential to confer important biodiversity or socio-economic benefits. Importantly, this is very likely to include high integrity forests that overlap spatially with other conservation designations such as High Conservation Value or High Value forests.

This provisional set of criteria will be presented and discussed with the stakeholders in the one-on-one meetings (activity 1.a).

Activity 2.b. HIFOR priority site identification

Taking into account stakeholders' feedback on the identified prioritization criteria, we will use them to identify and map priority locations for further HIFOR exploration. The resulting maps will tell us which locations are more likely for success, and where we should target more in-depth engagement with local stakeholders.

The final set of criteria and the priority sites will be presented in a workshop organized at the end of the project. Where possible, we will also report the overlap between high priority HIFOR landscapes and HCV and HV designation.

Output 3 – Feasibility assessment for future HIFOR development

OBJECTIVE: In parallel with Outputs 1 & 2, WCS will explore and identify the necessary next steps for the implementation of the HIFOR initiative. This includes the scope of legal, technical and financial feasibility assessments in each of the target country (Gabon, Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo).

DELIVERABLES :

- ✓ a report with:
 - the next necessary steps (the legal, technical and financial feasibility) for HIFOR development.
 - a synthesis of the key outcomes of the consultation meetings with stakeholders.
 - documentation of countries' interest and willingness to move toward a potential HIFOR implementation phase.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 3.a. Feasibility – assessing the next steps for HIFOR development.

We will determine and propose the necessary next steps towards HIFOR pilot implementation and development in selected priority locations. These will be determined in consultation with stakeholders at the national level and in target landscapes. It will be focused on the legal, technical, and financial feasibility assessment needed to inform the likelihood of successful implementation.

These next steps may include deeper consultations with authorities and community members in and around HIFOR pilot landscapes, identification and engagement with

potential offtake purchasers, establishment of financial, governance, and legal arrangements, monitoring and reporting steps for tracking GHG fluxes, as well as development of systems for revenue distribution.

We will solicit feedback and perspectives on the proposed next steps for successful implementation of the HIFOR initiative in the one-on-one meetings (activity 1.a). We will explore opportunities for alignment with some of the bilateral donor investment portfolios in the region (for example those of the UK, France, German, EU and US governments).

They will also be presented during a final workshop organized in each country along with the final map and the pilot sites.

Over the course of the project and via engagement with relevant authorities, we will work to ensure that comments and feedback on methods, maps, and feasibility assessments are considered and incorporated. Through these engagements, we will investigate, document and report countries' interest and willingness to move forward towards a potential HIFOR implementation phase. As follow-up to this preliminary grant, pending expression of interest from CAFI, WCSe would develop a relevant proposal to advance HIFOR implementation in countries that express interest in pursuing this options.

Monitoring & reporting

WCS will report to CAFI in accordance with the narrative and financial reporting requirements set in CAFI Manual of Operation and CAFI reporting templates. Moreover, the project will provide CAFI with all data, information, technical analyses, methodologies, and all photos and videos that was generated by the project. This includes all raw and processed data from surveys and studies (surveys, deforestation driver studies, value chain studies, etc.), data from monitoring and evaluation of activities, including associated spatial information (eg. all GIS shapefiles produced in the framework of the CAFI supported study).

For all initial data collected and used for the purpose of the project that not publicly available, terms of data sharing agreement will apply.

E. MODALITIES (*direct implementation (DIM)*)

All of the activities under the proposed scope of work are direct implementation modalities (DIM).

The project will be coordinated by the regional Central Africa office (Forest advisor with the support of Head of Strategic Partnerships). The implementation will be mainly done through a post doc position with the technical support of the Global Forest and Climate team of WCS. The national programs will also participate especially in the stakeholder engagement.

F. WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

Provide the envisaged project Work Plan and budget, using the table below: (1) output/activity (2) timeframe (3) by activity budget.

Table 2: Work Plan and total budget (excluding indirect support costs)

Output 1	Map of potential for HIFOR implementation	Nov24-Jan25	Feb-Apr 25	May-July 25	Aug-Oct 25	Nov25-Jan26	Feb-Apr26	Total Budget
Activity 1.a	Develop provisional HIFOR potential map	DEV	DEV					92 900
	Identify and map stakeholders	DEV						12 450
	Engage stakeholders		PREP	CONS				21 320
	Analyze synergies and complementarities with HCV, HCS, etc.		DEV	CONS				26 770
Activity 1.b	Refine HIFOR potential map based on stakeholder input				DEV			43 800
	Hold workshops with key stakeholders to present draft map					WORKSHOP	FIN	51 210
Output 2	Identification of pilot sites							
Activity 2.a	Definition of prioritization criteria							17 400
	Engage stakeholders on set of criteria		DEV	CONS				9 370
Activity 2.b	Hold workshops to present HIFOR priority sites			DEV	DEV	WORKSHOP	FIN	86 810
Output 3	Feasibility assessment and next steps							
Activity 3.a	Assess HIFOR feasibility				DEV			39 100
	Consult stakeholders on HIFOR feasibility and next steps			CONS		WORKSHOP		36 100
								437 230

PREP = Preparation
DEV =Development
FIN = Finalisation
CONS = Consultation 1 on 1 meeting
Mid-term and final debrief

Table 3: Project budget by UN categories

Budget narrative:

The proposed budget is comprised of the following components:

CATEGORIES	Amount Recipient Agency	TOTAL
1. Staff and other personnel	\$367 980	\$367 980
2. Supplies, Commodities, Materials	\$2 000	\$2 000
3. Equipment, Vehicles, and Furniture (including Depreciation)		
4. Contractual services		
5.Travel	\$37 250	\$37 250
6. Transfers and Grants to Counterparts		
7. General Operating and other Direct Costs	\$30 000	\$30 000
Sub-Total Project Costs	\$437 230	\$437 230
8. Indirect Support Costs*	\$30 606	\$30 606
TOTAL	\$467 836	\$467 836

* The rate shall not exceed 7% of the total of categories 1-7, as specified in the CAFI TORs and should follow the rules and guidelines of each recipient organization. Note that Agency-incurred direct project implementation costs should be charged to the relevant budget line, according to the Agency's regulations, rules and procedures.

- Labor** – We propose a total of 684 person-days with the following breakdown by output and activity and the total budget by activity:

		Nd days			
		Postdoc	Regional support	National support	FCC support
Output 1	Map of high integrity forest and potential for HIFOR implementation	207	64	32	120
Activity 1.a	development of a provisional HIFOR potential map	86	10	6	60
	stakeholders map	7	5	6	6
	stakeholders reach out	-	17	9	12
	synergies and complementarities HVC-HCS etc.	13	12	3	18
Activity 1.b	development of a refined HIFOR potential map	79	5	-	12
	Presentation of the final draft map	22	15	8	12
Output 2	Prioritize HIFOR landscapes	51	37	23	54
Activity 2.a	Definition of prioritization criteria	7	5	6	12
	Consultation on set of criteria	-	7	3	6
Activity 2.b	Identification of HIFOR priority sites	44	25	14	36
Output 3	Feasibility for future HIFOR development	22	27	17	30
Activity 3.a	Feasibility assessment	22	15	9	24
	Consultation on the feasibility and the next steps	-	12	8	6
		280	128	72	204

2. **Supplies** – We budgeted one laptop to support spatial analysis, estimated at \$2,000.00 per unit.

3. **Travel**

In order to participate in some stakeholders' consultation and/or to meet with the CAFI team for mid-term and final debriefing sessions, we propose the following:

- eight international trips (US/EU to Central Africa)
- as well as 7 regional trips

The following average unit cost estimates for airfare, lodging and per diem were used to estimate costs:

	Unit Cost	Quantity	Subtotal
International Travel - Airfare	2 000	8	16 000
Regional Travel – Airfare	800	6	4 800
Lodging	150	70	10 500
Average Per Diem	85	70	5 950
Total			37 250

4. **Other direct costs**

We propose to hold one workshop in each of the following countries Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa), Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) and Gabon (Libreville). We budgeted \$10 000 for venue rental and participant meals for each of these workshops. This funding is a contribution towards the full support for each workshop, with the balance supported by leverage funding as necessary.

G. Risk management:

Table 4 – Risk management matrix

Risks to the achievement of the outcome	Likelihood of occurrence (high, medium, low)	Severity of risk impact (high, medium, low)	Mitigating Strategy (and Person/Unit responsible)
National or local-scale data for refining the analysis of HIFOR potential is not available or difficult to access	High	Low	• We will design our analysis plan to be flexible as to data inputs, using regionally or globally available data where necessary as a placeholder until more granular data becomes available / accessible. • We will ensure that outputs constructed with global data are appropriately caveated and flagged as potentially limited vis-à-vis local scale assessments. • We will communicate the outputs of the spatial assessment as preliminary and requiring further investigation of local scale environmental and socio-economic processes in priority landscapes.
Confusion remains among stakeholder groups with respect to the relationship between HIFOR and other ongoing land use planning, forest protection, and sustainability initiatives	Medium	Medium	• We will use and adapt existing HIFOR communications products – which address the relationship between HIFOR and other related initiatives - in multiple forms to reach a broad range of target audiences, including high-level executive summaries as well as more technical issue briefs. • We will engage in direct one-on-one discussions to clarify areas of integration and address specific questions.

Annex 1: Results of the pre-consultation of the national authorities

WCS has consulted the national authorities relevant to the implementation of this preparatory grant. The details of these pre-consultations are presented in the table below.

Table 1 – Details of the pre-consultations undertaken with the national authorities in the focus countries RoC, DRC and Gabon

Country	Date	Activity
Rep. of Congo	8 th Sept 23	Official letter from Her Excellency Rosalie MATONDO signaling the engagement in the HIFOR initiative (see below)
	29 th Sept 23	Submission of the proposal to the CAFI
	2 nd Oct 23	Submission of the proposal to Min. of Forest Economy (MEF)
	6 th Oct 23	Submission of a translation in French to the MEF
	4 th Oct 23	Meeting with members of the MEF Cabinet and the General Directors to present the assessment
	4 th Dec 23	Signature of an MoU for a pilot in RoC between WCS and the MEF at UNFCCC COP 28
The RoC is fully engaged with WCS on the HIFOR initiative.		
Gabon	6 th Oct 23	Introduction to the new Minister of Forests of all the WCS projects including this assessment.
	8 th Nov 23	Meeting with the General Director of Forests
	27 th Nov 23	Transmission of a “fiche technique” from the DG Forêts requesting clarifications about the proposal
	2 nd Dec 23	Transmission of the answers to the requested clarifications to the DG that will be transmitted to the Minister for final feedback.
DRC	6 th Dec 23	Meeting between The SG of MEDD and WCS Vice President to present the study.
	The SG welcomed with much enthusiasm the assessment. After presenting it to the Minister, and contacting CAFI to give their feedback (see below), he will appoint a focal point for this assessment.	

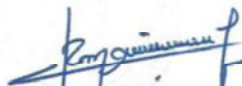
Figure 2 – Letter of engagement in the HIFOR Initiative from the Ministry of Forest Economy in Republic of Congo



A cet égard, le Gouvernement de la République du Congo confirme par ma voix, à l'endroit des Autorités de Wildlife Conservation Society, son engagement à collaborer dans le cadre de cette initiative innovante, en vue de relever son niveau d'ambition sur les enjeux liés à la préservation de la biodiversité et la lutte contre le changement climatique dans le Bassin du Congo.

En vous renouvelant notre gratitude pour cette sollicitude,

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Directeur Général, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées.



Rosalie MATONDO



**MINISTÈRE
DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET DÉVELOPPEMENT
DURABLE**

**SECRETARIAT GÉNÉRAL À L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE**

Le Secrétaire Général

Kinshasa, le **13 DEC 2023**

N° 3039 /SG/EDD/BTB/12/2023

Transmis copie pour information à :

- Son Excellence Madame la
Ministre d'Etat, Ministre à
l'Environnement et Dévelop-
pement Durable ;
- ✓ Monsieur le Directeur National et
Représentant WCS, RDC.
(TOUS) à Kinshasa/Gombe.

Objet : Sollicitation d'approbation
du projet HIFOR

A l'attention de Madame Berta
PESTI
Cheffe du Secrétariat de CAFI
Email : berta.pesti@undp.org
Genève - Suisse

Madame,

J'ai l'honneur de vous signifier par la présente le soutien du Secrétariat Général à l'Environnement et Développement Durable (SG-EDD) à l'étude menée par Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) relative à leur initiative de financement durable des forêts à haute intégrité (HIFOR) à l'échelle de l'Afrique Centrale.

En effet, en marge des assises de la COP28 à Dubaï, la WCS s'est rapprochée du Ministère de l'EDD pour présenter l'étude à l'échelle régionale qu'elle souhaite conduire visant à identifier les sites qui pourraient être éligibles au mécanisme de finance durable pour les forêts à haute intégrité (HIFOR). Il nous a ainsi semblé que les forêts de la RDC, étant au cœur du bassin du Congo et pour lesquels la valeur d'intégrité est peu connue à ce jour, pourraient aussi bénéficier de cette initiative.

En effet, les résultats au terme de cette étude permettront de positionner le pays de manière idéale pour une mobilisation accrue des financements dérivés des services écosystémiques fournis par les forêts à haute intégrité.

Dans l'espoir de votre avis favorable à la présente requête, je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, l'expression de ma parfaite collaboration.

[Signature]
Benjamin TOIRAMBE BAMONINGA

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