

# STATE OF PROTECTED AREAS IN CENTRAL AFRICA 2020



## **State of Protected Areas 2020**

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**<http://www.observatoire-comifac.net>**

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## **COMIFAC: Central African Forests Commission**

COMIFAC is an international organisation recognised for its role in the subregional integration of conservation and sustainable and coordinated management of forest ecosystems. It is responsible for the orientation, harmonization and monitoring of forestry and environmental policies in Central Africa. COMIFAC emerged from the commitments made in March 1999 by the Heads of State of Central Africa in the “Yaoundé Declaration”. It brings together ten member countries of the subregion that share a common natural heritage. Its legal framework is governed by the February 2005 treaty: “Treaty on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa and to establish the Central African Forests Commission”. COMIFAC’s Convergence Plan defines the shared ten-year intervention strategies of Central African States and development partners in the field of conservation and sustainable management of forest and savanna ecosystems. A second edition of this plan, covering the period 2015-2025, now exists.

**Web site:** [www.comifac.org](http://www.comifac.org)

## **OFAC: Central Africa Forest Observatory**

OFAC is a specialised unit of COMIFAC, in charge of coordinating the Forest Observatory, in relation with the COMIFAC National Coordination committees and in collaboration with all of the partners producing and disseminating information on the forests and ecosystems of Central Africa. OFAC is responsible for coordinating the collection and editing of data, the analysis of results and the dissemination of information to target groups through the Observatory’s website and various publications. OFAC thus provides the subregion and its partners with essential tools for steering and sharing knowledge for better governance and sustainable management of forest ecosystems. The unit contributes to the organization and dissemination of information within the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). It benefits from a support project financed by the European Union and the BIOPAMA program (IUCN and JRC).

**Website:** [www.observatoire-comifac.net](http://www.observatoire-comifac.net)

## **IUCN : International Union for Conservation of Nature**

IUCN is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its more than 1,400 Member organisations and the input of more than 18,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.

**Website:** [www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

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# PREFACE

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Planning and managing protected areas require knowledge about the status of these areas and the issues affecting them. In 2015, the first edition of the State of Protected Areas in Central Africa (SOPA-CA) provided an up-to-date assessment of national and subregional networks. This summary report was prepared by the Central African Forest Observatory (OFAC), under the auspices of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC). The preparation of SOPA 2015 was funded by the European Union through the RIOFAC project and the BIOPAMA-IUCN program, the Network of Central African Protected Areas (RAPAC) through the OBAPAC project (Observatory of Biodiversity and Protected Areas of Central Africa), and the German Agency for International Cooperation through the GIZ COMIFAC support project. Produced by a multinational group of Central African protected area experts, SOPA 2015 focused on presenting each country's protected area network, both with regard to the types of protected areas as well as their size and distribution. This was complemented by summary analyses of various themes (legislation, institutions, governance, support projects, socio-economic issues).

Following the success of SOPA 2015, many institutions voiced a desire to improve and rapidly update this publication. The momentum created by the production of the first edition led to the development of the second, which explores in more detail various themes related to biodiversity conservation and protected area governance and management. SOPA 2020, the volume you are now holding in your hands, completes and updates the inventory of the subregion's protected area networks, but also breaks new ground by delving deeply into certain themes that were either only briefly discussed (governance, tourism, etc.) or not mentioned at all (human-elephant conflicts, mining and oil industry, etc.) in the first volume. These themes were discussed and

approved in 2018 during a meeting of protected area specialists held in Douala.

The objective of SOPA 2020 is to contribute to a more effective use of approaches and tools for collecting and analysing data on protected area management in Central Africa. It aims to provide an overview of their importance with regard to global changes, but also to situate protected areas within national and regional territories. In keeping with the perspective of sustainable development in Central Africa, this geographical placement also must include the communities living in these territories. It is this much needed dual integration of protected areas that has guided the authors throughout the book.

This document is intended to be used by administrations in charge of protected areas, policy makers, technical and financial partners, research institutions, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and anyone else interested in biodiversity conservation in Central Africa. Special emphasis is placed on up-to-date and harmonized data and analysis to inform policy makers and managers. It does not claim to be exhaustive, and could not cover all relevant topics related to protected areas. Its objectives are to help build collective intelligence on the subject of protected areas and to stimulate new analyses and syntheses relevant to and sought by conservation and sustainable development actors.

SOPA 2020 consists of nine thematic chapters. The first provides an overview of the situation of Central African protected areas in 2020 (Chapter 1). The eight other chapters are organized in two sections. Whenever possible, the chapters are based on experiences and case studies in and around protected areas in the subregion. The first section focuses on the "Governance of protected areas in Central Africa". It presents the actors involved in protected area governance and some of the dynamics underway. This section has three chapters; the first provides

a general overview of protected area governance (Chapter 2) which is complemented by a specific chapter (Chapter 3) on Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). The section's final chapter (Chapter 4) introduces the importance of information for decision making and management effectiveness, subjects that are too often neglected. The second section focuses on "Sustainable development and protected areas in Central Africa". It offers insight into the conflicts undermining the sustainable development of Central African protected areas, and proposes possible solutions. This section has five chapters that address issues considered important by specialists: human-elephant conflict (Chapter 5), transhumance and protected areas (Chapter 6), extractive industries and protected areas (Chapter 7), ecotourism (Chapter 8) and climate change (Chapter 9). To reach a wide audience, the book is being published in French and English.

The process of developing SOPA 2020 involved diverse actors from the North and South, representing OFAC, COMIFAC, government institutions in Central African countries, donors, the private sector, conservation NGOs, researchers and members of civil society. For this second edition, the process was launched in September 2018 and an Editorial Committee was set up and chaired by the Deputy Executive Secretary of COMIFAC. Workshops were held successively from May 2019 to November 2020, both face-to-face and online, during which the members of the said committee defined and validated the content of the present document and the topics that were to be addressed, and then transmitted instructions and guidelines to the prospective authors. These workshops also provided an opportunity to discuss the texts with their authors as the process moved along.

SOPA 2020 has been developed through a collaborative approach involving different stakeholders, including conservation experts, researchers and technical partners in the conservation field. Different

authors volunteered to write the thematic chapters, with one or two lead authors coordinating the work of each group. In the course of the drafting process, some authors withdrew and others joined certain thematic groups. It should be noted that the Covid-19 epidemic made it impossible to hold joint writing workshops, as was originally planned, and the disruptions caused by the pandemic affected the availability of some authors and the progress of the project. To ensure the consistency of the document and to expedite the process, the additional services of editors, reviewers and proofreaders were indispensable.

The difficulties encountered during the preparation of this document, in an exceptional health context, made it possible to identify the points to be improved to facilitate the production of future editions. Without going into detail, the need for the various co-authors of the chapters to work remotely significantly limited the timely production of this document. It also hindered the desired synergy and collaboration between partners who did not all know each other at the outset. Moreover, administrative considerations made it necessary to work in parallel on the production of the texts, their translation and their joint layout, in both the French and English versions. The overlapping of these different production phases also further complicated the work, especially in terms of coordination. Despite the difficulties encountered, the authors and all of the stakeholders involved demonstrated their willingness to share their knowledge and experience to contribute to the final document.

The contributions of the many authors as well as the contributors and reviewers have resulted in a document that we hope will live up to the expectations raised.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in this wonderful adventure – without you, SOPA 2020 would not be possible. Thank you all.