RAINFOREST FOUNDATION UK

SECURING LANDS, SUSTAINING LIVES



MAPPING AND FOREST GOVERNANCE

IN THE CONGO BASIN



This leaflet provides information about a major programme of the Rainforest Foundation UK in the Congo Basin which runs until 2017.

The Mapping and Forest Governance (MFG) Programme is designed to contribute to poverty reduction, sustainable management and improved governance of tropical rainforests in the Congo Basin.

By supporting the documentation of forest communities' land tenure and governance systems, and the promotion of forest communities' rights to land and forest resources, the MFG project will:

GIVE FOREST COMMUNITIES A VOICE IN FOREST POLICY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH:

- Supporting community-led mapping activities on customary lands and resources covering up to five million hectares of the Congo Basin rainforest
- Developing and testing real-time community forest monitoring systems
- Building legal capacity to support communities' land and resource rights as well as their basic civil and political rights

GIVE POLICY-MAKERS THE TOOLS TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THE FORESTS THROUGH:

- The continued development of the MappingForRights geo-web platform – a forest land and resource rights spatial database for the Congo Basin
- Facilitating decision-making processes for forest communities, government agencies and the private sector
- Applied research in key policy areas (e.g. land tenure, forest zoning and community-based forest management)

PROGRAMME RATIONALE



It is estimated that over 50 million people depend on the Congo Basin rainforest for their wellbeing and livelihoods, including as many as 700,000 indigenous hunter-gatherers, commonly referred to as 'Pygmies' most of which are still, at least, partially nomadic. Sadly, these groups constitute some of the most disenfranchised and poorest people in Africa. Many lack access to the most basic state services and often see almost no benefit from the exploitation of the forest territories they inhabit and consider their own under customary law.

There is growing evidence that securing traditional lands and resource rights is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty in forest areas and combat deforestation, which in turn can contribute to the slowing of climate change. Until recently, there have been few formal mechanisms that allow for this kind of forest management. However, clarification of tenure is increasingly recognised as a cornerstone of good forest governance and as a means of enabling responsible investment. The Mapping and Forest Governance Programme is designed to support effective community participation in local, national and regional reform processes so that they do not lead to the further eroding of their rights.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

1. Land and resource use and tenure mapping in the Democratic Republic of Congo, (DRC), and Cameroon
2. Developing MappingForRights geo-spatial database
3. Building legal capacity in the DRC to support communities' land and resource rights

1: COMMUNITY MAPPING AND FOREST MONITORING IN THE DRC AND CAMEROON

Forest communities are largely invisible on official maps of the Congo Basin and have virtually no formal rights to land, much of which has been allocated by the state to logging companies or designated as strict conservation areas. Emerging threats such as the expansion of agro-industries, infrastructure development and mining are placing further pressure on forests, land and livelihoods.

The Rainforest Foundation UK, (RFUK), and our partner network are at the forefront of developing geo-spatial technologies and new participatory mapping techniques that can help communities to respond to these challenges by demonstrating their occupation, use and custodianship of tropical forests.

SPECIFICALLY, THE PROGRAMME FEATURES:

- Community mapping of customary rights and resource use and other techniques that promote participation of groups such as indigenous peoples or women.
- Development of icon-based software on GPS-enabled tablets to facilitate participation of non-literate people.
- Correction and validation of GIS data in villages and agreement on data-use protocols and community strategies to ensure that the ownership of the process lies firmly in the hands of the community.
- Collection of data on a range of social development indicators, enabling mapping of communities' development needs and priorities.
- The capacity to upload data directly, in near real-time, to the MappingForRights web platform and the development and testing of community-based forest monitoring systems.
- Field-based GIS technicians and mapping facilitators ("mobile mapping laboratories") providing support to local communities.



These innovations are enabling us to greatly expand coverage, improve data flows and bridge the gap between remote forest communities and central decision-making processes. The programme aims to support nearly 1,000 villages, (with a total population in excess of one million people), to map more than five million hectares by 2017. This will involve training approximately 5,000 community mappers – the largest exercise of its kind ever undertaken in Africa.

2: DEVELOPMENT OF MAPPING FOR RIGHTS – A FOREST RESOURCE SPATIAL DATABASE FOR THE CONGO BASIN

The MappingForRights platform aims to provide easy access to accurate geographical information about the presence, land use and rights of indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities in the Congo Basin.



Serving as a repository for data collected through the programme and from other reliable sources, it is intended to enable forest communities themselves to demonstrate their presence in the forest, for decision-makers and the private sector to take account of and recognise this presence; and to assist the international community in designing programmes concerned with those rights and to ensure that forest communities are equitable beneficiaries of future developments. Through the online interactive map – the first of its kind – authorised users are able to view community occupation and forest usage in the context of other claims on, and users of, the forest, such as logging activities and strictly protected areas.

Under the programme, the platform is also being expanded to include new datasets on social development, biodiversity, forest cover loss, extractive industries, commercial plantations, infrastructure development and REDD projects.

THE SITE IS EMERGING AS A KEY FOREST PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT TOOL. IT CAN:

- Accurately illustrate the extent of existing occupation and traditional tenure of forest lands throughout the Congo Basin.
- Contribute to, or provide a basis for, national and sub-national forest land planning and zoning.
- Illustrate where conflicts of use or rights already exist or could arise, both for national government planning and private sector investors.
- Inform programmes and laws to reform or clarify forest tenure rights, including development of community forest policies or other more secure land tenure arrangements.
- Provide a basis for assessing and implementing payments to communities for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, (REDD) or Payments for Ecosystem Services and other development interventions.
- Assist in monitoring compliance with international and bilateral agreements or treaties, such as ILO Convention No. 169 on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) and REDD safeguards.

3: BUILDING LEGAL CAPACITY TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY LAND AND RESOURCE RIGHTS

Forest-dependent communities in the region, especially indigenous peoples, are significantly under-represented in political and legal decision-making processes. Although important rights are sometimes provided in national legislation or under international obligations, communities and local civil society organisations are often not aware that these exist, let alone know how to exercise them.



RFUK develops and funds specialised training programmes for teams of young African lawyers to work with forest communities and local organisations, helping them to defend community rights to lands and resources, stop illegal forest destruction, confront abuse of forest peoples' rights and obtain essential legal documents such as identity papers. After their training, the local lawyers are placed in forest communities for several months so that they are able to learn first-hand about the legal issues these communities are facing, build up a relationship of trust with those communities and support them directly to develop and implement legal solutions to address these problems. This approach ensures that that legal capacity is built in-country and at the community level and will be beneficial to these communities well beyond the project lifespan.

THIS THIRD COMPONENT OF THE PROGRAMME WILL:

- Train 15 community lawyers in national and international law relating to the rights of local communities and indigenous peoples.
- The placement and mentoring of 10 of these in local organisations and rural forest areas, providing direct support to over 50 villages.
- Train more than 150 local people as community 'paralegals' to increase understanding and use of laws related to forest management and human rights and support the community lawyers in their work.
- Support communities to identify opportunities to advocate for their interests in specific policy processes or to undertake legal actions to ensure recognition of their rights.
- Develop links to universities in the Congo Basin, including the development of courses on land and resource rights, community and indigenous peoples' rights and other relevant legal issues that are so far proving challenging, yet are so crucial for forest communities.

OUR APPROACH



As one of the few organisations that recognises the link between human rights and the environment, RFUK is dedicated to supporting those at the frontline of rainforest protection: indigenous and traditional peoples' organisations, grassroots NGOs and others. This beneficiary-driven approach aims to foster dialogue and planning with other stakeholders, (state, private sector, international NGOs and donors), at three interlinking levels:

LOCAL LEVEL

Tools such as 'participatory rural appraisal' and 'problem ranking' are used to support communities to reach agreement about the underlying problems they are facing and what they want to do about it.

NATIONAL LEVEL

Civil society partners are involved at every stage of conceptualisation, design and implementation of programme activity. Government agents also receive training and support [after training] in areas such as GIS to increase understanding of the issues at stake and to ensure coherence with ongoing policy processes.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

RFUK works to ensure that community voices are heard in international policy processes and collaborates with relevant technical agencies on areas as diverse as geographic information systems and indigenous peoples' rights.

RAINFOREST FOUNDATION UK

SECURING LANDS, SUSTAINING LIVES

MAPPING FOR RIGHTS

Putting communities on the map

PROGRAMME PARTNERS:

Réseau Ressources Naturelles (RRN)

Groupe d'Action pour Sauver l'Homme et son Environnement (GASHE)

Centre d'Accompagnement de la Population pour le Développement du Mai-Ndombe (CADEM)

Forêts et Développement Rurale (FODER)

Maison de l'Enfant et de la Femmes Pygmées (MEFP)

SUPPORTED BY:

UKaid from the Department for International Development

CONTACT US

For more information please contact us on:

+44 (0)207 485 0193
MappingForRights@rainforestuk.org
www.MappingForRights.org

Printed on 100% Post-Consumer Waste Recycled Paper

