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FINAL EVALUATION
ILLUCBF PROJECT - DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



Dr Lys Alcayna-Stevens, Tilly Alcayna, Suzanne Philipps
18 September 2019

GASHE ONGD
CAGDFT
RESEAU CREF
APEM asbl
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Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the enthusiastic participation of the communities in Equateur Province, namely Ilinga, Irebu, Ilebo, Bofekalasumba and Inganda. The thoughtful feedback provided by residents of these communities was invaluable to this work.

Thank you to the entire RFUK, CAGDFT, and GASHE teams for your dedicated support of this project, provision of resources, and sharing of knowledge. We would also like to thank PREP-PYG, RCREF, APEM, Armelle Guignier, Guy-Patrice Dkamela, and Well Grounded for their insights. A special thank you to Georges Tchatchambe for his unwavering enthusiasm and support to the overall project and accompaniment of the evaluation team to the communities during this evaluation. Sincere gratitude is also extended to Theophile Gata and Victor Kangela for their kindness and support in Kinshasa. Thank you also to Joseph, Tito, Raymond, Barthelemy, Maurice, Jean-Louis, Mass, and Julien.

Disclaimer

This report has been funded by the UK government. The information contained in this report is the sole responsibility of its authors and does not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

Cette recherche a été financée par UK Aid, l'agence d'aide du gouvernement britannique, cependant les opinions exprimées ne représentent pas nécessairement le point de vue du gouvernement du Royaume-Uni.

FINAL EVALUATION
ILLUCBF PROJECT - DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Project Name	Improving Livelihoods and Land-use in Congo Basin Forests Fund
Country	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Implementing organisations	RFUK, Well Grounded, InCap, CAGDFT, GASHE, RCREF, PREPPYG, APEM
Focal areas	Provincial (Equateur, North Kivu) and National
Date of project	1 April 2016 - 30 September 2019
Date of evaluation	17 June - 31 August 2019
Donor	Department for International Devleopment (DfID)
Project grant	5,675,783 GBP
Co-financing	n/a

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FINAL EVALUATION OF ILLUCBF PROJECT DRC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY i

1. INTRODUCTION 1

2. BACKGROUND 5

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS 10

- 3.1 RELEVANCE 10
- 3.2 APPROPRIATENESS 11
- 3.3 PROJECT DESIGN 14
- 3.4 EFFICIENCY 16
- 3.5 EFFECTIVENESS 21
- 3.6 IMPACT 27
- 3.7 PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT 31
- 3.8 EQUITY 32
- 3.9 SUSTAINABILITY 33
- 3.10 REPLICABILITY 34
- 3.11 INFORMATION DISSEMINATION 35
- 3.12 RISK 35

4. LESSONS LEARNED 40

5. RECOMMENDATIONS 41

6. CONCLUSION 44

GLOSSARY

APAs	Autorités Politico-Administratives
APEM	Association pour la Protection des Peuples et des Espèces Menacés
BAD	Banque Africaine de Développement
CAGDFT	Centre d'Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts Tropicales
CCPF	Conseil Consultatif Provincial des Forêts
CF/FC	Community Forestry / Foresterie Communautaire
CFCL	Concessions Forestières des Communautés Locales
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFC	Division de la Foresterie Communautaire
DGF	Direction Générale de la Foresterie
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GASHE	Group d'Action pour Sauver l'Homme et son Environnement
GTF	Groupe de Travail Forêts
ILLUCBF	Improving Livelihoods and Land-use in Congo Basin Forests
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
LUP	Land-use planning
MEDD	Ministère de l'Environnement et Développement Durable de la République Démocratique du Congo
MATRV	Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et Rénovation des Villes
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PREPPYG	Association Paysanne pour la Réhabilitation et la Protection des Pygmées
RCA	Représentant Coutumièrement Attitré
RECO	Relais Communautaires
RCREF	Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers
RRN	Réseau Ressources Naturelles
RFN	Rainforest Foundation Norway
RFUK	Rainforest Foundation UK
SMP	Simple Management Plan
SNFC	National Strategy on Community Forestry

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The only project which has helped community forestry in DRC is RFUK and partners, there have been millions of dollars spent by other organisations but only RFUK and partners have really helped" **Chef de Division, Division Foresterie Communautaire**

The evaluation of the Improving Livelihoods and Land-use in Congo Basin Forests (ILLUCBF) project was undertaken from June to August 2019 by a team of three independent external evaluators, based on the terms of reference provided by Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK). The research was conducted according to a qualitative methodology which included systematic desk-based study of all key project documentation, interviews with all project partners, and other national-, provincial- and local-level stakeholders, an in-country workshop with partners and other stakeholders, site visits in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to 5 of the 10 pilot sites, and 18 focus group discussions (FGDs) with nearly 100 members of targeted communities. In all, 168 participants (stakeholders and partners) were interviewed for this evaluation.

Overall, this evaluation concludes that the ILLUCBF project is well-conceived and highly relevant, and that its implementation was effective. Its objectives were ambitious: (1) to improve livelihoods of forest dependent communities and reduce deforestation in DRC through piloting and demonstrating scalable models of community forest management; (2) to reinforce the capacities of national and local authorities so that they can administer, support and monitor community forests; (3) to reinforce the capacities of national civil society partner organisations so that they have the organisational and technical capacity to advocate in favour of pro-poor community forests; (4) to establish a recognised national forum for community forest issues in DRC. Despite the challenging context in which this project was undertaken, the outcomes achieved were remarkable, and even exceeded expectations in some cases.

The ILLUCBF project builds on RFUK's award-winning 'Mapping for Rights' (CGF) project (2012-2017) and some of its success can surely be attributed to the long-term engagement the project partners have had with communities at the project's pilot sites. The evaluation results indicate that where communities did not previously have a strategy on how to use their customary forest to improve livelihoods, following their integration in the project, there have been significant positive impacts on sustainable forest use, community solidarity, local income-generating activities, and community-based development initiatives. The results also indicate that previously marginalised community members, such as women and indigenous populations (IPs) are both integrated and empowered.

One of the greatest strengths of the project lies in its multi-pronged approach and its attention to stakeholders and processes at various levels. The establishment of national and provincial roundtables provided a highly effective forum of dialogue amongst stakeholders (state, private, NGO, civil society) and the opportunity to share learning and experiences and ensure that consensus was built. This had never before been undertaken in DRC and was lauded by all stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation. As a direct result of the national Roundtables, the national strategy was developed and the government agreed to start a 5-year experimental phase during which pilot CFCLs would be set up and the process would be documented in order to

draw lessons on effectiveness and keys to the success of the CFCLs. Other impacts included the monitoring of threats to community forestry, which helped illustrate to local government the types of mismanagement that could arise; the monitoring and reporting on human rights abuses in and around protected areas; and the development of protocols, tools and guides which can be used again and by other organisations.

These successes were possible because of the expertise and synergy of the project's consortium partners: national-level civil society organisations focusing on advocacy (CAGDFT, APEM), local environment and sustainable development NGOs (GASHE, RCREF, PREPPYG), and partners specialised in providing organisational development for African civil society organisations (Well Grounded) and administration (InCap). The consortium members played an essential role in the advocacy group which pushed for the DRC to sign the Community Forestry Decree in 2014 (2 August 2014) and to adopt Arrêté 025 on 9 February 2016. This legal change forms the bedrock of the project under evaluation, which is all the more impressive given that the project was conceived before the Arrêté was adopted.

It was well understood that this was a new regulatory environment and experimental phase for the government of DRC, which had not yet developed the resources or capacity to effectively administer and manage community forests. Indeed, the outputs of the ILLUCBF project are particularly commendable given the challenging circumstances under which it was implemented. Overall the project made adequate risk assessments and effectively analysed and mitigated for potential risks. However, they could not have predicted two Ebola outbreaks (one in each of the provinces where the project's pilot sites are located), a presidential election which took two years to be organised and led to extended instability throughout the country and lengthy internet shutdowns, and the fact that three partners left the consortium in the early stages of the project. Despite these challenges, good coordination and feedback loops among actors allowed them to intervene early when issues arose and turn them into opportunities – for example, the loss of two partners was turned into an opportunity to expand to North Kivu and connect with new partners.

This was an extremely ambitious project given the time frame of the project, and whilst it succeeded in obtaining six of the ten CFCLs applied for it only succeeded in accompanying one of the pilot communities to the simple management plan phase. The most urgent recommendation of this evaluation is therefore that further funding be secured so that all pilot communities can be accompanied to this final management stage while the experimental phase (2018-23) declared by the DRC government is still underway. To fail to do so, would be to fail to see all these achievements come to full fruition. There have already been real improvements in the livelihoods of forest dependent communities, and their ownership and initiative suggests that if the project can accompany them to the management phase, it stands to leave autonomous and sustainable community management of forest resources in DRC.

CRITERION	EVALUATOR'S SUMMARY COMMENTS	EVALUATOR RATING
Relevance	This project is well-conceived and highly relevant. At the international level, climate change mitigation and the sustainable management of rainforest environments is a global priority. At the regional level, the project is in line with other initiatives (such as CARPE) which seek to promote sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation in the Congo Basin through increased local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity.	Highly Satisfactory

CRITERION	EVALUATOR'S SUMMARY COMMENTS	EVALUATOR RATING
Appropriateness	The approach and strategy of this project were very appropriate for both the national DRC context, and the local community context. Pilot CF sites in both the east and west of the country contribute to the project's truly country-wide approach.	Highly Satisfactory
Project Design	The project design was ambitious, but well thought out in a context in which much remained uncertain. The design had enough flexibility that it managed to overcome issues related to the loss of partners during the course of the project.	Highly Satisfactory
Efficiency	The training component and monitoring and reporting were both highly satisfactory, but there were some problems with coordination	Satisfactory
Effectiveness	Output 1: Whilst too early to determine if CF is a viable model, the basis of the approach to CF has been achieved through validation of this project as the model approach in the National Strategy on Community Forestry (SNFC) and Operational Guide and positive impacts (such as stronger community ownership) in the pilot sites. Output 2: This output has been achieved as there now exists an enabling legal, policy and institutional framework at the national level and in pilot provinces on CF. Output 3: Organisational development is hugely important in the Congo Basin context and was successfully achieved. Output 4: In total four National Roundtables and five Provincial Roundtables were convened, as part of this specific project, and very well attended. The Roundtables were significantly refined, and are highly valued by the State and other actors as a means to allow discussion of issues, share learning and experiences, and ensure consensus was built.	Satisfactory
Impact	The impacts were outstanding despite this being an extremely ambitious objective given the time frame of the project. Whilst too early to be able to show impacts in livelihoods or deforestation, progress towards these long-term impacts is demonstrated. The considerable work delivered in a holistic and multi-layered approach enabled the development of an environment in which CF can work. Furthermore, this was an extremely innovative project; the Operational Guide for the Simple Management Plan had only recently been approved, and consortium members were at the forefront of contributing to that.	Highly Satisfactory
Participation and Empowerment	There was real appropriation of the CFCL by communities, which is a highly commendable feat in the DRC context.	Highly Satisfactory
Equity	The assessment, due to logistical constraints, focused principally on the work of the local NGO GASHE. It was clear that GASHE had encouraged participation of women and typically marginalised ethnic groups, as well as seeking to reduce conflict and integrate and educate neighbours. This trickled down to creating a sense of community and unity more broadly.	Highly Satisfactory

CRITERION	EVALUATOR'S SUMMARY COMMENTS	EVALUATOR RATING
Sustainability	Several communities have shown the initiative to proceed to the next step without being directed by GASHE, suggesting that if they can be accompanied through the management phase, the project stands to leave behind autonomous and sustainable community management.	Highly Satisfactory
Replicability	The consortium constantly re-evaluated and adapted their strategy during this experimental phase and the results were a great success. Part of this success was due to the fact that they were attempting to build something durable and replicable, and that great emphasis was put on developing protocols, tools and guides which can be used again and by other organisations.	Highly Satisfactory
Risk	Overall the project made adequate assumptions and effectively analysed and mitigated for potential risks. Two major unanticipated events occurred in the course of the project, namely: three partners leaving the consortium; and an Ebola Viral Disease (EVD) epidemic took place in Equateur (May – July 2018) and in North Kivu (August 2018 – present).	Highly Satisfactory

RESUME

« Le seul projet qui ait aidé la foresterie communautaire en RDC est RFUK et ses partenaires. Des millions de dollars ont été dépensés par d'autres organisations, mais seuls RFUK et ses partenaires ont vraiment aidé »

Chef de Division, Division Foresterie Communautaire

L'évaluation du projet ILLUCBF (Amélioration des moyens de subsistance et de l'utilisation des terres dans les forêts du bassin du Congo) a été entreprise de juin à août 2019 par une équipe de trois évaluateurs externes indépendants, sur la base du mandat fourni par Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK). La recherche a été menée selon une méthodologie qualitative comprenant une étude théorique systématique de tous les documents clés du projet, des entretiens avec tous les partenaires du projet et d'autres parties prenantes aux niveaux national, provincial et local, un atelier dans le pays avec les partenaires, des visites de sites en RD Congo dans 5 des 10 sites pilotes et 18 discussions de groupe avec près de 100 membres des communautés ciblées. Au total, 168 participants (parties prenantes et partenaires) ont été interrogés pour cette évaluation.

Globalement, cette évaluation conclut que le projet ILLUCBF est bien conçu et très pertinent, et que sa mise en œuvre a été efficace. Ses objectifs étaient ambitieux: (1) améliorer les moyens de subsistance des communautés tributaires de la forêt et réduire la déforestation en RDC par le biais de projets pilotes et de démonstrations de modèles évolutifs de gestion communautaire des forêts; (2) renforcer les capacités des autorités nationales et locales afin qu'elles puissent administrer, soutenir et surveiller les forêts communautaires; (3) renforcer les capacités des organisations nationales partenaires de la société civile afin qu'elles aient la capacité organisationnelle et technique de plaider en faveur de forêts communautaires favorables aux pauvres; (4) établir un forum national reconnu pour les questions relatives aux forêts communautaires en RDC. Malgré le contexte difficile dans lequel ce projet a été entrepris, les résultats obtenus ont été remarquables et ont même dépassé les attentes dans certains cas.

Le projet ILLUCBF s'appuie sur le projet primé « Cartographie pour la Gestion Forestière » (CGF) (2012-2017) de RFUK. Une partie de son succès peut certainement être attribuée à l'engagement à long terme des partenaires du projet avec les communautés lors du projet pilote des sites. Les résultats de l'évaluation indiquent que là où ils n'avaient pas encore de stratégie sur la façon d'utiliser leur forêt coutumière pour améliorer leurs moyens de subsistance, leur intégration au projet a eu des effets positifs importants sur l'utilisation durable des forêts, la solidarité communautaire, les activités locales génératrices de revenus, et les initiatives de développement communautaires. Les résultats indiquent également que des membres de la communauté auparavant marginalisés, tels que les femmes et les populations autochtones, sont à la fois intégrés et responsabilisés.

L'une des principales forces du projet réside dans son approche multidimensionnelle et son attention portée aux parties prenantes et aux processus à différents niveaux. La mise en place de tables rondes nationales et provinciales a fourni un forum très efficace de dialogue entre les parties prenantes (État, secteur privé,

ONG, société civile) et la possibilité de partager des expériences et de garantir la création d'un consensus. Cela n'avait jamais été entrepris auparavant en RDC et a été salué par toutes les parties prenantes interrogées pour l'évaluation. Suite aux tables rondes nationales, la stratégie nationale a été élaborée et le gouvernement a décidé de lancer une phase expérimentale de cinq ans au cours de laquelle un programme pilote de CFCL serait établi et le processus documenté afin de tirer des enseignements sur l'efficacité et les clés de la réussite et du succès des CFCL. Parmi les autres impacts, citons la surveillance des menaces pesant sur la foresterie communautaire, qui a permis d'illustrer aux autorités locales les types de mauvaise gestion qui pourraient survenir. Citons aussi le signalement aux autorités d'informations faisant état de violations des droits de l'homme dans et autour des aires protégées, ainsi que l'élaboration de protocoles, d'outils et de guides qui peuvent être utilisés à nouveau et par d'autres organisations.

Ces succès ont été possibles grâce à l'expertise et à la synergie des partenaires du consortium du projet: des organisations de la société civile au niveau national qui se concentrent sur le plaidoyer (CAGDFT, APEM), des ONGs locales pour l'environnement et le développement durable (GASHE, RCREF, PREPPYG) et des partenaires spécialisés dans le développement organisationnel d'organisations de la société civile africaine (InCap et Well Grounded). Les membres du consortium ont joué un rôle essentiel dans le groupe de plaidoyer qui a poussé la RDC à signer le décret sur la foresterie communautaire en 2014 (2 août 2014) et à adopter l'arrêté 025 le 9 février 2016. Cette modification juridique constitue le fondement du projet en cours d'évaluation, ce qui est d'autant plus im-pressionnant que le projet a été conçu avant l'arrêté.

Il était bien compris qu'il s'agissait d'un nouvel environnement réglementaire et d'une phase expérimentale pour le gouvernement de la RDC, qui n'avait pas encore développé les ressources ou la capacité pour administrer et gérer efficacement les forêts communautaires. En effet, les résultats du projet ILLUCBF sont particulièrement louables étant donné les circonstances difficiles dans lesquelles il a été mis en œuvre. Globalement, le projet a procédé à des évaluations des risques adéquates et à une analyse et à une atténuation efficace des risques potentiels. Cependant, il n'aurait pas pu prédire deux épidémies d'Ebola (une dans chacune des provinces où se trouvent les sites pilotes du projet), une élection présidentielle qui a pris deux ans à s'organiser et a conduit à une instabilité prolongée dans tout le pays et à de longues coupures d'Internet, et le fait que trois partenaires ont quitté le consortium au tout début du projet. Malgré ces défis, une bonne coordination et des boucles de rétroaction entre les acteurs leur ont permis d'intervenir tôt lorsque des problèmes se posaient et de les transformer en opportunités - par exemple, la perte de deux partenaires a été transformée en une opportunité pour s'étendre au Nord-Kivu et se connecter avec de nouveaux partenaires.

Il s'agissait d'un projet extrêmement ambitieux compte tenu de son calendrier, et il n'a pas réussi à accompagner toutes les communautés pilotes de la phase du simple plan de gestion. La recommandation la plus urgente de cette évaluation est donc que des fonds supplémentaires soient obtenus de manière à ce que toutes les communautés pilotes puissent être accompagnées jusqu'à la dernière étape de gestion alors que la phase expérimentale (2018-2023) déclarée par le gouvernement de la RDC est toujours en cours. Ne pas le faire, ce serait ne pas voir toutes ces avancées se réaliser pleinement. Les moyens de subsistance des communautés tributaires de la forêt ont déjà été réellement améliorés, et leur appropriation et leur initiative suggèrent que si le projet peut les accompagner jusqu'à la phase de gestion, il devrait laisser une gestion communautaire autonome et durable des ressources forestières en RDC.

CRITERE	RÉSUMÉ DES COMMENTAIRES DE L'ÉVALUATEUR	EVALUATION
Pertinence	Ce projet est bien conçu et très pertinent. Au niveau international, l'atténuation des changements climatiques et la gestion durable des forêts tropicales est une priorité mondiale. Au niveau régional, le projet est en ligne avec d'autres initiatives (comme le CARPE) visant à promouvoir la gestion durable des forêts, la conservation de la biodiversité et l'atténuation des changements climatiques dans le bassin du Congo grâce à un renforcement des capacités locales, nationales et régionales de gestion des ressources naturelles.	Très satisfaisant

CRITERE	RÉSUMÉ DES COMMENTAIRES DE L'ÉVALUATEUR	EVALUATION
A-propos	L'approche et la stratégie de ce projet sont très approprié à la fois au contexte national de la RDC et au contexte communautaire local. Les sites pilotes FC à l'est et à l'ouest du pays contribuent à l'approche vraiment nationale du projet.	Très satisfaisant
Conception	La conception du projet était ambitieuse, mais bien pensée dans un contexte très incertain. La conception avait assez de flexibilité pour réussir à surmonter les problèmes liés à la perte de partenaires au cours du projet.	Très satisfaisant
Efficacité	Les volets de formation, suivi et rapportage étaient très satisfaisants, mais il y avait quelques problèmes de coordination.	Satisfaisant
Efficience	Résultat 1: Bien qu'il soit trop tôt pour déterminer si FC est un modèle viable, la base de l'approche a la FC a été obtenu grâce à la validation de ce projet en tant qu'approche modèle de la Stratégie Nationale sur la Foresterie Communautaire (SNFC) et le Guide Opérationnel et les positif impacts (tels que le renforcement de l'appropriation par la communauté) dans les sites pilotes. Résultat 2: Ce resultat a été réalisé puisqu'il existe un cadre juridique, politique et institutionnel favorable au niveau national et dans les provinces pilotes en matière de FC. Résultat 3: Le développement organisationnel est extrêmement important dans le contexte du bassin du Congo et a été atteint. Résultat 4: Au total, quatre Tables Rondes nationales et cinq Tables Rondes provinciales ont été convoquées dans le cadre de ce projet spécifique, et elles étaient très bien fréquentées. Les tables rondes ont été considérablement raffinées et sont très appréciées par l'État, ainsi que d'autres acteurs, comme moyen de permettre discussion des problèmes, partage des apprentissages et des expériences, et assurer qu'un consensus émerge.	Satisfaisant
Impact	Les impacts ont été exceptionnels malgré le fait que cet objectif été extrêmement ambitieux compte tenu des délais du projet. Bien qu'il soit trop tôt pour pouvoir montrer les impacts sur les moyens de subsistance ou sur la déforestation, le progrès vers ces impacts à long terme a été démontré. Le travail considérable délivré dans une approche holistique et multicouche a permis de développer un environnement dans lequel la FC peut réussir. En outre, ce projet est extrêmement innovant; le guide opérationnel du Plan Simple de Gestion n'ayant été approuvé que récemment (les membres du consortium ont été à l'avant-garde pour contribuer a cela).	Très satisfaisant
Participation et Responsabilisation	Il y avait une réelle appropriation de la CFCL par les communautés, ce qui est un exploit hautement louable dans le contexte de la RDC.	Très satisfaisant

CRITERE	RÉSUMÉ DES COMMENTAIRES DE L'ÉVALUATEUR	EVALUATION
Equité	L'évaluation, en raison de contraintes logistiques, a porté principalement sur le travail du partenaire, GASHE. Il était clair que GASHE avait encouragé la participation des femmes et des groupes ethniques généralement marginalisés, tout en cherchant à réduire les conflits et intégrer et éduquer les voisins. Cette approche s'est répandue pour créer un sentiment de communauté et d'unité.	Très satisfaisant
Viabilité	Plusieurs communautés ont montré l'initiative de passer à l'étape suivante sans être dirigées par GASHE, suggérant que si elles pouvaient être accompagnées toute au long de la phase de gestion, le projet pourrait laisser une gestion communautaire autonome et durable.	Très satisfaisant
Réplicabilité	Le consortium a constamment réévalué et adapté sa stratégie au cours de cette phase expérimentale et les résultats ont été un grand succès. Une partie de ce succès est lié au fait qu'ils ont essayé de construire quelque chose de durable et réplicable, et que beaucoup d'emphase a été mise sur le développement de protocoles, d'outils et de guides qui pourront être utilisé à nouveau et par d'autres organisations.	Très satisfaisant
Risque	Globalement, le projet a formulé des hypothèses adéquates et a été analysé efficacement par rapport aux risques potentiels. Deux événements majeurs imprévus se sont produits au cours du projet, à savoir : trois partenaires ont quitté le consortium ; et une épidémie de maladie a virus Ebola a eu lieu en Equateur (mai – juillet 2018) et au Nord Kivu (aout 2018 – le présent).	Très satisfaisant



Ilinga forest (Equateur Province) Children walking to the river to collect water. © Tilly Alcayna (2019).

I. INTRODUCTION

The UK Department for International Development (DfID) has granted funds to the Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK), under the 'Improving Livelihoods and Land-use in Congo Basin Forests' (ILLUCBF) programme, to implement a 3.5 years community forests (CF) project in DRC (1st April 2016 – 30th September 2019).

The project was designed by a consortium of DRC and international NGOs composed of RFUK (lead), Forest Monitor, Global Witness, Well Grounded, Réseau Ressources Naturelles (RRN), Group d'Action pour Sauver l'Homme et son Environnement (GASHE), and Centre d'Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts Tropicales (CAGDFT).

The programme was finally implemented by Rainforest UK (RFUK), Well Grounded, InCap, CAGDFT, GASHE, Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers (RCREF), their sub-partner, Association Paysanne pour la Réhabilitation et la Protection des Pygmées (PREPPYG), and l'Association pour la Protection des Peuples et des Espèces Menacés (APEM).

The intended impact of the project was to improve livelihoods of forest dependent communities and reduce deforestation in DRC through piloting and demonstrating scalable models of community forest management which respond to the differing needs of local communities and marginalised groups and is integrated into DRC's land-use planning.

1.1 PURPOSE & SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation of the ILLUCBF project was undertaken from June to August 2019 by a team of three independent external evaluators based on the terms of reference provided by RFUK (Annex 1).

The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Evaluate the project from its design to its implementation, with a focus on the impact of interventions and outcomes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
- Make relevant recommendations for the RFUK and for partner organisations in DRC and inform future work as RFUK seeks to expand its community forestry work in DRC and the wider Congo Basin.

The main purpose of this evaluation is to examine the magnitude and reach of the project to date and to determine the likelihood of future impacts (Annex 2). The evaluation will also assess the performance of the project (in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability), the implementation of planned project activities and planned outputs against actual results, and examine the level of participation, empowerment and equity of the approach.

More specifically, the evaluation seeks to assess whether the project has achieved its four primary outputs:

Output 1: Pilots contribute to community forests being formally recognised as viable models of pro-poor, sustainable community forest management at scale through the establishment of up to 5 pilot community forest sites (later revised to 10 pilot community sites).

Output 2: The capacities of the national DRC government, Ministère de l'Environnement de du Développement Durable (MEDD), and pilot-based local authorities are sufficiently developed to administer, support and monitor community forests and to improve the legal and policy framework for community-based forest management.

Output 3: National civil society partner organisations have increased organisational and technical capacity to advocate in favour of pro-poor community forests as well as on meaningfully large-scale threats to its development, and are able to participate meaningfully as a stakeholder to promote the development of community forestry and related processes.

Output 4: Pilots contribute to the functioning of a recognised national forum for community forest issues

in DRC, allowing for exchange of information, building consensus and helping to ensure a controlled and rational development of the concept, and informing wider LUP and land policy processes and reform.

The evaluation covers the full duration of the project from its starting date on 1 April 2016 until August 2019 when the project had transitioned into closing off. This evaluation was conducted before the final date of the project contract (30 September 2019) to ensure that relevant staff were still available for interview and review.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach was used to ensure an evidence-based qualitative and quantitative assessment. This included a systematic desk-based study of all key project documentation (project log-frame, project plans, six-monthly progress reports, methodology and training documentation, publications, statements, summaries of key outputs); semi-structured interviews with consortium members and non-consortium key stakeholders (in person or via Skype); a one-day workshop held in Kinshasa which convened relevant consortium and non-consortium stakeholders; focus group discussions with pilot communities; and direct observations of the work achieved at pilot sites.

Interviews were conducted in the form of open discussions following the guiding questions in the ToR, which were complemented by additional questions developed by the evaluation team. Data was analysed and synthesised independently by consultants to provide evidence-based recommendations.

The in-country visit to DRC took place from 9 July to 6 August 2019 (see Annex 3 for the full timetable of activities and breakdown of participants). In total, 168 participants were interviewed as part of this study, of which 37 were women, and 4 were Batwa.

The workshop brought together five different consortium partners: CAGDFT, APEM, GASHE, RCREF and PREPPYG, and also non-consortium key stakeholders including Conseil pour la Défense Environnementale par la Légalité et la Traçabilité (CODELT) and Groupe de Travail Forêts (GTF), and stimulated discussion and evaluation of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability risks, and recommendations (Annex 4). Interviews were then conducted with all consortiums partners in order to deepen discussion on the issues raised during the workshop.

Interviews were conducted with relevant politico-administrative authorities at the national, provincial and local levels. In Kinshasa, interviews were conducted with the Secretary General of the Ministry of the Environment, the Director of the Direction Générale de la Foresterie (DGF), and staff of the Direction de la Foresterie Communautaire (DFC). In Mbandaka, interviews were conducted with the Provincial Minister for the Environment, the Counsellor and Director of the Minister for the Environment's cabinet, the Provincial Coordinator for the Environment, and the civil society organisation GTF. In each territory and sector, interviews were conducted with the Territorial Administrator, the Sector Chef and the state agents working on environmental issues at the sectoral level, i.e. those directly responsible for investigations related to the attribution of community forestry titles.

Due to current security constraints and ebola risk in visiting the pilot community sites in North Kivu, it was only possible to visit pilot community sites in Equateur Province. Of the eight possible sites in Equateur Province, five pilot community sites (Ilebo, Ilinga, Irebu, Bofekalasumba, Inganda) were visited. The sites were chosen because they represented a range of different sectors, two different experimental approaches (i.e. piloting LUP before or after attribution of the CFCL), and a range of stages along the community forestry process.

In Ilebo, Ilinga and Bofelakalasumba 4-6 focus group discussions (FGDs) (Annex 5) of 5-6 community members were held with the following groups:

- Comité de Suivi, Comité de Gestion, Conseils de Sages
- Cartographers and land-use planners
- Customary community representatives (RCAs)
- Community leaders

- Women
- Professionals

After presenting themselves to the whole community, evaluators allowed community members to choose the participants for the focus groups themselves. It was recommended that at least one woman be chosen for each group, but a separate focus group was held with women in order to have a more balanced perspective on gender issues. Professionals (teachers and health workers) are often from other villages, and so they were interviewed both in order to understand their integration in community forestry and to elicit their opinions on community projects, which often focus on the improvement of schools and health centres. Within the 'community leaders' group, leaders from neighbouring villages and camps were included in order to target the widest possible range of perspectives.

In Irebu and Inganda, due to time constraints, FGDs were held only with the Comité de Suivi, Comité de Gestion, Conseil des Sages.

FGDs lasted approximately an hour and were conducted in Lingala without the need for translation, as one of the external evaluators speaks the language fluently.

Overall evaluation rankings were based on the six-point rating scale (high satisfactory to highly unsatisfactory) according to Global Environment Facility Guidelines[1]:

- Highly satisfactory: Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and there were no shortcomings
- Satisfactory: Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were only minor shortcomings.
- Moderately satisfactory: Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate short comings.
- Moderately unsatisfactory: Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings.
- Unsatisfactory: Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major shortcomings.
- Highly unsatisfactory: Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings.
- Unable to assess: The available information does now allow assessment of the level of outcome achievements.

1.3 LIMITATIONS

Due to security constraints, the evaluators were unable to visit the North Kivu pilot community sites. However, community representatives and an politico-administrative authority (APA) from the sectoral level (along with RCREF and PREPPYG) attended the workshop and were interviewed after the workshop.

Due to time constraints, the evaluators were unable to visit all community pilot sites and are therefore unable to comment on perspectives from all sites. Perspectives quoted herein refer only to the specific communities visited in Equateur Province. However, APAs and community animators working with communities not visited were interviewed.

1. GEF (2017) Guidelines for Global Environment Facility Agencies in Conducting Terminal Evaluations for Full-sized Projects.



Inganda (Equateur Province) Women and children join for the community meeting. © Tilly Alcayna (2019).

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 FORESTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Democratic Republic of Congo is home to the second largest area of rainforest in the world (an estimated 100 million hectares in 2016)[2] accounting for more than half of the rainforest in the Congo Basin. Approximately 35 million Congolese depend on the forest for income, food, water, building materials and traditional medicine. DRC is also a biological hotspot, being the 5th most biodiverse country on earth. Designated parks and conservation areas occupy around 18 million hectares, or 11% of the national territory, though most of these exist only on paper and are unsuccessfully policed and managed.[3][4] The Congolese state has pledged to increase this to 17% by 2020.

Hyperinflation, nationalisation and declining infrastructure during Mobutu's dictatorship (1965-1997) and, the civil wars which followed (1996-2003) meant that relatively little of DRC's forests had been exploited industrially before 2002. With the establishment of a transitional government in 2002, the international community, led by the World Bank, pushed for the rebuilding of the country's political institutions and economy and encouraged foreign investment. Consequently, the new legal framework for Forestry (The Forest Code) was adopted in 2002.

2.2 FOREST COMMUNITIES IN DRC

Given the very long period of human habitation, management and adaptation of DRC's forests, and the diverse ethnic composition of the current human inhabitants, there is a dense and complex pattern of traditional ownership and use of forest resources over much of the country. Within each of the broad categories of 'Bantu' agriculturalists and the various 'Pygmy' hunter-gatherers, there are marked differences and complexities of traditional land tenure regimes, and the two broad systems often overlap, with many 'Bantu' peoples hunting and gathering extensively in their forests, and many sedentary 'Pygmy' peoples, working on their own as well as 'Bantu' agricultural fields.

2.3 FOREST-RELATED LEGAL FRAMEWORK PRIOR TO THE 2002 FOREST CODE

In DRC, the basic land tenure regime reflects the 1967 Bakajika Law and the 1973 Land Tenure Law. The former suppressed all forms of private land ownership, asserting that the state had "full ownership rights over its domain and full sovereignty in conceding rights to land to up to 20 kilometres, forests and mines through the extent of its territory". The 1973 Law allowed for certain types of 'permanent private concession' and recognised that customary laws apply to user rights over 'non-allocated lands in rural areas'. The 2002 Code does not modify the 1973 Land Law and continues to assert state ownership over all areas of forest.

Prior to the adoption of the present Forest Code, the basic legal framework for forestry was provided by a decree dating from 1949, and two decrees dating from 1950. Under the 1949 forest regulation, the government had complete discretion to issue 'authorisations for prospecting', in an area defined by the company itself, which were usually converted immediately into 25-year exploitation permits.[5]

The World Bank had a major influence on the development of forest policy in DRC since the return of relative peace to DRC in 2002. The development of the Forest Code was supported and encouraged by the World Bank, which made the release of a $15 million 'forest sector tranche' of a structural credit in May 2002 conditional on its adoption. The resulting code is very similar to the

2. Retrieved on 11 September 2019 www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/drc
3. Counsell, S. (2006) Forest Governance in the DRC. An NGO Perspective. FERN UK. https://loggingoff.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/84.pdf
4. Mapping for Rights (retrieved on 5 August 2019) www.mappingforrights.org/Democratic_Republic_of_Congo
5. Counsell, S. (2006) Forest Governance in the DRC. An NGO Perspective. FERN UK. https://loggingoff.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/84.pdf

Forest Law that the Bank developed for Cameroon in 1994. There was limited consultation over the Forest Code development, and few people other than senior officials in the Ministry of Environment were aware of its development.

2.4 THE 2002 FOREST CODE

The 2002 Forest Code sets out the basis for the industrialisation of DRC's forests, without making provision for hunter-gatherer communities – both Bantu and indigenous people (IPs). A number of implementation decrees were developed to fill its gaps, and appropriate institutional structures established to put the decrees into force. Reflecting the emphasis on large-scale commercial forest exploitation, most of the decrees passed between 2002 and 2014 related to the industrial 'concessions system', leaving community forestry, management of non-timber forest products, and relationships between communities and logging companies in a legal vacuum.

Given the extremely low value of the 'forest area tax' (and the 'compensations' that companies give directly to communities under their signed agreements, or 'cahiers de charges') introduced under the Forest Code compared to the potential value of timber, the timber industry ended up making only a small contribution to the development process in rural DRC, while immense profits accrued to the timber operators and the political elites with whom they worked.

2.5 LOGGING COMPANY TENURES AND THE LOGGING MORATORIUM

In the period during and following the wars of 1996-2001, approximately 40 million hectares of felling 'permits' were issued. In April 2002, under pressure from the World Bank, 143 logging permits were the subject of ministerial bylaws, effectively cancelling 23.4 million hectares of logging operations. The following month, also under pressure from the World Bank, a Ministerial Decree was re-issued prohibiting the issuing of any new logging permits. The intention was that, under the Forest Code that was then under development, the designation of 'logging permits' would be removed. Following a review of the remaining permits, and on completion of all the legal decrees necessary to implement the new Code, the remaining valid permits would be 'converted' into new-style forestry 'concessions', and the moratorium would be lifted. In practice, however, in contravention of the new Code and the May 2002 moratorium, 'concessions' continued to be granted. As a result of this, and once again under pressure from the World Bank, the Moratorium on the issuing of new logging allocations was restated in a new Presidential Decree in October 2005. However, between May 2002 and November 2005, around 17 million hectares of logging permits had either been issued or re-issued.[6] It is quite probable that many of the 'concessions' that were allocated in breach of the moratorium went to members of the political elite, representing valuable 'currency' in the re-shaping of Congo's political structure after the civil war.

As of March 2006, between 17 and 25 million hectares of DRC's forests remained under 'concession' or permits. The Congolese logging industry talks persuasively about how it will bring healthcare, schools, roads and trade into remote areas. Most local communities in the forest zones have suffered years of desperate poverty and hardship, have little or no experience of dealing with logging companies, and are eagerly awaiting a better life. There is a lack of a coherent land-use planning approach towards land management, and the ILLUCBF project therefore has a land-use planning component looking at how community forestry can be embedded into a more comprehensive land-use planning approach

2.6 COMMUNITY CONCESSIONS

Sustainable forest management and strict nature conservation are the two predominant approaches taken to forest management in the past. However, the 2005 logging moratorium has been ineffective and the trickle-down effects of "sustainable logging" have been few (taxes are too low). Companies are required to make contributions to rural development. However, tensions continue to grow between forest communities and forestry companies, who do not always respect these laws, and real community-based forest governance has so far proved illusory. Protected area approaches have also demonstrated poor results. A RFUK study based on 34 protected areas shows "unacceptable impacts on local peoples' livelihoods, human rights and land rights"

6. Counsell, S. (2006) Forest Governance in the DRC. An NGO Perspective. FERN UK. https://loggingoff.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/84.pdf

and no considerable impact on biodiversity (namely megafauna decline).[7] On the other hand, increasing evidence shows that formalising customary land tenure systems is one of the most effective strategies to protect forests and tackle poverty.

2.7 THE 2014 DECREE

The decree n° 14/018 of the 2nd of August 2014 fixes the modalities through which customary ownership of forests can be turned into formal community forest concessions titles (CFCL). The decree describes the steps to take to obtain a community concession, which include creating a participatory map of the concession created by the community of their customary land, and a community applying at the sectoral level for a concession title of land customarily owned and not the subject of any land tenure conflicts.

2.8 THE 2016 ARRÊTÉ

A bylaw was issued on the 9th of February 2016, describing the conditions for the use and management of forest concessions by local communities. The Arrêté covers key points on: organisational modalities and structures, simple management plans, rules for use of the forest concessions covering all forest activities, measures for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, rules for supervision and monitoring of the concession by local administration, and responsibility of the forest administration at central, provincial and local levels.

The first advantage of this bylaw is that communities set their own rules for forest management in terms of customary management arrangements and specific purposes of the community forests (not limited to logging), e.g. as indigenous and community conserved areas (articles 65 and 67 of the bylaw). In theory, community forests could also provide a basis to channel benefits to communities from REDD+ schemes and other payments for ecosystem services (PES) initiatives. The second advantage is that community tenure is secure: the concessions are granted in perpetuity and cover up to 50,000 ha (much larger than in other countries).

7. RFUK (2017) Community Forests in the Democratic Republic of the Congo https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media.ashx/community-forests-in-drc-web.pdf

Large areas of DRC forest are neither protected areas nor logging concessions and as such could become community concessions.

2.9 NATIONAL FOREST ADMINISTRATION CAPACITY

The capacity of the state to administer the forest sector is extremely weak at all levels. The Ministry is overstaffed, which has led to proliferation of special services and duplication of duties; even the actual number of employees of the Environment Ministry is only estimated by the World Bank as somewhere "between 2,000 and 4,000" employees based outside Kinshasa. Basic technical skills, such as forest management planning, geographical mapping, and forest inventories, are largely lacking. Most often, local forestry officials have no information about current forest laws and policies, and no basic logistical means (such as vehicles, computers or telephones) necessary to undertake their work. As such, the forest administration has little capacity to deal with the proliferation of community concessions.

2.10 MAPPING FOR RIGHTS PROJECT

The 'Mapping for Rights' or 'Mapping and Forest Governance (CGF) project (2012-2017) had already collected a substantial amount of geographical and socio-economic data in Mai Ndombe and Equateur, which significantly facilitated the identification for potential project areas for community forestry (e.g. boundaries and limits of customary land, livelihood activities, access to healthcare & education) and had been implemented by a group of local partners (including GASHE) meaning that strong relations between communities and partners had already been established and could be built upon. The mapping of traditional territories (which until that point had been almost unknown in DRC) has been used as a baseline for communities to claim their rights to lands and community forests.

Customary tenure systems are very well defined and understood at the local level and are widespread across the Congo Basin but are generally poorly documented and receive limited recognition in national law. Despite growing evidence that securing these rights may be one of the best routes to protecting the forest and halting poverty, the political economy of the region has been dominated by a dual model of industrial logging and strict nature conservation, with more

recent expansion in the mining and agro-business sectors. These overlapping claims are leading to land and resource related conflict and the increasing marginalisation of forest people. To date, RFUK's mapping project has supported hundreds of forest communities across the Congo Basin to produce maps of their lands and resources covering over 5 million hectares. In 2016, MappingForRights was recognised by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as part of the UN Momentum for Change awards. This included about 600 communities in DRC, and provided capacity building to thousands of community mappers.

2.11 DFID INTEREST IN SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

The DFID-funded programme in the Congo Basin "CONGOs - Improving Livelihoods and Land-use in Congo Basin Forests" supports Cameroon, DRC, Gabon, the Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic over a period of five years (4 August 2015 -1 August 2020). The objective of the programme is to improve the livelihoods of forest dependent communities and reduce deforestation in the Congo Basin by providing support to forest zoning, independent forest monitoring, civil society advocacy and the strengthening of legal frameworks for community forestry, as well as direct investments in community forest enterprises. The programme expects to support 2.4 million beneficiaries (direct and indirect). The programme aims to have a demonstrable effect, building a body of evidence on Community Forestry in the Congo Basin.[8]

DFID is a lead donor on land sector reform in DRC and globally; its focus in the sector being on devolution of forest land management, and the testing of participatory land-use planning.[9] At present, there are 17 active DFID programmes working on land governance. Budget information for four of the five main land programmes suggests that the overall level of spending on land programmes has risen consistently since 2014/15. The annual budget for these programmes rose from £7.2 million in 2014/15 to £16.6 million in 2015/16 and is expected to reach £26.9 million in 2016/17.[10]

8. IIED (2016) CoNGOs: NGOs collaborating for equitable and sustainable community livelihoods in Congo Basin Forests https://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G04056.pdf
9. RFUK ILLUCBF Project Proposal
10. ODI (2017) 2016 DFID Land Portfolio Overview https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11716.pdf



Ilebo (Equateur Province) Community meeting, focusing on young men.
© Tilly Alcayna (2019)

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 RELEVANCE

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed highly satisfactory. This project is well-conceived and highly relevant. At the international level, climate change mitigation and the sustainable management of rainforest environments is a global priority. At the regional level, the project is in line with other initiatives (such as CARPE) which seek to promote sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation in the Congo Basin through increased local, national, and regional natural resource management capacity.

However, the greatest strength of the project lies in its multi-pronged approach and its attention to actors and processes at the national and local level. Since the introduction of the 2002 Forest Code, the national government – strongly encouraged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank - has been reviewing forest legislation, in order to make community forestry (CF) a reality. Positive experiences and lessons from other contexts, notably Guatemala and Nepal, demonstrated that to achieve self-sustaining community forests, there is the need for a strategy around which the administration can convene.[11]

The consortium members played an essential role in the advocacy group which pushed for the DRC to sign the Community Forestry Decree in 2014 (2 August 2014) and to adopt Arrêté 025 on 9 February 2016. These documents fulfil the demands of the 2002 Forest Code and pave the way for the actualisation of community forest management in DRC. Furthermore, this legal change forms the bedrock of the project under evaluation, even if the project was conceived before the Arrêté was adopted, and while much remained uncertain in DRC's community forestry strategy.

The project aim is to demonstrate viable models of CF management in the DRC, which could provide an alternative forest management model to the other two dominant models: (1) the industrial logging model (also termed the 'sustainable forest management' model) and (2) the conservation model, both of which have been shown to deliver poor outcomes in terms of poverty reduction and biodiversity loss, as well as undermine fundamental human rights.[12]

Large tracts of DRC's forest are used solely by forest communities (for farming, hunting, fishing, and harvesting forest products). Under the new model, these areas would be eligible to become Local Community Forest Concessions (CFCLs).[13] Commercial logging is not permitted on CFCLs, and as such, this model has the potential to contribute to the conservation of forests. Furthermore, when communities are correctly accompanied (as was the case with the communities supported by GASHE which were visited during this evaluation), much of the awareness-raising focuses on the sustainable management of forests, on reducing environmental degradation and on protecting ecosystems and biodiversity. Awareness raising also involves poverty reduction strategies and techniques for stimulating local agricultural production and small-scale projects which promote the economic development of local communities. The project therefore has the potential of empowering local communities and indigenous peoples on a large scale.

While local communities have customary rights to the forest and often have informal forest management

11. RFUK (2014) Rethinking Community Based Forest Management in the Congo Basin. www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media.ashx/rethinkingcommunitybasedforestmanagementinthecongobasinnovember2014.pdf

12. RFUK (2014) New Forest Community Decree in the DRC https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media.ashx/37742-RFUK-CF-Briefing-Statement.pdf

13. ibid.

rules, formalising their rights to use, manage and benefit from their customary forests is a novelty in DRC. Forest communities (as well as local and regional administrators in rural, forested provinces) are largely unaware of communities' legal right to their customary forests and how attribution of a CFCL can help them secure their forests from multiple threats (e.g. logging, mining, and illegal poaching) while empowering them to develop and collectively manage forest resources. Beyond empowering local communities, this project also has the potential to build capacity of local administrators.

The project was also highly relevant to the ongoing work of local civil society organisations such as CAGDFT, APEM, GASHE, RCREF, and PREPPYG who focus on forest-dependent people, forest environments, and rights-based and sustainable development and who benefited from increased organisational capacity and technical development. These consortium members had a great deal of technical expertise and had the following overall goals which aligned to this project:

CAGDFT: an advocacy NGO based in Kinshasa whose mission is to support community rights and good governance in the forest sector, established in 2012.

APEM: a group of advocacy and legal consultants based in Kinshasa who evolved from RRN.

GASHE: an environment and development NGO located in Mbandaka, Equateur Province, which aims to promote sustainable development in the province, established in 1999.

RCREF: an NGO network for the forestry sector in DRC, comprised of 26 member organisations in six territories and three cities in North Kivu Province, established in 2003.

PREPPYG: an environmental and development NGO located in Butembo, North Kivu Province whose mission is to provide sustainable development to rural communities, via sustainable agriculture with a focus on protecting the rights of marginalised pygmy people, established in 1996.

Given the early proliferation of CFCL applications which were not based on a rigorous community consultation process, seeking to increase civil society and local governments' capacity to monitor the CFCL process was also extremely relevant. APEM monitored threats to CF regarding illegal allocation, use of CFs to secure park buffer zones, and the use of CFs for logging by companies, which significantly helped illustrate to local government the types of mis-management that could arise. InCap (a team of consultants) through CAGDFT provided technical training and development of tools for the administration. Well Grounded provided organisational development and leadership training to the national consortium members on a case-by-case basis. This was highly appropriate to the national consortium members, and activities included all or some of the following:

- Development of a Strategic Plan, including the clarification of vision, mission, values, objectives.
- Inclusion and diversity training (within organisations and whilst working with communities)
- Development of a Communication Strategy
- Financial Strategies to help civil society organisations to diversifying their funding streams.

3.2 APPROPRIATENESS

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed highly satisfactory. The approach and strategy of this project were very appropriate for both the national DRC context, and the local community context. Pilot CF sites in both the east and west of the country contribute to the projects truly country-wide approach.

3.2.1 ADVOCACY

The work of APEM has given the project a country-wide approach, through their monitoring of threats (illegal logging, conservation areas, REDD+ projects),

CF procedures and pilot site governance, and other challenges in forested regions beyond the pilot sites and their advocacy work. The APEM Coordinator was originally recruited as a lawyer for the RFUK Mapping and Forest Governance programme, funded by DFID from 2012, and the other APEM lawyers were trained as part of the same programme as community lawyers for RFUK Community Legal Field Workers programme. This demonstrates how RFUKs support to civil society ensures continuous capacity building. Through their previous training and experience on previous programmes, APEM ensured the thorough support and follow up on legal cases. This monitoring is possible with the use of 'focal points' (people trained in monitoring) in the provinces in which consortium partners are not already established.

APEM have also been instrumental in the development of tools such as the Illustrated Guide, the National Strategy on Community Forestry (SNFC), and on community management of forests.

3.2.2 ROUNDTABLES

The four national Roundtables (held annually 2016-2019) and the five provincial Roundtables (held 2017-2018) provided a highly effective forum of dialogue amongst all actors, ensuring the appropriateness of actions carried out by the project. The Roundtables were innovative in that they allowed for the possibility of exchange with many actors (state, private, NGO, civil society), a strengthening of relationships amongst these actors, and the harmonisation of strategy.

The Roundtables were a highly relevant modality for exchange, especially given the large number of so-called CFCLs applied for and granted immediately after the bylaw was issued, which did not always respect procedures (e.g. some exceeded the 50,000ha limit) and given the occasional issues with the allocation of CFCLs (e.g. in Mai Ndombe several CFCLs were awarded only in part, with communities arbitrarily being awarded only 300ha of the concession they had requested, which is also against official procedures).

The first national Roundtable, of this project, allowed stakeholders to elaborate the national strategy on community forestry. It also enabled state actors to understand what was happening on the ground at the pilot sites, and to understand the threats faced by communities (e.g. encroachment on their land by industrial and artisanal loggers, poachers and wildlife conservation guards). The exchange of experiences between different organisations accompanying communities through the process enabled consortium members to share their tools and approaches with others, in an attempt to harmonise approaches to community forestry and CFCL attribution and management (for example, GASHE make use of local awareness-raisers - known as 'relais communautaires' (RECO) - which was a strategy also adopted by PREPPYG).

As a direct result of the national Roundtables, the national strategy was developed and the government agreed to start a 5-year experimental phase during which pilot CFCLs would be set up and the process would be documented in order to draw lessons on effectiveness and keys to the success of the CFCLs. Pilot sites would inform the revision of the legal framework at the end of the experimental phase as well as the development of a number of tools and as mentioned in the Arrêté 025. These include 1) the official guidelines put forth by MEDD on the Operational Guide on Simple Management Plans (developed mainly by WRI with substantial input from RFUK and partners[14]) and, 2) non-official guidelines for participatory mapping on community resources (such as the Illustrated Guides developed by APEM that could be used when raising awareness in local communities).

One Illustrated Guide provides guidance on the Décret and the attribution phase, whilst the other Illustrated Guide provides guidance on the Arrêté and the management phase (the latter is under development at the point of evaluation). The ultimate aim would be to translate these into vernacular languages. These were developed by APEM and tested in action by GASHE to great success, although they have not yet been translated into languages beyond French and Lingala. (and Swahili for the Illustrated Guide on the Décret).

14. Including the drafting of key sections on multi-usage, participation and the establishment of community structures, as well as leading on the development of the participatory mapping guide.

3.2.3 CAPACITY-BUILDING

Capacity building is highly relevant in DRC where the forest administration's capacity to support local communities is very limited. The baseline study at the outset of this project revealed that there were only three staff in the DFC in MEDD and that no provincial authorities were aware of the CF law, and their responsibilities therein. According to the bylaw, the government is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of community forestry strategies and the application of forest governance methods and practices in the field. Provincial authorities are required to send reports concerning the management and operation of forest reserves to the central administration, as well as ensuring regular monitoring of the management and exploitation of forestry concessions, and providing technical assistance to communities. However, in reality, this was rarely achieved because there was a significant lack of personnel capacity (technical and human) as well as logistical and financial capacity needed to administer the attribution of CFCLs.

A study drafted by InCap assessing initial capacity indicates that local administration had extremely weak capacity to support communities in obtaining and administering CFCLs. However, it also warned about the risk of providing excessive support to local administration, given that they may pocket resources allocated for the support of communities to supplement incomes which, in rural areas are often paid late or not at all. However, this lack of financial and logistical support was highlighted by local administrators during the evaluation, who asked how they were supposed to undertake the work needed of them for the allocation of CFCLs when they lacked logistical capacity (the means to travel to community forests to complete investigations, such as motorboats and motorbikes, and computers and telephones to communicate and type up reports) and financial capacity. They also highlighted the fact that they do not receive training in community forestry from the state.

The consortium's approach was to provide trainings to national and local level actors, including the APAs. First, national and provincial capacities were assessed, resulting in an assessment study, as highlighted above. Second, a capacity building plan was developed and shared with the DFC. Third, development training tools in 'modules' were developed and a series of training events at local and central levels were held. Workshops in Kinshasa involved the DFC, and specific training on the CF database was held in three provinces (Equateur, Maniema, and North Kivu). Furthermore, there were regular joint monitoring missions to sites to aid the APAs to understand progress and impact. Temporary logistical support when APAs needed to investigate an application or when they travelled to communities in order to award them their newly granted CFCL was often provided.

3.2.4 PILOT SITES

The work of GASHE, RCREF and PREPPYG was highly relevant to the local context and respectful of the communities with whom they were working.

In order to test the economic viability of community forests as a model of pro-poor forest management, the potential pilot sites were selected to allow a range of potential activities. The pilot sites were selected based on the criteria for pilot site selection stated in the DRC legal framework, namely that already claimed land (e.g. for conservation or logging) should not be requested as a CFCL. Furthermore, according to the DRC legal framework, for a local community to apply for a CFCL, they need to provide among other information, a geo-referenced participatory map developed during a well concerted process with relevant stakeholders showing the boundaries of the concession that is subject to the application. A consultation workshop was therefore held with key stakeholders in Kinshasa, and a desk review of potential sites in Equateur Province, using information available from the RFUK participatory mapping initiative (Mapping for Rights) were jointly used to identify potential sites.

Through these, an initial list of 40 possible sites was reduced to 13 sites in 2 sectors in Equateur province (Lusankani and Mpama). Through a field study carried out by GASHE, communities' willingness and

preparedness to engage in activities was assessed. Six sites were then earmarked as potential pilots, and additional criteria were identified for the selection of a further four sites (two further sites in Equateur to be accompanied by GASHE and two sites in North Kivu to be accompanied by PREPPYG), which took place in Year 2 and Year 3[15]. The six initial pre-identified sites offer a diverse mix in terms of size of customary tenure, population, economic activities, biodiversity and ecosystems, access to markets, etc. The four additional sites that were identified later have larger tenures and include indigenous people (Batwa).

Following the identification of CF pilot sites, GASHE conducted a consultation with local authorities and communities to have a better sense of opportunities and challenges that they needed to anticipate, including the risk of exacerbating existing land disputes. When consulting with communities, the project was aware of the risk of raising unrealistic expectations in the communities in terms of what the project would actually do and provide. It was made clear that the project was based on a mutual learning approach. The communities, first and foremost, were supported in carrying the process as the primary actors and beneficiaries, with GASHE alongside to provide support, advice, training as and when needed, and to document the process.

The local administration, as mentioned, was brought on-board with the project from the outset so the local administration was aware and had given full permission for the activities of GASHE. They were then kept regularly informed and provided training on aspects of the attribution phase that they were involved in, and also the wider vision of the CFCL process to ensure their buy-in and support. Involving the communities and local administration in consultations from the beginning and managing expectations is key when engaging in work with local communities that aims to be sustainable and respectful.

The fact that all activities were implemented by local NGOs, which have strong technical capacity, good working relationship with local and provincial APAs and with local communities, was very positive. It also adds a sustainable dimension to the project, as GASHE and PREPPYG will continue to be the intermediaries in the future, and RCREF plays an important role in both supporting PREPPYG as well as providing advocacy at the provincial level. Moreover, given the weak capacity of local administration, relying on NGOs to support communities in the CFCL process seems strategic, as long as they work in consultation with local and provincial administration, a process which was encouraged by RFUK, including through the provincial Roundtables.

15. The identification of Baboele community happened in early 2019 (Year 3).

3.3 PROJECT DESIGN

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed highly satisfactory. The project design was ambitious, but well thought-out in a context in which much remained uncertain. The project managed to overcome issues related to the loss of partners during the course of the project.

The initial proposal was developed, designed and submitted in January 2016 by a consortium of organisations including RFUK, Global Witness, Forest Monitor, Well Grounded (international organisations) and RRN, CAGDFT, GASHE, (national civil society NGOs). The initial draft was written by international consortium members, which then sought feedback from all other partners during workshops held in Kinshasa. RFUK finalised the application. Other partners which we interviewed felt that they had been sufficiently consulted but did not always feel like there was room to make substantial changes to the application.

It was well understood that this was a new regulatory environment and an experimental phase (2018-2023) for the government of DRC, which had not yet developed the resources or capacity to effectively administer and manage community forests. The project design was therefore developed to strengthen the regulatory framework, build national and provincial capacity, and demonstrate the effectiveness of community forestry through 5 pilot sites (which was then revised to 10 pilot sites in 2018).

The project had an overly optimistic vision, but a clear overall plan on how to get there which provided room for adaptation and revision based on context and

provided an enabling environment for flexibility. All national and local partners were concerned about the 3.5-year time frame and felt that a minimum of 5 years would have been more realistic in order to make substantial progress towards the long-term goals of the project. The project documents contain relevant activities to achieve the project development objective, whilst providing scope and space to flexibly adapt to situations, challenges, and opportunities as they arise. A clear Theory of Change was developed with an associated logframe which describe the expected outcomes and outputs of the project. However, indicators were broad and not well defined. This did allow adaptation of the project based on changing realities across the 3.5 years of the project, as reviews and updates were periodically provided to DFID.

3.3.1 CONSORTIUM

The initial consortium changed over the course of the 3.5 years. RFUK was originally, and continued to be, responsible for the overall coordination and financial management of the project and to provide technical support as needed. Global Witness was responsible for strengthening the capacity of Congolese civil society at the national level and to advocate in favour of best practice approaches to enabling pro-poor sustainable, community forestry management, via close partnership with RRN. Forest Monitor was responsible for helping to finalise the legal, policy and institutional frameworks on community forestry that remained unfinished. Well Grounded was responsible for the organisational development of national partner organisations for and beyond this project. CAGDFT was responsible for the coordination of the Roundtables and facilitating discussions on the CF national strategy. GASHE were provincial partners responsible for implementation of the CF pilot sites with integration of land-use planning.

The initial consortium set-up suffered from a number of issues with partners dropping out. During the latter phase of the Mapping and Forest Governance project, which preceded the ILLUCBF project, it became clear that the local organisation in Mai Ndombe, CADEM, lacked the organisational management to handle large budgets, and it was decided by RFUK that they were no longer suitable partners (a contract was never signed). At the outset of the project in April 2016 Forest Monitor ceased operating, and therefore was no longer a partner of the project, leading RFUK to absorb the project responsibilities. From the outset Global Witness and RFUK were not aligned on policy work regarding how to engage with actors and how to campaign on forestry issues.[16] Global Witness left the consortium in 2017. A fraud incident within RRN (Global Witness's primary partner) was uncovered and RRN was removed from the consortium also in 2017.[17] Certain RRN consultants were individually recruited by the project and later founded a new civil society organisation called APEM, who then successfully took on the advocacy and monitoring, and provision of technical and legal support for all the project activities. InCap (a team of consultants) was also recruited and became responsible for the institutional capacity building of the DRC administration. In September 2017 RCREF joined the consortium and was responsible for supporting the technical and financial follow-up of PREPPYG and for advocacy of CF in the province of North Kivu. PREPPYG was responsible for the implementation of the CF pilots in North Kivu.

A number of consultants were also hired to deliver/facilitate training on participatory mapping and LUP, develop a short film on community forestry in DRC, conduct socio-anthropological research in community forest pilot sites, conduct research on gender issues, make modifications on the CF database, and to conduct research into the REDD value chain in DRC.

3.3.2 STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Stakeholder analysis was very well done as many of the stakeholders had been part of the roundtables from the previous mapping project and thus strong connections were already established. Major non-consortium

16. RFUK interview
17. Financial payments were ceased in a letter of 21st July 2017. An audit was conducted by KPMG and after further investigation by RFUK a letter dated 4th December 2017 was sent requesting them to return the misappropriated funds.

stakeholders included central government (MEDD and the DFC), and provincial administration as well as other international organisations supportive of CF, such as WRI and GIZ.

3.4 EFFICIENCY

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed satisfactory. The training component and monitoring and reporting were both highly satisfactory, but there were some problems with coordination.

3.4.1 SET-UP

Overall, consortium members had satisfactory and complementary technical experience. Technical and organisational capacity of national partners was initially assessed through a due diligence process and any gaps in capacity were attended to through training by InCap and Well Grounded. Furthermore, individual expertise was high. National calls for positions ensured that highly competent staff were recruited, and this project benefited from Congolese staff in leadership positions with significant previous experience of working with indigenous people, within the Ministry of the Environment, and those with a deep involvement in the Forest Code.

Significant project staff turnover (5 full staff changes in the course of the 3.5 year project) in RFUK caused frustration for a number of the other consortium members who felt time was lost re-explaining approaches and activities or resending previously shared documentation. For all other consortium members, teams remained relatively consistent[18], which avoided any loss of institutional knowledge.

Tension existed between the international consortium members around project expectations and approach, which was largely linked to difficulties with coordination and communication. Full consortium member meetings were rarely held, although all or most consortium members met ad hoc on the sidelines of various project events, notably the national Roundtables. One mid-term review with all consortium members was held in February 2018 in Kinshasa and another meeting was held a year later in March 2019 in Kinshasa, though this was not attended by Well Grounded due to other internal priorities.[19] The infrequent coordination led to a lack of understanding of each's others approach and work. For example, the loss of other partners (Forest Monitor and Global Witness) and how RFUK would absorb those responsibilities was not well explained to consortium members, whilst the on-going work Well Grounded was conducting was not well explained to RFUK. International partners each expressed sentiments that decision were taken unilaterally by other partners. Very few coordination meetings were held jointly between the international partners (RFUK, Well Grounded and InCap) rather the relationships were bi-laterally established between RFUK and Well Grounded and RFUK and Incap, and this also limited the horizontal exchange of activities and progress within the project.

Furthermore, issues of delays in response time from Well Grounded were highlighted by RFUK and national partners, despite dedicated full-time project staff existing within Well Grounded. National partners further highlighted instances of last-minute changes to the scheduling of planned activities to be delivered by Well Grounded which then overlapped with other planned activities. Well Grounded perceived that organisational development activities, despite being one of the key outcomes of the project design, were deprioritised compared to activities related to the communities and establishment of the CFCLs.

Nevertheless, national consortium members expressed overall satisfaction with working relationships in the final set-up. The set-up was highly complementary: GASHE, PREPPYG, RCREF brought local experience and provided evidence from pilot sites across provinces, CAGDFT provided relationships with the government, facilitated training and worked on advocacy, Well Grounded and InCap provided organisational training, APEM investigated wider community forestry issues and ensured that training was based on concrete examples, and RFUK provided financial and technical oversight and training. Despite tensions at the international level, the set-up therefore permitted highly

18. The GASHE Project Coordinator changed in 2019

19. RFUK interal communication

satisfactory synergy of effort in working towards a common vision.

3.4.2 TRAINING AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Training at every level was a very important and commendable component of this project. Well Grounded's approach to capacity development is on a case-by-case basis, in which they act as a coach or mentor to an organisation, in which the result of the work will depend on the capacity, structure and commitment of the individual organisation.[20] Well Grounded provided several in-country workshops which were then followed by remote Skype sessions in which GASHE, CAGDFT and RCREF would provide their reflections and desires for further development. National partners highlighted some issues with delayed responses to queries from Well Grounded; Well Grounded in turn noted some delays in national organisations following up with the documents they were requested to complete (e.g. on reflections, on mission, vision, strategy etc.). Overall, project partners reportedly benefited from organisational development training provided by Well Grounded and felt that it was a highly participatory method of accompaniment able to be led according to the needs of the organisation. Specifically, national partners valued the development of their organisational strategy and vision and communication strategy and highlighted the need for support in financial training to help diversify funding streams.

Training provided by InCap helped the DFC not only to master the legal framework around CF but also to design a capacity development plan for community forests which will enable the DFC to partner with numerous other organisations. InCap adapted their capacity-building plans for MEDD and DFC based on a needs assessment and on consultations with other actors in Kinshasa (WWF, World Resource Institute, AFD, GIZ). The assessment focused on (i) the number of staff available; (ii) the knowledge, skills and competence of the staff; (iii) challenges related to the DRC context. Based on this assessment, a training plan and a training-of-trainers guide was developed to ensure the provincial and local administration could be well informed and supportive. Training provided by InCap, CAGDFT, and APEM to APAs ensured that key provincial administrators understood their role and responsibility as regards community forestry.

Training on inclusion, diversity and conflict resolution was highly valued by local implementing partners and community members. For example, mappers confronted with community members who did not fully understand the project, had been equipped through their training to carefully explain it and to diffuse any tension. Finally, community members fully understood their rights under the law and benefited from technical participatory training on mapping, LUP, attribution, legal rights, and, in the case of Ilinga, developing the SMP. They were also involved in defining what 'development' meant to them.

3.4.3 TIMING AND PHASING OF ACTIVITIES

The timeframe of 3.5 years to build policy consensus and enter the CFCL management phase in a participatory approach was ambitious. It is important to emphasise that the project was operating in a new legal context in which legislature was being developed and capacity of administrative staff was extremely low at the outset. Moreover, GASHE effectively only had 2.5 years in which to implement activities with the communities,[21] as the first year involved developing the team and the awareness raising tools to sensitise communities. This relatively short timeframe was determined by the donor. The consortium had originally sought and intended this project to last for a minimum of 10 years in which the full scope of the CF to management phase could be adequately piloted and learnt from.

Activities were adequately phased to take communities logically and gradually through the attribution phase steps in a participatory manner. Furthermore, Roundtables were organised yearly to build on previous steps and Roundtables at the provincial level were used to build awareness raising once CFCLs had been submitted. These provincial Roundtables were highly effective and often resulted in CFCLs being signed by local authorities who had not properly understood the process beforehand.[22]

20. Well Grounded Interview

21. RCREF and PREPPYG had two years as they only joined the consortium in 2017

22. The only case in which this did not happen immediately was due to conflicting borders with a WWF supported CFCL project, and this case was eventually resolved successfully.

While the project has set up successful CFCL pilots and land-use plans (LUP) the short duration of the project limited the ability to enter, develop and disseminate documentation and lessons learned regarding the management phase of CF. Once again, it must be emphasised that the consortium members intended for this project to last a minimum of 10 years.

3.4.4 MONITORING AND REPORTING

Overall, RFUK ensured satisfactory monitoring and reporting through standardised templates of reporting, regular RFUK monitoring visits, regular partner project and financial reports, collecting feedback from local communities, and keeping up-to-date inventories of assets. Close monitoring of activities and finances permitted the case of fraud in RRN to be uncovered (which also involved funds from other international projects). RFUK dealt with this issue well and returned the embezzled sum (£22,083.81) to DFID.[23] On this basis, RFUK decided to reduce the size of disbursements to local partners, as to facilitate financial monitoring. There were certain issues with financial reporting of national partners, but this was overcome by providing additional and specific training on financial reporting and the introduction of simplified budgeting spreadsheets. National partners appreciated the regular reporting requests of RFUK and felt this helped keep RFUK and the national partners on the same page.

3.4.5 MAJOR COSTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY

Despite some delays, the project delivered high quality planned, as well as some unplanned, outputs with no additional cost to the project. Time was a bigger constraint in this project than money. The major costs were involved in delivering Output 1 (Pilot Communities, 32.7 per cent of total costs) and Output 4 (Roundtables, 32.5 per cent of total costs), of which the Activities of Output 4, represented 22 per cent of the total costs (Table 1). Overall, this project was administratively heavy – due in large part to the experimental nature of the project which was heavily involved in building capacity and contributing evidence for the generation of new legislation on CF (CFCL attribution and management) as the project progressed. This accounts for the high costs of building policy consensus through the Roundtable process (Output 4).

Assessing value for money as part of the project was introduced in the final year and was therefore not planned from the beginning. Overall value for money is evidenced by the highly successful outcomes and impact, focussing on the poorest communities, with a highly equitable approach regading inclusion of marginalised groups, and the considered steps taken to ensure efficient and effective use of resources as illustrated in Figure 1.

A number of metrics were proposed by RFUK to DFID related to efficiency and effectiveness in April 2019:

Efficiency: Cost per CFCL was calculated by spend against two specific partner activity budget lines which contribute towards the CFCL application process and divided by the number of completed submissions. The results show that the estimated cost per CFCL in Equateur was £24,360.

Effectiveness: Land area secured was calculated by spend against the specific CFCL activity budget lines identified above, revealing an estimated cost per ha of £3.04/ha and estimated cost per beneficiary of £9.47. Even factoring in the whole Output 1 budget (including all the 'additional' complementary activities and the overall target number of concessions), it is an estimated cost of £18/Ha of secured land.

These figures represent estimated costs based on the data on spend and total hectares until that point, therefore final figures once all CFCLs have been obtained may vary.

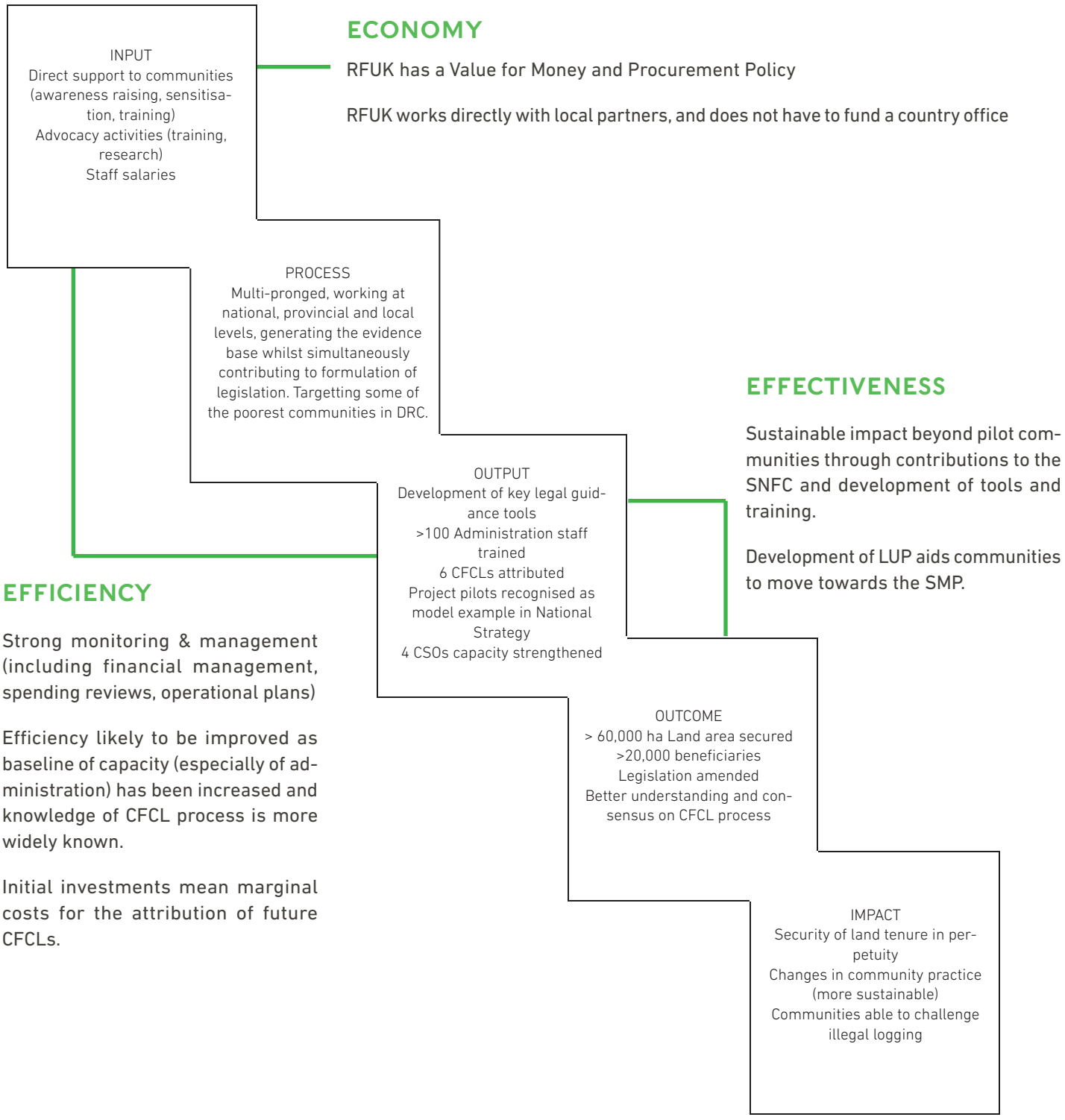
As contexts vary significantly in DRC determining a range of costs for CFCL applications moving forward - monitoring each on a case by case basis dependent on context (security, accessibility, level of training already established etc) - may be more appropriate. It must be noted that future value for money indicators should be developed to focus not on the cost of producing a written document for the CFCL or the SMP, but to focus more on the quality of the management brought about with the CFCL and what this management brings to communities.

23. Based on communication with RFUK: $27,388.88 = £22,083.81

TABLE I. FINANCIAL INFORMATION ON PROJECT BUDGET

DECRIPTION	TOTAL COSTS GBP	% TOTAL COSTS
Output 1. CF Pilots		
Activities	589,873	10.4%
Capital	223,297	3.9%
Information and Communication	51,402	0.9%
Management Costs	178,249	3.1%
Staff/consultants	814,347	14.3%
TOTAL OUTPUT 1	1,857,168	32.7%
Output 2: Government Capacity		
Activities	138,823	2.4%
Capital	3,641	0.1%
Information and Communication	33,402	0.6%
Management Costs	33,261	0.6%
Staff/consultants	462,479	8.1%
TOTAL OUTPUT 2	671,607	11.8%
Output 3: CSO Capacity		
Activities	100,808	1.8%
Information and Communication	26,626	0.5%
Management Costs	994	0.02%
Staff/consultants	462,035	8.1%
TOTAL OUTPUT 3	590,463	10.4%
Output 4: Roundtables		
Activities	1,269,449	22.4%
Information and Communicatio	38,606	0.7%
Management Costs	131,954	2.3%
Staff/consultants	403,790	7.1%
TOTAL OUTPUT 4	1,843,798	32.5%
MEL Costs	294,965	5.2%
Overhead Costs	417,783	7.4%
TOTAL	5,675,783	100%

FIGURE I. VALUE FOR MONEY SCHEMATIC



It is acknowledged that the proposed efficiency and effectiveness metrics are broad stroke calculations based on current costs. However, moving forward the costs of obtaining a CFCL, and developing an SMP, are likely to decrease. As this project was experimental there were associated upfront, initial investments which were necessary to build an enabling environment. The high quality of these pilots means there is now a model to follow: the development of tools, guidance, legal frameworks, and increased knowledge of CF process across the DRC, means that moving forward GASHE, RCREF, PREPPYG and indeed other NGOs will be able to replicate the pilots (CFCL attribution, LUP and SMP) with marginal costs. Furthermore, the initial investments put into proving a viable model of CF is leveraging additional long-term support from other donors. As an example, Synchronicity Earth has provided support through the provision of hardware (laptops) to the DFC to maintain the geospatial database.

3.5 EFFECTIVENESS

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed satisfactory. Each output will be assessed separately in the following section to determine the level of achievement against planned activities and outputs.

3.5.1 OUTPUT 1 "PILOTS CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY FORESTS BEING FORMALLY RECOGNISED AS VIABLE MODELS OF PRO-POOR, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT AT SCALE THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UP TO 5 PILOT COMMUNITY FOREST SITES".

Whilst too early to determine if CF is a viable model with associated positive impacts, the basis of the approach to CF has been achieved through validation of this project as the model approach in the National Strategy on Community Forestry (SNFC) and Operational Guide for Simple Management Plans.

Box 1. Key events and activities during the project

13 Oct 2015: First national Roundtable

9th of February 2016: Issuance of Arrêté 025

1st of April 2016: Start date of the project

19-20 May 2016: Second National Roundtable

15-16 February 2017: Third National Roundtable

July 2017: Suspension of RRN as partner, request for funds to be returned in December 2017

28 September 2017: Global Witness leaves the consortium

September 2017: Réseau CREF joins the consortium, after RNN suspension

25-26 Sep 2017: First Provincial Roundtable in Mbandaka (for the provinces of Sud Ubangi, Nord Ubangi, Mongala, Tshuapa and Equateur)

30 Nov – 2 Dec 2017: Second Provincial Roundtable in Goma (for the provinces of Nord Kivu, Sud Kivu and Maniema)

10-11 August 2017: Fourth National Roundtable – the National Strategy is validated

1 April 2018 – PREPPYG joins the consortium

April 2018 – Geospatial Database is established and functioning

31 May 2018: The National Strategy on Community Forestry is officially adopted by the Ministry of Environment

25th to 27th June 2018: Fifth National Roundtable

June 2018: RFUK sets up a CSO network with 11 focal points monitoring the legal aspects of CFCLs across the country

September 2018: Five Concessions de Forêts des Communautés Locales (CFCLs) are granted to five communities in Equateur Province, namely Ilinga and Bosende in Lusankani Sector, and Ilebo, Mibenga and Nzondo in Mpama Sector

3-5th October 2018: Third Provincial Roundtable in Lubumbshi (for the provinces of Kasai, Sankuru, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, Lomami, Haut Lomami, Lualaba, Tanganyika, Haut Katanga)

October 2018: the Conseil Consultatif Provincial des Forêts (CCPF) is setup in Equateur province (already exists in North Kivu)

1st to 3rd November 2018: Fourth Provincial Roundtable event took place in Kisangani (Pool Oriental, comprising Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, Ituri and Tshopo)

31 December 2018: Presidential elections take place in DRC

January 2019: a fifth community in Equateur (Irebu) receives its CFCL title

29 – 31 May 2019: Fifth Provincial Roundtable in Bandundu-Ville (for the provinces of Mai Ndombe, Kwilu, Kwango, Kongo Central)

19 – 21 June 2019: Sixth National Roundtable

TABLE 2. COMMUNITY PILOT SITE DATA

PROVINCE, SECTOR	COMMUNITY	STATUS OF CFCL APPLICATION	SIZE (HA) AWAREDED	# PEOPLE REACHED INDRIECTLY	STATUS OF LUP	STATUS OF SMP	GOVERNANCE OF CFCL
Equateur, Lusankani	Ilinga	Submitted 11/17 Granted 09/18	3,393	1,340 M=678 F=662	Completed 06/19	Submit-ted and approved 09/19	Internal governance structures establised
Equateur, Lusankani	Irebu	Submitted 11/17 Granted 01/19	29,815	4,417 M=2,201 F=2,216	Completed 06/19	-	Internal governance structures establised
Equateur, Lusankani	Bosende	Submitted 11/17 Granted 09/18	2,958	2,714 M=1,370 F=1,344	Completed 06/19	-	Internal governance structures establised
Equateur, Mpama	Ilebo	Submitted 11/17 Granted 09/18	12,973	2,526 M=1,364 F=1,162	Completed 06/19	-	Internal governance structures establised
Equateur, Mpama	Mibenga	Submitted 11/17 Granted 09/18	11,891	2845 M=1,403 F=1,442	Completed 06/19	-	Internal governance structures establised
Equateur, Mpama	Nzondo	Submitted 11/17 Granted 09/18	432	416 M=233 F=183	Completed 06/19	-	Internal governance structures establised
Equateur, Duali	Bofekalasumba	Submitted 04/19	1,353	-	Completed 06/18 (first pilot)	-	-
Equateur, Duali	Inganda	Submitted 04/19	1,109	-	Completed 06/19	-	-
North Kivu, Bapere	Bamasobha	Submitted 06/19	29,142	-	-	-	-
North Kivu Bapere	Baboele	Not yet sub-mitted	Approx. 9,768	-	-	-	-

Activity 1.1 Identification and set-up of 10 community forest pilot sites: The revised logframe (2018) targeted two provinces: Equateur and North Kivu. As of August 2019, 6 communities had obtained their CFCLs in Lukolela Territory (Lusankani and Mpama Sectors), 2 communities had submitted an application in Ingende Territory (Duali Sector) (March 2019) and one more community in North Kivu (Bamasobha, Bapere Territory) had submitted an application (June 2019) (Table 2). The applications in Duali sector have been delayed for political reasons and despite constant follow-up from GASHE they have not been able to progress. Furthermore, CFCL attributions in North Kivu Province have historically been very complicated and have taken significant amounts of time to be processed. Therefore, it is unlikely that 10 pilot communities formally legally designated will be successfully achieved by the end of the project.

Identification of community forest pilot sites was achieved as planned, however, the set up of the pilot sites was delayed compared to the planned activities. The delays were attributable to internal and external factors.

Internally: the time it took to develop tools for awareness raising on community forestry (6 months for the first communities) including the Illustrated Guide, which proved highly successful and sped up the sensitisation process for future communities; and the time it took to sensitise and conduct the awareness raising with communities (at the outset of the pilots there is a high level of suspicion from communities on the agenda of the accompanying NGOs and whether their intention is to "steal" the forest).

Externally: the low capacity of local government in dealing with applications, which necessitated capacity-building activities; the median time to obtain concessions, which is linked with political blockages at the administrative level (either local, provincial or national) or overlapping issues of CFCLs with other INGOs.

Considerable effort was put into addressing the external issues. Both GASHE and PREPPYG have been following up on the application procedure with the appropriate provincial administration, advocating on behalf of the communities and providing extra clarification via training. It must be noted that despite the law stating that the administrative decisions to attribute the CFCL should not exceed 120 days, in practice this is not always respected by the administration.

Activity 1.2 Applied research on different economic options and incentives, with development of specific approach for marginalised groups: some research on the potential for cacao cultivation in North Kivu and Equateur (Mpama Sector) was carried out, however, applied research on different economic options with specific approaches for marginalised groups was not completed. Instead, an anthropological study conducted in 2018 (published in 2019) was used throughout to help inform activities around marginalised groups. As the project progressed the thinking around community forests evolved and broadened from originally focussing on economic options and incentives, to thinking about research on access to markets, agroforestry, and biodiversity. This type of research is planned for the second phase of the project.

Activity 1.3 Support to communities in management of community forestry concessions was achieved as far as LUP in all sites, but up to the SMP stage only in Ilinga. The LUP enables communities to understand their current use of their forest, the resources they have, and how they could use the forest in more productive ways. While the LUP has a value in and of itself for the aforementioned reasons, the rationale in this project was to ensure that all communities reached the LUP phase as after this is completed it facilitates future development of the SMP. Community members of the pilot sites received training on participatory mapping, landuse planning, the law and their rights, submitting a CFCL application, perceptions of "development", local power dynamics, and in some cases the differences between internal and external management, the identification of members and set up of the comité de gestion, comité de suivi and conseil des sages, and how to sustainably manage a community forest. The Conseil Consultatif Provincial des Forets (CCPF) was established in Equateur province to deal with any disputes arising from CFCL attributions. The CCPF in

North Kivu was already in place and received further training.

The project provided key inputs (related to multi-usage, participation, the establishment of community structures, as well as leading on the development of the participatory mapping guide) to the development of the Operational Guide for Simple Management Plans led by WRI (pending final approval by the DFC), especially on diversification of management activities and on land-use mapping and planning. Ilinga was the first community to develop a SMP. Based on this experience, developing a SMP from scratch, in which land-use planning needed to be conducted also, took 2.5 months,[24] therefore there was not sufficient time and resources to support the other communities in developing a SMP from the date the Operational Guide for Simple Management Plans was approved to when the project began closing activities. Communities stated uncertainty about their ability to submit an SMP without external support as this is still the experimental phase and guidance (in the form of the Operational Guide) has only recently been released.

3.5.2 OUTPUT 2 "THE CAPACITIES OF THE NATIONAL DRC GOVERNMENT, MEDD, AND PILOT-BASED LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE SUFFICIENTLY DEVELOPED TO ADMINISTER, SUPPORT AND MONITOR COMMUNITY FORESTS AND TO IMPROVE THE LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT"

This output has been achieved as there now exists an enabling legal, policy and institutional framework at the national level and in pilot provinces on CF.

Activity 2.1 Applied research and consultation on necessary institutional development at national (DFC, MEDD) and provincial levels in Equateur and Mai-Ndombe was carried out by InCap. Security constraints prevented InCap from visiting North Kivu Province and so the baseline assessment was carried out by RCREF.

Activity 2.2 Institutional capacity building, including through workshops and training for administration staff at the different levels: was successfully achieved, and went beyond the original project plan by also developing specific training tools (specifically 7 learning 'modules')[25] and also a guide on training-of-trainers. Training (workshops and direct training) was provided to national (DFC, MEDD) and provincial and local (Governor, Counsellors, Territorial Administrators, Customary Leader, Chief of Post for the Environment etc) levels leading to comprehension and respect of the CF procedure according to the law. They also received key training on gender, diversity, inclusion, and, crucially, a legal workshop to discuss and explore issues related to interpreting and understanding the DRC legal framework of CF. All training needs were identified through rigorous capacity needs assessments and capacity development plans done by InCap. DFC staff accompanied some of the supervision missions, through which their understanding of processes and issues at stake was improved.

Activity 2.3 Set up sustainable mechanisms for institutional support for and monitoring of community forests was achieved through a 'training-of-trainers' guidance document to sustain capacity building of local administration after the end of the project. Furthermore, a legal guides ('Guide juridique' on the attribution phase of a CFCL and the management phase) were developed to help inform local administration on the main legal issues that could arise. Overall the project did excellent work on this area, including to overcome challenges to build local capacity to support CFCL process after project ends.

Activity 2.4 Establishing an (online) geospatial database and other technical tools within MEDD/DFC for monitoring and management of all CF pilots and provision of support to MEDD/DFC staff in its use and map collection/processing was achieved. The DFC, as well as provincial administration in Maniema, Equateur and North Kivu, received several training sessions on the database. However, there were some issues with the database in terms of data entry coordination and responsibility for management between the DFC and the provincial level, which were being resolved by APEM through training and increased coordination at the time

24. Based on communitcation with RFUK

25. 19 modules were proposed and 7 had been completed at the time of evaluation, based on interviews with InCAP and documentation received from RFUK

of evaluation. A consultant was hired to progressively make modifications on the geospatial database, based on the trial, learning and feedback from the DFC. RFUK have secured further funding from Synchronicity Earth for the continued support of the DFC in using this tool.

Activity 2.5 Collection of map information for all CF pilots (including those developed outside the scope of this project) and entering these in a geospatial database to be established within MEDD to assist in monitoring and management of CF has been successfully achieved, with all obtained and submitted CFCLs in the different provinces by different actors having been entered into the database.

3.5.3 OUTPUT 3 "NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNER ORGANISATIONS INCREASED ORGANISATIONAL AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY TO ADVOCATE IN FAVOUR OF PRO-POOR COMMUNITY FORESTS AS WELL AS ON DOCUMENTED LARGE-SCALE THREATS TO ITS DEVELOPMENT AND IS ABLE TO PARTICIPATE MEANINGFULLY AS A STAKEHOLDER TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY AND RELATED PROCESSES."

Organisational development is hugely important in the Congo Basin context and was successfully achieved through training provided by Well Grounded.

Activity 3.1 Organisational development support to civil society organisations was satisfactorily received by CAGDFT, GASHE and RCREF (who had already received support from Well Grounded through a previous project). An initial capacity assessment with CAGDFT and GASHE highlighted areas for significant organisational development, including the:

- Development of a strategic plan during the first year, including the clarification of vision, mission, values, objectives, via a 5-day workshop with follow-up sessions conducted remotely over Skype. CAGDFT and GASHE reported that the biggest change for them as organisations is their decision to only do activities which fit into their strategy and core business and to be more discerning on which funders to contact. They also feel more confident in being able to directly engage with other donors.

- Inclusion and diversity training, both internal within the organisations and whilst working with communities. Internally, more female staff were hired in both CAGDFT (three women hired) and GASHE (one woman hired as the Communications Manager and two women as animateurs). Whilst working with communities, the training helped to ensure the inclusion of women in all community activities and decision-making, the animateurs also reported being more inclusive in how they listen to the communities as a result of the training. People from the villages often respect what is said from people from the city, but animateurs have tried to create a conversation with communities and not just expect the communities to take their word.

- Communication Strategy during the second year to enable the organisations to navigate and share information and learning they have, via two in-country sessions and follow-up remote sessions;

- Development of Financing Strategies to help civil society organisations to diversity income streams.

This support was highly valued by the national partners. RCREF received support during a leadership crisis it faced in 2018. A number of issues were flagged to RFUK by RCREF's longer term partners (IUCN Holland and RFN) who ceased funding RCREF due to financial management issues. After careful evaluation and assessment, RFUK decided to support RCREF throughout the first consultancy contract (2017) as Well Grounded prepared an organisational diagnostic to understand the nature of the issue. RCREF then became a full partner in 2018. This diagnostic led to an organisational reflection on their vision and purpose, which was supported by Well Grounded. RCREF then continued to receive further support related to its community strategy. Well Grounded did not provide direct support to PREPPYG as RCREF (via Well Grounded training) had a mandate to build PREPPYG organisational capacity, including through several monitoring missions, as well as support with financial management and systems.

Individual support in technical and advocacy work was received by consultants working for RRN (originally), and then APEM. This comprised training in leadership. These consultants expressed the wish that Well Grounded would return in order to offer APEM organisational development support (which was not possible originally, as APEM was not officially one of the consortium members).

Activity 3.2 Creating tools for the realisation of and tracking of quality CFCL application process was achieved through the work of APEM, and they were tested in situ by both APEM and GASHE:

APEM produced an Illustrated Guide on the attribution of CFCLs to guide communities through the process – this was highly successful in context and has been translated into Lingala and Swahili with support from RCREF. It is hoped that it will be translated into other national and local languages also.

The Illustrated Guide on management of CFCLs is in preparation and will continue to be jointly worked on between APEM and RFUK.

The tools based on Kobo collect applications (questionnaires for communities and administrators) allow CSOs to monitor respect of community rights and assess whether a CFCL application process was carried out with the full participation of communities.

Activity 3.3 Production of briefings and public communication on threats to the development of community forests was achieved via the work of APEM and RFUK:

- Documenting and monitoring large-scale threats achieved by work of APEM through innovative establishment of focal points in 14 of the 26 provinces.
- Documentation of the threats to CFCLs from the forestry sector in the predominantly forested provinces of Equateur, Mai Ndombe, Tshuapa, Tshopo, Kongo Central, Ituri, Maniema, Nord Kivu, Sud Kivu and Haut-Katanga took considerable effort from APEM in terms of both time and resources.
- Investigations leading to reports of human rights abuses in and around rainforest protected areas, such as Salonga National Park.[26] These reports emphasise that "International donors need to put rigorous systems in place to ensure such abuses are stopped and that the conservation projects they fund do not harm local people and to publish the results of any investigations into conservationist abuses" – RFUK's Executive Director, Simon Counsell.

APEM also worked with GTCRR, a CSO network monitoring REDD+ projects, to research REDD+ value chains and financial flows in DRC.

3.5.4 OUTPUT 4 "PILOTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE FUNCTIONING OF A RECOGNISED NATIONAL FORUM FOR COMMUNITY FOREST ISSUES IN DRC, ALLOWING FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION, BUILDING CONSENSUS AND HELPING TO ENSURE A CONTROLLED AND RATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT, AND INFORMING WIDER LUP AND LAND POLICY PROCESSES AND REFORM"

Four National Roundtables and five Provincial Roundtables were convened and very well attended. The Roundtables were significantly refined, and are highly valued by the State and other actors as a means to allow discussion of issues, share learning and experiences, and ensure consensus was built. The National Strategy on Community Forestery (SNFC) was a direct result of the Roundtables. The Roundtables at the provincial level involved awareness raising for key members of the administration and often resulted in the signing of CFCLs. Furthermore, Terms of Reference (ToRs) for five Roundtable working group who would work on a variety of issues such as threats to community forestry have been created but have yet to start working.

Activity 4.2 In one geographical sector, test pilot initiative for integrated participatory land-use planning was conducted in Equateur. Local partners were trained on LUP and then LUP was carried out in all pilot sites which were awarded the CFCLs, and for two sites in Equateur the LUP preceded the CFCL application. The LUP methodology was being finalised as of the evaluation, and a shareable 'Field Guide' is anticipated to be finalised before the end of the project. The project tried to influence land reform processes to integrate CF concerns in new regulation, however, the Ministry was not responsive and the land reform does not seem to have advanced during the project timeframe.

26. RFUK (2019) https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media/abf196ba-89da-4680-8df3-af5d382f7d5f

3.5.5 QUALITY OF PROJECT INTERVENTIONS

Quality of project interventions across the 4 outputs was very high. There was considerable attention to going through all the steps thoroughly, both in terms of CFCL set-up (extremely rigorous in community consultation and participation) at community level and for training local partners, administration and CSO networks. All training was based on capacity assessments, provided a clear evidence-base on which to tailor activities and capacity building. Good coordination and feedback loops among actors allowed them to intervene early on when issues arose and to turn issues into opportunities, such as the loss of RRN and GW which became an opportunity to expand to North Kivu and link with new partners, while reducing negative effects.

3.6 IMPACT

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed highly satisfactory. The progress towards long-term impacts were outstanding as communities have begun thinking about long-term management.

3.6.1 IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS AND REDUCING DEFORESTATION

The intended impact of the project was to "improve livelihoods of forest dependent communities and reduce deforestation in DRC". Improvement in livelihoods and deforestation reduction are long processes, and it should be noted that this project was originally conceived to be implemented in a timeframe of 10-15 years, and partners were working under the assumption of funding being renewed. Consortium members, non-consortium stakeholders, and communities alike highlighted that it is not possible to achieve meaningful livelihood improvements in the 3.5 years of this exploratory project.

Improving livelihoods and reducing deforestation are complex impacts to measure, and the metrics proposed by the original proposal -namely, to reach 10,000 forest-dependent people and to protect 100,000 hectares - are considered too simplistic, which is an all too common problem in development projects in which it is difficult to measure improvements in social development. The project managed to reach more than double the number of targeted forest-dependent people directly and indirectly (20,052 beneficiaries) through the award of 6 CFCLs out of a targeted 10, protecting 61,462 ha (as 31.05.2019). A further 31,604 ha are pending for the submitted CFCLs (Bofekalasumba, Inganda and Bamasobha) which are not yet approved, which encompass 3,321 further beneficiaries. Only Ilinga community (Mpama Secteur, Lukolela Territoire, Equateur Province) progressed as far as developing the Simple Management Plan (September 2019) which outlines a five-year community forest management plan. However, Bofekalasumba (Duali Secteur, Equateur) has also started planning and working towards community development projects (school, hospital, community fields, renovated church), despite not yet being awarded the CFCL.

Given the 3.5 year timeframe of this project it is too early to assess the long-term impacts, however, it is possible to discuss the evidence on the progress towards long-term impacts.

Prior to the LUP there was no baseline data on the coverage and type of forest (primary or secondary) in the communities, the maps prepared as part of Mapping for Rights provided only the boundaries of the communities customary land and the location of livelihood and cultural activities. It is through the participatory and inclusive LUP that data on the type of forest now exists and it is from this basis that future changes in forest cover can be measured.

The planned future forest use of several of the communities interviewed by the evaluators (e.g. Irebu, Ilinga, Ilebo) indicates expanded areas of reforestation and protection for conservation, indicating progress towards a reduction in deforestation. Many communities have also begun to deny logging companies access to their forests and are seeking support from the state when they uncover instances of trespass and illegal logging This further supports the case that progress towards reducing deforestation is being made.

Prior to the project, communities stated that they did not have a strategy on how to use the forest to improve livelihoods. Through the project, however, the way they view and use the forest as a united community has changed. Communities have begun communal fields (manioc, maize, peanuts, or cacao) in order to be able to grow more crops, improve the efficiency of the harvest, pool the produce, and generate communal income for



Ilinga (Equateur Province) village church and community goats. © Lys Alcayna-Stevens (2019).

community-based development initiatives. For example, Bofekalasumba and Inganda pooled together the incomes from communal fields of manioc production in order to finance the building of a joint school. Bofekalasumba has also saved money to renovate their church and build church benches. Associations have developed in Ilinga and Bofekalasumba, and Ilinga has developed a community savings group which has financed the building of an office for the Comite de Gestion and Comite de Suivi. Irebu and Bosende have also begun small community funds.

The communities have strategically planned how to export these resources to generate income: Ilebo has positioned the communal cacao fields close to an existing road, whilst Ilinga community joined together to clear and improve the road to the nearest market. This is clear evidence that progress towards improving livelihoods is being made.

Furthermore, communities stated that they intend to sustainably manage the resources at their disposal to ensure future generations can also benefit. Several changes in practice, due to training received from GASHE, have resulted in beneficial environmental impacts which have knock-on effects for current and future livelihoods:

- Rules have been placed on how to fish including prohibition on non-sustainable damaging practices such as poison fishing, night fishing with a spears, using mosquito nets, fishing for young fish, and removing fish spawning habitats (e.g. long grass or tree roots). The results have been that a greater number and diversity, including bigger, fish being observed by several different communities.

- Ilinga has stopped cutting trees to retrieve honey, instead using hives for the bees, and has stopped cutting trees within 50m of the water's edge to avoid erosion and to protect their water sources even in the dry season.

- Communities have placed restrictions on traps (10 traps per hunter), banned night hunting, hunting of pregnant animals and large animals who reproduce infrequently e.g. hippos. The result has been that communities anecdotally report animals are beginning to return, including increasing numbers of hippos (Ilinga, Ilebo).

3.6.2 SUCCESSFUL AND DEMONSTRATIVE MODEL

The context in which the community forests were piloted was challenging. There was a lack of awareness of gender issues, and strong Bantu stereotypes about indigenous populations[27], in addition to a high level of suspicion of outsiders coming to "steal" the forest.[28] Nevertheless, the main outcome of this project - to provide a "successful and demonstrative model of community forest based management which responds to the differing needs of communities including those of marginalised groups (indigenous people and women), living in and around the model pilot sites and which contributes to integrated participatory land-use planning" - has been highly satisfactory, achieving impact at both the national and local levels.

As a result of the project, communities perceived greater community cohesion and unity, a sense of security over forest boundaries and resources, and an interest in taking responsibility for development that will be driven by the community.[29] It is also very important to note that the approach taken by this project in the pilot communities has been recognised at the national level through the institutionalisation of the model in key documents such as the Guide Operationel and the National Strategy on Community Forestry (SNFC).

Attention to marginalised groups, in particular women, was achieved by their intentional inclusion and facilitation in any community activity and the impact has been that women in the communities felt more empowered to speak in front of men and to put forward ideas (further explored in Section on Equity). IPs were similarly integrated both in Equateur (Bofekalasumba in particular), and in North Kivu through partnership with PREPPYG (who work specifically with Pygmies). As a result of the project, IP children from Bofekalasumba are now attending the school that was built

27. Moise, R (2019)
28. Based on community FGDs
29. Based on community FGDs

from community funds, through the encouragement of GASHE, where previously they had not.

3.6.3 WIDER IMPACTS ON COMMUNITY FORESTRY

The wider impacts on community forestry have been highly satisfactory and highly commendable. Alongside providing the evidence for a successful model of community forestry, the project documented human rights abuses linked with strict nature conservation in Salonga National park which led to the suspension, arrest and trial of eco-guards implicated in cases of rape and torture , where the Congolese Wildlife Authority (ICCN) has been deemed responsible for paying damages if they are established (this may be the first time ecoguards are held accountable this way) and the suspension of the mixed ICCN and Congolese National Army (FARDC) patrols. The project also created a network of "focal points" and sentinel CSOs to track potential human rights abuses and lack of inclusiveness linked to CFCLs, protected areas and REDD+ projects, equipping them with easy-to-use monitoring tools.

Furthermore, the project built policy consensus through the Roundtables, which brought together multiple actors involved in the Forest Code including the State and international actors, operating at both the national and provincial level. Since several issues also derived from lack of coordination amongst INGOs, the Roundtables also provided an excellent platform to ease key discussions around long-term capacity building strategies for forest administration, issues with CFCL attributions, inputs to the national GIS database, development of well accepted operational tools linked to Arrêté 025, and monitoring of human rights abuses.

3.6.4 PROCESS

> **"We ourselves are the ones who did everything, so it always felt like things were in our hands."**
>
> **Ilinga villager**

The progress towards long-term impacts was achieved through a considered multi-layered approach focusing on unity and consensus building. At the local level, the participatory approach enabled communities to be fully involved at all stages of the pilot and to feel that progress was due to their efforts. Despite initially being suspicious of GASHE, communities highlighted that it was GASHE's approach that enabled trust and momentum to be built. The key elements of this approach were: being deeply respectful of the local customs; emphasising community unity and jointly resolving any conflict; repeated visits; clear messaging and explanation based on the law; involvement of all community members (including women and IP); logical training at each stage from mapping, attribution of the CFCL, to the LUP; and proximity and time spent in-community.

The alternative approach was implemented by other conservation organisations in which polygon estimations of customary land ownership have been superimposed over forests, communities have not been fully involved in all stages of CFCL attribution, and the vocation of the CFCL was chosen in advance (whereas this should be discussed post-attribution with the community) and has not been multi-usage (another stipulation of the legal framework).

CFCLs only work if they are mapped correctly and in a very participatory manner which includes all members of the community (women, indigenous populations, etc) as well as neighbouring communities, to avoid conflict at a later stage. It is very important for major funders to understand that the community forestry process should be highly participatory in order to succeed and that funders will need to be careful, and critically assess whether organisations seeking funding for CFCLs will respect the SNFC and adhere to a truly participatory approach.

Overall, the 3.5 year timeframe was too optimistic to be able to show impacts in livelihoods or deforestation, but the considerable work delivered in a holistic and multi-layered approach enabled the development of an environment in which CF can work. Therefore, the impacts are considered highly satisfactory.

3.7 PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed highly satisfactory. There was real appropriation of the CFCL by communities, which is a highly commendable feat in the DRC context, and indicates the dedicated approach of GASHE.[30]

> **"GASHE taught us that using our own forest we can put tin roofs on our houses" Bofekalasumba villager**

Pilot communities were highly involved in all stages throughout the CFCL process. They were deeply involved in the original mapping of customary boundaries; in resolving intra- or inter-community disputes; electing community representatives, land-use planners, the community education teams (RECO); developing the CFCL application; gathering the data and analysing it for the land-use plan; electing members to the Comités de Suivi, Comités de Gestion and Conseils des Sages and electing the President of the General Assembly; and, in Ilinga, developing the simple management plan (SMP). GASHE provided the necessary guidance, tools, and information, which the communities appropriated and used.

Despite initially being suspicious that this project was another way to "steal" their forest, communities interviewed by the evaluators unanimously felt empowered and that they had secured their forest for future generations through the deeply participatory approach taken. Communities stressed that they now believed that development comes from themselves and not from outsiders. Several had begun community initiatives such as: a community savings group, agricultural associations, community fields, community service, and the internal governance structures (Comité de Suivi, de Gestion and Conseils des Sages) as required by the law.

Community representatives from North Kivu commended PREPPYG for their work on ensuring the inclusion of all clan leaders during discussions and decision-making. Bamasobha (Bapere, North Kivu) is a large community in which the villages are dispersed. There were thus significant challenges in ensuring and assuring the clan leaders of each village that they had the same information. PREPPYG ensured that clan leaders were brought together to jointly agree on the CFCL and thereby ensured unity of the villages.

The different steps of the process also enabled communities to better understand the limits and resources of their forest, the activities they were carrying out, and their own demographics. For example, whilst collecting baseline demographic data as part of the land-use planning, inhabitants of Ilinga realised the extent of the number of children living in their communities.

Prior to the project communities in both Equateur and North Kivu[31] highlighted that they had not known that the law states that communities can obtain a land title for the whole or part of their ancestral forest, however, with the attribution of the CFCLs, communities told evaluators that they felt empowered to ensure their legal right to the forest would not be not threatened by the State, logging companies or wildlife park rangers.

The project also ensured the participation of the State, through "frank, mutually respectful collaboration".[32] As highlighted in the section on relevance, this project was highly relevant to the State and provided the State with the evidence base for a model on participatory CF; provided training at the provincial and local level to ensure that politico-administrative authorities (APAs) understood the CF attribution process; ensured the State played a central role in discussions through the national Roundtables; and provided the State with the geospatial database, and the associated training, which allows the State to monitor the CFCLs nationally.

30. The evaluation team was unable to visit communities in North Kivu Province, however, community representatives who attended the workshop also stated satisfaction and appreciation of PREPPYG's approach.

31. North Kivu Representatives present in the workshop

32. KII with State actor

3.8 EQUITY

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed highly satisfactory. It was clear that GASHE as well as the other partners had encouraged participation of women and typically marginalised ethnic groups, as well as seeking to reduce conflict and integrate and educate neighbours. This trickled down to creating a sense of community and unity more broadly.

> **"We want to be present whenever issues are being discussed and we will stand up and have our voice heard. It didn't used to be like that"**
>
> **Female Irebu Villager**

The approach employed by GASHE aims to reduce tensions and conflicts and promote inclusivity at all levels. In the DRC context this is incredibly important as it is often those people who feel excluded from projects who end up sabotaging them or causing problems. GASHE achieves its aims by holding transparent community meetings and not by relying on one or two leaders in order to convince the community. During community meetings, they respect local authorities, such as the village chief and clan elders, but also allow space for more marginalised people (women, IP, youth) to speak up, and hold separate discussions with specific groups were necessary and appropriate. They also teach conflict resolution techniques, which community members say they now use in ordinary community meetings. GASHE also strive to include neighbouring villages and camps in order to increase transparency and cohesion, which is also the approach taken by PREPPYG in North Kivu.

The greatest strength of GASHE's approach is that they spend a great deal of time with communities, returning again and again to answer questions, and sometimes staying in the village for several weeks or months, to make sure that all community members feel they have understood the material. The most promising element of their approach, which should be followed as an example by other accompanying organisations, is that once they have educated and raised awareness in the community, they then follow the community's lead and do not push them to choose one type of forest usage over another (i.e. they do not push for conservation if this is not desired by the community). This is far more sustainable than the alternative as it is less likely to cause resentment, exclusion and conflict.

Furthermore, they seek to empower all community members, and ensures that the community themselves select their mappers, RECOs, and representatives. Where other NGOs arrive and immediately seek those people who are literate or French-speaking (for example), GASHE attempts to integrate all community members and to make them all feel that they can understand and contribute to the process – one practical technique, for example, is to have people draw maps of their forest on the ground, rather than asking them to use a pen and paper.

The project aimed to ensure that marginalised people (IP and women) were involved throughout the process. In selection of sites it was ensured that the CF process would also be piloted in a community (Bofekalasumba) in which IPs lived (although it must be noted that this village had high levels of equality between IP and non-IP, which is rather unusual in the regional context). Tools were developed based on an assumption of high levels of non-literacy and non-numeracy; and women and IPs were given the opportunity to be equitably represented in training, decision-making, negotiations, involved in monitoring, and invited to participate in local and national workshops.

In the five sites visited, the project had made a significant impact on women's involvement in CF. Traditionally, women do not speak in front of men in meetings, however, GASHE had encouraged the participation of women to such an extent that women said they now spoke up more in ordinary community meetings also. Through facilitation, and by trying to schedule meetings when women were available, women received the same information as men and were supported to raise their voice in meetings (Ilebo, Ilinga, Bofekalasumba). Women held positions in the committees e.g. Vice President of the Comite de Gestion, Ilebo, and Treasurer for the Comite de Suivi and Gestion, Ilinga. It was clear that real steps toward inclusion had been made because Ilinga

elected, without involvement of GASHE, to send both a man and a woman representative to the Roundtable in Kinshasa, while Ilebo sent only a woman. During these workshops a presentation was given focussing solely on the role of women in resource management, the challenges they face and the opportunities brought about by CF.[33] This level of inclusion of women is highly unusual for the traditional Congolese context. However, men and women alike noted the importance of having perspectives and involvement of all the genders in determining how to use the forest. Women did not highlight any additional burdens, but noted that participation in all meetings and training can be difficult due to child-rearing and house management responsibilities.

The project conducted a study on gender dynamics in order to better understand the context, collected gender-disaggregated data, hired female community outreach officers in both Equateur and North Kivu Province, included training sessions on gender considerations at the provincial and sectoral levels as well as within the organisations of local partners. There was also training of government officials in the integration of IP based on the SNFC strategy, as well as anthropological research on the inclusion of marginalised groups based on interviews of IPs in Bofekalasumba.

On an organisational level, national consortium members such as GASHE and CAGDFT had also made changes to their employment policies following inclusion training by Well Grounded, by employing more women and identified Diversity & Inclusion Champions to foster equity in the workplace.

3.9 SUSTAINABILITY

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed highly satisfactory. Positive effects of the project were that there had been real substantive changes, and that several communities had shown the initiative to proceed to the next step without being directed by GASHE, suggesting that if the project can accompany them to the management phase, it stands to leave autonomous and sustainable community management.

The guidance documents, legal texts, fundraising strategies and training provided to government and administrative teams are examples of highly sustainable outputs, which will continue to benefit CF beyond the end of this project.

A further step for the Illustrated Guides (both the completed CFCL attribution and on-going simple management plan), which was underway at the point of evaluation, is translation into the 4 national languages to be used more easily by the communities (currently both are in the administrative language, French, and the first guide is additionally in Lingala and Swahili).

As the project only went as far as the first stages of the CF process, namely, attribution of the CFCL and development of LUP and SMP (for Ilinga), and has not yet begun fully implementing the management phase, there are very real risks to the sustainability of the project impact if funding is not leveraged to support the second stage of experimentation. In the law, the experimental phase lasts until 2023 and the consortium needs support at least until this date, and for a number of years beyond, in order to adequately develop pilot models which can demonstrate long term impacts on livelihoods and a reduction in deforestation, and in order to accompany communities to autonomous management of their forests.

As outlined in section on impacts, progress has begun on practices to sustainably manage the environment and on developing sustainable practices for economic development such as cultivating community fields and clearing roads along which to transport and export agricultural produce. However, communities would struggle to fully advance beyond the attribution phase (the first phase) without the technical support of GASHE. These approaches are new for communities, and if development gains cannot be made from sustainably managing the forest via the management phase (second phase of CF), there is a risk that communities may accept industrial mining or logging in order to make money[34], which would run counter to the project's aims to reduce deforestation. All of this could be significantly mitigated if the project were to receive funding for the next 5 years, at a minimum.

Several partner organisations (e.g. GASHE) are highly reliant on funding secured by RFUK. However, organisational development was central to the project's approach and capacity for fundraising and seeking alternative partners has been built throughout the project's duration. As things currently stand, however, if more funding is not secured soon, the highly trained and experienced community animators and project leader will have to disperse from September, which will entail a loss of expertise, as well as

33. Based on correspondence with RFUK

34. Rasied by APEM during the workshop

the important personal relationships already established with communities.

It is clear that the legal steps needed to obtain the CFCLs and then to engage in sustainable management are often beyond the capacity of communities alone and as such a mechanism needs to be set up to provide continuous support to them aiming at improved livelihoods and reducing deforestation.

An exit strategy had not been defined in the proposal nor in the early stages of the project. National organisations have identified routine activities which can be carried out without large sums of money.

3.10 REPLICABILITY

Overall, this aspect of the project was deemed highly satisfactory. Due to the political and legal context, much was uncertain at the beginning of the project. The consortium constantly re-evaluated and adapted their strategy during this experimental phase and the results were a great success. Part of this success was due to the fact that they were attempting to build something durable and replicable, and that great emphasis was put on developing protocols, tools and guides which can be used again and by other organisations.

This project has provided a viable model for participatory community forestry in Equateur Province and North Kivu Province as far as the land-use planning, and successfully delivering the attribution phase. Even if provinces vary significantly in DRC in terms of administrative capacity, community structure, threats and risks, the same basic process - which has been validated in the SNFC - could be used with adjustments in different provinces. The North Kivu and Equateur provinces are quite different in their socio-economic and environmental characteristics, for example, there is more mobility and economic development in North Kivu, and more pressure on forests from mining, the carbon trade and armed groups. As such the success of the model up to early management of CFCLs in both provinces (as well as learning from LUPs carried out in Maniema as part of another project) provides convincing evidence that the model tested can be adapted and established across provinces.

Based on the baseline information collected in the pilot selection phase, it appeared that the pilots were carried out in areas with extremely little administrative support capacity and infrastructure, which demonstrates their robust nature and the likelihood of their success elsewhere.

One of the consortium partners, APEM, conducted monitoring throughout the forested provinces of the country, and has excellent data on the risks and characteristics of these provinces, as well as having established replicable models of communication and monitoring via people working as 'focal points' in various provinces who can alert them to risks and illegal activities.

The pilot involving the IP community was carried out in a setting where the relationship between Bantu and IP was particularly good even before the project started. This evaluation is unable to comment on the relationship between IP and Bantu in Bamasobha as it was not possible to visit North Kivu Province. While this pilot was key to test and adapt tools and methods to make sure they were appropriate with IP communities, further pilots may be needed in communities requiring further integration.

The significance of the "accompagnateur", the accompanying organisation, in the CF process is a major factor in the success of the CF. The deep community involvement and commitment of GASHE and PREPPYG was fundamental to the success of those pilot sites. In the DRC context it is crucial to find reliable, committed, rights-based accompanying organisations. In several interviews at the national, provincial and local levels, particularly with civil society organisations, comparisons between GASHE and other large NGOs were made. In these comparisons, it was suggested that other conservation organisations paid far less attention to community appropriation and empowerment, and often led communities to declare their CFCL entirely for environmental conservation purposes, rather than honouring the multi-usage approach of CFCL management.

Roundtables have been an important way for GASHE and other partners to share the tools and approaches they have developed with other accompanying organisations. The project demonstrated high levels of successfully implemented adaptation to arising needs by setting up effective mechanisms for stakeholder exchange. For

example, during the third national Roundtable a gap was identified related to involvement of provincial stakeholders in the policy process; it was suggested that more effort needed to be made to capture these perspectives. CAGDFT therefore developed an inter-provincial Roundtable of neighbouring provinces that face similar issues and have similar geographies which brought together APAs, NGOs working in the region, other forestry stakeholders and forest-dependent community representatives, to discuss challenges and solutions which could be fed directly into the national level Roundtable. The first inter-provincial Roundtable was held in Equateur, it was then replicated in the Kivus, Katanga and the Oriental region, in which all provinces were represented. The Roundtable is a highly replicable and successful forum for discussion of multiple actors at different levels, but is extremely costly and may therefore face constraints in terms of financial viability.

3.11 INFORMATION AND DISSEMINATION

A significant number of key studies, publications, and guidance tools were developed through the course of this project (11 in total). RFUK published a number of these reports via its website, which are available in English and French, and also ensured they were distributed to partners and other stakeholders in DRC (see Annex 6 for the full list of publications). RFUK also hired a consultant to create short videos showcasing the work carried out in Equateur (published on Youtube on 31 January 2019) available in English and French and the Illustrated Guide to the CFCL process was adapted into a 7-minute video (published on Youtube on 18 February 2019). However, both have received limited views.[35] RCREF also produced its own short video promoting community forestry based on their work in North Kivu.[36] These videos have, however, been shared in national meetings in DRC, but have yet to be shared with the communities. PREPPYG, however, has a regular radio segment on CF which is widely listened to by communities in North Kivu.[37]

3.12 RISK

Overall the project made adequate assumptions and effectively analysed and mitigated for potential risks. Two major unanticipated events occurred in the course of the project, namely: a significant number of partners leaving the consortium; and Ebola Viral Disease in Equateur (April – July 2018) and in North Kivu (August 2018 – present). The effect of partners dropping out has been discussed in the Ssection on project design, and overall was successfully mitigated for with the formation of APEM, hiring of InCap, and RFUK absorbing responsibilities. Ebola Virus Disease has had numerous prior outbreaks in DRC and therefore should have been included as a medium likelihood and a medium risk at the design stage, but RFUK updated the risk registers which were sent as part of quarterly reporting when the outbreak began in Equateur. The ebola outbreak in Equateur led to GASHE to develop a contingency plan and suspend activities for two weeks in May 2018; these activities were carried out shortly after, keeping delays to a minimum. The ebola outbreak in North Kivu did not affect the activities of PREPPYG who developed a contingency plan but were able to deliver activities as planned. When ebola reached Goma in July 2019, RCREF also developed a contingency plan and provided RFUK with regular updates as part of the weekly calls.

As highlighted previously, the biggest risk to this project was the original timeframe. All partners with whom we spoke emphasised that 3.5 years was an ambitious timeframe in which to test viable models of CF and that it was unlikely that the management phase would be able to be fully tested in such a short amount of time.

35. 2,433 and 527 views respectively, as of 9 August 2019 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6G0bNCNCc2A
36. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eso7jHR9tAk
37. According to reports to DFID there are over 7,500 listeners.

TABLE 3. ORIGINAL RISK MATRIX AND EVALUATION SCORE

DESCRIPTION OF RISK	PREDICTED LIKELIHOOD/IMPACT	SCORE
There is sufficient interest among communities and institutional actors to participate in the project.	Low/High	Adequately predicted and mitigated for. Strong relations between partner CSOs and communities had already been established.
Political or civil unrest.	High/Medium	Adequately predicted and mitigated for. The election period caused political instability from 2016-18, as the outgoing president delayed elections beyond his mandate, and caused delays in the work of in-country partners in December 2018 and January 2019 when internet was cut in large parts of the country, creating difficulties for communication. The following mitigation measures were added in the six-monthly reports to DFID across 2018-2019. In the immediate pre- and post-election period in December to January 2018/19 the political security situation was high and there was a three week internet shutdown which hampered partner activity. As a precautionary measure RFUK limited partner transfers to cover only salaries and operational costs, to limit exposure and partners holding significant unspent funds. Furthermore, RFUK monitored the situation daily through telephone calls with the partners. Civil unrest and violence is a significant threat in North Kivu Province. The continued volatility of the situation in the east of DRC should not be underestimated.
Government doesn't sign the outstanding Community Forestry Arrêté, or does so but after a long delay or in a very amended form from recent draft versions.	Low/Medium-High	The Arrêté 025 was signed during the initiation phase.
Surge of community forests are established that are disproportionate to the capacity of MEDD (previously MECNDD) to administer them.	High/High	Adequately predicted and mitigated for via the development of the National Strategy on Community Forests, consensus building through the Roundtables, and investigations conducted by APEM. Other actors established CFCLs with limited participation of communities before the adoption of the National Strategy. 13 CFCLs in Mai Ndombe had to be retracted and reviewed.

		CFCLs applications are being delayed in part due to previous CFCL applications not following legal procedures.
The loggies moratorim and other large-scale threats to the development of comunity forests.	Medium-High/Medium	The threats to the development of community forests were slightly under-scored. Both likelihood and impact should have been ranked as 'High'. Nevertheless, mitigation measures were adequate and the project successfully went beyond expectations in uncovering, monitoring, and combattting threats to community forests.
Lack of capacities of state agencies partners and cpmmunities.	High/High	Adequately predicted and mitigated for. Targeted support and training to state agencies was provided by InCap via CAGDFT and APEM. this ensured that the capacities of state agencies were increased. Partners also worked to promote a long-term vision and phased approach to community forest development (15-20 years) and ensured that experiences were shared via the Roundtables, including experiences from community representatives. Organisational development, support and training was also provided to partners to increase capacity. Partners anticipated initial suspicion from community members that this project was a ruse to steal their forest. This was mitigated for via a slow and steady community engagement strategy, where the law was careful explained and the community participated in the production of all data, maps, and applications for the CFCLs. Suspicion remains amongst some community members who do not attend meetings. During elections, state actors are often replaced and investments made in certain political positions can be lost. This will continue to be a risk and the strategy to target non-political appointees remains the most effective.

Elite capture and inequity for marginalised groups such as women and indigenous people.	High/Medium-High	Adequately anticipated and mitigated for. CF were closely monitored and inclusion and participation of women and IP was actively facilitated by GASHE and PREPPYG. Pilot mixed community – Bofekala-sumba - had existing good relationships between Bantu and IP. This would likely continue to be a risk in other locations.
Lack of necessary information, inaccessibility of communities, access to markets etc.	Low/Medium	Adequately analysed and mitigated for. A substantial amount of geographical and socio-economic data in potential project areas (e.g. on livelihood activities, access to healthcare & education) had already been collected.
Ebola epidemic risk (added in six-monthly reports to DFID).	High/High	The following mitigation measures were added in the six-monthly reports to DFID across 2018-2019. GASHE, RCREF and PREPPYG teams took all necessary hygiene precautions when travelling, as per the guidance from health actors in the areas (for example, provision of handwashing points with chlorinated water at the office locations, field staff required to use disinfectant after field missions, incorporation of sensitisation messages in community work). They monitored the situation careful and provided weekly updates to RFUK. Contingency plans were developed in both provinces and activities suspended during the peak of the epidemic in Equateur.



Bofekalasumba (Equateur Province). The community hold a dance which involves all members of the community. © Lys Alcayna-Stevens (2019).

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The following are lessons learned for other potential partners intending to accompany communities seeking CFCLs.

Pilot projects require substantial time in order to train forest communities to fully understand their legal rights to their customary forests and how attribution of a CFCL can help them secure their forests from multiple threats while empowering them to develop and collectively manage forest resources. The use of local awareness-raisers (known as 'relais communautaires' or RECO) greatly increases the success of these trainings.

Capacity building of local and regional administrators in rural, forested provinces, is essential to the success of pilot projects.

Organisational development and leadership training for the national consortium members greatly increases the sustainability of pilot projects (RFUK's support to civil society ensured continuous capacity building).

Monitoring is greatly improved with the use of 'focal points' (people trained in monitoring) in the provinces in which partners are not already established.

Capacity building is highly relevant in DRC where the forest administration's capacity to support local communities is very limited. The extent of this capacity can best be assessed with a baseline study at the outset of a project.

There is a risk in providing excessive support to local administration, given that they may pocket resources allocated for the support of communities to supplement incomes which, in rural areas are often paid late or not at all. However, a total lack of financial and logistical support makes it impossible for local administrators to undertake the work needed of them for the allocation of CFCLs, and a budget line should therefore be included to support them in this.

Local partners in the ILLUCBF project based their interactions with local communities on a mutual learning approach, which was highly effective and enabled them to manage expectations and ensure mutual respect and sustainability.

National calls for positions ensured that highly competent staff were recruited, and this project benefited from Congolese staff in leadership positions with significant previous experience of working with indigenous people, and within the Ministry of the Environment.

Close monitoring of activities and finances permitted the case of fraud in RRN to be uncovered (which also involved funds from other international projects). Subsequently, reducing the size of disbursements to local partners, as well as providing additional and specific training on financial reporting and the introduction of simplified budgeting spreadsheets, facilitated financial monitoring.

Other actors, such as logging companies, can interfere with or undermine the process when there are conflicts of land and resources, and dealing with these issues necessitates a strong relationship with local civil society organisations.

It takes time to identify and set up community forestry pilot sites (to develop tools for awareness raising on community forestry, to build the capacity of local government in dealing with applications, and to deal with political and administrative delays) and these must be figured into the timeline.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR CURRENT PROJECT (DFID) DONOR:

- Fund a second phase of the project for the pilots to be finalised entirely and lessons drawn accordingly, in line with the official government experimental phase ending in 2023, so as not to lose project gains and to build and ensure sustainability of economic benefits through the SMP phase.
- Consider co-funding or providing technical support to ensure further funding is accessed to continue to support community forestry work in DRC.
- Ensure that projects taking place in countries with weak governance are funded over a longer time frame – at least 5 years – to allow for risk mitigation.
- Verify that guidance and information to set-up the project Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework is in line with the wider programme, with impact indicators and final log-frame provided at the beginning of the project so as not to cause delays in project activities.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DRC:

- Commit to maintaining the database after handover, so that valuable data is not lost.
- Commit to keep supporting CF and granting CFCLs that follow due processes.
- Ensure that on-the-ground experience is used for the revision of the legal framework at the end of the experimental phase.
- Support the continuation of national and provincial Roundtables, including financial resources and political buy-in from the Ministry level, as a key mechanism for dialogue and problem-solving by concerned stakeholders.
- Use the capacity development plan and training-of-trainers' manual developed by the ILLUCBF project to provide sustainable resources and organise trainings. This will ensure that capacity reinforcement of national, provincial and local administration is maintained so that provincial and local representatives are aware of and able to conduct their duties. Given the early proliferation of CFCL applications which were not based on a rigorous community consultation process, increasing local governments' capacity (via the training-of-trainers guide) to monitor the CFCL process is extremely relevant.
- Determine a strategy, in discussion with other actors at the national Roundtable, which ensures that administrators have the financial and logistical means to carry out CFCL investigations and monitoring missions.

FOR POTENTIAL DONORS AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (UN, WORLD BANK) IN THE DRC:

- Lessons learned gathered by the project on the optimal process for setting up CFCLs, as well as possible challenges and solutions should be reflected in all new projects relating to CF in DRC.
- Ensure that a range of stakeholders (state, private, NGO) are involved in processes of legislative and policy reforms to ensure ownership and buy-in.
- Ensure that attribution of CFCLs is completed following best practices and appropriate involvement of communities, following the RFUK model.
- Coordinate funds to build capacity of national and local administration, together with national government.
- Ensure that the national GIS database is complete and up to date by providing up-to-date information on CFCLs supported by their own projects, and support the provincial administration in providing GIS data to the national level.
- Tackle threats to community forestry and other human right threats related to environmentalism

through the organisation of joint missions and the use of shared tools for monitoring.

- Support the continuation of national and provincial Roundtables as a key mechanism for coordination, healthy dialogue and problem-solving by concerned stakeholders.

- Develop models which would allow communities to apply for a CFCL with only light accompaniment for the post-experimental phase.

FOR CONSORTIUM MEMBERS:

- Identify other funding sources to finance GASHE and PREPPYG's community activities, and funding to continue other activities such as Roundtables and monitoring.

- While waiting for funding, identify activities that can be undertaken with small funds to ensure that progress is not lost, e.g. keeping contact with communities at pilot sites.

- With future funding, replicate the community-based participatory approach from the pilot sites. This includes moving at the community's pace with sensitisation via regular visits (this was shown to work well to overcome initial community suspicion); dedicate time in communities (e.g. weeks or months) to help community members feel they can trust organisations; continue to ensure all aspects of the project are explained carefully and the community is leading decision-making.

- Where possible, facilitate peer-to-peer learning between communities e.g. when starting in a new community bring representatives from a previous pilot to explain their trajectory and journey through CF to help convince other community members.

- Improve coordination by ensuring regular communication through scheduled quarterly or six-monthly meetings. International consortium members who have reliable access to the internet could coordinate quarterly, whilst all-consortium meetings could be every six months.

- Clarify relationships between all consortium members including reporting lines, coordination schedules, scope of activities, point of collaboration, and expectations.

- Ensure there is time scheduled into future planning sessions in which consortium members can explain their approach, ways of working, and what each member considers "success" related to their own activities and the activiites of the consortium.

- Ensure that other consortium members are sufficiently consulted and given the opportunity to provide substantive feedback on funding applications.

- Continue supporting capacity development of civil society organisations by keeping it as a stand alone objective in future proposals.

- Improve indicators of impact:

    - use targets based on geo-spatial imagery (i.e. for deforestation impact)

    - include metrics (defined by communities) to track evolution of women's active involvement in activities at the community level

    - include impact indicators (these can be defined by communities) at the planning stage and reassessed at regular intervals during the project.

- Define value for money metrics with donors during the planning stage and emphasise the case for why simple averages are not appropriate (rather calculations should be done on a case-by-case basis) and comparisons between contexts, within a country and between countries, may not be applicable.

- Ensure that future budgets include a line to support APAs, even if no funding can be given to them directly (as was the case for DFID funding).

- Minimise staff turnover, where possible, and ensure substantial time for a briefing of new staff is in place in order to maintain institutional knowledge.

- Ensure extra time is built into work on pilot sites in eastern provinces (such as North Kivu) where CFCL

attributions have historically been very complicated and where there are extra challenges due to the militarised nature of the zone.

- Development a more targeted approach to integrating marginalised groups, such as IPs (the current flagship pilot site, Bofekalasumba, is quite unique in the integration of IPs with the broader community, and the approach used there will not be reproducible everywhere).

6. CONCLUSION

Overall, this evaluation concludes that the ILLUCBF project is well-conceived and highly relevant, and that its implementation was effective. Its objectives were ambitious: (1) to improve livelihoods of forest dependent communities and reduce deforestation in DRC through piloting and demonstrating scalable models of community forest management; (2) to reinforce the capacities of national and local authorities so that they can administer, support and monitor community forests; (3) to reinforce the capacities of national civil society partner organisations so that they have the organisational and technical capacity to advocate in favour of pro-poor community forests; (4) to establish a recognised national forum for community forest issues in DRC. Despite the challenging context in which this project was undertaken, the outcomes achieved were remarkable, and even exceeded expectations in some cases.

It was well understood that this was a new regulatory environment and experimental phase for the government of DRC, which had not yet developed the resources or capacity to effectively administer and manage community forests. Indeed, the outputs of the ILLUCBF project are particularly commendable given the challenging circumstances under which it was implemented. Overall, the project made adequate risk assessments and effectively analysed and mitigated for potential risks, some which could be predicted (such as the time it would take to train APAs) and some which could not (such as the two Ebola outbreaks and the presidential election which took two years to be organised and led to extended instability throughout the country and lengthy internet shutdowns). Despite these challenges, good coordination and feedback loops among actors allowed them to intervene early when issues arose and turn them into opportunities.

This was an extremely ambitious project given the time frame, and the new regulatory environment. It did not have the time to accompany all the pilot communities to the simple management plan phase. The most urgent recommendation of this evaluation is therefore that further funding be secured so that all pilot communities can be accompanied to this final management stage while the experimental phase (2018-23) declared by the DRC government is still underway. To fail to do so, would be to fail to see all these achievements come to full fruition. There have already been real improvements in the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities, and their ownership and initiative suggests that if the project can accompany them to the management phase, it stands to leave autonomous and sustainable community management of forest resources in DRC.



Bofekalasumba (Equateur Province). Two boys ask for their picture whilst waiting in the church. © Tilly Alcayna (2019)