

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

# BRINGING COMMUNITY FORESTRY TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN THE CONGO BASIN: A REVIEW OF EU SUPPORT TO DATE

### 1. Title of Project

International support to Community Forestry in the Congo Basin: Lessons Learned, Gaps, and the Road Ahead.

### 2. Background and rationale

A handful of countries in the developing world have supported the development of community forests which are forested lands held collectively by local communities. These forests are very often governed by customary rights, rules, and institutions that vary and change according to local circumstances. Many forest communities clear small areas of forest for subsistence agriculture or husbandry, but let the forest and its ecosystem regenerate.

But national legislation in many countries' does not recognise communities' customary rights to their forests, and governments are often reluctant to support the development of viable and inclusive community forestry models. This leaves forest communities vulnerable to external pressure on their land.

In Central Africa, community forestry is a relatively new concept. In Cameroon, the concept has been implemented for two decades with mixed results. Other countries in the region including Gabon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Republic of Congo are starting seeing implementation of community based management models on a pilot scale. By working with communities to strengthen their forest rights, decision makers can help to achieve numerous governance, development and climate benefits.

Fern and its local partners in the Congo Basin work with civil society organisations, local communities, policy makers and donors to strengthen community forest rights and promote community based forest management. In the context of the [CoNGOs project](#) (*NGOs collaborating for equitable and sustainable community livelihoods in Congo Basin forests*), Fern aims to achieve improved governance and practice in equitable and sustainable community forestry livelihoods including through:

- Legal recognition for communities' customary tenure rights;
- Building the capacity of forest communities to claim their rights and improve sustainable forest management models; and
- Promoting community forestry in the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) FLEGT VPA and REDD+ processes.

A number of donors are supporting the development of community forestry in the Congo Basin by aiding national governments to reform their land and/or forest sector, encouraging development initiatives to strengthen local livelihoods, and funding climate actions that involve community participation in forest restoration and protection.

However, this support has not yet been systematically recorded and assessed in the Congo Basin as a whole at the exception of Cameroon. The paper will therefore shed light on EU policies and processes that contribute to the development of community forestry in the Congo Basin, and assess how relevant successful they have been so far.

Ultimately, the paper aims to convince the EU to step up its support to community forestry as a tool that can contribute to achieving the SDGs, improve forest governance and attain climate objectives

### 3. Aim of the study

The main purpose of the study is to provide an assessment of EU policies and processes including funding that support the development and implementation of community forests.

The specific objectives of the paper are to:

1. Provide a brief context on the state of play of community forestry including definitions and legal and institutional framework in the targeted countries.
2. Describe the main policies and processes, and funding for supporting community forestry in the Congo Basin.
3. Provide an assessment of how effective these policies and processes have been including challenges and best practices (case studies).
4. Provide concrete recommendations on how these policies and processes can be strengthened and additional support needed from the EU to make viable and inclusive community forestry a reality in the Congo Basin.

The intended audience for the paper are:

- EU Commission officials
- EU Member State officials
- EU based NGOs working on community rights and forest governance issues
- International institutions supporting forests programmes including AFD, CAFI, FCPF, and UNDP
- CSOs in VPA partner countries
- Governments in VPA countries

### 2. Report content/outline:

**The study will include the following contextual elements:**

- Regional governance and political context
- State of play of community forestry in the Congo Basin and its potential: the region is too diverse for a “one size fits all” approach
- The legal frameworks: gaps, loopholes and best practices

**The study will also include the following information:**

- EU and international policy context and its impact on policy coherence and donor coordination.
- Other actors involved such as international NGOs, academia, etc.

- Quantitative (if possible including funding magnitude, number of communities concerned, and size of forest area), and qualitative analysis of relevant policies and processes that support community forestry (FLEGT-VPA, REDD+, Nationally Determined Contributions, CAFI, SDGs, Bonn challenge...).

#### **Proposed structure**

1. Executive summary - 1 page
2. Recommendations to EU donors and civil society organisations on strengthening support to community forestry in the Congo Basin – 1 page
3. Methodology- 0.5 page
4. State of play of community forestry in the Congo Basin – 4 pages
5. Overview of relevant EU policies, processes and funding instruments– 3 pages
6. Assessment of these EU policies, processes and funding instruments – 3 pages
7. Case studies – 3 pages
8. Appendices

### **3. Those involved in the project**

The project will be overseen by Fern members of the CoNGOs project. An editorial group comprised of Fern campaigners and communications staff, and Fern’s partners in the targeted countries will input the paper including providing contributions and feedback. The Communications Manager will supervise an external editor who will review the paper.

### **4. Methodology**

The methodology for the research will include a desk review (including a review of relevant academic literature, relevant Fern and other NGO publications and programme materials, and material from other institutions such as Chatham House, FAO, UNDP, WRI, RFUK, Client Earth, CIFOR, CIRAD and the UN), as well as key informant interviews with EU Commission officials, EU Member States officials, Fern staff in Brussels and relevant donor organisations and local partners and civil society organisations in the countries covered by the study.

The consultant will write the study and work with Fern partner organisations in targeted countries who will be in charge of interviewing civil society/forest community representatives, and government officials and donor agencies supporting forests and community forests programmes.

### **5. Timeline**

20 days of full time work carried out over an 8 week period. The draft report will be available by September 2018. The final report will be published in November 2018.

#### **Deliverables:**

- A draft work plan outlining timeline, refined methodology, clarification of conceptual framework, list of definitions to be used, list of key resources, and refinement of research questions.
- A refined structure for the study as well as list of key informants.

- An inception report, outlining preliminary findings of desk review of available data and analysis.
- Draft study (20-25 pages) and an overall summary (2 pages) providing answers to the specific objectives of the paper, as well as presenting several concrete recommended actions for the EU donors and civil society organisations to advance community forestry in the Congo Basin. The study can be written in French or English but we have a preference for French.
- Submission of the final study to Fern staff.
- A short PowerPoint presentation of the findings.

