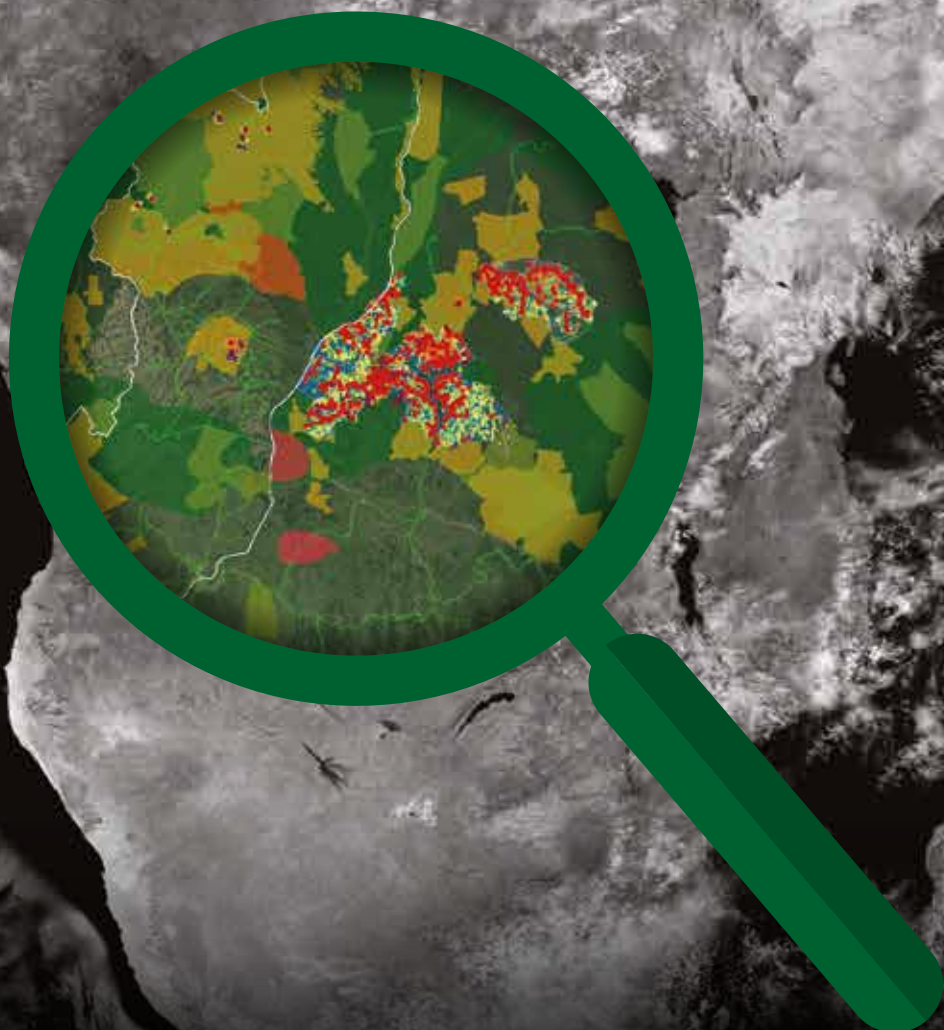




SECURING LANDS, SUSTAINING LIVES

**SECURING FORESTS:
PARTICIPATORY
MAPPING AND
COMMUNITY FORESTS
IN THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO**



BRIEFING
JANUARY 2019

MAPPING FOR RIGHTS
Putting communities on the map

1. SUMMARY

If well implemented, new community forest legislation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) offers an unprecedented opportunity for communities to obtain legal rights to forests they have inhabited for generations and to improve their livelihoods. However, for community forests to deliver equitable and sustainable outcomes there is a need to ensure that they are developed by the communities themselves, to truly address their needs and priorities. This would represent an important departure from externally-imposed community forest models found elsewhere in the region. [MappingForRights](#) aims to support a bottom-up approach to community forest management by enabling communities themselves to create highly accurate and detailed maps of their customary lands and resources.

2. BACKGROUND

In February 2016, DRC finally completed the legal framework for community forests, some 14 years since such a framework was first introduced in the 2002 Forest Code. The signature by the Environment Minister of a Ministerial Order on the management of community forests [*Concessions Forestières des Communautés Locales (CFCL)*] followed a 2014 Presidential Decree laying out the process through which these community forests could be applied for by local communities and indigenous people.

In a number of respects, the legislation is a significant improvement on the legal frameworks that are in place in neighbouring countries. In terms of size and duration of the community forests permitted, concessions (CFCLs) in DRC can be up to 50,000 hectares and held by communities according to their own custom, in perpetuity. This is in contrast with Cameroon, for example, where a concession is

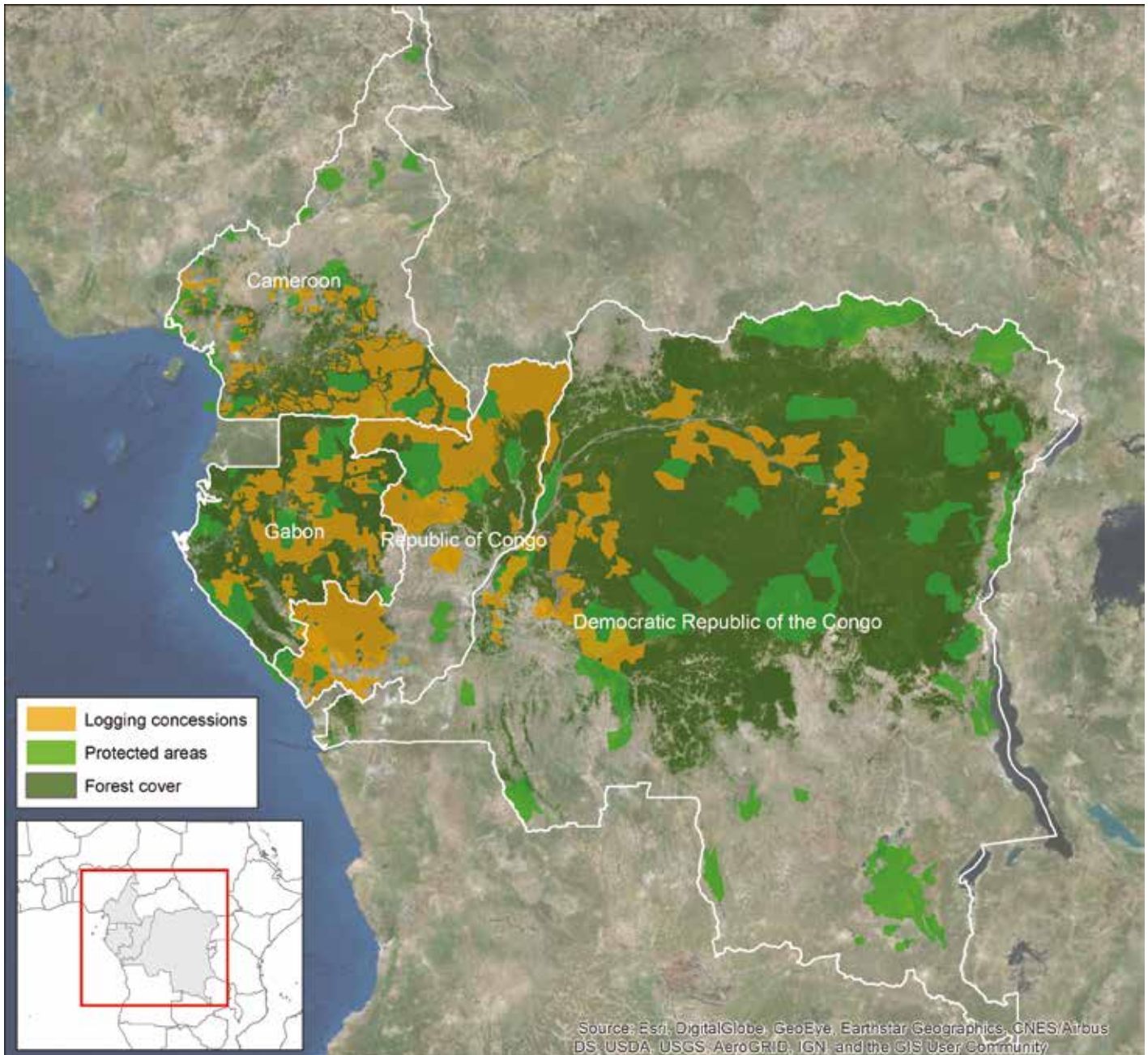
limited to 5,000 hectares and a 25-year lease period. The DRC community forestry law also allows for multiple uses of forests – such as for timber, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and game hunting, as well as for nature conservation, provision of environmental services, and many other types of uses (including cultural and spiritual).¹



Members of Ilinga community, in DRC's Equateur Province, celebrate as their CFCL is officially granted in September 2018. Ilinga is one of several communities supported by the Rainforest Foundation UK and its local partners to map their forests and obtain a CFCL.

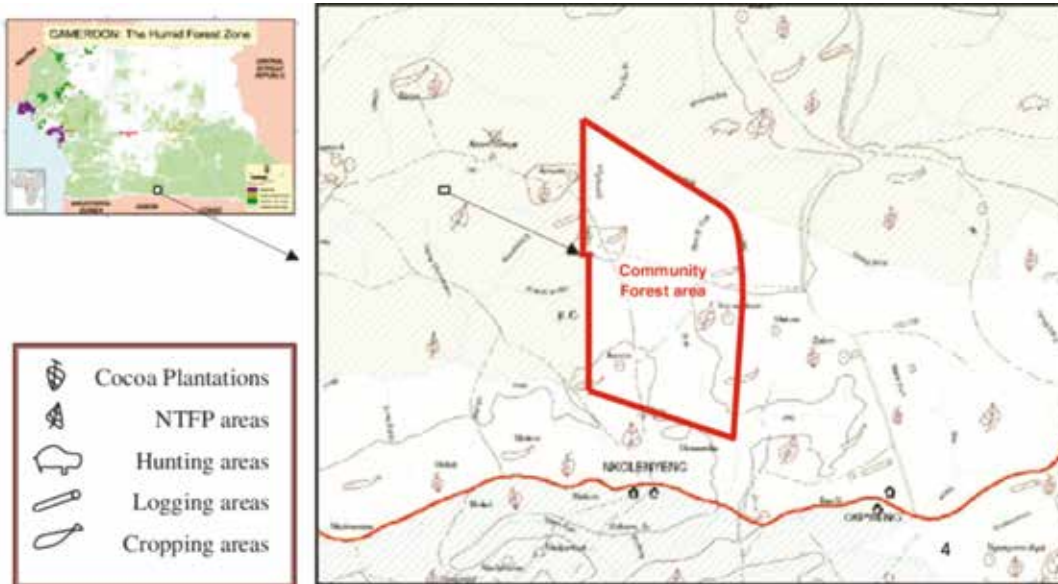
¹ For more information on community forests in the Congo Basin see RFUK, 2014: <https://www.rainforestfoundationuk.org/media.ashx/rethinkingcommunitybasedforestmanagementinthecongobasinonovember2014.pdf>

MAP 1 - FOREST AREAS POTENTIALLY AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITY FORESTS IN DRC VS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES



In contrast to neighbouring countries, where most of the forests have been claimed by the logging industry or as protected areas, DRC has tens of millions of hectares of forest (indicated above as “forest cover”) still potentially available for alternative forest management models. This is partially due to a moratorium on new logging concessions that has been in place since 2002. Source: MappingForRights, WRI

MAP 2 - AN EXAMPLE OF A COMMUNITY FOREST MAP IN CAMEROON



In most Congo Basin countries, community forests have typically only been granted on degraded roadside areas that were deemed unsuitable for timber extraction or strict biodiversity conservation, and these areas are typically limited to a maximum size of 5,000 hectares. This particular concession is notable for its small, straight-bounded shape – a sign that it may not be based on actual customary systems on the ground, which often follow natural features. Source: Lescuyer, 2013.

Setting up and managing community forests in DRC

The process of applying for, and eventually managing, a CFCL in DRC is nevertheless a demanding one for forest communities. In applying to create a community forest, communities can be expected to complete an array of forms, which are not available in local languages. They are also required to create accurate maps of the area where they would like to create a CFCL and to identify the individuals who have a customary claim over the land in question. The law on the attribution of CFCLs requires the preparation of a participatory map as part of the application process.²

Once a CFCL has been legally established, communities can then create a management plan for the area. What this looks like will vary from one community to another, but it is clear that the mapping of community land tenure, land use and natural resources in the area will be a key part of this process.

With community forestry in DRC currently in its infancy, many communities are being supported by local or international non-profit organisations (NGOs). If this is to be done properly, detailed information on community land tenure and land use patterns at the local level is an essential prerequisite. Moreover, if this data can be gathered in a way that is inclusive, and which gives communities some ownership over it, then such a process also has significant advantages beyond simply obtaining a CFCL.

However, some of the initial community forestry initiatives that have so far taken place in DRC, particularly those supported by large conservation agencies, are of questionable quality, especially with regards to not placing enough emphasis on community participation and ownership of the mapping process. Local NGOs have reported a low level of participation among some marginalised groups in map preparation, resulting in maps which may not accurately represent the interests of all members of a community but rather those of local elites and/or the facilitating conservation agencies.³

² Article 4, Décret n° 14/018 du 02 août 2014 fixant les modalités d'attribution des concessions forestières aux communautés locales.

³ For example, out of 34 community forest applications supported by conservation organisations World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and African Wildlife Fund (AWF)

in Mai Ndombe, Equateur and Tshuapa provinces as of February 2018, all have been set up for conservation purposes. In many of these cases a number of irregularities have been noted and in some cases communities have even been unaware that an application had been submitted in their name.

3. MappingForRights, PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY FORESTS IN DRC

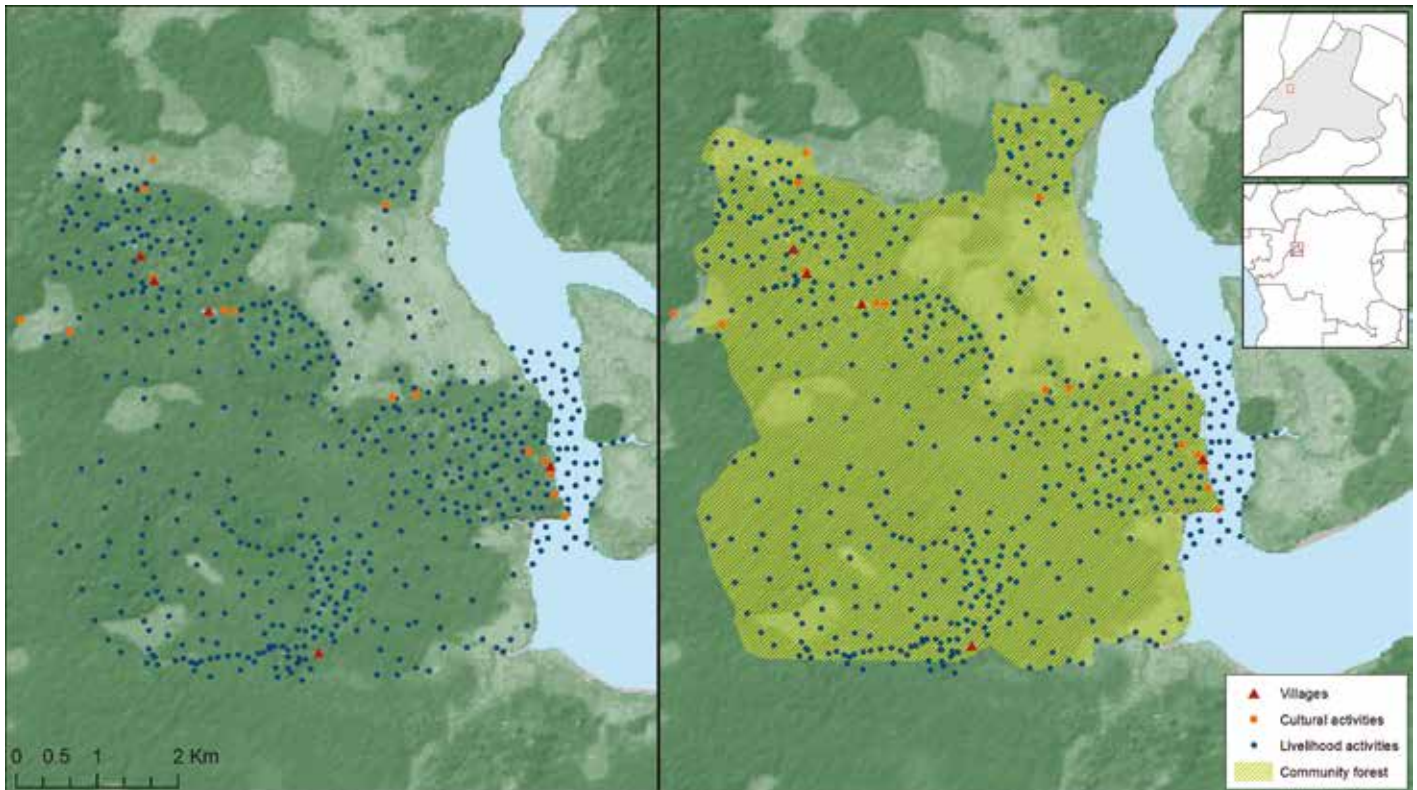
MappingForRights aims to support the creation of maps that depict what the community itself defines as important. In order to achieve this, a number of key steps to ensure ownership of the mapping process should be followed – from the point of obtaining their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) to the eventual validation of the map both within the community and with neighbouring ones.

To encourage effective participation of all community members in the map-making process, the use of accessible, icon-based data collection apps makes it possible for non-literate people to collect highly-detailed information about their forests. In some cases, it is necessary to work separately with those who are often excluded from decision-making processes, such as women, indigenous people or persons without customarily-recognised land.

The end results of this participatory community mapping can offer important insights into customary tenure and resource systems in DRC. Community mapping conducted between 2013-17 in Mai Ndombe, Equateur and Maniema provinces shows that customary land tenure boundaries are predominantly clan-based, and are generally very well defined and accepted locally, each with its own rules governing access and use of forest resources.



MAP 3 - PARTICIPATORY MAPPING DATA USED TO INFORM THE BOUNDARIES OF A COMMUNITY FOREST CONCESSION IN LUSANKANI, EQUATEUR PROVINCE



Customary resource systems that have been mapped by communities themselves can provide a solid geographical basis for community-based forest management models in DRC. These maps of Ilinga community show how detailed community mapping information (in this case from MappingForRights) can be a reliable basis for defining the boundaries of a CFCL. The map on the right shows a CFCL granted in September 2018. Source: MappingForRights.org

These clan-based land tenure areas are logical building blocks for the demarcation of forest areas that can be applied for by communities who wish to legally manage their traditional land as a CFCL. On this basis, RFUK and its local NGO partner *Groupe d'Action pour Sauver l'Homme et son Environnement* (GASHE) are supporting the development of some of the first pilot community forests in DRC, by helping a series of communities in *Territoire de Lukolela*, Equateur province to submit CFCL applications.

The maps that were created under [MappingForRights](#), outlining the tenure areas of different communities, were used as a basis for working with the selected communities. These maps helped to determine the boundaries of the communities' CFCLs and in creating maps to include in their official applications to the authorities (see Map 3, for example). The importance of accurately mapping community boundaries cannot

be overstated here. As the first CFCLs are now starting to be granted, it is becoming increasingly clear that one of the main stumbling blocks for some CFCL applicants will be the reconciliation of competing claims over land – both between different communities and between communities and other land users, such as logging concessions and protected areas.

Such maps will likely also be of practical use for communities in deciding how to develop their forests over the longer term. According to DRC's legal text on the management of community forests, a CFCL's management plan should divide the concession into a number of zones for different land uses. It should also include a socio-economic study, an inventory of the resources in the area, and should outline how the concession will be managed in line with local customs.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

A genuinely participatory approach to mapping community forests is essential if they are to deliver long-term benefits for DRC's forests and its peoples, especially when used as a basis for applying for a CFCL. In this regard we recommend the following:

- Develop official guidance on how to properly facilitate participatory mapping, as foreseen in DRC's community forest legislation, building on innovations and lessons learnt and from [MappingForRights](#) and other mapping initiatives.
- Incorporate the role of participatory mapping in forthcoming official guidelines on developing management plans for CFCLs (*'Le Guide Operationnel sur le Plan Simple de Gestion'*).
- Ensure training of government agents and NGOs on the above so that they are better able to assess the level of participation and ownership of mapping processes related to community forests.
- Establish an official community forest database which permits analysis of geographical data relevant to the attribution and management of CFCLs. Ideally, such a database should be accessible to local users.



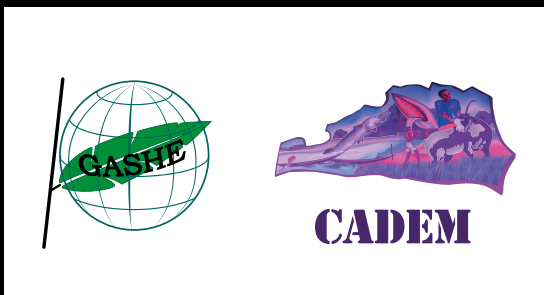
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