

CV4C DRAFT MID-TERM REVIEW REPORT

Draft MTR Report

7 November 2019

FOKABS INC.

955 Rotary Way, K1T 0L2, Ottawa, Canada

Tel: +1613-795-4747 Email: kfobissie@fokabs.com

Evaluators from FOKABS: Kevin Enongene and Kalame Fobissie

Report Commissioned by:

Centre for International Development and Training [CIDT]

Faculty of Social sciences, University of Wolverhampton

Telford Innovation Campus, Shifnal Road, Priorslee, Telford TF2 9NT, UK

Tel: +44-01902-323-219 Email: cidt@wlv.ac.uk Web: www.wlv.ac.uk/cidt

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	iii
Acknowledgement	v
Executive Summary	vi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Context.....	1
1.2. Project description	1
1.3. Purpose of this mid-term review (MTR)	2
2. METHODOLOGY	3
2.1. Approach/Methods employed.....	3
2.2. Limitations	5
3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	6
3.1. Relevance, coherence and design	6
3.1.1. Quality of project design / formulation	6
3.1.2. Relevance to national and regional priorities	7
3.1.3. Regional coherence.....	8
3.2. Overall Objective (Impact)	9
3.2.1. Key Achievements and Successes	9
3.2.2. Key Challenges and Gaps	9
3.3. Specific Objectives (Outcomes)	9
3.3.1. Key Achievements and Successes	9
3.3.2. Key Challenges and Gaps	11
3.4. Project Results (Outputs).....	11
3.4.1. Key Achievements and Successes	11
3.4.2. Key Challenges and Gaps	19
3.5. Efficiency.....	22
3.6. Sustainability	24
4. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES	26
4.1. Lessons learnt	26
4.2. Innovation	28
4.3. Regional exchange.....	29
4.4. Capacity strengthening	30
4.5. Project management and governance	31
4.6. Impact prospects	32
4.7. Gender.....	32
4.8. Case study success stories	34
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	35
5.1. Conclusions.....	35
5.2. Recommendations for the second half of the project	36

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CA	Competent Authorities
CADGF	Cercle d'Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts
CALF	Société Civile pour l'Application des lois et Réglementations Forestières
CAR	Central African Republic
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CED	Centre for Environment and Development
CFLEDD	Coalition des Femmes Leaders pour l'Environnement et le Développement Durable
CFP	Community and Forest Platform
CIDT	Center for International Development and Training
CIEDD	Centre pour l'Information Environnementale et le Développement Durable
CLIP	Consentement Libre, Informé et Préalable
COMIFAC	Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CV4C	Citizens Voices for Change
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEVCO	International Cooperation and Development
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FASA	Faculté d'Agronomie et des Sciences Agricoles
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FDGs	Focus Group Discussions
FGF	Forest Governance Forum
FLAG	Field Legality Advisory Group
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade
FODER	Forêts et Développement Rurale
FPP	Forest People Programme
GDRNE	Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles et de l'Environnement
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GMTMD	Gabon Ma Terre Mon Droit
GTC-RR	Groupe de Travail Climat REDD+ Rénové
IFM	Independent Forest Monitoring
IM	Independent Monitoring
IO	Independent Observatory
IP	Indigenous Peoples
ISO	International Standards
MEFDD	Ministère de l'Économie Forestière et du Développement Durable
MINFOF	Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune
MTR	Mid term Review
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSAs	Non-State Actors
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operations and Development
OGF	Observatoire de la Gouvernance Forestière
OTP	Open Timber Portal
PGDF	Plateforme pour la Gestion Durable des Forêts
PTA	Public Timber Auction
RDC	Republique Democratique du Congo

REDD+	Reduced Emissions of Deforestation and Degradation
REM	Resource Extraction Monitoring
RENOI- RDC	Réseau des observateurs indépendant des ressources naturelles en RDC
RoC	Republic of Congo
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
SNOIE	Standardized External Independent Monitoring System
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
WRI	World Resources Institute

Acknowledgement

The evaluation would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of a number of stakeholders. We express our sincere gratitude to the Project Manager of the CV4C project Prof. Aurelian Mbazibain and Mrs. Ella Haruna for their support and guidance throughout the evaluation process. Very special thanks to the CV4C project in-country partners and project beneficiaries in Cameroon and CAR for open and frank discussions, and their willingness and readiness to share valuable information and contribute to the evaluation mission. Without their perspectives, it would have been difficult to fully assess the implementation of the project this far.

Executive Summary

This report evaluates the extent to which the European Union and Department for International Development (DFID)-funded Citizens Voices for Change (CV4C) project is on track towards achieving its intended results.

Significant progress has been made towards the specific objectives of the project to build strong and effective NSAs capable of monitoring forest governance and forest land use change, informing relevant processes particularly FLEGT and REDD+, and contributing to effective responses from law enforcement and policy making agencies in five Congo Basin countries. Based on detailed capacity needs assessments at the beginning of the project, CV4C delivered a capacity building programme for non-state actors as well as government actors and organised regional exchanges so as to promote learning between countries in order to boost the performance of CSOs and other actors in tracking and combatting illegalities in the forest sector. With support from the project, some governments (including but not limited to Cameroon) are better responding to the IFM reports generated by NSAs. Significant improvements have been achieved in the quality of evidence generated by the project especially independent forest monitoring (IFM) reports. This has been supported by ISO certification of the SNOIE¹ tool approach in Cameroon, technical assistance on quality management systems in other countries as well as review of project reports by technical experts. Publication of reports and briefs on the Open Timber Portal and development of FLEGT Watch have strengthened monitoring capability of NSAs. FLEGT WATCH has been developed and piloted in the region, allowing for improved efficiency and impact on the ground. The profile of this tool has been raised across the Congo Basin region through the focus and emphasis laid on IFM at regional events including the 2017 Meeting of Parties of Congo Basin Partnership and the 2018 Forest Governance Forum. At policy level, CV4C has been instrumental in informing national forest related processes such as FLEGT and REDD+ in the project countries.

CV4C has made considerable progress regarding the attainment of the four expected results set by the project and majority of respondents rated the progress achieved towards the attainment of the project results as high to very high. Key results of the projects achieved so far include: improvement of the organisational and institutional capacities of project partners through the elaboration of strategic documents (policies, plans and strategies); significant focus on gender and mainstreaming through the project; capacity of actors within the forest governance landscape across the project countries reinforced; improvement in the financial and administrative management of project partner organisations; improvement in the quality of IFM outputs and other reports elaborated by project partners; development and roll out of FLEGT WATCH, establishment of an international online platform – Open Timber Portal (OTP) for the publication of IFM reports and private companies' legal requirements compliance information to reach an international audience; establishment of a regional community of practice on IFM by exposing CSOs to best practices and fostering synergies between organisations through experience sharing and establishment of a regional IFM platform in the Congo Basin.

¹ Standardized External Independent Monitoring System

The project has been efficient towards the use of financial and human resources for the implementation of project activities. The project was successful in mobilizing additional funding from DFID for the implementation of supplementary and complementary activities. While the majority of project partners attested that transfer of funds to them was timely enough to permit them to implement project activity as planned, it emerged that some operational challenges in funds transfer and reporting systems resulted in slow down of activities in mid 2019. Progress has been made towards the attainment of the overall objective of the project which is to strengthen the contribution of non-state actors (NSA) to improving forest governance, sustainable forest management and the contribution of forests to development in five Congo Basin countries. However, the overall progress of the project with regards to the attainment of its overall objective and specific objective will be better assessed at the end of the project as it is too early to judge at this point in time.

Concerning relevance, the implementation of the project activities is relevant to the countries' priorities relating to combatting illegal forest exploitation (FLEGT) and addressing global climate change through the reduction of forest-based emissions (REDD+). The project countries have ratified the Paris Agreement and the forest sector is highlighted as an important sector that will support these countries in attaining their GHG emission reductions set in their respective National Determined Contributions (NDCs). Hence, the CV4C project through its strengthening of forest governance in the Congo Basin countries supports the NDC process in these countries as the forest can only deliver its contribution in terms of climate change mitigation under prevailing conditions of good forest governance. Pertaining to alignment with regional initiatives, the project supports the COMIFAC convergence plan, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) and the Central Africa Forest Initiative (CAFI).

In terms of sustainability, several outputs generated by the project so far supports sustainability of the project. Elements of the project including but not limited to: elaborated plans for organisations – strategic plans, resource mobilization plans, financial sustainability plans and gender policies; capacity building delivered by the project on different technical and organisational thematic areas; the established regional IFM platform; developed methodological guidelines (such IM REDD+); and partnership agreements between project partners and institutional partners (FODER and MINFOF in Cameroon and renewal of IFM mandates for partners in CAR, DRC and Republic of Congo) represent elements of project sustainability as they would continue to be useful beyond the life of the project. However, there exist some key risks which could hamper the sustainability of the project results: financial and socio-economic risks, institutional risks and political risks. Concerning financial risks, the lack of adequate financial resources after the end of the project will likely retard IFM activities in the region as they are resource-intensive. Institutional risks relate to the fact that, the implementation of the elaborated strategies will not happen if the hierarchy of the institutions do not make a commitment towards their implementation. Political risks within the context of the CV4C project refers to the political unstable climate in the Congo Basin which may impede IFM as IM missions can only be conducted in secured areas.

At the mid-term point, this report presents lessons learned related to: IFM approaches and quality management, gender mainstreaming, capacity building and project implementation. Overall, the project is on track towards attaining its overall and specific objective by end date. The MTR focuses on the project outputs and outcomes while highlighting success stories, challenges encountered and lessons learned. The evaluation was conducted through the review and synthesis of project reports, documents and online information. In addition, primary data was collected using interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with partners and other relevant project stakeholders. The realisation of this MTR was not without challenges. The limitations of this MTR include:

- ✓ The difficulty encountered in interviewing some of the GDRNE platform members in CAR as most of the members do not have a physical office;
- ✓ A limited number of non-project partners in Cameroon were consulted due to the fact that, FODER's CV4C project manager who had to establish the link between the evaluator and the non-project partners, was on mission overseas during the period reserved for primary data collection in Cameroon;
- ✓ Field visit was limited to two countries (Cameroon and CAR) due to time and budgetary constraints.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the design of the project

Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM) is key to addressing illegal forest practices in the Congo Basin which culminates in a loss of revenue to the government of the respective forest countries. Independent forest monitoring activities are at different stages of development in the Congo Basin countries. Cameroon for instance received support on IFM until 2013 when the official IFM project ended and since then, the monitoring of forest activities by the civil society of the country was challenging due to inadequate financial resources, giving room for increased corruption and illegalities in the forestry sector of the country. In Central Africa Republic (CAR), limited progress with the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) and the result of armed conflict led to significant levels of illegality in the forest sector. With a country in reconstruction, the role of civil society remained weak especially with regards to independent monitoring of natural results and voice. In the Republic of Congo (RoC), the 2014 Forestry Law mandated CS to monitor the implementation of the VPA process. Since 2013, CADGF (Cercle d'Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts) took over from REM as the mandated forest monitor but since then, the former has been working on IFM issues largely alone. Although negotiations on VPA in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has stalled, the country is the most advanced in the sub-region on REDD+ issues under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). Mandated IFM in DRC is conducted by OGF (Observatoire de la Gouvernance Forestière).

Irrespective of the challenges faced by CS in conducting IFM in the Congo Basin, some efforts are still made by the CS to check forest illegalities. However, there remained a lack of appreciation and acceptance of IFM among decision makers of the Congo Basin countries. In Cameroon for instance, there was a reluctance of the government and private sector to acknowledge the role of independent monitors and to engage with them. Consequently, outcomes of CS independent monitoring in the country were hardly acted upon, defeating the purpose for IM. Moreover, IM work realised by CS, indigenous peoples and local communities in the Congo Basin are not readily taken into account by law makers, anti-corruption committees, private sector actors, importers and competent authorities (CA) in Europe. It is against this backdrop that the CV4C project was developed to address some of the setbacks in the implementation of the VPA-FLEGT and REDD+ processes in the Congo Basin countries.

1.2. Project description

Citizen Voices for Change: Congo Basin Forest Monitoring (CV4C) Project is a four-year (January 2017 to December 2020) project funded by the European Union (EU) with co-financing by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The project is implemented by nine different partner organisations: Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT) of the University of Wolverhampton in the UK, Centre for Environment and Development (CED), World Resources Institute (WRI), Field Legality Advisory Group (FLAG), Forêts et Développement Rural (FODER), Brainforest, Cercle d'Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts (CADGF), Observatoire de la Gouvernance Forestière (OGF), Centre pour l'Information Environnementale et le Développement Durable (CIEDD).

Implemented in five Congo Basin countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon and Republic of Congo (RoC), the project has as

its goal an increased contribution of forests to development, through reduced deforestation and degradation, conservation of biodiversity, sustained provision of ecosystem goods and services, and improved livelihoods for local forest communities. The overall objective is the strengthened contribution of non-state actors (NSA) – civil society organisations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples (IP) and local communities – to improving forest governance and sustainable forest management (SFM) in five Congo Basin countries. The project has as specific objective, strong and effective target NSAs monitor forest governance and forest land use change, inform relevant processes particularly FLEGT and REDD+, and contribute to effective responses from law enforcement and policy making agencies. The following results are envisaged to be achieved by the project:

- Result 1: Increased organisational and operational capacity of NSAs to undertake monitoring of forest governance, land-use, and REDD+ safeguards.
- Result 2: Improved quality and availability of independent information on compliance with forest and land sector legal norms
- Result 3: Viable, constructive and sustainable networks of well-informed local NSAs, with increased cross-border cooperation and information exchanges.
- Result 4: Effective engagement and response from forest law enforcement agencies, law makers and judiciary in national forest policy processes

The project has as its target group the following: Six national CSO partners in five countries and a regional organisation (FLAG); eight FLEGT and REDD+ CS/IP platform and community forest platforms in the project countries; 30 regional CSOs involved IFM; national and local government authorities; FLEGT/REDD+ institutions, the media, legislators, Competent Authorities in Europe and private sector actors. The final beneficiaries of the CV4C project constitutes 75 million poor men and women who depend on the forests of the Congo Basin.

1.3. Purpose of this mid-term review (MTR)

The aim of the mid-term evaluation is to understand progress realised so far towards achieving project objectives and outcomes and draw out lessons on how CV4C can be improved during the rest of its implementation for more positive impacts.

The objectives of the MTR are:

- To assess the extent to which the project is on track, in terms of implementation and achievement of the results (positive/ negative/ intended / unplanned etc);
- To conduct a mid-point assessment of enabling conditions/ constraining factors stakeholders perceive could help/hinder project sustainability;
- To identify good practices, lessons learnt case studies, and potential models for scale-up/ adaptation/replication (innovation), which will inform activity planning and organisational learning among the partners;
- To make recommendations for the second phase of the project (2019-2020).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Approach/Methods employed

Overall Approach of the Mid-Term Review

The MTR complied with the Organisation for Economic Co-operations and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. Gender issues and mainstreaming² will be considered as a cross-cutting theme as well as quality of project design, regional exchange, project management and governance, capacity strengthening, innovation, potential Sustainability, impact prospects and lessons learnt.

The MTR process generally constituted of: 1) review of literature: this entailed a context analysis of relevant CV4C project document from the various countries and 2) Field work: this entailed primary data collection through interview (face-to-face, Skype and telephone) in all the five CV4C project countries. Field visits were conducted in two of the CV4C project countries – Cameroon and Central African Republic. In addition to the field visits, project partners from the project countries were consulted in a regional workshop that took place in Douala from the 24 to 29 of June 2019.

Phases of the Mid-Term Review

The MTR was conducted using a three-phase approach: (i) Inception phase, (ii) data collection and analysis phase and (iii) close out phase - reporting.

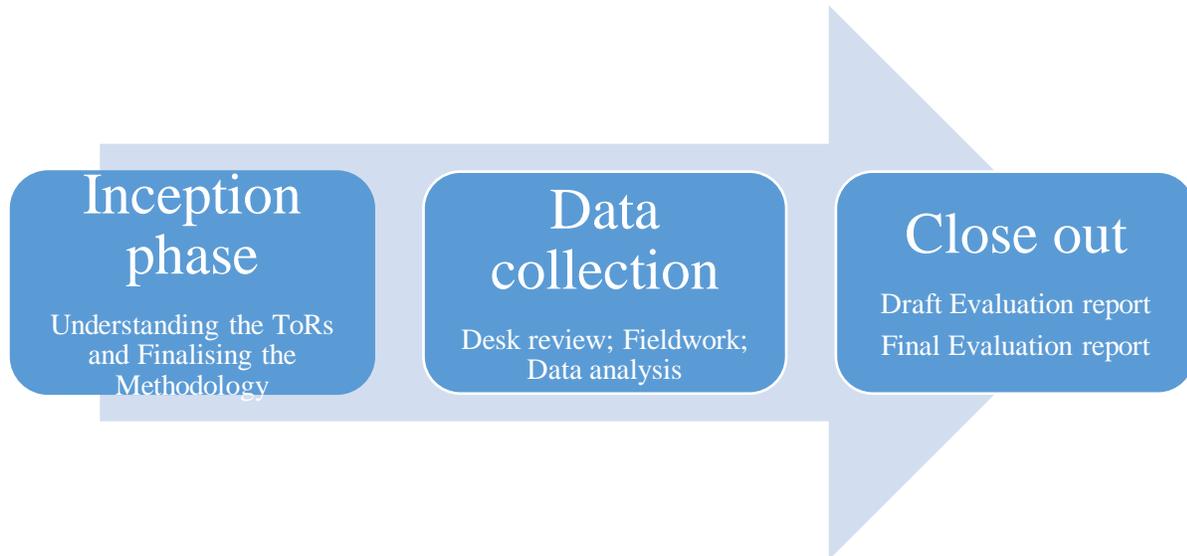


Figure 1: Phases of the CV4C MTR

² Issues relating to the consideration or integration of gender into project activities

Inception phase

This phase was dedicated to the identification of stakeholders who could provide relevant information for the evaluation in the project countries. The data collection tools were also designed in this phase.

Data collection and analysis phase

The MTR team gathered detailed and critical primary and secondary data from three sources:

a. Desk review and research:

Findings were identified through document review and validated through interviews with stakeholders and project partners. Sources of documented information included inter alia:

- Relevant project documents including the project proposal, project logical framework, newsletters and strategic plans (work plans, monitoring and evaluation plans, risk management plans), etc
- Reports: relevant reports for each of the project countries (including baseline reports, annual reports, monitoring and evaluation reports, reporting on gender, OD and independent forest monitoring (IFM) assessments conducted for each country etc.)
- CV4C project website, partner websites & project communications outputs including those from the Forest Governance Forum (FGF)

b. Field visits and stakeholder workshop:

Field visits were made to the two selected countries (Cameroon and CAR) during which face-to-face interviews were conducted with project partners and stakeholders (identified in consultation with CIDT). Cameroon was chosen because it hosts more project partners (three – CED, FODER and FLAG) than any other project country and consequently, it is rationale that more project activities would have been implemented in the country. CAR on the other hand was chosen because at the time of the MTR, the country was developing a national REDD+ strategy of which the CV4C CAR project partner (CIEDD) is part of the consortium in charge of this assignment. Hence, it was an opportunity for the evaluators to assess the potential relevance of the CV4C project to the national REDD+ strategy process and how the project can support the process. Interviews were conducted and meetings (group discussions) held with the selected project beneficiaries. Moreover, primary data collection for the MTR also benefitted from a regional project workshop that was held in Douala from 24 to 29 of June 2019, in the course of which face-to-face interviews were conducted with the project partners after which a questionnaire was submitted to the project manager of each project partner organisation for their completion. This was meant to obtain additional data (quantitative). In a nutshell, a total of 29 and 9 respondents were consulted face-to-face and virtually respectively as part of the evaluation exercise (see **Figure 2**). The list of actors consulted is provided in Annex V.

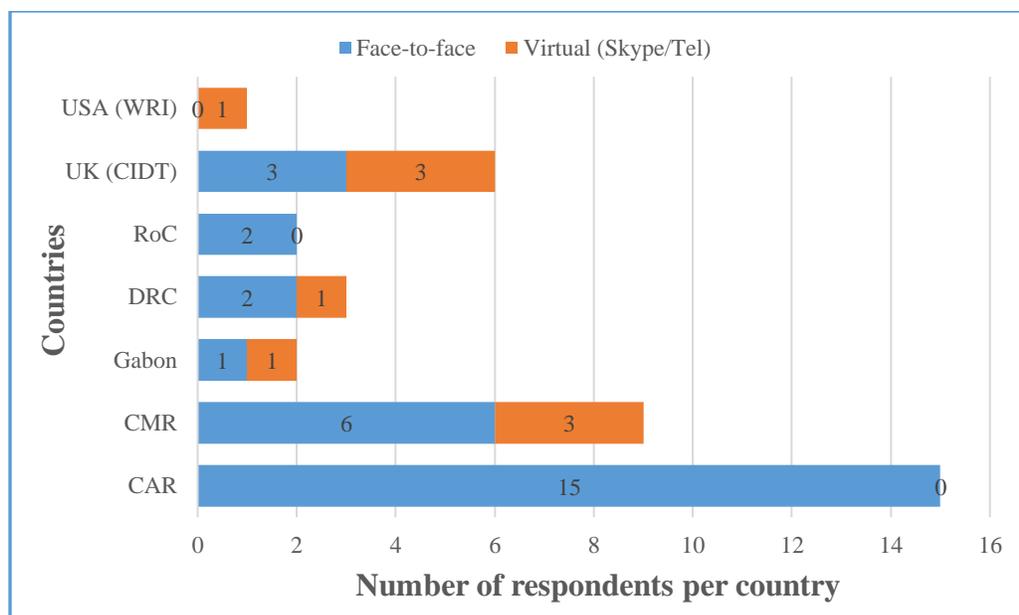


Figure 2: Number of actors consulted face-to-face (interviews/group discussions) and virtually (Skype/Telephone) across countries of the project partners

Close out phase

This phase was characterized with the elaboration of the draft MTR report which was submitted to the CIDT. Feedback received was used to generate the final MTR report.

2.2. Limitations

This evaluation was not without limitations. The following challenges were encountered in the course of the MTR process:

- ✓ Lack of a physical office for some respondents: interviewing some targeted respondents was challenging and, in some cases, impossible because of a lack of a physical address (an established office). This was particularly the case with the GDRNE platform members in CAR most of whom were not in possession of an office space and could only be reached by telephone. Unfortunately, attempts to set up an appointment with some of the members through telephone were futile since their telephone numbers were not reachable. For this reason, only a limited number of platform members were interviewed.
- ✓ The field visit for the MTR exercise was limited to Cameroon and CAR only due to limited time and resource allocated for the evaluation. While information on the progress of the project was obtained from all the project countries via face-to-face interviews with the in-country project partners, it would have been interesting to also hear from non-project partners in the other three countries where field visit did not happen (Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo).
- ✓ Interviewing the project beneficiaries in Cameroon was quite challenging. This is because FODER's CV4C project manager who was meant to facilitate contact between the evaluator and the project beneficiaries, was away on mission abroad during the period that

was reserved for primary data collection in Cameroon. However, a handful of project beneficiaries in the country were interviewed.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.1. Relevance, coherence and design

3.1.1. Quality of project design / formulation

The design and formulation of the programme's overall, specific objectives and components were very clear, practicable and feasible within the proposed time frame for the implementation of the project. This sub-section provides further analysis and discussion on the different aspects of the programme design and formulation.

Project logical framework analysis

The programme design is focussed on addressing illegal forest exploitation activities in the Congo Basin forest. The specific objective of the programme in tackling the problem is to establish strong and effective NSAs for monitoring of forest governance and land use change, informing relevant processes (FLEGT and REDD+) and contributing to effective responses from law enforcement and policy-making agencies in five Congo Basin countries. To achieve this, the project is focussing on four output areas.

The Logical Framework analysis revealed that the project indicators are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound).

Specific (indicators must use change language, describing a specific future condition): all the four result areas (outputs) of the project used change language such as increased, viable and effective. Each output contains a number of indicators for the project activities.

Measurable (Results, whether quantitative or qualitative, must have measurable indicators, making it possible to assess whether they were achieved or not): The project established very specific qualitative and quantitative indicators that are measurable. All the indicators for the four outputs were quantitative in nature and this made it clear enough for the evaluators to conduct analyses and assessment of the project achievements / progress so far. For instance: output indicator 1.3: Proportion (%) of national NSA partners (7) with an internal gender policy/strategy; and output indicator 2.1: Number (#) of IFM field missions conducted.

Achievable (Results must be within the capacity of the partners to achieve): during the formulation phase of the project, the project partners generated the outputs and activities of the project. The capacity of the in-country project partners was assessed and trainings were organised to ensure a smooth implementation and achievement of the planned project results.

Relevant (Results must make a contribution to selected priorities of the national development framework): the project design and formulation was to address forest governance issues which is

important for the REDD+ and FLEGT national processes ongoing in the five Congo Basin project countries. All the project activities are relevant to achieving the stated outcome and the overall goal and objective of the project. Moreover, the project remains very relevant in the effort by the Government of Congo Basin countries to combat illegal forest exploitation activities and climate change.

Time-bound (Results are never open-ended. There should be an expected date of accomplishment): the project assigned targets to the outcome and outputs with a clear timeline (2020 and 2021) for the accomplishment of the targets.

Gender inclusion in the logical framework

Beyond the SMART indicators, the project design specifically integrated gender in the logical framework indicators 1.1, 3.1, 3.2. The planning, implementation and results of some of the programme's activities were therefore also measured in terms of gender considerations.

3.1.2. Relevance to national and regional priorities

With the exception of Gabon, the project countries are engaged in the REDD+ process under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) (FOKABS, 2017). Equally, the project countries are engaged in the FLEGT-VPA process and the CV4C project supports these processes at the national level. The project countries are signatories to the Paris Agreement and as part of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted to the UNFCCC secretariat, the forest sector emerges as a key sector relevant for the countries to achieve their conditional and unconditional GHG emission reduction targets. Hence, the CV4C project through its improvement of forest governance in the Congo Basin countries supports the NDCs process of the respective countries. Equally, the Congo Basin countries have in place national visions and strategies geared towards achieving green growth and attaining emergence with the forest sector of the respective countries envisaged to play an important role in the attainment of the country's visions. However, the forest sector can only make a significant contribution to this drive for sustainable development under prevailing conditions of good forest governance in the respective countries. In this light, the CV4C project clearly supports the national development visions of the five Congo Basin CV4C countries.

Concerning alignment with regional initiatives, the CV4C project supports the COMIFAC convergence plan and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). In 2017 for instance, the CV4C project made contributions to the 17th annual CBFP Meeting of Parties specifically on Stream 1 (Forest Governance/Policy and Land Use) through the preparation and presentation of a background paper on how to address the lack of adequate regulation of the fast growing national and regional timber markets in the Congo Basin. The Central Africa Forest Initiative (CAFI) is yet another regional initiative to which the CV4C project shows a close alignment. Under this initiative, all the five CV4C countries have signed the CAFI Declaration and receive funding for the implementation of holistic low emission development actions and frameworks that involves among others, the reform of national policies and measures for tackling the drivers of deforestation

and forest degradation, of which weak governance and law enforcement constitutes one of the underlying drivers common to all the countries under the initiative³.

3.1.3. Regional coherence

The project has been appropriate in fostering collaborations and cross-border cooperation among the project partners across the five countries. Regional synergies are being maximised within the implementation of the project as evidenced by significant regional lesson learning events engaging project partners but also external stakeholders. The regional Forest Governance Forum of 2018 held in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo for information sharing and learning, the regional conference with Interpol held in Yaoundé, Cameroon in 2017, as well as annual project planning (February to March 2018 in Bangui – second coordination and planification meeting) and lesson learning meetings demonstrate sustained effort to enhance coherence. Some countries are new to IFM while others are more advanced, giving room for learning among partners. For instance, FODER and FLAG in Cameroon are advanced in terms of their IFM competence whilst CIEDD in CAR are relatively, new to IFM as such they learn from their Cameroon counterparts (FLAG and FODER)⁴. FLAG operates at the regional level, making regional activities possible and enhances the maximization of regional synergies. In June 2018 and July 2019, the project organized regional workshops which brought together technical IFM experts to enable them work on the guiding principles, criteria and indicators for quality IFM in the Congo Basin region⁵, with the 2019 workshop coinciding with the first regional Interpol training on forest-related crimes. These regional events represent attempts to ensure that partners across the project countries adopt similar IFM practices so as to enhance harmonization and quality of IFM outputs generated by organisations in the Congo Basin region. According to the project partners (six respondents), the CV4C project is regionally coherent (from a little to a very large extent) as presented in Figure 3.

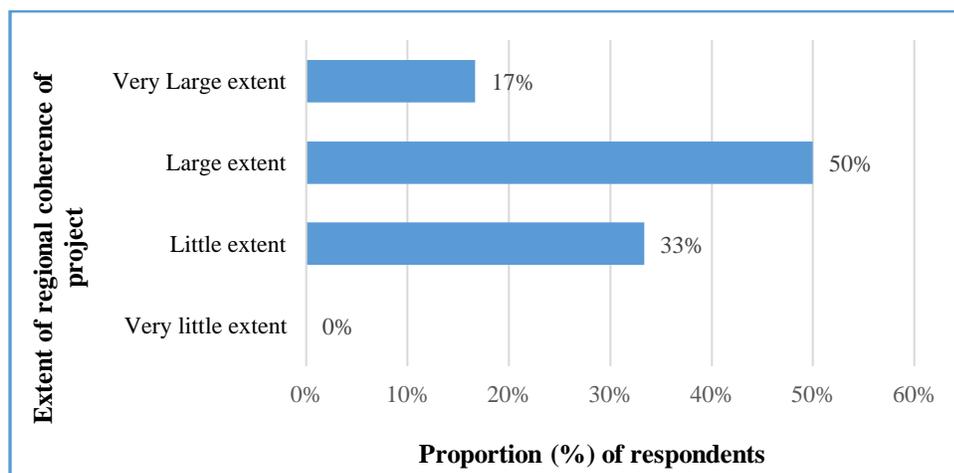


Figure 3: project partners' perception on the regional coherence of the project

³ See: <https://www.cafi.org/content/cafi/en/home/our-work/governance/the-cafi-declaration.html>

⁴ Interview with a staff of CIDT

⁵ Interview with the CV4C project manager

3.2. Overall Objective (Impact)

The overall objective is the strengthened contribution of non-state actors (NSA) – civil society organisations (CSOs), Indigenous Peoples (IPs) and local communities – to improving forest governance and sustainable forest management (SFM) in five Congo Basin countries.

3.2.1. Key Achievements and Successes

The project has taken steps towards strengthening the contribution of NSA to improving forest governance and sustainable management of forests in the Congo Basin. CV4C conducted trainings for state and non-state actors as well as regional exchanges so as to promote learning between countries in order to boost the performance of CSOs and other actors in tracking and combatting illegalities in the forest sector including illegal trade in timber. Reports generated by CSOs are increasingly being accepted by the administration. In Cameroon for instance, some of the reports elaborated by CSOs have received a reaction from the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife and this constitutes a positive step towards curbing illegal logging and trade in timber. A similar trend is observed in the DRC and the Republic of Congo. The key achievements and successes of the project with respect to its overall objective would be better assessed at the end of the project.

3.2.2. Key Challenges and Gaps

NSAs are still not at their best in getting their contribution related to forest governance channeled through to the decision-making arena and consequently, they have a marginal contribution to ameliorating forest governance. A possible underlying cause of this challenge is the leadership conflict plaguing the civil society platforms in some of the project countries like Cameroon – where the community forestry platform (CFP) members are contesting over leadership and strategic orientation. This culminates in fragmentation of the platform, rendering it difficult for the members to have a common voice and because of this, their contribution to enhancing forest governance and sustainable forest management could be hampered. Another challenge is related to the lengthy nature of forest governance processes, rendering it difficult for the project's contribution to the processes to be clearly visible after two years of its implementation.

3.3. Specific Objectives (Outcomes)

The specific objective is strong and effective targeted Non-State Actors (NSAs) monitor forest governance and land use change, inform relevant processes (particularly FLEGT and REDD+), and contribute to effective responses from law enforcement and policy-making agencies in five Congo Basin countries.

3.3.1. Key Achievements and Successes

So far, the project has made significant progress towards improving the level and quality of non-state actors' engagement in forest monitoring activities and national forest governance processes in the five CV4C project countries. In-country project partners have been able to conduct IFM missions (14 and 33 in 2017 and 2018 respectively) geared at documenting cases of illegalities. While IFM missions are important, their ultimate goal of improving forest governance could be seriously compromised if the IFM process used to collect data and the reports produced thereafter are of poor quality. Conscious of this, the project has taken some steps to ameliorate the quality of IFM practices and the outputs (reports) of IFM missions. In Cameroon for instance, the project

supported FODER towards achieving an ISO 9001 (quality management) certification for the SNOIE⁶ and this has led to an improvement in the quality of IFM activities implemented by non-state actors and the IFM reports elaborated by them. Efforts to enhance quality of the IFM process and outputs have also been initiated in CAR, DRC and RoC through targeted technical assistance to NSAs in these countries.

The project has recorded some achievements with regards to informing national forest related processes (REDD+ and FLEGT). In Cameroon, contributions made by the project regarding access to REDD+ information done in a publication entitled “Right of access to information in REDD+ in Cameroon” were taken into account in Cameroon’s national REDD+ strategy adopted in June 2018. Still in Cameroon, recommendations made by communities in the final Communiqué of their workshop related to accelerating the validation of inventory data was taken into account by MINFOF in the circular letter of 30 May 2018 concerning the validation of the inventory data (LC No. 0082 of May 30, 2018) (CIDT, 2018a). In the DRC, a roundtable organized against the breach of the logging moratorium in 2018 with support from the CV4C project⁷, coupled with further campaign championed by OGF was crucial for the moratorium to be maintained until the conditions fixed by the government in 2002 are met. The elaboration of the national REDD+ strategy for CAR is currently ongoing (May 2019 to July 2020) and some of the CV4C project outputs in CAR (IFM reports) have been identified and currently being reviewed to feed the study on the identification of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in CAR. Through support delivered by the project, platform across the project countries have demonstrated remarkable progress as far as gender mainstreaming in their actions within and beyond the scope of the project is concerned. An example to cite is GTCRR that now considers gender as a fundamental component of its deployment strategy for the CAFI funding. The project generated a research report on gender which culminated in gender budgeting, the designation of gender focal points within the different in-country project partner organisations, and a changing political environment that favors the empowerment of women in the forestry space.

Concerning contribution towards effective responses from law enforcement and policy-making bodies, over 70% of sanctions / actions have been taken by MINFOF following the denunciations from independent observers responding to the quality procedures of SNOIE (CIDT, 2018a). In DRC, 50% of independent observers’ comments concerning the 2018 published reports have been sanctioned while 58% of the statement of offense in the Republic of Congo have been sanctioned. Recently in CAR (July 2019), logging permits of two logging companies (logging permit number 169 and 171) were cancelled through Decrees (Decree No 19.212⁸ and Decree No 19.213⁹) jointly signed by the following authorities: Minister of Water, Forestry, Wildlife and Fishery; the Prime Minister; and the President of Central Africa Republic.

⁶ Interviews with the CV4C project manager of FODER

⁷ See: <https://cidt.org.uk/table-ronde-nationale-multi-acteurs-sur-les-processus-de-la-politique-forestiere-de-la-revision-du-code-forestier-et-de-la-levee-du-moratoire-sur-les-nouvelles-allocations-forestieres-en-rdc/>

⁸ Central Africa Republic (2019). Decret No 19.213 Portant Retour au domaine de l’Etat d’un Permis d’Exploitation et d’Aménagement

⁹ Central Africa Republic (2019). Decret No 19.212 Portant Retour au domaine de l’Etat d’un Permis d’Exploitation et d’Amenagement

Overall, majority of the project partners (67%, corresponding to 4 of 6 respondents) consulted were of the opinion that the project is to a large extent focussed towards meeting its specific objective (Figure 4)¹⁰. “Our monitoring and tracking of project indicators show that the project is on track to deliver on its key objectives”¹¹, revealed a respondent.

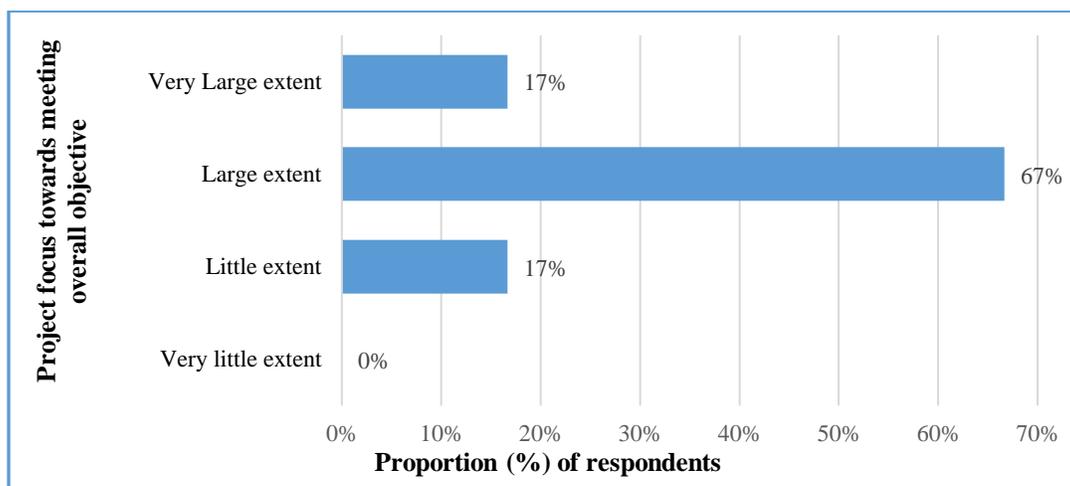


Figure 4: Opinion of project partners regarding the focus of the project towards attaining its specific objective

3.3.2. Key Challenges and Gaps

The process of decision-making, even those concerning well-established cases of illegal forest exploitation, is always very slow and this slows down the response of the administration to IM reports. Also, complicity between illegal loggers and forestry officials tends to dampen the effective responses from law enforcement agencies as far as addressing issues of forest illegalities identified by CSOs is concerned. Moreover, there is still some level of mistrust of IFM exhibited by key stakeholders such government, some timber importing countries, and private sector associations. A key challenge to the gender mainstreaming process was that of gender blindness and the lack of political commitment to gender exhibited by the in-country project partners¹².

3.4. Project Results (Outputs)

3.4.1. Key Achievements and Successes

This section covers key achievements and successes that were made in both the first and second year of the CV4C project, in the 4 different result areas.

Result 1: Increased organisational and operational capacity of NSAs to undertake monitoring of forest governance, land-use, and REDD+ safeguards.

Result 1 can be subdivided into two specific outputs:

¹⁰ Interviews with the project manager of each project partner organisation

¹¹ Interviews with the CV4C project manager at CIDT.

¹² See: The CV4C draft gender report “The State of Play: Key issues and Lessons when it comes to gender mainstreaming within the CV4C Partner Organisations in the Congo Basin”

(i). Technical capacity strengthening: Trainings were carried out with the aim of improving skills and competencies for the independent monitoring of FLEGT, REDD+ and land use change (CIDT, 2018a). CIDT organised training workshops for trainers in Cameroon, Gabon, CAR and DRC with the aim of making NSAs to be able to conceive and conduct capacity building trainings and events in the context of project objectives.

Independent monitoring: In 2018, the project trained over 141 people (including 48 women) on independent observation. Specifically, the trainees were trained on the following aspects: quality management procedures in the IM, the quality management audit according to the ISO 9001 standard: 2015, the investigation of the wood circuit, the use of the FLEGT WATCH and OTP tools, audits according to the forest management and chain of custody standards according to the FSC (CIDT, 2018a).

Communication and visibility: In the first year of the project, the project improved communication and visibility of its partners by developing communication strategies for CIEDD and OGF, strengthening of digital and event communication for FODER as well as website makeover for OGF (CIDT, 2018a).

(ii). Organisational and operational development: the aim was building the capacity of partner organisations in planning, financing, managing, implementing and monitor programs and interventions taking gender equality into account both in the immediate and longer term. This output is subdivided into: Strategic planning, financial and administrative management and resource mobilisation.

- Strategic planning focused on updating strategic documents of the organisation, improvements and revision of strategic axes with distribution of responsibilities (Mbzibain, 2018; CIDT, 2018a). FLAG, FODER, OGF, CAGDF and Brainforest benefitted from project support in the revision or development of their strategic and intervention plans. The GMTMD, CALF, GTCRR, GDRNE (CAR), PGDF (Congo) and CFP (Cameroon) support for the revision and adoption of their strategic plans. FODER, Brainforest and OGF also benefitted from capacity building for the development of their financial sustainability strategy.
- Financial and administrative management: The project has supported in-country partners in reinforcing their financial and administrative management capacity. With support from the project, FLAG's accounting and financial management system was formatted and its administrative and financial procedures updated (CIDT, 2018a). In Gabon, Brainforest had its status, internal rules and procedures manual revised while the capacity of the CIEDD team in team building and peer support was strengthened. The Financial and Administrative officer of FODER was trained on financial expertise who in turned conducted a restitution of the training to the other in-country project partners in order to for them to enhance financial management of the project and financial management within their respective organisations. CAGDF had its Statutes and internal regulations revised and validated with support from the project.
- Resource mobilisation: Some project partners (FODER, CIEDD, Brainforest and FLAG) received support on resource mobilisation and diversification of sources of finance. With support from the project, FLAG has been able to secure two new projects and obtained validation from the FAO EU FLEGT programme on a project jointly elaborated by FLAG and CIEDD (CIDT, 2018a). FODER has also signed a convention with the EU delegation in Cameroon to receive funding (from the EU) for the implementation of a project on the strengthening of mining governance.

- Gender: The project supported the seven project partners in developing their gender policies and integrating gender into their strategies and interventions, an aspect which the project partners did not possess prior to the commencement of the project (FOKABS, 2017). In addition to the gender policy, CAGDF has adopted its five-year (2019-2024) action plan on gender (CIDT, 2018a).
- Communication: All partners have been supported to develop communication plans including support to the visibility of their actions through creation of websites and news bulletins.

Result 2: Improved quality and availability of independent information on compliance with forest and land sector legal norms

This result area is geared at bringing improvements to project partners, local and national organs of forest control and international stakeholders, by harmonising their IO practices, helping in the development of FLEGT/REDD+ methodologies, and lastly publishing information on IO and the forest sector.

Improvements for co-applicants and monitoring organisations

The priority for the project here was to build and enhance the technical competencies of co-applicants and monitoring organisations to undertake IFM. The project also had as a key focus area to harmonise IFM practices with regards to the collection, analysis, reporting and publication of information to target project beneficiaries. In this light, the project supported improvements in two domains. Firstly, regarding rigour, norms and professionalism in forest monitoring activities, the project conducted trainings in 2017 and 2018 which have culminated in an augmentation in IFM missions and the publication of their results (CIDT, 2018a). The project partners effected 33 IFM missions in 2018 that respects quality procedures while 14 IFM missions were conducted in 2017 (Mbzigain, 2018). The SNOIE tool developed by FODER received the ISO 9001/2015 certification in February 2018. Lessons learnt from the SNOIE tool was replicated in the Republic of Congo as a rigorous and professional IFM approach. A peer review mechanism has been set up under the project whereby elaborated IM reports are submitted to FODER for review and this approach is geared at assuring and enhancing the quality of IM reports generated in the region. Through OGF and the technical expertise of FLAG, the project supported the elaboration process of the national IFM strategy for DRC, following the creation of a national network of CSOs involved in IFM in DRC. The project equally supported the revision of CAR's 2012 national IM strategy and a recent version is available (CIDT, 2018a). However, the revision process for CAR's IM strategy was not yet completed during the period when the MTR was conducted.

Secondly, in the domain of strengthening co-applicants' role as key actors in the forest governance landscape, the project has been supportive in ensuring that the project partners are being recognised as key actors as far as forest governance is concerned in their respective countries. In Gabon for instance, the project supported the negotiation of a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Water and Forests and Brainforest. In Congo, the CAGDF signed a memorandum of understanding with the MEFDD in 2014 and got a permanent mission order in 2017 to secure its IFM mandate (Mbzigain, 2018). In Cameroon, other local CSOs in addition to CED and FODER played an increasingly important role in fighting illegal logging, forest conversion and improved forest governance with support from the project. In DRC OGF managed to have them official IFM mandate renewed. Also in DRC, OGF has established partnerships with organisations that embark on non-mandated IFM has made it possible for IFM missions to be conducted (CIDT, 2018a).

Improvements for local and national forestry control organs

The CV4C project brought improvements to local and national organs of forest control by strengthening the technical capacities of their local and national administrative personnel. This was done through forest inspectors' trainings in DRC and also joint IFM missions in the five project countries.

- ✓ In the DRC in 2018, the project strengthened capacities in administrative sectors in charge of law enforcement through; the training of forest administration, justice and police as well as the development of a strategy and plan of action for the fight against illegal exploitation of construction wood and the realization of joint (independent monitors and the administration) forestry control missions.
- ✓ In Cameroon, the second draft of Cameroon's SN REDD+ was analysed and limits relating to access to information were identified, which led to a proposal for a working group on access to information on REDD+ which was put in place by a Service Note from the REDD+ national coordinator in 2017 after advocacy actions led by FODER. This working group developed principles, criteria and indicators for the monitoring of access to information in REDD+ as well as a proposal for an approach for conflict management linked to access to REDD+ information (CIDT, 2018a).

Improvements for national and international actors

Through the CV4C project, project partners were supported to produce high quality documents and products to different audiences: competent European authorities, wood importers in the sub-region and all other stakeholders. A total of 92 diverse publications, public events and official communications on forest monitoring and conformity were achieved by the CV4C project in 2018 while 26 observations from the IM reports were published online (<http://www.opentimberportal.org>) and some information published on the project website (<http://cidt.org.uk/cv4c/cv4c-en/>) and other partner sites (<http://www.bd-obster.org/>, www.oiecameroun.org, etc). Some information was distributed through contact lists, resulting in requests for information from some competent authorities, European operators and control bodies for better application of the EUTR (CIDT, 2018a). Platforms also received other forms of support from the project including: elaboration of communication strategies (PGDF, GTCRR and CALF); elaboration of gender strategies (all platforms); and elaboration of resource mobilization plans/strategies and securing funding for projects.

To enhance the responses of IFM organisations to illegal logging, in 2017, together with Tropenbos International, the project initiated the development of an automated satellite- based forest warning system for West and Central Africa and this continued into 2018. Project partners and other CSOs in Cameroon received introductory training on the operation of the radar warning system based on the modules already available.

The media played a role in the diffusion of information on forest governance and climate change in the 5 project countries and the 4th edition of ForMa was organised on June 7th 2018 in Yaoundé, Cameroon (CIDT, 2018a).

Result 3: Viable, constructive and sustainable networks of well-informed local NSAs, with increased cross-border cooperation and information exchanges.

In the domain of institutional and organisational capacity building of national CSO coalitions, the project developed a capacity building plan based on needs assessments conducted with 8 platforms in the five project countries (Mbzibain, 2018). Six platforms so far (CALF and GTC-RR in DRC, GMTMD in Gabon, GDRNE in CAR, CFP in Cameroon and PGDF in Republic of Congo) received support from the project on strategic planning and external communication (CIDT, 2018a). Worthy of note is the fact that the project revamped some platforms (CALF and GMTMD) which were inactive at the commencement of the project. This revamping by the CV4C project was partly achieved through the establishment or updating of basic institutional documents such as bylaws and statutes.

The project supported the development and implementation of the regional IFM strategy through FLAG. With support from the CV4C project, the regional CSO platform on IM created in 2014 was revitalised through the revision and adoption of its operating charter as well as its strategic action plan. The regional platform is now (as of 2019 – when the MTR was conducted) constituted of 14 CSOs active on IM in the Congo Basin (CIDT, 2018a). Moreover, leading IFM organisations in the region have agreed on a joint definition and principles for IFM and this equally constitutes an achievement.

The project supported the establishment of regional communities of practice on forest monitoring by exposing CSOs to best practices and fostering synergies between organisations through the sharing of experiences. In the DRC for instance, the project supported OGF in establishing a national network of independent monitors of natural resources (RENOI-RDC) in order to improve forest and other natural resources monitoring in the country (CIDT, 2018a). Transboundary meetings and exchange events such as the 11th edition of the forest governance forum (FGF) and monitoring and evaluation meetings organised by the project served as a platform for mutual learning and facilitated coordination between the project partners including IO CSOs and other actors in charge of combatting illegal forest exploitation.

The project has been instrumental in supporting collaborations between IFM organisations on the one hand, and FLEGT and REDD+ stakeholders on the other hand. Within the first year of the project, over 150 platform members were trained on gender and action plans for the integration of gender were developed. Also, CIDT and FODER contributed to the revision of forest governance courses taught by FASA of the University of Dschang in June and November of 2017. A seminar was also co-organised by CIDT, FODER and FASA on the impact of VPA/FLEGT on forest governance which saw the participation of students, lecturers, CSOs, private sector and other research and administrative institutions. Two other multi-stakeholder workshops were also organised by FODER on: synergies between forest processes (VPA/FLEGT) and climate processes (REDD+ and NDC); evaluation of transparency in APV/FLEGT and REDD+ in Cameroon. In 2018, the CFP prepared a position paper on the slow pace of the VPA process in Cameroon and the associated implications, reiterating the urgency needed for the government to take necessary measures for strengthening the implementation of the VPA¹³. Also, the project through FODER published a paper on transparency of the VPA process in 2018¹⁴. The project also contributed in

¹³ See: <https://loggingoff.info/library/acceleration-de-la-mise-en-oeuvre-de-lapv-flegt-et-implication-de-la-societe-civile-et-des-communautés-dans-le-processus-au-cameroun/>

¹⁴ See: <http://pfbc-cbfp.org/actualites/items/APV-FLEGT-foder.html>

organising the Forest Media Awards which is an initiative for the promotion of media involvement in matters of forest governance in Cameroon. Brainforest also carried out joint actions with WWF for monitoring non-forestry investments in Gabon while in CAR, CIEDD worked with the members of the working group on environmental protection, gender and the application of forest regulations (Mbziban, 2018). In CAR, CIEDD supported the training of parliamentarians on gender and a gender integration plan into actions of National Climate Coordination. The gender training has enabled members of parliaments to have a better understanding of the gender concept, enabling them to integrate gender considerations in their work¹⁵.

In Gabon, Brainforest built journalists' capacity on forest governance and also facilitated the creation of a platform for journalists on forest governance. In the DRC, OGF co-organised with Tropenbos International, CFLEDD, FPP, Netherlands Embassy and UNESCO, a national multi-stakeholder round table on the revision of the Forest Code, Forest Policy and Moratorium (CIDT, 2018a).

Result 4: Effective engagement and response from forest law enforcement agencies, law makers and judiciary in national forest policy processes

The project registered some successes in result 4 starting from the first year. The CFP in a bid to influence REDD+ in Cameroon and make it more inclusive, following FPIC guidelines and guarantor of the participation of different actors in decision making, wrote a position paper on the mid-term report and another letter addressed to the Government of Cameroon, the FCPF and World Bank on the need to have a REDD+ process. The CED supported indigenous peoples, after a complaint to the judiciary on the impact of the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline on Indigenous People through mediation and advocacy.

- In Cameroon, CED facilitated the representation of IP communities in VPA national institutions and was able to plead for the renewal of VPAs in Cameroon with the EU and DEVCO. CED also got the attention of the civil society and the Belgian private sector on the necessity to be implicated in the fight against illegal forest exploitation. IP received support from the CED to be represented in 2 National VPA Monitoring Committee meetings in Cameroon. Also, the state (MINFOF) has been responsive to the IM reports generated by independent observers, with over 70% of sanctions meted out by MINFOF following denunciations from independent observers (CIDT, 2018a).
- In CAR, a mapping of communities of the 14 PEAs that make up the forest mass of southwestern CAR was carried out by the CIEDD within the CV4C project, with the aim of highlighting operational licences and those in dormancy. This culminated in the cancellation of two logging permits by the government of CAR in July 2019. Following the 2017 Interpol meeting, a multi-stakeholder group on law enforcement was established and the CV4C project through CIEDD, provided technical and financial support for this to happen.
- Looking at the contributions made by NSAs in policies / reform processes (Forest, FLEGT, REDD+), Cameroon saw 4 contributions to FLEGT/REDD+ processes notably: National RED+ strategy, Public Timber Auction (PTA) and the FLEGT Action Plan and the fight against deforestation in the EU (project report 1 & 2). In Congo, the revision of the legal forest

¹⁵ Interview with a member of parliament in CAR

framework was achieved while two contributions were made in Gabon: one position paper regarding the status of the national parks' agency and another on the revision of the Gabonese forest code.

Perspective of project partners relating to the relevance of project activities and progress realised for the different result areas

Concerning the relevance of project activities under each results area in achieving their respective results, overall, the majority of project partners were of the view that that activities under results 1, 3 and 4 were to a large extent relevant in delivering the expected results (Figure 5). For result area 2, respondents were of the opinion that activities under this result area was to a large extent (50%, corresponding to 3 of 6 respondents) and very large extent (50%) relevant towards delivering the result.

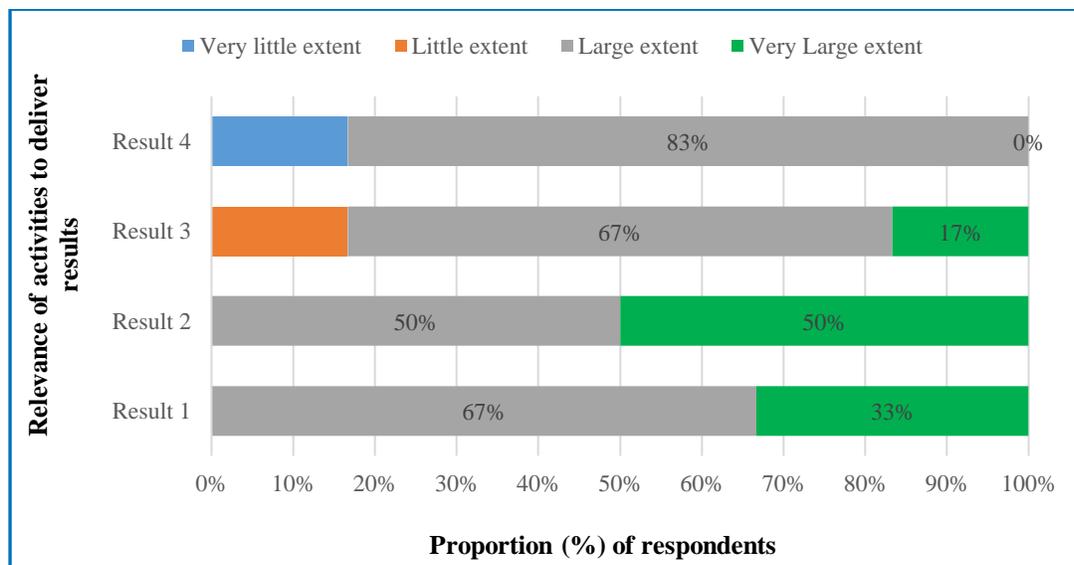


Figure 5: Perspective of project partners regarding the relevance of project activities in delivering results¹⁶

Respondents also shared their views regarding progress realised with respect to each of the four result areas. A majority of the respondents rated the progress achieved in result areas 1, 2 and 4 as high (Figure 6). However, result 4 represents the only result area with a progress rating score of low. For result area 3, 40%, 40% and 20% of respondents rated the progress achieved so far as average, high and very high respectively. Result 1 received the most outstanding rating (high to very high) of progress achieved of all the result areas. While the high rating accorded to result 1 could actually mean that the project has done much work in that area, the level of involvement of the project partners in result 1 related activities cannot be ruled out as a contributory factor. Capacity building and organisational and operational development generates quick and visible results and the project partners, who constituted majority of the respondents, were highly concerned and engaged in the process. Consequently, this could be an aspect that contributed to the high rating of result 1.

¹⁶ Interviews with staff of project partner organisations

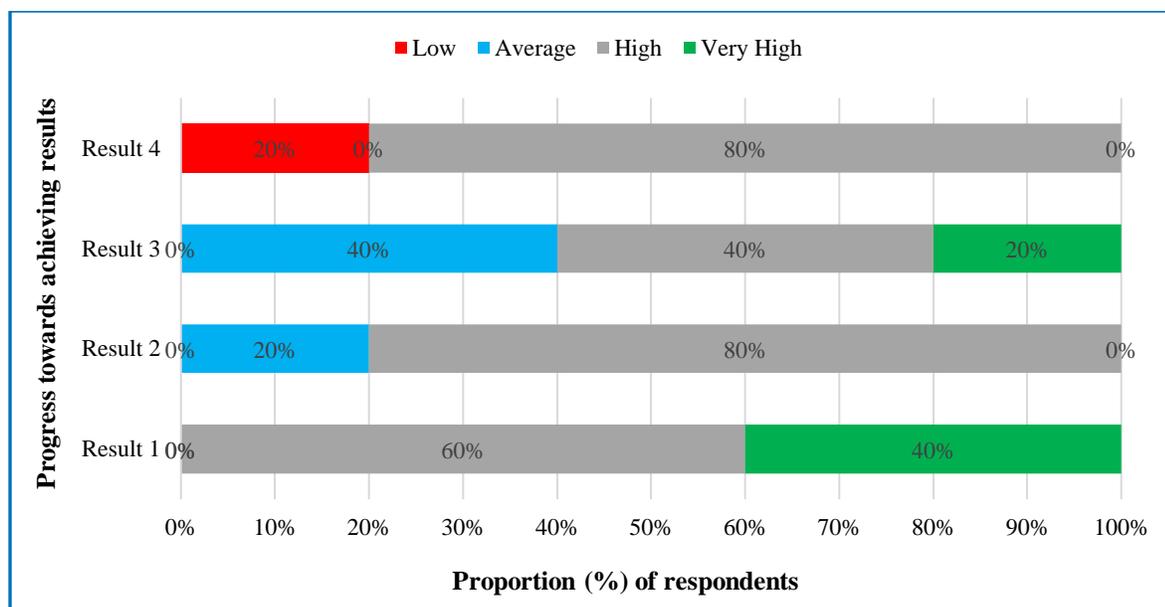


Figure 6: Perspective of project partners on the progress realised under each result area¹⁷

In order to corroborate the ratings of the project partner, further analysis was done on the project indicators under each result area in order to track the level of progress. Only 1 indicator (1.2) under result area 1 is yet to have its target attained while the targets for indicators 1.1 and 1.3 have been attained at 100% and 255% respectively (Figure 7). Hence, this concurs with the rating of high to very high progress for result 1 provided by the respondents. Similarly, result 4 stood out as the only result area having an indicator (4.3) with a 0% achievement rate and this could explain the reason why it was the only result area whose progress was rated as low by some respondents. Worthy of note is the fact that the four result areas are different in terms of their nature, timescale and target audience. Result area 1 for instance is concerned with organisational development of the project partners and this can easily be achieved since it involves just the project partners as opposed to result area 4 which is related to effective response from law enforcement agencies – actors external to the project, over whom the project has very little or no influence. Also, unlike organisational capacity development which yields quick results, getting effective response from law enforcement agencies (result 4) is something which does not happen immediately.

¹⁷ Interviews with staff of project partner organisations

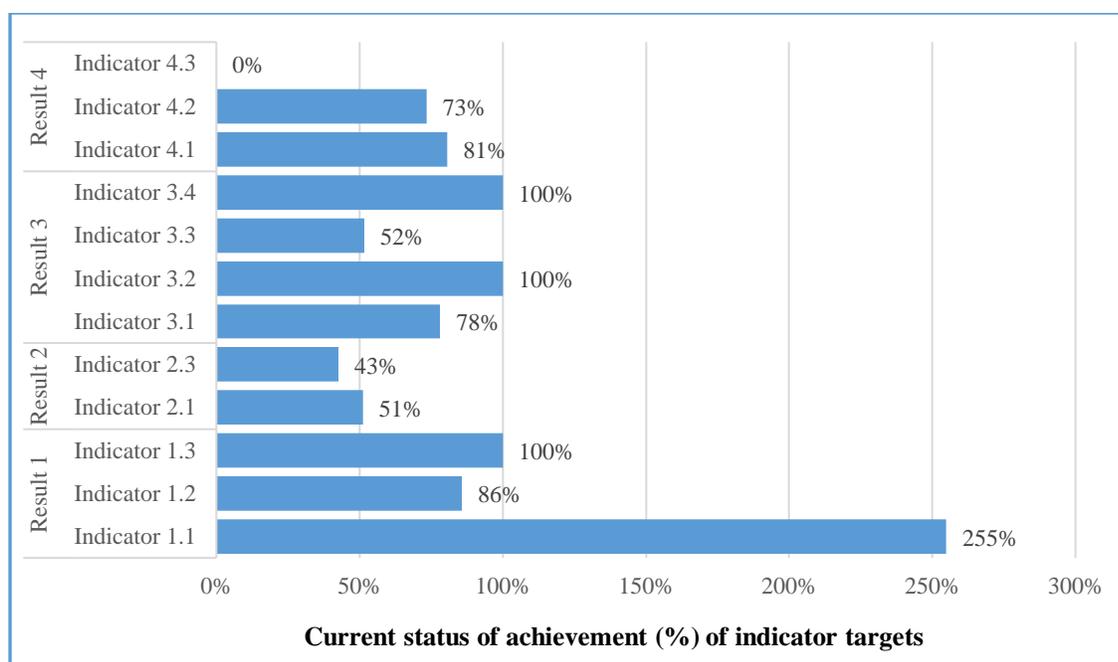


Figure 7: Level of achievement of indicators under each result area Source: based on project log frame)

3.4.2. Key Challenges and Gaps

The enabling factors and challenges identified for each result area varies across the project countries. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Enabling factors and constraints for the attainment of the four result areas of the CV4C project (Source: partners’ feedback)

Country	Enabling factors	Challenges (existing / potential)
Result 1		
Cameroon	-Needs assessment conducted at the start of the project ensured capacity building was tailored to meet the needs of project partners. -Well adapted capacity building approaches (trainings, coaching and experience sharing)	-A context of strong corruption within the country that could impact the development of organisations and their impact. - Inappropriate or unclear definition of the vision, mission and organisational values of some organisations renders the organisational development process difficult. - A lot of changes in the project team (CED)
Gabon	-Willingness of the organisation to improve organisationat the structural level (reorganisation and revision of basic documents)	- Economic factors (scarcity of funds, ineligibility for funding, etc.) and human resources (departure of staff)
CAR	-Improved capacity of independent observers on data treatment and quality control	-Staff turnover – frequent transfer of government personnel

Country	Enabling factors	Challenges (existing / potential)
		-The non-availability of some GDRNE platform members to attend to OD related activities or issues.
DRC	-Confidence and appropriation of actions that are implemented together by platform members.	-The platform largely depends on project funds for the implementation of its action and this is often limited.
Global	-Elaboration of tools and relevant trainings received by the project partners. -Growth and market study realised for FLAG. -Existence of some OD related tools/aspects in some partner organisations. -CIDT's experience and existing tools on OD. -Collaboration with World Grounded. -The demand-driven approach employed by the project. -Strong involvement of the project partners in the preparation of OD related working sessions.	-Weak governance system still existing within certain project partner organisations. -Some partners have not prioritised or fully taken advantage of the support available for organisational development. organisation -Leaders of some organisations exhibited resistance to accept OD support. -OD was treated just as a project-related activity, involving mostly the project staff and not the entire organisation.
Result 2		
Cameroon	-Proven experience of partners on IM including quality management experience in IM.	-Complicities between illegal loggers and some forest administration officials. -Weak collaboration between partners at the national level who embark on IM. -The weak collaboration between MINFOF and other law enforcement agencies. -organisation
Gabon	-Improved collaboration between IM stakeholders.	-Economic factors (inadequate funds for the realisation of field missions) after the project comes to an end.
CAR	-Increased capacity of independent observers on the treatment of information and quality control of information to be published.	-Inadequate funds for conducting field missions after end of project.
DRC	-The involvement of the forest administration in the realisation of monitoring activities.	-The unstable socio-political situation of the country and the resentment of logging companies to joint forestry control missions. - High dependence for a mandated IFM on state authorisation prior to the realisation of any field mission.
Global	-Established mechanism for the review of reports. -Good alignment with other projects (CIEDD's OI-RCA 2; CED's FAO project; and FLAG's OTP) -Coordination role played by FLAG on IFM -The sharing of experience among project partners such as FODER's work with OGF and exchanges with Brainforest	-Inadequate appropriation of tools by the project partners could constitute a challenge. - FLAG has experienced some challenges in playing their role in quality control of the IFM reports because not all the independent monitors in the region send their reports to FLAG for review.

Country	Enabling factors	Challenges (existing / potential)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Existence of some IFM tools in all project partner organisations with the exception of Brainforest. -FLAG's past relation with most of the project partners. 	
Result 3		
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The existence of several NSA networks and platforms that offer a diversity of alternative action for the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The community forest platform lacks an effective operation and functioning although coordinated by a CV4C project partner. -Lack of advocacy campaign support from the project.
Gabon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Capacity building of platforms (restructuring, reorganisation) and improvement of communication and exchange of information within the platform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The existence of diverging interests among platform members.
CAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organisational restructuring of the GDRNE platform and capacity building of its members based on needs assessment conducted by the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Availability of limited funds for the functioning of the platform and the implementation of its actions.
DRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The manifested will of the Congolese civil society actors to create a synergy for combatting illegal forest exploitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Failure to take into account the recommendations of the civil society could retard the dynamism of NSAs.
Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strategic tools developed within platforms. -Strong will exhibited by all platforms to receive support. -Collaboration with World Grounded in DRC, RoC, and CAR. -Additional funding from CAFI in DRC (GTCRR). -Some platforms were dynamic and flexible, being able to mobilise and engage in an advocacy work as soon as opportunities arose. -Openness of the Environment administration in CAR and Cameroon (REDD+). -Existence of strong leadership in some platforms: Coordination OIE, GTCRR, GMTMD and PGDF. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Weak synergy and leadership contest between organisations within platforms. - High dependence of platforms on projects –no platform disposes of an appropriate robust resource mobilisation strategy prior to the commencement of the project. -Existence of weak leadership in some of the platforms (CFP, CALF and GDRNE).
Result 4		
Cameroon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Openness of the administration regarding the participation of non-state actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Lack of public information on national forest policy processes -Limited experience of project partners to engage with law enforcement agencies. -Poor understanding of the judiciary on the role of IFM. -Limited capacity of independent monitors on strategic litigation and to transform IFM to case files that can be admitted in court.

Country	Enabling factors	Challenges (existing / potential)
Gabon	- Improved participation and representation of NSAs in different processes	-The administration's choice of NSAs and their level of involvement in forest governance issues.
CAR	-Accompaniment of NSA in CAR in the participation and representation in different political processes in which the government is engaged for the improvement of natural resource governance.	-Few organisations are active in independent monitoring
DRC	-Existence of an ongoing project on the elaboration of a methodology for IM of REDD+ in DRC.	-Lack of adhesion of NSAs to the IM REDD+ methodology
Global	-Flexibility of the project permitted adjustments according to emerging priorities during the project implementation. -Good reputation and network of all in-country partners at the regional level and within their respective countries. -Collaboration of the project with Interpol. -Project partners' good use of processes such as FLEGT and REDD+ to drive their agendas. - Recent inclusion of Wildlife IM, which brings a new perspective on the possibilities of IFM -Existence of a regional platform.	-Lack of political will and crisis within actors. -Resistance to IFM in the project countries. Some governments are receptive to IFM while others are not. This makes it difficult for the impact of the published IFM reports to be assessed. -Overall slow pace of the VPA process in Cameroon, DRC, and CAR. -Weak advocacy capacity and experience of some project partners. -Slowness of the project team in completing ongoing publications. -Lack of harmonisation of advocacy approach and understanding within the region. -Weak collaboration with platforms not supported by the project – especially indigenous platforms.

3.5. Efficiency

To date the efficient use of financial and human resources in the implementation of the CV4C project in line with national and international standards is satisfactory. To a considerable extent, the project is on track towards implementing planned activities as per the allocated resources. The project was successful in mobilising additional funding from DFID (1.4m UK Sterling Pounds) for the implementation of additional activities in the domain of monitoring wildlife activities in the Congo Basin.

Efficiency of financial resource management

Over 86% (six of seven) of the project co-applicants (in-country partners) confirmed the availability of sufficient financial resources in their respective organisations for the implementation of project activities¹⁸. Project activities for each organisation are planned annually through a participatory approach and a budget line allocated for each activity by the in-country

¹⁸ Interviews with a finance and technical staff of each co-applicant organisation

project partner. The implementation of the activities is then carried out with respect to this schedule with funds made available by CIDT to the different co-applicants. However, two co-applicant organisations expressed concerns over the fact that transfer of funds from the University of Wolverhampton to them normally takes time. This causes funds to get to them late in some cases and as a consequence, implementation of project activities is slowed down¹⁹. Ironically, the University of Wolverhampton has an annual turnover of £180mn and currently implements 15-20 EU funded projects. The late reception of funds by some project partners was worth investigating further since only a small proportion (less than 30%) of the in-country project partner organisations highlighted this issue. Interestingly, these concerned organisations opined that the delay in fund transfer was a shared responsibility between them and the University. On their part, they in most cases submitted their narrative and financial reports late to CIDT, often after the deadlines that were fixed and this causes fund transfer to them to happen late as it would normally take some time for their reports to be approved prior to a subsequent bank transfer made. The transfer of funds is further slowed down following the submission by a project partner, an inappropriate financial justification documents for funds expended on previous project activities. This situation would need to be regularised prior to a subsequent transfer of funds made to the concerned project partner organisation. CIDT has however taken the following steps toward improving the timely reporting and transfer of project funds by in-country project partners and CIDT respectively;

- ✓ Project partners have been asked to notify CIDT once they have consumed over 80% of their budget in order for arrangements and procedures for subsequent transfers to be initiated in advance
- ✓ Project partners have been trained (in June 2019) on the management of EU grants and projects, including financial management. Co-applicants expressed their optimism that the training will go a long way to enhance their capacity to report timely and accurately to CIDT and in this way, delays in fund transfer would be avoided in the second half (2019-2020) of the project implementation²¹. This is something worth assessing in the final evaluation of the project.

The CV4C project at its start, recruited the consulting firm AXYOM to assess the financial capacity of the 7 project partners in order to establish a baseline and following this exercise, a number of recommendations were formulated for each project partner (Mbzibain, 2018). CIDT and the co-applicants have in place appropriate accounting and financial systems for the management and reporting of financial information. All the in-country project partners confirmed that they employ the double-entry accounting using a specialized software (SAGE SAARI) procured by the project for several partners and its use permits an analytical monitoring of the project finances and the elaboration of timely financial reports²². Regarding procurement, CIDT and the in-country partners have in place a rigorous procurement procedure which ensures efficient use of project resources. Each project partner organisation has a ceiling amount beyond which project related purchases is subjected to the obtention of a minimum of three proformas. The same

¹⁹ Interviews with staff of two project partner organisations

²⁰ Interview with a staff of CIDT

²¹ Interviews with staff of each co-applicant organisation

²² Interviews with finance staff of each co-applicant organisation

holds for the procurement of the services of consultants under the CV4C project. Above a certain sum (varies from organisation to organisation), consultants are recruited through a competitive process involving a call for tender.

Overall, majority of the project partners (71%) opined that the CV4C project has so far been fairly managed and coordinated from a financial perspective as presented in **Figure 8**.

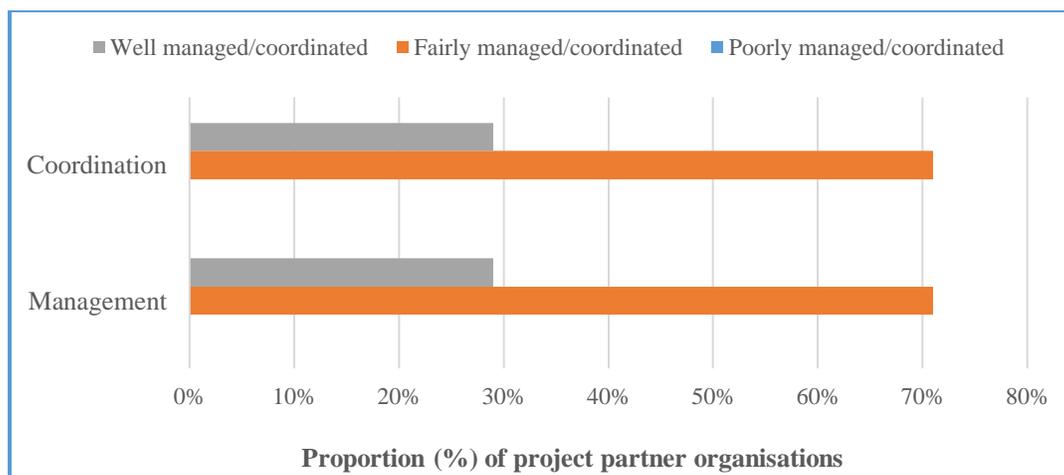


Figure 8: Perspectives of project partners on the management and coordination of project from a financial stance²³

Efficiency of human resource management

CIDT and the in-country project partners reported the availability of sufficient human resources required for the implementation of the project activities. Each in-country project partner has two or more dedicated staff to take charge of the management of the project and the implementation of project activities.

3.6. Sustainability

So far, the project has yielded some outputs which represent aspects of sustainability. Through the organisational and institutional capacity building support provided by the project, the project co-applicants and the targeted platform members in the project countries are better structured and organized and this would enhance their functioning in the future even after the end of the life of the project. The following aspects represent elements of sustainability of the CV4C project so far:

- ✓ The strategic plans, resource mobilization plans, financial sustainability plans and gender policies developed by the co-applicants with support from the project will continue to be useful after the end of the project. Some project partners including FLAG, CIEDD, FODER, and GMTMD members have been able to secure additional funding;
- ✓ Capacity building conducted through training, experience sharing and coaching on various technical and organisational development themes constitute aspects of sustainability as skills acquired by the project beneficiaries will be used after the CV4C project comes to an end;

²³ Interviews with finance staff of each project partner organisation

- ✓ The regional IFM platform (PA-OI) established with support from the project would likely continue to exist and function after the project comes to an end;
- ✓ Creation and strengthening of civil society IFM platform in DRC is one of the most significant achievements of the project considering that OGF has been the main mandated IFM organisation in the country. Expanding IFM to other organisations is key to sustainability. The same can be said for Republic of Congo with ongoing support to implement non mandated IFM in Congo which relieves the pressure from CAGDF as the only mandated organisation implementing IFM.;
- ✓ The project has developed several methodological guides that can be used beyond the project initial period including for IFM, IM REDD monitoring, measuring transparency and corruption in the forest sector; monitoring of agro industries amongst others. Evidence from Gabon already suggests that partners in Gabon have adapted IFM techniques to the monitoring of mines in the country. Requests for evidence from government and private sector actors for support from Brainforest demonstrates gains which will live beyond the project period.
- ✓ Development of online platforms for forest monitoring and publication of reports such as FLEGT WATCH and the Open Timber Portal;
- ✓ Regional engagement with national and international stakeholders such as supporting curriculum development with University of Dschang and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and organisations such as the FAO provide the necessary foundations for sustainability of the action;
- ✓ Increasing application of IFM methodologies in other sectors of land use monitoring such as mining in Cameroon and Gabon as well as agricultural commodities by Brainforest demonstrate application of learning to others spheres of interest in the region;
- ✓ Ongoing negotiations and partnership agreements between project partners and institutional partners demonstrate concrete actions towards sustainability. This is highlighted in Cameroon through engagement of FODER with MINFOF, in CAR, DRC and Congo Brazzaville with renewal of IFM mandates for partners. Ongoing publications on IFM in the region and state-NGO relations also represents steps towards sustainability as these publications have potential to be impactful beyond the life of the project.

3.6.1. Financial and socio-economic risks

While some elements of the project are likely to be used after the end of the CV4C project, the lack of finances constitute a key risk that may hamper the sustainability of the project²⁴. IFM activities require field missions which can only be realised with the availability of adequate financial resources. Consequently, the lack of adequate financial resources after the end of the CV4C project will simply mean that IFM activities will be retarded in the region²⁵. Also, the regional IFM platform established with support from the project may collapse without funding beyond the life of the CV4C project.

²⁴ Interview with project partners

²⁵ Interview with a staff of WRI

3.6.2. Institutional risks

The implementation of the different strategies developed by the partners in the course of the project will depend on the willingness and motivation of the organisations' board members or coordinators. Having a strategy document is one thing and implementing it appropriately is another²⁶. This implies that, where the management or hierarchy of the in-country partner organisations fail to commit to the implementation of the elaborated strategies, sustainability of the project results will be hindered.

3.6.3. Political risks

The Congo Basin region is unstable from a political perspective²⁷. For instance, the DRC and CAR are post war countries and are still plagued by insecurity. Cameroon as well has recently become unstable with the ongoing anglophone crisis experienced by the nation. Hence, political instability constitutes a risk that may hamper sustainability of the project as IFM missions can only effectively be conducted in secure areas. The lack of political will of the governments of the project countries to support IFM as an approach to improving forest governance also constitutes a risk that may impede the sustainability of the CV4C project. Some project partners have the mandate to conduct IFM and the absence of governments' will on improving forest governance might jeopardise this mandate²⁸.

4. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

4.1. Lessons learnt

Lessons learnt by the project team after two years of project implementation were generated through interviews with the CV4C project team within each consortium partner organisation. The generated lessons are presented below.

Capacity building

- ✓ Taking a need assessments of partner organisations and then building capacities around the identified needs is important. This enables the project to tailor capacity development activities based on the respective needs of the organisations. However, organisational capacity building depends to a large extent on the organisations' willingness and motivation to engage with the support offered, and to actively implement strategies and policies thereafter.
- ✓ Regional exchange and learning events constitute important forums for experience and knowledge sharing. This permits countries or actors who are less advanced in an aspect to learn from the more advanced ones. This fosters south-south learning and the application of context-specific actions to achieve solutions to identified challenges. Furthermore, learning can only be effective if relationships of trust are established and this often takes time but the bottom-up approach employed by the project allowed this to flourish.
- ✓ The role of civil society in capacity building at the national level is not limited to indigenous and local communities but extends to other actors like the administration. This

²⁶ Interview with a staff of CIDT

²⁷ Interviews with a staff of CIDT and in-country project partners

²⁸ Interview with a staff of CIDT

is evident for the case of CAR where the administration solicited capacity building support on gender from the CV4C project partner in the country.

- ✓ While OD is useful for specialized organisations, it should be achieved through an innovative approach that will enhance its acceptance by the organisations and not their staff seeing the whole idea and process of OD as a distraction to them from pursuing their main objectives.

IFM

- ✓ A business-as-usual (BAU) approach is not sustainable. IFM is more largely supply driven than demand driven. IFM is mostly undertaken by participating organisations who decide where to conduct IFM missions and what to monitor. The future should be users of the information deciding where IFM should go and what they should monitor. In this way IFM becomes responsive to the needs of the users of the information. IFM should rather provide reliable information which could be used by the stakeholders in the forestry space to enable them take actions and decisions that would strengthen forest governance at different levels – local, national and international.
- ✓ IM organisations are open to increase the quality of their work and make it more impactful but that is going to take longer time beyond the scope of the project. Some organisations are quick to embrace new issues that will improve quality while others are less receptive to new concepts and initiatives, and this is mostly influenced by an organisation's leadership.
- ✓ The attainment of a formal certification for an IFM methodology culminates in an improvement in the quality and credibility of IFM outputs. The ISO certification of the SNOIE conforms to international quality principles and therefore IFM outputs obtained following the procedures prescribed by SNOIE are more likely to be accepted by recipient stakeholders. This is the case in Cameroon where MINFOF officials reacted positively to the IFM reports submitted to them.
- ✓ At present, the OTP is gaining traction as a credible online platform for the dissemination of IFM reports and it is increasingly used as a source of forest legality-related information by actors in Europe and USA. This trend is likely to continue into the future and for the credibility of the platform to be sustained and enhanced, there is need for quality IFM data that adheres to national and international quality standards.

Gender

- ✓ The elaboration of gender policies, strategies and action plans as well as the designation of a gender focal point within organisations produce significant positive change. Through the elaboration of gender strategies, the partner organisations have embarked on measures to mainstream gender in their day-to-day functioning. For instance, the project partner in Gabon took actions geared towards increasing the number of female staff in the organisation following the gender-related support received by the partner from the project.
- ✓ While promoting gender mainstreaming and equality within organisations is important, this might not be feasible in all instances or take time due to some constraints. For instance, Brainforest intended to recruit two female forest engineers but ended up recruiting just one

because it was not possible to get two female qualified forest engineers. For this reason, the organisation had to hire a male to fill the second forest engineer position. Nevertheless, the intention to prioritise female candidates is already indicative of progress towards the mainstreaming of gender.

- ✓ In order to drive gender mainstreaming in an organisation, it is beneficial to have the buy-off of a high-level staff in the organisation or to rely on an individual(s) who have passion for gender issues.

Project implementation

- ✓ There exist practical challenges that affects implementation of some project activities which cannot be resolved by the project alone. Leadership conflict within civil society platforms for instance is a real problem in Cameroon and the result is the disruption of project activities to be implemented with the platform. A problem of this nature is unlikely to be resolved by the CV4C project. However, the project has invested considerable time and resources in order to attempt to resolve this issue.
- ✓ Timely reporting by project partners to the lead consortium partner is critical for subsequent fund transfer from the lead consortium partner to the in-country project partner to be made on time. Implementation of project activities by some in-country project partners has stalled due to lack of funds or late arrival of funds resulting from the late or incomplete submission of narrative and financial reports.
- ✓ The involvement of relevant national stakeholders in the implementation of a project is important for country ownership. In each country, project activities have been implemented with the involvement of diverse stakeholders including the administration. This facilitates the valuing of the output of the project by the national actors.
- ✓ The use of newsletter to communicate the progress of a project to external actors on a monthly basis enhances project visibility. Unlike project reports which are lengthy, project newsletters are brief and could easily be read. Communicating on a project of this nature can be quite challenging as communication is not limited to just project partners but also to actors external to the project.

4.2. Innovation

The project was delivered through an innovative approach. The project supported FLAG to operate as a regional partner, providing its IFM expertise to Brainforest in Gabon, CAGDF in Congo and CIEDD in CAR in order to guarantee quality of IM reports. The project encourages project partners to jointly bid for call for proposals. This not only strengthens collaboration between the project partners but also enhances their resource mobilization capacity.

In the area of IFM, the project has so far developed the FLEGT WATCH. This integration of information technology in IFM is innovative and it is envisaged to render IFM missions more cost-effective as alerts on forest exploitation activities received on the application would be assessed

and for each case, an IFM mission will only be conducted if the assessment reveals it is worthwhile to do so. The ISO certification of SNOIE is the first of its kind in the domain of IFM in the Congo Basin. This assures quality and enhances credibility of IFM reports elaborated by organisations that use the ISO certified SNOIE. The development of the Open Timber Portal as a global platform for information sharing is a significant step forward in improving transparency in the forest sector. Moreover, the quality control and associated capacity building of IMs done around the use of the OTP also improves the quality of data and its usability by international audiences beyond the Congo Basin. The CV4C project has been influential in ensuring that actors in the Congo Basin agree on a common definition for IFM

The CV4C project has developed an IM REDD+ methodology guide which is available for use and has already been used in DRC in collaboration with RENOI. The IM REDD+ guide prescribes the different steps to be followed by independent monitors for the monitoring of REDD+ activities in the countries of the Congo Basin. Also, combination of OD and IFM, and the integration of gender mainstreaming in IFM issues represents innovative aspects of the project.

4.3. Regional exchange

The CV4C project promoted and facilitated the participation of a broad range of national and regional level stakeholders in the course of its activities both in the first and second year. The level of experience on IFM issues vary among the countries of the Congo Basin and the project creates an arena for cross-country learning. Cameroon for instance is well advanced on IFM issues and the project partner in CAR (CIEDD) have had an opportunity to learn from their Cameroon partners (FLAG and FODER). Regional exchange is facilitated by FLAG operating at the regional level within the framework of the CV4C project. So far, CV4C has organised several regional exchange events notably:

- ✓ In May 2017 (in Accra, Ghana), the project co-organised with Civic Response Ghana, an international conference on IFM in West and Central Africa attended by participants from Cameroon, Ivory Coast, DRC, Liberia, CAR, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium, Indonesia and Turkey (CIDT, 2017a). The conference had as its main objective the sharing of lessons on IFM conducted by the civil society;
- ✓ The project organised a regional conference on law enforcement and illegal logging in the Congo Basin from the 14-16 November 2017 at the Interpol Regional Office for Central Africa, Yaoundé, Cameroon. The aim of the conference was to initiate the dialogue between law enforcement authorities and civil society and provide an open space for discussion and exploration to address the shortfalls in the FLEGT and REDD+ processes for the different actors and going forwards, how the state and non-state actors can build mutual collaboration and trust to achieve rigorous and effective systems.
- ✓ The regional meetings of independent observers in the Congo Basin organised in June 2018 in Douala and July 2019 in Kribi. The Douala meeting enabled the members to agree on the IM definition, common principles and an action plan while the Kribi one enabled IFM experts in the Congo Basin region to elaborate shared regional references on IM as well as share ideas on strategies for mobilising resources in order to ensure the sustainability of IM in the sub-region;

- ✓ In October 2018, the project organized in Brazzaville, the 11th session of the forest governance forum (FGF) attended by over 250 participants from the five project countries and other countries (Chad, France, Belgium, Ghana, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Liberia, Poland, Switzerland and the United States) (CIDT, 2018c);
- ✓ A regional workshop on investigation techniques for forest crimes and illegal financial flow was organised by the project.
- ✓ The project organised annual planning and lesson learning events which brought together all project partners. These meetings provided the opportunity for partners to take stock of progress made with implementation but also to share lessons and best practices.

4.4. Capacity strengthening

So far, the CV4C project has embarked on a number of capacity building activities. The project played an important role in strengthening the institutional and organisational capacity of the co-applicant organisations. In order to ensure that capacity building exercises actually respond to the needs of the organisations, the project first of all conducted a capacity needs assessment of the different organisations which entailed the design of a bespoke tool with potential of collecting quantitative data and this tool was used during field visits to each project country and facilitated self-assessment by each project partner. The capacity assessment report was used by partners as a baseline for action planning and for monitoring and evaluation of the project. Following the capacity assessment, capacity development interventions were built around the identified needs. The outcome of this was the strengthening of the organisational and institutional capacity of the project partners through the elaboration of strategic documents including but not limited to: strategic plans, communication strategies and resource mobilisation plans. This approach taken by the project is quite pragmatic in addressing the challenges of forest governance in the Congo Basin since CSOs can better play their role as independent forest monitors within the forest governance landscape if they are well organised at the institutional and organisational levels.

Outside organisational and institutional capacity building, the project has strengthened capacities in other areas:

- ✓ In 2017, in the DRC, a total of 32 non-state actor individuals benefitted from a training delivered by the CV4C project on the basic concepts of gender, tools and gender indicators in forest governance (CIDT, 2017b).
- ✓ In March 2017, the project partners received a training on gender concepts including the process for conducting a gender needs assessment. This training was meant to capacitate each project partner to conduct gender related needs assessment within their respective organisations.
- ✓ In Cameroon, a total of 13 journalists were trained by the project on issues related to annual forest royalties and the social obligations of forest enterprises (CIDT, 2017c).
- ✓ The project supported the elaboration of IFM training materials which are made available online (CIDT, 2017d).
- ✓ The project in November 2017, trained the project consortium members on the utilisation of the Open Timer Portal (OTP) for a better valorization of the results of their IFM missions (CIDT, 2017e).

- ✓ In CAR, six members of parliaments of the Production, Natural Resources and Environment Commission received training on the integration of gender in forest governance in CAR (CIDT, 2017f).
- ✓ In Gabon, the project supported the training of CSOs in the monitoring and evaluation of non-forestry investments in the forest sector of the Republic of Gabon (CIDT, 2018d).
- ✓ In 2018, 10 staff of FODER were trained within the framework of the project on the writing of scientific articles on the governance of forest resources (CIDT, 2018e).
- ✓ In February 2018, with support from the project, FLAG trained eight organisations (FODER, Papel, ASTEVI, SUHE, Cedla, CED, and TI-C) on the monitoring of wood circuit in Cameroon (CIDT, 2018f).
- ✓ Gender focal points were trained in Cameroon in 2018 on the elaboration of a gender strategy within an organisation (CIDT, 2018g).
- ✓ In May 2019, 25 participants from 17 CSOs in Cameroon were trained on project elaboration (CIDT, 2019). This training has also been provided to CSOs in Gabon and CAR during the first 2 years of the project.
- ✓ In June 2019, project partners were trained in Douala on the management of EU funded projects.

4.5. Project management and governance

CIDT is the lead implementing entity of the CV4C project and takes overall responsibility for the implementation of the project. CIDT takes the responsibility for the management of the project funds and for reporting (financial and narrative) to the EU on the progress realised regarding the implementation of project activities. The CIDT project manager oversees the implementation of project activities in the project countries and at the Congo Basin regional level. The in-country project partners are tasked with the implementation of project activities in their respective project countries while the regional organisation FLAG is mostly involved in the implementation of project activities across the region.

Annually, project partners organise a planning meeting for project activities to be implemented in the course of the year and the implementation of project activities follow the plan arrived at by each project partner. CIDT transfer funds to the different partner organisations for the implementation of activities for the first quarter of the year. Following the consumption of the funds received by the project partners, each partner organisation elaborates a narrative and financial report and submits to CIDT alongside the justifications for the financial expenses as well as request for additional funds. The university pre-finances project activities up to the tune of 2 million Euros and needs to recover money spent from the EU by providing appropriate financial reports with accompanying justification documents. For this reason, co-applicants need to be cleared of their previous financial expenditures prior to the University transferring more funds to them. Once the reports received are validated by CIDT, CIDT makes a request to the finance department of the University of Wolverhampton for funds to be transferred to the project partner organisation whose reports have been validated. The reports submitted by the individual partners are compiled into a main report by CIDT for submission to the EU.

4.6. Impact prospects

The CV4C project is supporting the capacity building of CSOs in the Congo Basin region active in independent monitoring of forests. The increased capacity of these CSOs would translate into improved IFM in the region including IFM reports of high quality based on which informed decisions could be made by government actors in the different Congo Basin countries and at the international level. This is already evident following the request made by the competent authorities in Europe to the CV4C project for IFM related information in the Congo Basin. Moreover, the ISO certification of the SNOIE would go a long way to improve the quality of IFM outputs in the Congo Basin and this would likely increase national governments' acceptance of the role of CSOs in the monitoring of forest illegalities in the sub-region. With support from the project, a regional platform of CSOs on IFM have been established in the sub-region. This will likely foster the implementation and coordination of IFM activities in the Congo Basin. Moreover, expanding IM beyond the forestry sector is a fundamental sustainability issue in terms of: monitoring of landscape activities such as agricultural expansion, mining, benefit sharing and community rights; and climate monitoring including NDCs and REDD+.

The OTP at present is making significant contribution in terms of improving the quality of IFM reports and this is likely to be the case in the future. For instance, the quality assurance provided through the OTP will go a long way to increase the credibility of data obtained with the aid of SNOIE tool within the Congo Basin and beyond.

The project has been instrumental in bringing on board non-traditional actors in the domain of forest monitoring. Within the framework of the project, the project partners have engaged strongly with the media, ensuring that identified cases of forest illegalities are communicated to the public. Also, journalist have been trained by the project, rendering them capacitated in the domain of IFM. In a nutshell, the project has potential for enhancing CSOs' contribution to improving forest governance and sustainable management of forests in the Congo Basin.

IM activities also entails the verification of tax payment by logging companies and whether or not these companies harvest timber within the concession attributed to them by the state. Consequently, IM will deter logging companies to encroach and harvest timber in community forests. This will mean that, local communities will be able to fully enjoy the resources in community forests attributed to them, leading to an improvement in their livelihoods. Also, everything being equal, the forest royalties paid by the logging companies will be used to realise developmental projects within local communities.

4.7. Gender

The CV4C project had gender mainstreaming as one of its objectives under the capacity building outcome and this was embedded in the activities of the project. The project supported gender mainstreaming through capacity strengthening within four strategic areas: organisational level, individuals, projects/programmes and working with governments to advocate for more equitable forestry policies (CIDT, n.d). The objective of the CV4C project for driving gender equality in the different strategic areas include:

- ✓ **Individual level:** capacity building for men and women in partner organisations. This is geared at strengthening the capacity of women and men at all levels to better observe and implement gender considerations;
- ✓ **Governmental level:** advancing collaborative efforts between CSOs, partner organisations and government actors on gender. This is aimed at enhancing the institutional capacities of partner organisations in collaborating with government departments in gender and forestry;
- ✓ **Organisational level:** mainstreaming of gender within partner organisations. The idea here is to integrate gender into the organisational strategy of the project partners and to establish a gender balanced work force where female forestry officers have the same opportunity to advance as their male counterparts;
- ✓ **Projects/programmes:** promotion of gender sensitive project planning. This strategic area is geared at fostering capacity building and training in gender analysis as well as gender mainstreaming into project activities and monitoring and evaluation.

Within the framework of the project, gender was mainstreamed in the partner organisations through several measures:

- ✓ **Training on the gender concept, tools and gender analysis:** gender training was organised by partner organisations for their staff and networks. The training enhanced the participants' understanding of the gender concept and the use of gender analysis tools in gender mainstreaming.
- ✓ **Appointment of gender focal point (GFP):** a focal point for gender was appointed within each of the seven project partner organisations. The focal points are charged with the responsibility of ensuring gender mainstreaming within their respective organisations.
- ✓ **The adoption of gender strategies and policies by the project partners:** project partners without a gender strategy were supported by the project in the elaboration of a gender organisational strategy.
- ✓ **Elaboration of gender sensitive working documents and production of gender sensitive reports:** project partners elaborate terms of reference for every project activity to be implemented. This gives room for the implementation of gender sensitive activities and reporting since gender aspects will be taken into consideration in the selection or participants for the activities (CIDT, n.d.). For instance, a total of 169 individuals were trained on gender issues by the project in 2017 of which 84 (49.7%) were women (CIDT, 2017).

A summary of the gender outcomes per in-country CV4C project partner / country is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of gender achievements of the CV4C project partners (Source: CV4C Gender Report).

Gender mainstreaming measure taken by project	Project countries concerned	Action taken / outcome
Conducting gender trainings for partners and sensitization on gender sensitive reporting	CAR (CIEDD), Republic of Congo	The co-applicant in each of the three countries have trained their respective local partners on gender issues.

	(CAGDF) and the DRC (DRC)	
Use of gender sensitive indicators in planning	Cameroon (FODER) and Gabon (Brainforest)	-Integration of gender specific indicators in the annual activity plans to facilitate the measurement of gender considerations.
The design of gender specific tools in forest related issues and in other work aspects	Cameroon (FODER)	-Gender tools in IFM and other forest-related issues have been designed and tested by some project partners.
Aligning organisation's documents with a gender perspective	Gabon (Brainforest)	-Improved the gender sensitivity of key documents of the organisation such as statutes, internal rules and regulations, manual of procedures and strategic plans.
Restructuring of the organisation and ensuring its gender sensitivity	Gabon (Brainforest)	-Promotion of women to the organisation's strategic positions; -Inclusion of gender specific considerations into the daily functioning of the organisation – provision of separate toilets for men and women.
Participation and promotion of women and IP's rights	Cameroon (FODER)	-Participation in various international events that celebrate women and minorities' rights including among others: International -Women's Day, Indigenous People's day and Rural Women's day.

4.8. Case study success stories

Box 1: Success stories

ISO 9001 2015 Certification of SNOIE

Developed in 2015 by FODER in collaboration with other CSOs, SNOIE constitutes a set of monitoring processes for the exploitation of natural resources (NR) based on the international standard ISO 9001 2015. The system was developed with an objective of rendering external independent monitoring activities more effective, increase the credibility of denunciations emerging from IFM and channelling them towards the appropriate users including but not limited to technical and financial partners and competent authorities. With support from the project, SNOIE received the ISO 9001 2015 certificate on April 17, 2018. Since the obtention of the ISO certificate, SNOIE has emerged as the very first approach employed in the monitoring of natural resources by civil society in Cameroon. IFM reports elaborated following the SNOIE and submitted to MINFOF have triggered a reaction from MINFOF officials demonstrated by forest control mission carried out by the National Brigade for Forest and Wildlife control.

SNOIE represents one of the first IFM tool in the world developed by the civil society that has earned an ISO 9001 2015 certificate. The tool has not only potential for improving the quality of IFM in the Congo Basin but can as well be used by other countries in the globe for improving forest governance.

Strategic plans and gender mainstreaming

CV4C supported the elaboration of strategic plans for the different in-country project partners. These plans were elaborated in an inclusive manner, involving almost all the members of the different organisations. This is important as members of each organisation have an awareness of the content of the elaborated strategic plan and this could facilitate its implementations.

The project conducted gender needs assessment for partner organisations and elaborated a gender strategy for each of these organisations and an action plan for its implementation. The gender support accorded by the project to the partner organisations have so far led to noticeable changes within some of the organisations. In Gabon for instance, following the adoption of their gender policy in 2018, Brainforest reviewed some of their internal documents to render them more gender friendly and appointed many female staff. FODER has since the adoption of their gender strategy included a talking point on gender on their agenda for the organisation's Monday routine meeting. FLAG designed a tool that tracks on a semester basis, the participation of men and women in the activity of the organisation. OGF had 28% of female staff and as part of the gender strategy of the organisation, a recruitment of two female staff (forest engineers) was planned. However, only one competent female forest engineer was appointed, causing the other position to be filled by a male staff. In CAR, the administration solicited support from the CAR based project partner for capacity building on gender aspects and consequently, 32 individuals across 16 ministries in the country were trained on how to mainstream gender in their work. Each partner organisation now has a gender focal point responsible for supporting and tracking implementation of the organisation's gender strategy.

PA-OI Network and RENOI

The CV4C project supported the establishment of the African Platform of Independent Monitors for Natural Resources (PA-OI). PA-OI is a network of 11 CSOs whose work involves the harmonization of strategies and methodologies for a professional, credible and effective monitoring of forests in the Congo Basin. In July 2019, the CV4C project supported the PA-OI network in the elaboration of a repository to be used as a reference document by CSOs for the methodology to be employed in the following domains: Internal legal and professional functioning of the CSOs implementing IM and their members; approach to be followed for the collection, analysis and interpretation of IM data; and protocol to be followed in the elaboration of IM reports, the dissemination and follow-up of IM information. The repository takes into account the specificities for both mandated and non-mandated IM and establishes five principles for IM. These includes:

- ✓ Legality and legitimacy of organisations that conducts IM activities (Principle 1);
- ✓ Independence and impartiality of independent monitors (Principle 2);
- ✓ Credibility of independent monitors (Principle 3);
- ✓ Existence of appropriate and sustainable resources for conducting IM (Principle 4); and
- ✓ Quality of information and procedure for publishing IM products (Principle 5).

For each principle, the repository provides a set of criteria and indicators.

CV4C also supported the establishment of RENOI in RDC which brings together both NGOs and platforms of organisations dealing with IFM in the country. It was set up to enhance the sharing of experience and to increase the profile of IFM. So far, RENOI has come up with a consensual and highly important IFM strategy.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusions

The CV4C project was found to be on track in attaining its overall objective, specific objective and key results. Concerning progress towards the attainment of the overall objective, the project has strengthened the organisational and institutional capacity of non-state actors across the project countries, increasing their capacity to improve forest governance in the region and this is demonstrated by the improved quality of IFM outputs generated by NSAs in the different project countries some of which have received a positive reaction from the forestry authorities as is the case for Cameroon. For the specific objective, the project supported project partners to conduct

IFM missions and as well supported the IFM tool SNOIE to obtain an ISO 9001 2015 certificate. This is to ensure that NSAs in the region effectively monitor forest governance and generate quality IFM reports that can inform the FLEGT and REDD+ processes and trigger responses from law enforcement agencies in their respective countries.

On the efficiency side, the project has been efficient towards the use of human and financial resources for the implementation of project activities. The project was successful in the mobilization of additional funding from DFID for the implementation of additional activities that were not initially included in the project design. Transfer of funds to project partners was timely, permitting majority of the partners to implement project activities as planned. However, two project partner organisations attested that project activities were in some cases slowed down due to late arrival of funds and this was partly as a consequence of the late submission of their narrative and financial reports alongside justifications of expenditure to CIDT.

So far, the project has generated strategic documents and tools among others which represents elements of project sustainability. The regional IFM platform established, capacity building conducted and strategic documents (strategic plans, gender strategy, resource mobilization plans, etc.) elaborated all constitute elements that would continue to exist and be used after the life of the CV4C project. However, there exists key risks: financial and socio-economic; institutional; and political which have potential of hampering the sustainability of the project outputs.

Overall, the project design and implementation is relevant to the priorities of the respective project countries in the domain of forest governance improvement for the sustainable management of forest resources. CV4C is relevant to the commitment of the governments of the Congo Basin countries to combat illegal logging (FLEGT process) and to fight climate change – reducing forest related emissions through the REDD+ mechanism.

5.2. Recommendations for the second half of the project

The main recommendations of the MTR can be summarized under the following categories based on the four outputs of the project.

Result 1: *Increased organisational and operational capacity of NSAs to undertake monitoring of forest governance, land-use, and REDD+ safeguards*

Recommendation 1.1. Focus on the next half of the project should be around resource mobilisation to enable project partners to start exploring options for securing funds after the CV4C project comes to an end. In this way, there is an effective strategy within each organisation in terms of the next steps following the end of life of the project. Also, close support should be provided to the in-country project partners to enable them to effectively respond to calls for proposals.

Recommendation 1.2. the project should ensure the monitoring of the utilization and effectiveness of the strategic and methodological documents or guidelines developed for and available to the different project partners. In the event that the tools are not utilized adequately, the monitoring

exercise will enable corrective actions to be taken that would ameliorate their utilization during and after the life of the project.

Result 2: *Improved quality and availability of independent information on compliance with forest and land sector legal norms*

Recommendation 2.1. In commissioning studies within the framework of the project, partners have to be clear on the added value of the different commissioned studies and how the results of these studies will be used for advocacy or for improving forest governance in the different project countries otherwise the completed studies would have no meaningful impact. Hence, the project should conduct a pre-assessment of the importance of planned studies to be realised under the CV4C project and ensure that their outputs are relevant for advocacy and for improving forest governance.

Recommendation 2.2. Continuous support should be directed to the project partners in implementing and imbedding the quality management systems that have been developed so far in the project. This will enable IFM reports, to be published at the national and international level. The number of IFM reports published on the OTP (26) is very low relative to the number of IM missions conducted, implying that a greater proportion of the IM reports ends up not being published. The project should continue to support partners towards improving the quality IM's outputs as this would render them more eligible to be published on the OTP. Such support could take the form of quality assurance training of the independent monitors and the development of IM aided tools to improve the quality of the observations.

Recommendation 2.3.: FLEGTWATCH is a new innovative tool developed with potential to be adapted and applied in different settings. Focus should be to strengthen national ownership and seek linkages with other technological tools developed in the region. Potential for FLEGT Watch as an IFM information management system needs to be explored in-order to enhance information management during the IFM process.

Results 3: *Viable, constructive and sustainable networks of well-informed local NSAs, with increased cross-border cooperation and information exchanges*

Recommendation 3.1. Due to the leadership conflict existing within the civil society platforms in some of the project countries, project activities to be implemented with the platforms should be limited to active or committed members within the platforms and these members could be identified by the in-country project partners using a set of conceived guidelines or criteria. Hence, the project will not discontinue work with the platform but rather, focus on the active members within the platform for the implementation of platform-related project activities. This will not only ensure efficient use of project funds but as well guarantee the attainment of project output as the active members of the platform involved in the project activities will be able to make more meaningful impact out of their involvement.

Recommendation 3.2. More specific support in terms of advocacy should be provided to the civil society platforms across the project countries. So far, the project has supported the capacity building of the platforms but has not provided specific support on advocacy and it is important for platforms to get more involved in advocacy actions as this would increase their impact as key actors within the forest governance landscape in the region. More attention needs to be focused in the last year of the project to identifying concrete advocacy themes and supporting platforms to work on those themes.

Recommendation 3.3: The creation of PA-OI and other national IFM platforms is very strategic for the future of IFM and impact on forest governance in the Congo Basin. The last year of the project should focus on further strengthening of institutional capacity but even more importantly securing additional financial resources to ensure that gains achieved are maintained and/or upscaled. This may include supporting diversification of IFM function to other landscape issues such as biodiversity and implementation of national determined contributions, mining, agro industry amongst other thematic areas.

Result 4: *Effective engagement and response from forest law enforcement agencies, law makers and judiciary in national forest policy processes*

Recommendation 4.1. The CV4C project should go a step further to focus on establishing strong and viable links with national law enforcement agencies, law makes and judiciary in order to trigger response of law enforcement agencies to IFM outputs generated in the respective project countries.

Recommendation 4.2. The collaboration between the NSAs and the administration should be strengthened across the different project countries so as to influence effective response from the judiciary and law enforcement agencies to outputs generated by CSOs. Ongoing engagement with judiciary should be fostered. Also, a study should be conducted by the project to understand the reasons behind the low response from government agencies to IFM outputs across the project countries.

General recommendations

Recommendation 5 - On gender: the evidence generated through this review demonstrates a project that has provide strong investment in gender capacity building and mainstreaming. It is useful to document this experience and ensure that monitoring of national gender plans continues through out to the end of the project and beyond. Future projects should systematically seek to build on gender focal points in different partner organisations for the identification, budgeting and implementation of gender responsive project / programme activities.

Recommendation 6 - On capitalisation of lessons: There seems to be a lot of evidence of achievements of the project that were relayed through out the review. Unfortunately, there was little evidence that the project was systematically documenting best practices for the future. It will be useful for the project to focus resources on documenting best practices as these will provide the

groundwork for future projects but also products that can be shared beyond the project stakeholders.

Recommendation 7 – on project indicators: While the project indicators seem realistic, the project team should work harder during the second half of the project and drive implementation towards the attainment of indicators whose targets are far from being achieved, particularly indicators 2.1, 2.3, 3.3 and 4.3.