

Note on the participation in the 2nd Steering Committee Meeting of the Regional project to promote Reduced Impact Logging in the Congo Basin (Phase 1) held in Libreville, Gabon, on 17-18 December 2008

(by James K. Gasana, Intercooperation, Bern)

Project title	<i>Regional project to promote Reduced Impact Logging in the Congo Basin (Phase 1)</i>
Number	<i>PD 392/06 Rev. 2 (F)</i>
Country	<i>Republic of Gabon</i>
Total Budget	<i>US\$ 1,106,490 (ITTO: US\$ 950,087)</i>
Funding sources	<i>Japan (US\$ 475,087); Switzerland (US\$ 200,000); USA (US\$ 110,000); France (US\$ 65,000); BPF-B (100,000); Gabon (30,000); TFF/WCS (100,000)</i>
Executing Agency	<i>Tropical Forest Foundation (TFF) in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)</i>
Duration	<i>March 2008 – March 2010.</i>

The project was approved by the International Tropical Timber Council in June 2006 but it was not fully funded until May 2007. The Agreement between ITTO and the Government of Gabon on its implementation was signed on 13 November 2007, and the first installment of the ITTO funds was released in March 2008.

The project aims at promoting sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin through Reduced Impact Logging (RIL) practices incorporating fauna conservation concerns. The two project specific objectives are:

- (1) Raising the awareness and promoting of RIL in the region through, inter alia, demonstrating the opportunities and feasibilities of RIL under different conditions; and
- (2) Providing and improving the complete range of RIL courses in the Region and create training capacities including through building those of existing vocational training institutions.

The first Project Steering Committee meeting was held in June 2008, but not all stakeholders attended it. The second PSC meeting which is the object of this note took place in Libreville on 17-18 December 2008, after a field visit on 16 December. SECO was represented in the meeting by James K. Gasana (Intercooperation, Bern).

The meeting was chaired by M. Antoine Ndongou, Assistant Director General of Forestry. The major points of the Agenda were:

- Review of the minutes of the 1st PSC meeting;
- Review of the structure and progress of the project;
- Review of the Yearly Operations Plan.

The key conclusions from the discussions are the following:

On the minutes of the 1st PSC Meeting

The meeting took note of the recommendations of the June 2008 Meeting and provided additional thoughts on how to ensure the follow-up to those which were not yet implemented. In particular:

- The Committee encouraged the Project Management to take contact with COMIFAC and explain its long term vision.
- Define the concept of conventional logging through a wider consultation with key partners of the public and private sectors.
- With regard to the promising collaboration of ENEF (Ecole Nationale des Eaux et Forêts), it will be important to have its implication in a sustainability perspective.
- It will be important to conduct a mid-term evaluation which will allow shedding light on the sustainability of the project.
- The project must make sure that the beneficiaries of its field training courses have an in insurance coverage. This concerns ENEF's students and others.

Review of the structure and progress of the project

- The Committee requested a revision of the Project's organization chart to show clearly that the Ministry of Forest Economy has the overall responsibility of the project.
- The project experienced delays in starting the activity in the demonstration forest. This is due to: the late arrival of machines (November 2008); the contacted companies have not yet responded; the academic year in ENEF starts in September, and the first seminars took place in December 2008.
- In the critical analysis of the project progress, the Committee found that the planned activities are correlated with the setting-up of the demonstration forest. The project manager provided assurances to the effect that the delays will be overcome.
- On the financial side, the project has already spent USD 110,262 as of 30 November 2008. The project manager has been requested to estimate the in-kind contributions of the Government and of TFF to the project.

Review of the Yearly Operations Plan

The Executing Agency presented the YPO of the first 12 months and informed the Committee on the potential negative impact of the global economic crisis on the project's implementation.

Recommendations

The committee made the following recommendations in relation to the implementation of the project:

The project should inform COMIFAC on its longer term vision as far as the Congo Basin is concerned.

Defining the concept for conventional logging must be done in consultation with the partners of the project (public and private sectors, civil society).

The sustainability depends on the effective ownership of its results. The mid-term evaluation will allow verifying this as well as recommending the orientations for the future.

The project has no civil responsibility for any accident to the beneficiaries of its field courses. The beneficiaries should provide the proof of their insurance.

The organization chart of the project should be corrected to reflect the implementation strategy of the project.

The project must have a monitoring and evaluation system.

The project should consult with ITTO Secretariat for the requested budget adjustments.

Date for the next PSC Meeting

The next PSC meeting will be held in September 2009.