

Gender Assessment

FP159: PREFOREST CONGO - Project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from forests in five departments in the Republic of Congo

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**GREEN
CLIMATE
FUND**

Annex 8

Gender Assessment Report & Action Plan

PREFOREST CONGO - Project to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from forests in five departments in the Republic of Congo



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

IGA	Income-generating activities
ADB	African Development Bank
WB	World Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEMA	Agricultural Machinery Center (<i>Centre d'Exploitation des Machines Agricoles</i>)
CPF	Country Programming Framework
DGA	Directorate-General for Agriculture (<i>Direction Générale de l'Agriculture</i>)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
DSCERP	Growth, Employment, and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (<i>Document de Stratégie pour la Croissance, l'Emploi et la Réduction de la Pauvreté</i>)
DHS	Demographic Health Survey
ECE	Growth and Employment Survey (<i>Enquête sur la Croissance et l'Emploi</i>)
ECOM	Congolese Household Survey (<i>Enquête Congolaise auprès des Ménages</i>)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
FSA	Agricultural Support Fund (<i>Fonds de Soutien à l'Agriculture</i>)
HDI	Human Development Index
IEC	Information, Education, Communication
INS	National Statistics Institute (<i>Institut National de la Statistique</i>)
MFI	Microfinance Institution
LPA	Agricultural Policy Letter (<i>Lettre de Politique Agricole</i>)
MAEP	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (<i>Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Elevage et de la Pêche</i>)
MPFIFD	Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Women's Integration in Development (<i>Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme et de l'Intégration de la Femme au développement</i>)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Government Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization

EDSP	Economic Diversification Support Project
ASDSP	Agricultural Sector Development Support Programme
PDARP	Agricultural Development and Agricultural Track Rehabilitation Programme <i>(Programme de Développement Agricole et de Réhabilitation des Pistes Agricoles)</i>
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NPFS	National Programme for Food Security
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
NDP	National Development Programme
NPPW	National Policy for the Promotion of Women
NGP	National Gender Policy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
PRODER	Agricultural Rural Development Project <i>(Projet de Développement Rural Agricole)</i>
PRONAR	National Afforestation and Reforestation Programme <i>(Programme National d’Afforestation et de Reboisement)</i>
GAC	General Agricultural Census

1. Introduction

Today, the importance of analyzing gender related roles and power relationships in the context of development is recognized. In agriculture, men and women do not have the same roles. Although the importance of the role of women in family food security is evident, it can also be agreed that almost everywhere in the world, and particularly in Africa, women enjoy fewer rights than men.

In Congo, women represent 70% of the labor force and are responsible for 60 to 80% of the country's subsistence crop production. According to the National Development Plan, they predominate (making up nearly 70%) throughout subsistence crop production, as well as in the processing and marketing cycle of agricultural and fishery products. Women are particularly involved in the social life of the family (basic education, health, childhood assistance, etc.) and play an essential part in maintaining food security, in rural as well as urban areas. They invest a major part of their income in food security for children and the family.

However, unlike men, women unfortunately face several difficulties in their activities. More than ever, they are confronted with insecurity and vulnerability due to several factors. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), adequate inclusion of women's needs in agricultural production would improve their output by 22%, particularly in terms of maize production (FAO, 1999).

Furthermore, women are the main users of natural resources through different activities, such as fuelwood supply, traditional medicine, mushroom and caterpillar harvesting, gathering of wild leaves and fruit, as well as fishing in water bodies. As a result, they are key stakeholders in human interactions with ecosystems.

More than men, women are directly and immediately affected by the use and conservation of natural resources, because they are involved on a daily basis in ensuring household food security, firewood collection, water supplies, etc.

1.1 Context and justification

The Republic of Congo is engaged in a national Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) process, specifically through its UN-REDD National Programme and support from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI). Moreover, Congo ratified the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and submitted its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), stressing its commitment to sustainable development and its support to the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In this context, the Congolese Ministry of Forest Economy requested support from FAO to develop a project proposal for submission to the Green Climate Fund to finance priority interventions of its REDD+ Investment Plan. Accordingly, the project proposal 'Project to Reduce GHG Emissions from Forests in Five Departments in Congo (PREFOREST)' is being prepared and makes provision for the development of several activities across various types of ecosystems and with numerous stakeholders.

The project revolves around three components:

- Component 1: Land-use and resources planning and strengthening of land access and security rights

- Component 2: Establishment of agroforestry and forestry systems for climate change mitigation;
- Component 3: Strengthening agroforestry financing structures, business capacities and value chains

The activities planned by this Project for submission to the Green Climate Fund could have positive as well as negative effects on ecosystems and stakeholders. To guarantee effective participation by women (who control more than 50% of agricultural assets) in planning and implementation of the Project, and to ensure that the Project activities are sensitive to gender issues and promote equality, specific consultations with women's groups took place in the target departments. For this purpose, FAO recruited a consultant specialized in gender to suggest a management framework to address gender issues, necessary to finalize the Project proposal for submission to the Green Climate Fund.

1.2 Objective of the Assessment

Main Objective

The main objective of this assessment is to conduct a situational analysis in order to identify any gender disparities that could hinder full participation by women and their enjoyment of the benefits of the Project.

Specific Objectives

- To conduct a diagnostic (institutional and operational) in order to identify any gender-based risks and disparities that could limit full participation by women during Project implementation.
- To promote an environment favorable to gender mainstreaming in Project implementation to allow women to have access to the benefits and opportunities offered by the Project.
- A detailed analysis of the needs, interests and stakes related to the participation of women in agriculture, agroforestry and forestry activities in the target departments in respect to the points below:
 - Women's contribution to the work;
 - Land allocation;
 - Access to and use of agricultural and forestry resources (e.g. relating to non-timber forest products and food security);
 - Value chains and financing tools;
 - Land rights and access to land and forests by women (formal and customary);
 - Sharing of benefits related to agricultural and forestry activities;

The main recommendations are to be integrated in the Project with consideration also of a risk monitoring and evaluation management framework.

1.3 Methodology

To guarantee effective participation by women in Project planning and implementation, and to ensure that the Project's activities take into account the practical needs and strategic interests of women and men in the target districts across the various ecosystems, individual and group discussion meetings were organized with women in the districts of Louvakou, Kayes, Madingou, Ngo 1 and 2, Eluna, Mvouti, Hinda and Kinkala from May 20, 2019 to June 1, 2019.

Institutional interviews were also conducted with resource persons from the different sectoral departments (Ministry of Women, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Forest Economy, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Scientific Research), Project stakeholders, civil society organizations, selected United Nations agencies and other development partners.

Moreover, data collection tools were developed to successfully complete fieldwork (checklist and analysis guide). Two approaches were preferred:

- a. The first approach consisted of evaluating women's needs in the target districts covered by the interviews using a checklist.
- b. The second approach was made possible using data collection sheets intended to raise and explore gender issues in agriculture, agroforestry and forestry. This approach allowed the team to determine the type of data to be collected and to facilitate the analysis.

We should stress that these approaches were supported by core elements relating to gender and development in general and those relating to the agricultural sector in particular.

Desk review

A variety of relevant strategic documents available at national level were analyzed and summarized.

Individual interviews

Information was collected in Brazzaville and in the target districts through direct interviews, focus groups, as well as working sessions with representatives from the technical departments of the ministries with a stake in the Project (i.e. Ministry of Forest Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Women's and Integration in Development), United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as civil society organizations.

The list of interviewed participants is attached to this report.

Focus Groups

These consisted of interactive discussion sessions of two hours per group on average in the target districts listed below:

- Department of Kouilou: districts of Madingo-kayes, Mvouti and Hinda;
- Department of Niari: district of Louvakou;
- Department of Bouenza: districts of Loudima, Kayes and Madingou;
- Department of Pool: district of Kinkala;

- Department of Plateaux: districts of Ngo and Mpouya.

Discussions essentially covered thematic areas related to agriculture, agroforestry and forestry, and were guided by the different points of the terms of reference of the assessment.

1.4 Organization of the report

The report was developed within the context of the Congo GCF Project and is intended as a 'living document' whereby the assessment data and Action Plan may be updated periodically based on new information obtained during the inception and implementation phases. The project's mid-term evaluation will also consider gender and provide feedback to further refine this document. The gender expert assigned to the project will be responsible for a review of this document on an annual basis.

The assessment reveals disparities between men and women in terms of access and control of land, access to resources, sharing of benefits, and representation within the agriculture, agroforestry and forestry contexts. It is organized into three major sections:

- The first section is structured in line with the Green Climate Fund methodology in which the main issues in Annex 8 of the Green Climate Fund are addressed.
- The second section of the report presents a more in-depth gender analysis that goes beyond the points requested by the GCF in order to better understand the conditions of women within the context of the Project.
- Finally, the third section consists of an action plan, which proposes strategies/actions specific to women; and presented as an annex to this document.

2. GCF Appendix 8 Form:

This section was developed in line with the Green Climate Fund methodology and addresses the main issues in Annex 8.

2.1 Presentation of the context of the country of intervention

Maternal mortality rate	In the Republic of Congo, the maternal mortality rate is 436 deaths per 100,000 live births. The most affected are young women between the ages of 20 to 24 years (32%), as well as adolescents under the age of 20 years (or 25%) ¹
Infant mortality	The infant-child mortality rate is 33.81 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019. This rate is substantially higher in rural areas than in urban areas. Mortality in children under the age of five years was 45.41 per 1,000 in 2019 (World Data Atlas).
Educational status of girls and boys	The net school enrollment rate is 81.3%, which consists of 82.7% for boys and 80.0% for girls. The gross intake rate increased from 78% in 2005. ² Out of 100 pupils entering primary school, a total of only 69 (boys and girls) complete their primary education - 77.39% boys versus 67.65% girls in 2005. From the point of view of access as well as completion, the gender parity index is still in favor of boys. ³
Adult literacy rate (disaggregated by gender)	In terms of literacy, women are less literate than men with a rate of 72.1% for women between the ages of 15 and 24 years, versus 83.2% for men in the same age bracket. The disparity is particularly due to the time women and girls spend on household chores, as well as their vulnerability. ⁴ Another study indicates that the French language literacy rate of persons between 15 to 24 years of age is 87.5%, consisting of 89.1% for men and 86.0% for women and that the illiteracy rate, all languages combined, for the same age group is 6.8%, 5.7% for men and 7.8% for women. ⁵
Poverty rate	A household survey ⁶ revealed that, in Congo, there is more poverty in women-headed households, with a rate of 58.2% compared with 48.8% of households headed by men, and this discrepancy is even greater in urban settings. According to the abovementioned survey, this situation is partially explained by the fact that women are often victims of employment and credit discrimination.
Workforce participation rate (disaggregated by gender)	At least 192,776 women are engaged in formal work compared with 417,643 men. ⁷

¹ UNDP Congo: National Human Development Report 2015.

² Gender Inequality Development Indicators (GEDI) 2015

³ Idem

⁴ Idem

⁵ General Population and Housing Census (GPHC 2014)

⁶ Congolese Household Survey (ECOM, 2009)

⁷ UNDP Congo, National Human Development Report 2015.

<p>Land system</p>	<p>Law no. 21/2018 of June 13, 2018 sets the rules for land use and acquisition in the Republic of Congo. There is also a customary land system based on traditional ancestral rules and practices.</p> <p>Regarding land ownership, Congolese women face cultural obstacles that prevent them from owning and controlling land. According to customary law, women may own land either through matrilineal or patrilineal descent (the family head is generally a man and decides on land allocation), through marriage ties (the family head allocates land to the wife at the request of the husband), lease agreements (by means of a land rent that varies by department and land type) or through purchase (this is a relatively recent procedure and an increasing number of women are using this form of acquisition). If the woman is not the family head, she must refer to a man for land access as, unfortunately, women are disadvantaged in most cases. Various limitations to the ability of women to own land seriously hinder their effective participation in economic activities.</p> <p>In summary, women, particularly in rural areas, face serious obstacles, such as illiteracy, economic weakness, lack of education and others that prevent them from directly exercising control over the land concessions available to them.</p>
<p>Access to inputs, agricultural equipment, training or technical support</p>	<p>In Congo, farmers in general and women in particular face several challenges. The vast majority of rural women use basic and archaic methods of production (hoe, machete), increasing the drudgery of their work. A lack of appropriate technologies that could reduce the time spent on domestic chores, production, processing and storage of agricultural products considerably worsens their state of health, depriving them of rest, leading to early aging, loss of production and increased morbidity and mortality.</p> <p>Small tools are the basic equipment of 71.2% of agricultural households headed by men versus 28% of women-headed households.⁸</p>
<p>Life expectancy (disaggregated by gender)</p>	<p>65.7 years for women; 62.8 years for men (2018)⁹</p>

2.2 Responses to GCF Annex 8 questions

➤ What is the status of women?

While some gaps remain, a legal, policy and institutional framework is in place to address gender issues and empower women in Congo.

International law

At the international level, Congo signed (1980) and ratified (1982) the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Congo is also a signatory to the African Charter on

⁸ PROJECT UTF/PRC/014/PRC GENERAL AGRICULTURAL CENSUS AND CountrySTAT

⁹ UN Human Development Report: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/120606>

Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) (or Banjul Charter, adopted in Nairobi in 1981) which promotes the rights of women. This Charter calls for states to "ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of women and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions."

National law

According to Congo's Constitution (2005) women shall have the same rights as men. Article 14 supports women's participation and states that: "The public authorities shall ensure the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the protection and promotion of their rights. They shall take all appropriate measures in all fields, in particular in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural fields, to ensure the full development and participation of women in the development of the nation. They shall take measures to combat all forms of violence against women in public and private life. Women shall have the right to equitable representation in national, provincial and local institutions. The State shall guarantee the implementation of gender parity in these institutions".

Congolese law guarantees and ensures women's promotion and representation in all political, elective and administrative offices (Article 8 (3) of the 2002 Constitution). Furthermore, electoral law stipulates that candidate lists must take into account the representation of women in a proportion of at least 15% (Article 61 (3) of the Electoral Code as amended in 2007)

In relation to land rights, Congo has also put in place laws to address the rights of women in relation to land and inheritance. The Constitution declares that private property is sacred and that compensation is required in the case of depriving someone of his/her property (Art. 34). While in practice customary law dominates, [Bakajika](#) law (1966 tenure legislation) recognizes the State's full land rights throughout the national territory, but at the same time respects the holders of prior land and customary rights ([FAOLEX-FAO's legal database](#)). Furthermore, under Article 473 of the Family Code, sons and daughters have equal inheritance rights as long as the marriage is under the 'community of property' marriage type. The Constitution also ensures the elimination of sexual violence (Art.15), the right to information (Art.24), and the right to free education without discrimination (Art.45).

Institutional framework

At the national level, the key government agency responsible for promoting women's empowerment is the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Integration of Women in Development (See [link](#)). This Ministry is a member of the project's Technical Committee. Throughout Congo, a number of NGOs also support women's empowerment and awareness raising on gender issues. These include: Agence Régionale d'Information et Prévention du Sida (ARIPS), Association des Femmes pour le Développement de la Bouenza (AFDB) (both addressing violence against women and girls and education of children), REFADD (Réseau des femmes Africaines pour le développement durable en Afrique centrale, Femmes Energie, et Association des Femmes Juristes du Congo (AFJC).

National Policy / Action Plan on Gender

Validated in November 2016 the National Gender Policy aims to achieve gender equality and the social, economic and political empowerment of women and girls in the Congo. Initiated by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Integration of Women into Development, the policy has five strategic areas for its implementation. These include 1) the consolidation of gender equality and the empowerment of women; 2) strengthening the role and place of women and girls in the economy and employment; 3) increased access of women and girls in the decision-making spheres; 4) combating forms of sexual violence; and 5) strengthening the institutional mechanism for the implementation of the national gender policy (See [link](#)).

Nevertheless, the sociolegal status of women in Congo remains a major concern. Although Article 17 of the 2015 Constitution enshrines the principle of gender equality in all sectors of national life, some legislative instruments continue to convey disparities between men and women.

For instance, Article 171 of the Family Code covering the rights of spouses in marriage gives predominance for the choice of marital home to the husband, in case of a disagreement between the two spouses. In terms of this code, although the woman has the right to freely perform the activity of her choice, the husband may, in the interest of the household, obtain a prohibition from a judge against her performing that activity.

Violence against girls and women is a recurrent phenomenon despite the existence of the legal framework aligned to international standards. Regarding marital violence, bodily harm constitutes the most common form of violence perpetrated against women¹⁰. Such violence is even more widespread in that it is committed under the seal of intimacy.

In terms of the inclusion of gender-specific needs in politics and public life, power-sharing is unequal at legislative, executive and judiciary levels. There are 8.6% women in Parliament, 13% in Government, 12% in decision-making positions within ministries, 17.3% in departmental councils and 26% in town councils. The proportions are similar in political parties, professional NGOs and unions¹¹.

➤ **What are the current beliefs, perceptions and stereotypes related to gender?**

Congolese society is organized traditionally, following a patriarchal system which favors the gender-based distribution of social roles. Men are prepared to manage power and to enjoy male privileges, which make them the “chiefs” of the family and community; women are more predisposed to occupy themselves with the house, taking care of their families as a spouse and/or mother and to remain far from the spheres of public decision-making.

It is generally accepted that women have less leadership skills than men of an equivalent level and that, depending on whether a man or woman makes a decision, the outcome is different, with an unfavorable prejudice against women.

➤ **What is the gender-based division of labor between men and women?**

Whether in the field of agriculture or forestry, the gender-based division of work is still very present.

¹⁰Ministry for Women’s Empowerment and Integration in Development, *NATIONAL GENDER POLICY* Nov 2015

In terms of forest use, women¹² gather non-timber forest products for their food needs (e.g. *Gnétum africanum*, currently called “coco” in Lingala, “fumbua” in Kituba, mushrooms, caterpillars, wild fruit, vegetables), medicinal plants, leaves from different trees, particularly those of the arrowroot family, which are used to cook cassava. However, men mainly use the forest for commercial gain (i.e. hunting, charcoal making).

Regarding agriculture, whether in groups or as individuals, preparation for planting, stump removal and tree felling are normally performed by men. They have a predominant role in pre-season activities (input provision and soil preparation).

Women play a major part in all the different steps, production, processing and marketing.

We also note that arboriculture is mainly dominated by men, with 70.5% men versus 29.5% women participating.¹³ This low level of involvement by women may be explained by their fairly limited access to land in certain departments.

➤ **What is the level of participation by women and men in the formal and informal economy?**

The economy of the Republic of Congo is mainly based on oil production. Wood, services and an embryonic agriculture make up the rest of the activity. Regarding the participation of women in the formal economy, they represent approximately 53% of the agricultural labor force.¹⁴ They are involved throughout the cycle of subsistence crop production (68%), harvesting, storage, and nearly 100% in the processing and marketing of agricultural and fishing products.

The study on the participation of women in development shows that 38.8% of employed women living in semi-urban areas and 21.1% of those living in urban areas practice secondary activities. It is noted that less than 28% of farms belong to women today.¹⁵

➤ **What is the situation between men and women with regards to access to land, practice of agriculture, agroforestry and forestry?**

In Congo, land is governed both by modern and customary law. Concerning modern law, Law no. 21/2018 of June 13, 2018, sets the rules for land use and acquisition in the Republic of Congo, and is implicitly and explicitly non-discriminatory to women. It contains no legal obstacles based on gender. However, customary law recognizes four methods of access to land, which are:

1. Allocation by descent (matrilineal or patrilineal), where the family head, generally, a man, decides on land allocation;
2. Through marriage, where the family head allocates lands to the wife at the request of the husband;

¹² Ministry of Sustainable Development, Forest Economy and the Environment: Report on the involvement of Congolese women in the effective implementation of the convention on biological diversity.

¹³ FAO, National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods: Country Gender Assessment Series.

¹⁴ European Union, Gender Profile, Republic of Congo: Situational analysis of girls and women in the Republic of Congo. January 2017.

¹⁵ Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Integration in Development, NATIONAL GENDER POLICY Nov 2015

3. Through lease arrangements; and finally,
4. Through purchase.

In all cases, irrespective of a person's family line, the four methods of land allocation are in the hands of men. Land-related decisions are made by the family during family meetings, generally chaired by men. As a result, the various limitations to the ability of women to own land seriously hinder their effective participation in economic activities. For women, this creates chronic land insecurity which also limits their opportunities to plant perennial crops on land, which may be taken away at any time.

In terms of agriculture, the districts covered by the Project are mainly characterized by subsistence food crop production (mainly practiced by women) dominated by polyculture, as well as market gardening (essentially a man activity). In this system, producers combine various crops, which may include cassava, maize, bananas, yams, market gardens and peanuts. A slash-and-burn agricultural system is practiced mainly by women in forest or savanna areas (supported by male labor, particularly in forests).

A lack of appropriate technologies means a lower production for women. The equipment in village machinery centers is not only aging, but also insufficient.¹⁶ Services for individuals are expensive.

Unlike men, who are spared from paid labor for certain activities (which considerably reduces production costs), women must rely on paid labor for agricultural activities, such as stump removal, transplanting for market gardening, and transportation of harvests from the fields to major roads.

Whether married or single, women farmers reinject nearly all their revenue from the harvest into the overall operations of the family.

The fact of being solely or primarily responsible for family expenses makes it difficult for women to save any money to expand agricultural activities or build economic capital to develop activities. This insecure means of operation is unfortunately widespread and common to all women in the interviewed groups.

Compared with men, women rarely receive training (on agricultural or agroforestry techniques or financial management of their operation). In addition to reasons related to literacy, family constraints are barriers, which were also mentioned by some women to justify their lack of training within agricultural groups.

Agroforestry is a new practice for women farmers in the Project departments. They stated that they have never practiced or been trained in agroforestry. However, men already seem to be more familiar with this practice (Ignie and Kayes where some have already experienced agroforestry, particularly land owners within the context of agricultural development projects).

Women and men have free access to forests. The National Gender Profile Report on the agricultural sector shows that women's associations involved in forestry activities are concentrated in the departments of Pool (53.4 %), Plateaux (30.7%), Likouala (11.4 %) and Niari (3.4 %).¹⁷

Women are involved in and contribute significantly towards forest management. They have different roles and needs in forest resource management.

- **Would differences in vulnerability be expected between men and women and their capacity to adapt to climate change? If yes, which ones?**

¹⁶ See section 1.1.3. on modern agricultural techniques and equipment P.32

¹⁷FAO, *National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods: Country Gender Assessment Series*.

As men and women are not affected in the same way by climate change, there are naturally differences in terms of the level and type of vulnerability.

In rural areas, women are the first victims of deforestation, which forces them to spend more time looking for firewood and non-timber forest products to meet family food and energy needs.

Greenhouse gas emitting fuelwoods are thus far the main energy sources used by Congolese women to cook (firewood, charcoal, biomass waste are an integral part of the consumption habits of most households in the Republic of Congo).

Fetching water for drinking and for household needs is the responsibility of women and girls and requires a lot of time and physical effort, more from women than men.

It is often women who bear the burden of collecting water, fuelwood and food supplies.

Women have a key role in providing a balanced diet for their families, because they are generally in charge of producing subsistence crops, legumes and vegetables that are a direct part of household consumption. As a result, a shortage of food caused by drought and destruction of flora and fauna, risks aggravating the situation of women and girls, particularly in areas that are already weakened.

However, there is a low degree of involvement by women in climate change adaptation policies and programmes.¹⁸

➤ **What inequalities exist between the different social groups?**

In Congo, minority groups are made up of indigenous peoples (previously called Pygmies). These indigenous peoples, barely integrated into the national economy, live in a situation of extreme poverty and marginalization with increasingly limited access to natural resources owing to overexploitation of these resources by the Bantu. Their lifestyle is essentially based on hunting and gathering.

Interviews with indigenous peoples in the village of Onyamva in the Department of Plateaux highlighted the social disparities and stigmatization experienced by this population daily. In fact, in terms of health, indigenous women practically live on the margin of the healthcare system. They are no longer go to national healthcare facilities due to the stigmatization and discrimination experienced. They are practically forgotten.

They practice subsistence farming and have access to forests to gather NTFP. However, they find it difficult to sell off processed products (such as cassava). The Bantu with whom they cohabit do not buy their products due to assumed dirtiness.

Data from the 2007 census indicates that the net primary school enrollment rate of indigenous children between the ages of six and 11 years is 44%, which is half that of all children in this age group. Furthermore, less than 4% of indigenous pupils receive secondary education.

➤ **What roles are women and men supposed to play within the context of the project?**

There is no distinction between women or men within the context of Project implementation. However, the gender assessment detected the disparities faced by women, not only in the agricultural sector but also

¹⁸The REDD+ national strategy is not gender-sensitive

in agroforestry and forestry. For this reason, strategies have been developed to take these disparities into account and to counteract the observed inequalities.

To this end, emphasis is placed on incorporation of the practical needs and strategic interests of each of the Project's target groups, in line with the gender action plan. The objective being that, in time, women and men will be able to share equally and equitably the benefits of the Project. By way of these strategies, one of the Project's objectives is to ensure that 35% of beneficiaries are women.

The Project also intends to build the capacities of the Project team on the gender concept and effective gender mainstreaming in development projects. This is to guarantee achievement of the gender equality objectives throughout Project implementation. The Project also intends to promote women's empowerment by building their leadership and citizenship capacities. The objective here is to develop their power of negotiation with men from the community, within their families and in their working environment (within groups).

Furthermore, a participatory approach will be applied for technical training related to climate resistant agroforestry and forestry extension. Before training, there will be discussions with women to align training sessions with their availability to ensure that the timetable and scheduling of the training fits in with their family constraints and status as mothers.

In addition, within the context of mixed groups, and in order to avoid abuse related to domination by certain members of the male sex over other members of the female sex (as criticized), emphasis will be placed on equal representation in decision-making bodies. This is to avoid the management board been totally male.

➤ **Do women and men from vulnerable communities have equal access to information, and should they take part in the project and benefit fully from the anticipated project results?**

One of the Project's objectives is to ensure that all Project targets (men, women, and young people) have equal access to opportunities resulting from the Project, particularly in terms of information. For this reason, there is a plan to organize awareness raising sessions with community leaders and men in the districts covered by the Project, on the role of women in the development process through their representation in grassroots community organizations. Their awareness will also be raised on the benefits the community can derive from the involvement of women in these development processes.

Furthermore, the assessment revealed that access to information by women at village level largely depends on the channel by which this information arrives. To account for this, the Project will monitor the channels used to relay information at community level. This is to ensure that women not only have timely access to information, but also that they can participate effectively in meetings and public consultations. Agricultural sector chiefs will be involved in relaying information in the villages.

In addition, capacity building programmes on the abovementioned issues related to personal development (female leadership) will allow women to make their voices heard during these public consultations as rights holders and full citizens.

➤ **Do women have equal access to education, technical knowledge and/or improvement of skills?**

The assessment revealed a real need for training of women from groups in various domains related to their activity, as deficiencies are negatively impacting their productivity.

In fact, most of the women interviewed, unlike the men, had rarely received training (on agricultural techniques, financial management of their operation...) although the need is real and urgent in view of the deficiencies observed. The chief of Mvouti sector confirmed that, he does not remember a training session organized for women producers for the past six years.

The technical capacity building programmes planned as part of the Project are open to all Project targets (men, women, and young people). However, in terms of the barriers (family constraints for women, illiteracy rate noted in women in rural areas) observed during the assessment and which limit the participation of women at the same level as men, the Project will ensure the training is adapted to meet the profile of the producers and their social constraints.

➤ **Will the services and technologies provided by the project be available and accessible to women and men?**

Yes. In fact, the gender assessment showed that a lack of modern technologies increases not only the drudgery of agricultural work for women, but also their overload. They must complete domestic tasks, their agricultural work, processing/storage of agricultural products and provide food for the family all at the same time. Strategies have been defined to ensure access by all Project targets (women/men/young people) to services and technologies, particularly mechanization.

Concretely, the Project plans to provide mechanization through the donation of modern agricultural equipment to male and female producers.

For Component 2 (Deployment of climate-resilient agroforestry and forestry systems), one of the Project's objectives it is to have at least 35% women in all capacity building and support activities that will be conducted.

Moreover, gender-specific indicators will be defined at the level of each objective of the Project's logical framework, with particular regard to access to services and technologies. These indicators will enable monitoring not only of effective access by all target beneficiaries during the implementation of the Project, but also the evaluation of the number of women, men and young people who got access to services and technologies during the reporting.

➤ **Are there opportunities to promote female leadership in local governance/political systems and formal/informal institutions? If not, what obstacles are preventing women from taking on leadership roles?**

Sociocultural barriers, as well as other factors (illiteracy, non-respect of progress already made at legal and institutional level, weak economic power...) are major obstacles encountered by women producers in assuming their leadership role.

In fact, the driving principle of Congolese society is that of men being the source and holder of all authority. Determination of status within the community, as well as role distribution therefore revolves around this principle. With minor variations, women are almost excluded from the domain of power (public and private sphere) or are only involved in the margins (domestic domain).

As an opportunity, the Project could, if necessary, screen beneficiaries by ensuring positive discrimination towards women's groups, with particular reference to the PRONAR lands that will be made available by the State. Indicatively, the anticipated objective is 35% women beneficiaries.

The Project may also rely on the Departmental Directorates for Women's Empowerment and Integration in Development, present in all departments that will host the Project, through implementation of the Congolese national gender policy.

The Project will also rely on national programmes that promote women and gender equality by other technical and financial partners, particularly United Nations agencies (UNDP, UNFPA).

Finally, NGOs that support women's rights at national level are also an opportunity that the Project will use to develop women's power in terms of leadership and decision-making.

➤ **What are the different needs/priorities of women and men within the context of the project/programme? Will the project/programme be able to meet their respective needs and priorities? If yes, how?**

The assessment helped develop a baseline situation for the Project targets, differentiated by gender. The following information will be collected during the inception phase:

- Number or percent of women with secure tenure rights in the project area.
- Percentage of people (gender disaggregated) aware of legal mechanisms and procedures for land tenure security.

The different products of the logical framework, building on the gender action plan, will faithfully reflect the needs and priorities of the targets, taking into consideration not only gender, but also vulnerabilities observed. These needs include building the technical capacities of men, women and young people; the promotion of new, climate-resilient agricultural techniques among women and young people, and access to credit.

Practically, the Project plans to:

- Provide a sustainable source of fuelwood supply through climate resistant agroforestry practices, taking into consideration the fact that women are the ones primarily concerned;
- Support small enterprise development through training on business planning for producers (men/women/young people);
- Support micro-finance institutions in developing financial products and service relevant to beneficiary and women's needs (low interest rate, longer maturity periods and alignment with production cycles, etc.)

The Project document, specifically the logical framework, contains clear strategies such as indicators disaggregated by gender, which will allow for the participation of men and women in all actions planned by the Project to be verified or measured. Sub-activities are also planned as precursors to certain activities by way of corrective measures.

Specifically, the gender assessment identified priority needs specific to women, which are translated into action and integrated in the gender action plan in order to become an integral part of the logical framework of the Project document for their implementation.

➤ **Were the specific needs of vulnerable persons taken into consideration by the project/programme?**

Youth and the elderly (particularly elderly women) living in the project area face particular challenges that will be taken into account in the project implementation.

Youth

For global programming purposes, FAO defines the priority age range for rural youth development from 10 to 25 years. In Congo, it is noted that due to high population growth rates, youth make up a large segment of the total population of approximately 5.2 million. The median age is 19.2 years. In rural areas the fertility rate was estimated at 6.5 children born per woman (2011-2012). Many children, particularly girls, are not able to complete their schooling. According to the UNDP Human Development Report, mean years of schooling for boys are 7.5 while for girls only 6.1 years. Girls may also be married or in a 'pre-marriage' union at a very early age. Some 27% of women aged 20 – 24 are already in such a union or marriage according to UNDP. Under customary practices, many girls may be forced into pre-marriage unions before the age of 18. For youth in general, employment remains a challenge. While the national unemployment rate stands at 10.4 percent, youth unemployment is as high as 22.8 percent (UNDP, See [link](#)). More opportunities for employment for youth in the agriculture and forest sectors could reduce rural-urban migration.

In order to ensure that youth (including boys and girls) have opportunities to participate in and benefit from project activities, the following measures will be adopted:

- Project opportunities will be communicated through youth-friendly channels, for example through youth associations and social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp)
- The project will target young leaders in the community for engagement and wider impact. When needed, the project will facilitate/support the emergence of young leaders in target communities.
- Facilitators will be trained to seek the youth perspective in all events and trainings. They will be encouraged to adapt activities to address the particular concerns of youth.

Particular attention will be paid to the needs of indigenous youth.

Elderly

While family and community relations tend to provide some social and economic stability, the elderly (defined as 65 years or older) are a particularly vulnerable segment of the population in the Republic of Congo. Approximately 100,000 people fall in this 'old age' bracket. The elderly tend to suffer more health ailments and these may be more acute in rural areas where health services are insufficient.

By customary practice, traditional leaders tend to be elderly men and they may use their influence to access resources and to solve disputes and other problems arising at the local level. By contrast, elderly women generally lack such opportunities for status and leadership in the community. Elderly women are particularly vulnerable in the event of the death of their husband since customary inheritance rules and practice favor men. Furthermore, access to pensions is limited to 22.1% of the elderly population (UNDP Human Development Report).

The elderly often hold a wealth of information on local history, plants, animals, and traditional cultural practices. Indigenous elders in forested areas may be particularly knowledgeable on biodiversity.

To ensure that the elderly have equitable opportunities to participate in and benefit from project activities, the following measures will be adopted:

- Facilitators will be trained to seek the perspective of elderly participants in all events and trainings. They will be encouraged to adapt activities to address the particular concerns of the elderly.
- In the agroforestry activities, the project team will seek the advice of elderly members of the community to learn about past experience, traditional varieties, natural pest control methods, etc.

- Input from elderly men and women will be sought in the mid-term and final evaluation.

Particular attention will be paid to the needs of indigenous elderly, particularly women.

➤ **Did the project recognize the distinct vulnerabilities of women and men in the development of specific response strategies for each target group?**

Overall, Project interventions cover men, women and young people. However, as the gender assessment revealed specific vulnerabilities, particularly for women, elderly, and youth, the Gender Action Plan identifies and proposes specific actions which, within the context of the Project's activities, would allow adequate and targeted responses to these specific vulnerabilities.

➤ **Are the specific knowledge and skills of women and men, in particular vulnerable groups, used to contribute to the results and solutions of the project/programme?**

Methodologically, the Project favors the participatory approach, through public consultations, as well as focus groups with different target groups, the objective being to rely on pre-existing mechanisms and skills to guarantee achievement of the anticipated results.

➤ **Is it possible for the project/programme to question gender stereotypes and increase positive relationships between men and women by equitable actions? If yes, what are these opportunities and actions?**

Within the context of the gender assessment, the Project identified stereotypes which negatively impact the daily output of women. These are:

- According to some beliefs, fruits from trees planted by women are never of good quality. Moreover, until the recent past, women did not have the right to climb avocado or butter fruit trees because of these beliefs.
- According to customary beliefs, women do not inherit land. This contributes to limiting women's rights and impacting their productivity.
- According to beliefs and social constructs, the place of a woman is exclusively at home. This tends to exclude women from public affairs, considerably limiting their decision-making power and their chance to benefit from the training opportunities that are sometimes offered.

In order to overcome stereotypes within the context of the Project, awareness raising sessions on unfavorable sociocultural attitudes will be organized on site for women and men in order to deconstruct these stereotypes. Awareness raising sessions will also be organized with community leaders in respect to behavioral changes (mindsets) related to women's access to land within the customary framework;

In terms of the logical framework:

The Project's logical framework will integrate objectives and indicators disaggregated by gender. These indicators will help monitor progress over time, and changes resulting from the Project.

The gender dimension will be crosscutting throughout all areas of interventions and not just through actions in favor of and for the visibility of women.

In addition to indicators, gender-sensitive activities and expected results will be defined in the logical framework. This will force the Project implementation team to formulate actions in annual operational plans.

The Project will ensure that the institutional provisions planned take the gender issue into account and enable strategies to be implemented and gender integration to be measured in the proposed actions.

At implementation level:

- The Project team will rely on the situational analysis (the assessment) and other qualitative and quantitative data (disaggregated by gender) in due course to evaluate the gender impact of the Project's interventions on the target beneficiaries;
- In addition to the Project's flagship activities, the logical framework will incorporate specific activities in response to certain practical gender-specific needs identified during the assessment;
- The capacities of the Project team's agents will be strengthened on gender and development, to ensure real and effective gender mainstreaming during implementation of the GCF Project;
- Gender expertise will be recruited to strengthen the Project team in order to guarantee the expected gender-sensitive results; and
- The data from the various activity reports and/or other Project documents, will be routinely disaggregated in order to see the differentiated impact on each of the targets (men/women/young people).

In terms of monitoring and evaluation:

The gender dimension will be integrated into the performance and impact assessment missions of the GCF through:

- The incorporation of gender objectives into the terms of reference for the assessment (elements to be taken into account in all assessments);
- The recruitment of a gender consultant in assessment missions (final and/or mid-term);
- Disaggregation by gender of all data in the different reports, specifying data in the "young people" category;
- Availability of reports on successes or failures of initiatives or the achievement of gender objectives.

3. Gender assessment within the context of the project

This section presents a more in-depth gender analysis that goes beyond the points requested by the GCF in order to better understand the condition of women within the context of the Project.



3.1 Gender analysis in the agricultural/forestry/agroforestry value chain

The project aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation caused by slash-and-burn agriculture and fuelwood extraction. Given that it will be based on the implementation of agroforestry and forestry systems, it is judicious to analyze gender mainstreaming in the different value chains of these three agricultural practices.

As indicated by the study entitled “*Gender in value chains*” by AgriproFocus, gender-sensitive value chains are important in many respects. From an economic point of view, they will ensure women and men have the same conditions and opportunities; they will increase their productivity and will then make use of the full potential of all segments of the population.

3.2 Agriculture

In all the target communities in the different departments considered for field interviews, women are heavily involved in agricultural production. Based on the fact that the situation of Congolese women farmers varies slightly from one zone to another (savanna/forest), from one community to another and even from family to family depending on social and economic factors, it is important to recognize the existence of a real analogy of their working conditions and their status. The gender-based division of work, still very present in agricultural activity, particularly in rural areas, means that women bear the burden of most tasks related to agricultural production. However, stump removal and tree felling are essentially the responsibility of men.

In the districts targeted by the Project, agriculture is mainly characterized by subsistence food crop production dominated by polyculture. In this system, producers in general and women in particular combine various crops, which are most often cassava, maize, bananas, yams, and peanuts.

Cropping practices use traditional methods, namely slash-and-burn agriculture. Such cultivation is mainly practiced by women in the forest, as well as in savanna areas, but particularly in forest settings. In Mvouti for example, the interviewed women explained that agricultural land is developed through clearing followed by tree felling and burning.

Within the context of their agricultural activities, the interviewed women farmers generally use basic and archaic means of production (hoe, machete). As a result, a lack of modern technologies, particularly mechanization (especially in savanna areas where women work on large areas, as is the case with certain groups in Madingou), increases not only the drudgery of agricultural work for these women, but also the work burden, especially as they also need to complete domestic tasks, production, processing and storage of agricultural products.

3.3 Access, use and control of resources

Access to resources means the capacity to use a resource, and control represents the capacity to make decisions concerning the use of the resource. The distinction between access to certain resources and their control is important, because the capacity to use a resource does not necessarily involve the possibility of defining the use of that resource. In this section we discuss the access, use, and control over various resources.

3.3.1 Land

As indicated in the national land policy document, land is primarily for farmers, a factor of production irrespective of their economic orientation.

On the legal level, Congo recognizes two main land acquisition methods.

- Acquisition resulting from legal provisions on private property as governed by the Civil Code: succession, donation, obligation (contractual), accession, ordinance;
- Acquisition through recognition of customary land rights (land registration rules, specifically stipulated by Law No. 10-2004, amended by Law 21/2018 of June 13, 2018, setting the rules for the occupation and acquisition of land in the Republic of Congo).

However, customary law recognizes four methods of land acquisition:

1. Allocation by descent (matrilineal or patrilineal): the family head, generally, a man, decides on land allocation;
2. Through marriage: the family head allocates lands to the wife at the request of the husband;
3. Purchase: This is related to the ability of each woman to pay for one or more areas from a land owner who sets the price for his land;
4. Lease agreement: This consists of an agreement with a land owner, who in return receives money or a part of the annual production. Lease agreements are made for specific periods of time (in Ignie, the maximum lease is 2 years, until harvesting of the planted crop). Payment and amounts vary by district. Payment in Goma Tsé-Tsé, for example, ranges from 10% to 20% of the harvest, while in Louvakou it is 10% of the harvest and 59/76 USD for 1 hectare; 50 USD/ha in Mpoya). In Ngo in Plateaux, a hectare is leased at 42 USD, only to persons not native to the village and who wish to plant fields of subsistence crops, while village inhabitants use the land freely.

In all cases, these four methods of land allocation in the different departments targeted by the Project are handled by men. The field mission allowed observation of the fact that sociocultural considerations have serious impacts on access to land by Congolese women. In fact, if women are not the family head, the chance of accessing land is left to the goodwill of family heads or the men of the family, who may be a brother (older or younger), an uncle or, when these are no longer alive, a son. In all cases, in the presence of a man (brother/husband/son), his voice is the predominant one.

Some testimonies collected in the district of Madingou¹⁹ revealed that when a husband or brother is absent or not interested in agricultural activities, women may “control” fairly large areas. However, once such women want to seriously invest within the context of certain calls for projects, they must discuss this with their male relatives to receive their authorization. This situation creates chronic land insecurity for women, which limits their opportunity to plant perennial crops on land, due to the risk that the land may be taken away at any time.

Women’s groups interviewed in the Department of Niari stated that lease agreements gave them rights when the rules were well-established and respected, particularly the right to plant trees; although they were obliged to make a financial contribution or “*countercharge*” to the owner worth 10% of the harvest and also 10% from 20 trees upwards.

However, in Ngo in the Plateaux, women from land lease groups have no right to plant trees on landowners’ land because, according to these landowners, that would make these groups “*owners*” of this land.

The women interviewed in Mvouti, native to or married in Mvouti, generally stated that until now they were working “freely” on their families’ land on their individual plantations. For women coming from other towns, and residing in Mvouti, they agreed on a lease with landowners at 84 USD/ha. Unfortunately, as land lease holders, they do not have the right to plant fruit trees and can only grow food.

¹⁹ Women members of a group testified that they were expelled from family land by the brothers of their president because they believed that, as women, they had no right to settle people on land without their authorization. This was not only violent but the group’s harvests were destroyed.

Marginalization of women by customary law in terms of access to land may explain the scarce presence of women observed within most of the landowner associations interviewed. In Nyari, for example, the landowners' association has **128 members, including 29 women and 98 men**. In Ngo, the landowners' association has **six members, including one woman and five men**.

“Previously, women could control the land on an exceptional basis only when there was no adult man in the family line. This control was until the boy children reached maturity”. (Mr. MBOUMY AGNAN SG of NYARI land owners. Statement collected during focus groups held in Louvakou on May 23, 2019).

These limitations imposed by customary law on the ability of women to own land seriously hinders their effective participation in economic activities. In fact, land control rights play a central role in guaranteeing a decent life for women, particularly in rural areas. This is even truer as the land constitutes the main source of income and livelihoods.

From all conversations, it emerged that married women with access to land through marriage were in the end reduced to the role of beneficial owner only, as decision-making power reverts to the family head, husband or son although she is the main user.

“When I got married, I left my village and I went to live in my husband’s village. I worked on my mother-in-law’s plantations, but these were the plantations that her husband had left. My mother-in-law is no longer alive, and my husband is also dead, but I cannot sell and I cannot even give to anyone because these lands belong to my sons and their paternal uncles”. A participant in the Madingou focus group, May 25, 2019.

Concerning widows, Article 484 of the Family Code stipulates that women may not inherit properties from their husbands, except as beneficial users, denying them a right to ownership. This means that although they are the spouse of the deceased person, they cannot control his land heritage.

Most of the interviewed single women or heads of households state that they have access to family land but are aware that this land does not belong to them, but rather to the family. Therefore, they have no decision-making power on this land.

It appears that, under customary law, gender, matrimonial status and socioeconomic condition are very important in determining the ability of an individual to acquire land.

Although the legal reforms of 2018 clearly mention the place of women for land management in Congo, it should be recognized that this reference itself is not sufficient to regulate gender-based social relations in terms of land rights under customary law.

This Law 21 on land should be disseminated as a matter of urgency, with particular emphasis on the place of women; strategies and provisions for land administration should be implemented that take these cultural and customary realities into account; and platforms should be created for discussion and awareness raising at local and community levels.

Within the context of the Project, particularly its Component 1, three land options are planned. Apart from the PRONAR land option, the Project will need to contract with individuals (purchase and/or lease). The Project will need to ensure that it does not support the above-mentioned disparities in its land contracts.

Moreover, the Project's gender objective of involving 35% women must be implemented within the context of the support it provides to landowners in terms of securing their land rights. Women's groups must also take priority in cases of land allocation by the Project.

3.3.2 Credit

Financial resources are an instrument to develop agricultural activities in rural, as well as urban areas. Unfortunately, access to credit remains a major challenge for farmers in general and women farmers in particular (1.5% for women and 4.1% for men)²⁰.

Because Congolese banks are commercial and not agricultural banks, it is difficult for them to support agricultural activities as they have no understanding of the specificities.

"This is a barrier, because our banks here know nothing about agriculture, not the harvest cycle and not the seasons, and this creates a major problem in terms of repaying any loans they grant as they do not take all that into account".

Most women farmers interviewed in the Project sites have very little familiarity with banking procedures. Furthermore, they have very few interactions with financial institutions.

The physical location of the farms and the distance to the source of credit is one of the disadvantages for these women. As an illustration, there are no microfinance institutions in certain districts, everything needs to be done in Brazzaville. This is the case for Ignie, 45 km from Brazzaville. In Louvakou, some members of groups stated that they have an account at MUCODEC (*Mutuelles Congolaises d'Épargne et de Crédit* [Congolese Savings and Credit Unions] based in Dolisie. However, they have never received microcredit as this is conditional on a certain savings requirements.

Some women interviewed in Hinda benefited from awareness raising campaigns on agricultural microfinance and access to bank credit. They also stated that they had undertaken some awareness raising modules on financial education through the NGO CERPAC.

For the record, these women are developing in an insecure environment. With the exception of some who are land owners, most work on small farms that only provide for subsistence livelihoods. This excludes them from the possibility of guaranteeing the required loans. Furthermore, the lack of diversification of their activities means that no additional income can be expected apart from that coming in from their farming.

In order to mitigate this difficulty, other forms of savings and credit have been created for increased accessibility to the most disadvantaged women. These are Women's Savings and Credit Unions (*Caisses féminines d'épargne et de crédit mutuel* - CFECM), supported by the Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Integration in Development.

These local organizations have been established to facilitate access to credit by women, especially in rural areas. These unions are oriented towards the collection and securing of savings, and the credit beneficiaries are simply the women who have made deposits.

²⁰ European Union, *Gender Profile, Republic of Congo: Situation analysis of girls and women in the Republic of Congo. Jan 2017.*

3.3.3 Training

The assessment revealed a real need for training of women from groups in various domains related to their activities, as the deficiencies are negatively impacting their productivity. In Goma Tsé-Tsé (during public consultations led by *Initiative Développement*), the (female) president of the market gardening group expressed the wish to become involved in agroforestry, while continuing market gardening activities, but would like to receive training beforehand.

In fact, most of the women interviewed, unlike the men, have hardly been trained (in agricultural techniques, financial management of their operation...) while the need is real and urgent in view of the deficiencies observed.

"I have been agricultural sector chief here in Mvouti for six years. I do not remember a training session being organized here for women farmers." Daniel IBATA, ASC in Mvouti, interview conducted on 05/24/2019.

The only training Programme attended by some women in Mvouti is the one organized by an NGO coordinator on agroforestry using moringa.

Group interviews revealed that most women from agricultural groups are less able than men to assimilate the knowledge offered by agricultural extension services. There are far higher levels of illiteracy in women from the groups than men. This is one of the reasons motivating most of them to join with men within the context of groups, despite the male domination that they will experience.

It should be noted that, unlike the men, most of the women interviewed in the different districts do not speak French, but rather the local language (some focus groups in the south essentially were conducted in the Kituba language). In addition to reasons related to literacy, family constraints are obstacles which were also mentioned by some women to justify their lack of training within agricultural groups.

In fact, during conversations, women stated that within the context of previous agricultural projects conducted in their districts, training programmes did not always take into consideration their status as mothers and wives. Furthermore, the training was sometimes organized far from their villages (Madingou). This was obviously not possible for them, due to a lack of time and means to attend.

Also, some married or cohabiting women who were questioned stated that sometimes their husbands or partners preferred to go alone to the training and come back and train them afterwards. This forced them to be happy with secondhand training. This is the case for one of the members from a women's group in Hinda who confided in us that, as part of an agricultural project by the Ministry of Agriculture, she and her husband had been eligible to attend training offered by the agricultural technique demonstration center. Only her husband believed that it was useful for him to attend the training.

This type of behavior by husbands may have repercussions on the achievement of the gender objective set by the Project.

During the field research, it was also revealed that some husbands or partners objected to their partners to participate as the training was offered by men.

This situation calls into question the best approach for training offered within the context of Project implementation. This was also specified by women from Madingou Kayes who requested training on cassava varieties and their cultivation but drew attention to the fact that this training must be scheduled

during periods when they would be able to attend. In other words, they needed to be consulted to agree on the timing.

3.3.4 Modern agricultural techniques and equipment.

Field investigations showed that the vast majority of rural women use basic and archaic methods of production (hoe, machete), making their work arduous.

A lack of appropriate technologies that could reduce the time spent on domestic chores, production, processing and storage of agricultural products considerably worsens their state of health, depriving them of rest, leading to early aging, loss of production and increased morbidity and mortality. Field investigations revealed that, in the department of Plateaux, specifically at the Etsouali village machinery center in the district of Ngo, services cost 67 USD (plowing). Furthermore, this machine center has an insufficient number of tractors (2) to meet the demand. Most of the tractors are aging or broken down. Producers need to contact private companies at a higher cost: 84 USD.

As indicated in the report of the General Agricultural Census conducted in September 2016, and supported by our field research, small tools are the basic equipment of 71.2% of male-headed agricultural households, compared with 28% of households headed by women. These small tools essentially consist of hoes, axes, machetes, saws, chainsaws etc. Fixed installations consisting of dryers, drying areas, workbenches, granaries and silos exist in 29.3% of women-headed households. Pulled and processing equipment are respectively used by 29.7% and 30% of women-headed households.

Field investigations also revealed that, in areas where private service providers offer modern equipment services, these services are often not delivered on time to the women requesting them. This is specifically the case for women's groups in the district of Louvakou who state that they paid enormous amounts of money together with drums of diesel to service providers who never performed the work for which they were paid. It should also be noted that some equipment service providers require large areas in order to make the trip. To a certain extent, this disqualifies some women for whom access to large areas is almost impossible in rural settings.

This is also the case in Madingou in Bouenza, where women from the different interviewed groups mentioned that they find it difficult to bring in a tractor, even after paying months in advance (for example: a tractor paid for in October 2018 still had not come in June 2019...); "they do not respect agricultural calendars", "the equipment is often broken down and takes long to repair"; costs are still high: 185 USD for plowing and spraying.

With regards to small tools, some women's groups, particularly in the district of Hinda, stated during interviews that they received an agricultural equipment donation from the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Women's Integration in Development, as a one-off action. This is also the case for certain groups from Mpouya who have no problems with mechanization, because they received tractors from Minister Mboulou, so plowing is almost free, and the price is purely symbolic²¹. He also made donations to villages along the rivers. This is unfortunately not the case for women in groups from other target districts.

In terms of access to inputs, there is a generalized lack of access to plant protection products and seeds for market gardening. In fact, whether in Bouenza, Niari or Plateaux, the interviewed women's groups and individuals noted enormous difficulties in obtaining improved seed and inputs (fertilizers). Their financial

²¹ See ID consultation reports.

vulnerability due, amongst other things, to the fact that they hold primary responsibility for household chores, makes it difficult for these women (a little more than men who are mobile and less economically vulnerable) to access inputs.

The poor state of the road network also definitely affects all agricultural producers, but the findings and statements of participants in the discussions showed that women are affected a little more. In some districts, particularly Louvakou, women stated that they recruit young people to do piecework in order to transport their harvests from the plantations to the road; they also order trucks to come close to the water's edge to transport bags of retted cassava to Dolisie at 3.5 USD per bag and 2.5 USD for the bag owner.

The lack of agricultural tracks makes it difficult to transport field produce to urban centers. Farms are approximately 10 km from the village, as in the case of Mpouya. Women travel by foot and often have to stay in camps during maintenance and weeding operations. For women who do not have the means to pay young people, they carry their products on their heads from the plantations to the village.

"Mama We carry everything on our heads or on our backs then we travel for kilometers and kilometers... How much can you carry? An old woman like me?" Ms. Joséphine Mboumba, Lumière group from Mumbazi Louvakou.

3.3.5 Forest resources

Law 16-2000 of November 20, 2000 relating to the Forest Code in the Republic of Congo, Law 14-2009 of December 30, 2009 amending certain provisions of Law 16-2000 of November 20, 2000 and its enforcement texts, including Decree 2002-47 of December 31, 2002, define the conditions for forest management and use. The Forest Code, undergoing revision (see 2016, still not officially adopted), acknowledges the rights of communities to all "forest products" derived from the community's forest (Article 32, see 2016).

The National Gender Profile Report on the agricultural sector shows that women's associations involved in forest activities are concentrated in the departments of Pool (53.4 %), Plateaux (30.7%), Likouala (11.4 %) and Niari (3.4 %) ²². They specifically devote themselves to hunting for non-timber forest products (NTFPs).

Of course, women are essential in the management of forest resources. Field research revealed that they play an important role in using and processing forest resources, in order to meet their families' needs. Women and men have different roles and responsibilities in terms of forest use. Management of timber and fauna is the responsibility of men, while women manage products taken from the forest for commercial and food purposes.

However, it should be specified that the field work revealed no discrimination against women in terms of forest access. In Louvakou, the interviewed women stated that they had the right to go into the forest even when they were not land owners. *"We have the right to go into the forest and take what we want... We just need to ask"*.

Access is totally egalitarian. Women are involved in and contribute significantly towards forest management. They have different roles and needs in the management of forest resources and they do not look for the same resources as men. Women's forest activities include traditional arboriculture, harvesting of non-timber forest products, harvesting and management of fuelwood to prepare food.

Non-Timber Forest Products

²² FAO National Gender Profile op.cit.

In the different target districts, women are very involved in gathering, processing and selling NTFPs. Apart from hunting, these two activities are in fact traditionally reserved for women and children.

These products vary by district, as well as by ecological cover and dietary habits in the departments. They include *Gnétum africanun*, currently called “coco” in Lingala, “fumbua” in Kituba, mushrooms, caterpillars, wild fruits, legumes, medicinal plants, leaves from different trees particularly arrowroot, which are used to cook cassava and other foods.

Men’s forest activities are primarily for profit. The same applies to the manufacture of charcoal, which is an exclusively male activity. The development of the relevant sectors will enable these women to increase their financial independence and their purchasing power.

NTFPs provide livelihoods and income for the interviewed women. Some of these products are used for their own consumption, and others are intended for sale. It is therefore easy to understand the negative effects of any natural resource degradation phenomena on the lives of rural communities.

NTFPs have many functions: food, medicine, traditional medicine, construction and craft materials, income sources through the sale of some NTFPs such as caterpillars, honey, Gnetum leaves, palm nuts, kola nuts, etc.... religious and mystical (protective talismans etc.).

3.3.6 Fuelwood:

In Congo, firewood supplies to cook food are, by nature, an activity for women. This is effectively based on the fact that women are in charge of preparing family meals, and they therefore appear to be the primary users of natural resources in all their activities (fuelwood supplies, traditional medicine, gathering of mushrooms and caterpillars, picking of wild leaves and fruits).

Unfortunately, the focus groups with women showed that they know very little or nothing about the links between environmental conservation and global warming. They make absolutely no connection between the unusual phenomena that they are experiencing, such as drought, drying up of water sources, soil infertility, etc. and activities like deforestation. It is important to promote more awareness among women on these phenomena as well as on climate-resilient agricultural practices.

Concrete and effective alternatives to slash and burn agriculture should be introduced to women given that restrictions to natural resources access would be counterproductive and would increase the economic vulnerability of the women and their families.

3.4 Work contribution

In terms of women’s contributions to work, their workload in the productive, as well as the reproductive spheres should be revisited. Field investigation shows that women producers constitute a real agricultural workforce in the target areas.

The report of the General Agricultural Census conducted in 2016 showed that the agricultural workforce represents a total of 514,358 farmers, out of an estimated population of 4,801,684 inhabitants in 2015. Of this number, 65% of women contribute to 70% of food production. According to the same report, women represent 70% of agricultural labor and are responsible for 60 to 80% of the country’s subsistence crop production. However, agriculture contributes only 3.6% on average to the GDP. Also, despite the high level

of involvement of women in agricultural activity, as well as other considerable advantages, the agricultural sector does not manage to satisfy the national food demand.

It should be emphasized that, despite their strong motivation for agricultural work, women experience economic and social disparities which negatively impact their output. The same applies to their level of education, which, during conversations, proved to be greatly inferior to that of the men in the groups. There are so many difficulties which could (at least partially) justify the low level of impact by women in agriculture on the GDP despite their high level of participation in the agricultural workforce.

The project should take this situation of illiteracy into account in the different capacity building programmes planned in the various components.

3.5 Women and agricultural groups (associations, cooperatives)

Collective groups are the most functional type of organization found during field work. They are either mixed or exclusively made up of women. However, they are not organized in sectors and they have an average of 20 members per group. They are groups of private individuals which function independently. However, the general trend is more towards individual work. They (the women) work on common plots, but they prefer their own plots on which they work alone.

Also, in some districts, groups exist only by name. This is the case in the district of Ngo where it was noted that, after receiving support, the groups broke up once the projects left. The members were divided and only some of them continued the activities.

For those who work together within a group context, they can handle expenses that they could not have managed individually. This is particularly the case with women from certain groups in the district of Hinda who believe that this facilitates the purchase of seed and cuttings. They plan to purchase a mechanical pump on behalf of the group in a near future.

We note that another type of association-based operation was observed in some villages. In fact, in this method of operation, women help each other with sowing, weeding and harvesting, but each woman has her own field (exp. presented by a participant at the meeting in Ngo: six women each have 2 ha).

Most of the interviewed women's groups function informally. Women are not familiar with the legalization circuit. The illiteracy that characterizes many of them is not helpful (this is specifically the case with most women's groups from the town of Kayes).

Based on the fact that legal recognition is a fundamental prerequisite for any organization, and that the Project will not be able to work with non-formalized groups, it is important that these women's groups, that have functioned informally until now, be supported in their formalization in order to become legal entities and therefore eligible for the Project support.

Apart from aspects related to formalization of these groups, problems inherent in their operation, management and structure were also noted. In fact, all the dysfunctions noted within these groups will prevent these women from creating strong foundations of solidarity in order to develop strategies and derive maximum profit from opportunities that could result from their association.

3.6 Women and representation

The representation of women in the local or community authorities of the districts visited seems to be related to the perception of communities about women and their socially attributed and recognized roles.

The blatant absence of women was noted at the head of all target departments. In fact, the chairpersons of the Departmental Councils and the prefects of Bouenza, Niari, Pool, Kouilou and Plateaux are exclusively men.

“I assure you that the fault lies with the women.... They exclude themselves; they limit themselves due to their fear, illiteracy and education”. Statements made by Mr. Aimé Sibi, Departmental Director of Women’s Integration in Niari. Dolisie, May 23, 2019.

In the district of Mvouti, the executive of the village committee that makes the important decisions for the village is made up exclusively of men.

This under-representation of women and their weak decision-making power and leadership were also observed within the visited groups and communities. Women take part in public meetings cautiously. They sometimes do not have the information or are informed at the last minute. This is the case with the district of Ngo 2 and Eluna in Plateaux, where we held discussion groups with women who had only been informed of our activity on our arrival.

However, men were fairly represented and seemed to have been informed well in advance. As this is effectively a matter of access to information, it was noted during field work that the channel by which information arrives in a village is a determining factor in whether or not women take part in public meetings. In fact, village chiefs and community leaders seem to have little inclination to associate with or involve women in public meetings. The information is managed by/with men from the community. For them, public meetings are primarily a men’s affair. However, every time agricultural sector chiefs were used to pass on information, a maximum of women were at the meetings. The plausible explanation for this attitude by village chiefs and other community leaders seems to be the fact that the latter are still fairly influenced by sociocultural obstacles and the traditional perception of the role of women, which confine their role to that of wives and mothers, with no place in the management of the community’s public affairs.

For this reason, the Project must strategically rely on these agricultural sector chiefs or public employees (Departmental Directorate for Women’ Empowerment and Integration in Development) to relay information within communities.

Also, in order to reinforce women’s power within mixed agricultural groups, but also communities, awareness must be raised for women, as well as men on the distribution of social roles and gender inequalities. This can take place through training programmes and validation of the positive results of participation by women in various community activities implemented within the Project framework, as well as other things. It can also be achieved through intensified educational campaigns among community leaders and organizational and religious leaders on the role of women in development. This development cannot be achieved without the effective participation of men and women in the decision-making process at local and community levels.

3.7 Firewood use

According to the results of the agricultural sector study conducted in 2011 in Congo, the majority of rural households use firewood for cooking (72% to 84%), followed by charcoal (12% to 15%)²³. As women are at the heart of household use of firewood, they bear the costs incurred by purchasing firewood (in urban areas). Women and children may spend a significant amount of time in the collection of firewood for cooking.

3.8 Agroforestry

Agroforestry is still scarcely practiced in Congo. Arboriculture is mainly dominated by men, 70.5% versus 29.5% for women²⁴. The low level of involvement by women in this activity may be explained by their limited access to land in certain departments.

The interviewed women farmers claim that they have never practiced or been trained in agroforestry. However, they plant fruit trees on their farms (those who have the right to do so). On the other hand, men seem a little more familiar with this practice, particularly in Ignie, when in the past they had experience with an agroforestry project. This is also the case in Kayes, where according to some participants, agroforestry seems to be practiced already but only by landowners (land is leased only for subsistence crops/1 ha at 84 USD). This is also the case in Bouenza, deemed to be arboreal land with aging orchards and disappearing knowledge. However, in this district, there have been several landmark experiences with existing agroforestry, other than that of the SNR (*Service National de Reboisement* [National Reforestation Service]), supported by the ASCs or by the NGO ID or by individuals trained by ID or the ASC.

Generally, the women interviewed in the different target districts claimed that they are ready to improve their knowledge about agroforestry. The only obstacle is the restrictions related to land.

The women's subsistence crop group, supported by the ASC in Nkayi, also expressed their willingness to plant trees to ensure sustainable income for the future. *"A tree nursery and planting trees, that's the future."* Zita, a nursery gardener taking part in the ID consultations.

In any case, a real training-action strategy must be planned and developed in order to technically build women's agroforestry capacities. They must also be supported to avoid any dropouts.

However, with the state of customary laws governing land, agroforestry could be complicated in that women could be forced out at any time. This is also the case for women living in the districts of Ngo, Kayes, where only landowners can plant trees. During the implementation phase, the Project must therefore take these sociocultural realities into account.

3.9 Processing and marketing

Field work reveals that processing and marketing activities are part of women's duties. Men only get involved on an ancillary basis. In most districts where interviews were conducted, women were in fact seen to have primary responsibility for activities related to harvesting, storage, transport, processing and marketing of agricultural products.

²³ African Development Fund, Republic of Congo: Congo Agricultural Sector Study 2011.

²⁴FAO, National Gender Profile of Agricultural and Rural Livelihoods: Country Gender Assessment Series

These activities, particularly those related to processing, take place almost daily, both to feed the family and for commercial purposes. However, they are not without difficulties for women. Processing essentially concerns the cassava tubers.

Women producers from the visited districts stated that they face several constraints that may vary from one district to another. Generally, they have limited access to reliable road connections, a lack of customers for their products and storage and processing difficulties. They also experience enormous deficits in terms of information on market opportunities, technological advances, as well as quality requirements, which considerably limits their economic and commercial opportunities.

Although the difficulties cited above may seem common to male and female producers, it must be recognized that the impact on women is greater.

For this reason, the establishment of “purchase agreements” and sales platforms, as planned by the Project through under Component 4, is especially commendable as it will reduce the difficulties faced by women farmers in selling their products.

More specifically, producers from the district of Louvakou are faced with the lack of a local market, and they transport their products to Dolisie for sale. This impacts the cost price and the profit. Deterioration of the road hinders sales. This is also the case in Loudima where the isolation of the agricultural tracks and the arduous nature of transport prevents effective marketing of their products. They also have difficulty storing products prior to selling them owing to a lack of “warehouses” and cold rooms. Producers in Kayes lack customers to buy their products owing to the impracticable nature of the tracks, amongst other factors.

3.10 Women and climate change

Women’s activities in rural areas, particularly the type of agriculture practiced and the collection and use of firewood, link women to deforestation and its negative effects. Women contribute towards deforestation, which is one of the main causes of climate change; they are also the ones who primarily suffer the adverse consequences.

In Loudima, climate change seems to have impacted peanut production this year due to a lack of rain and stronger winds than in past years. The issue of drought and drying up of water sources, as well as bush fires destroying plantations kept coming up during different interviews held with women in Bouenza. This is the case in Ngo, for example, where bush fires are very common and cause a loss of crops. Because of drought, inhabitants buy water during the dry season at 1.80 USD for a 200-liter barrel.

In Mpouya, the loss of 1 ha of banana trees due to heat and sandy soils that do not retain enough water was reported. Due to the roles assigned to them by the community, women are more affected than men by drought, hunger, malnutrition, soil infertility, bush fires, poverty, harvest losses and other product losses due to climate change. This has consequences for women, in terms of their social status and their role within the community and family.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of information, women suffer the effects of climate change, while continuing to practice activities that jeopardize environmental conservation. In other words, due to ignorance and a lack of information, they continue to expose themselves to climate change risks, while also contributing towards them. However, their contribution to climate change is very small compared with that of industry.

It is important to rethink strategies to prevent and combat the effects of climate change, fundamentally integrating the role of women and the different impacts of climate change on men and women. In fact, the

policies and strategies developed to date in the Republic of Congo are general and do not take gender specificities into account (the REDD+ national strategy does not take the gender issue into consideration at this time).

Within the context of the fight against climate change, it is also important to emphasize education and awareness-raising for women.

The efficacy of environmental and climate change policies and strategies can be ensured through gender mainstreaming and gender equality. These policies and strategies should take into account problems of differentiated impact induced by natural phenomena and strengthen the participation of women in decision-making on the subject.

3.11 Women and food security

Undernourishment and malnutrition are the main health problems affecting the most vulnerable segment of the Congolese population (children, pregnant women, the elderly and low-income households)²⁵.

The women farmers interviewed about their personal investment in feeding their households are incontestably the guarantors of food security for their families. As they have a key role in providing a balanced diets for their families, women are generally in charge of producing subsistence crops, legumes and vegetables that are a direct part of household consumption. Due to their primary responsibility in terms of food security, women have an important role to play in conserving the environment and natural resources, as well as promoting sustainable development.

During field work, women within the different interviewed groups were unfortunately not informed on their very important role in adopting agricultural systems that will guarantee sustainable food production.

²⁵ *Country Programming Framework - FAO/Congo-Brazzaville 2013-2016*

4. Analysis of the gender skills of the different stakeholders

The design, management and implementation of field activities incorporating a gender approach requires methods that match the practical needs and strategic interests of each community and their different component groups, which requires a certain level of expertise.

Hence the importance of reviewing the gender knowledge of individuals involved in the entire Project cycle.

4.1 Skills of stakeholders and potential partners

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP) and the Ministry of Forest Economy (MEF)

The Ministry of Forest Economy

Issues related to forestry, agroforestry, NTFPs and fuelwood are under the supervision of the MEF. As a project stakeholder, its capacities need to be strengthened on gender issues and development for effective support to the Project.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries is implementing the government's agricultural policy.

The National Reforestation Service (SNR)

The SNR is a public establishment under the supervision of the Ministry of Forest Economy, with numerous scientific and technical responsibilities: public plantations on behalf of the State or local authorities, technical assistance to private investors and sponsors of agroforestry plantation projects, technical assistance to forestry companies in the reforestation component of their management plans, protection of catchment areas, development of non-timber forest products, dissemination of technical information, production and distribution of seeds/plants for local populations, research and development.

A key Project partner, this entity will play a fundamental role in implementation. Hence the need to build the capacities of agents on gender and development issues to guarantee gender mainstreaming in all support provided to the Project.

National Afforestation and Reforestation Programme (Projet national d'afforestation et de reboisement - PRONAR)

The objectives of this programme include mitigating human pressure on forests through the promotion of forestry and agroforestry plantations, supporting stakeholders in afforestation and reforestation activities.

It is a strategic Project partner, specifically within the context of supporting women in agroforestry. For this reason, it would be judicious to build the capacities of this organization on gender and development issues to ensure maximum impact on the women targeted by the Project.

United Nations Agencies

United Nations agencies such as UNDP and UNFPA offer real opportunities to promote women's rights through the implementation of activities within the context of the Project.

In fact, within the context of cooperation programmes and the annual work plans with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Integration of Women in Development, these agencies already carry out

activities in the district (Madingou) covered by the Project. Useful partnerships may be considered in order to support Project activities related to their gender equality mandate.

This is the case of the United Nations Development Programme which, within the context of its annual work plan, carries out educational activities on women's rights in the departments of Bouenza and Niari.

Gender focal points in the different sectoral ministries

Within the context of institutional meetings organized for this assessment, interviews were held with gender focal points in the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, the Ministry of Land Use Planning, the Ministry of Scientific and Technical Research and the Ministry of Forest Economy.

Almost all focal points interviewed are not really aware of their role of ensuring crosscutting gender integration. Mainly women, these focal points, or at least most of them, limit their roles to the celebration on March 8.

There is a need to build capacities, not only on gender basics, but also on gender mainstreaming in public policies, policy and strategy documents, as well as projects.

Agricultural Sector Chiefs

These are the representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries in the districts. They provide a real opportunity for the Project in terms of the gender dimension although their relevant capacities need to be strengthened.

The Project should rely on the ASCs to ensure that information reaches women in the communities, and that they effectively take part in the different consultations and meetings organized, as part of the Project or any other related activity.

5. Analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to gender mainstreaming in the Project.

Implementation of the GCF project has advantages that could be capitalized upon. This section analyzes some of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to gender mainstreaming in the Project.

5.1 Strengths

- Motivation of women farmers in the target districts

During field work, we witnessed women's motivation for participation in the Project. All of them agreed to the Project's objectives, while declaring themselves receptive to the practice of agroforestry. This motivation suggests strong mobilization on their part during Project implementation.

- Strong involvement of rural women

The strong involvement of rural women, coupled with the different Project strategies and actions, will also allow the Project to easily reach its objective of 35% women.

5.2. Weaknesses

During the assessment, we noted several weaknesses that could impact the achievement of some of the Project's objectives:

- Poor knowledge of the gender concept, as well as its mainstreaming in the different steps of the Project cycle by some project stakeholders. This was definitely noted during the assessment, but corrective measures are proposed in the plan of action.
- The poor culture of routinely disaggregating data by gender; this is also a weakness noted by the assessment that is taken into consideration in the Project operational strategies.

5.3 Opportunities

Opportunities concern legal, political, commercial or strategic measures that are new in the project environment and that relate to gender promotion on which the Project may be based.

- Implementation of the National Gender Policy action plan

The National Gender Policy adopted in 2016 has the long-term objective of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. It includes five strategic axes. Strategic axis 2 covers strengthening of the role and the place of women and girls in the market economy and has the objective of:

- Increasing the visibility and importance of labor by women, in particular rural and indigenous women, in diversification of the national economy;
- Promotion of female entrepreneurship.

Implementation of this national gender policy covers all departments and districts in the Republic of Congo including those within the Project area. This is an opportunity for the Project in that the activities related

to the role of women are directly aligned with the objectives targeted by strategic axis 2 of the National Gender Policy.

To this end, the Project should consider working in synergy with the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Women's Integration in Development and its partner, UNDP, to pool their interventions.

5.4 Threats

Threats are understood here to be any action likely to perpetuate or reinforce gender inequalities. These are addressed in order to propose mitigating actions in the action plan.

- The low income received from agricultural activities coupled with the fact that women (married, widowed, or heads of household) are those who primarily take care of the family.

This financial vulnerability prevents some of them from finding the **10% or 20%** contribution required by the Project and could be a gender threat for this Project. In fact, regarding the financial vulnerability of women revealed by the assessment, it is not surprising that this criterion could rule out a substantial proportion of women because they are incapable of meeting it.

- Cultural practices and determinants that give preeminence to men over women are a threat to Project implementation from the gender promotion point of view.

In fact, if all disparity reduction strategies noted during the assessment are not implemented, in order to motivate full participation by women, with particular reference to access to information and the representativity and mixed nature of the management boards of groups, the Project's targeted objective of 35% risks being difficult to achieve.

- Stereotypes linked to gender-based division of labor: these considerably limit women and prevent them from expressing their full potential. They limit women in their daily actions, confining them to socially constructed roles, and making them dependent on men within the context of performing certain tasks.

These stereotypes must be deconstructed to allow woman to freely perform all tasks related to their agricultural or agroforestry activity with the only obstacle being their physical ability.

For example, the following was suggested during field interviews:

- Misunderstanding/lack of cohesion in women's groups;
- Lack of a cooperative working culture, which makes it difficult to provide support to beneficiaries within the context of the Project.

6. Gender integration strategy in the Green Climate Fund

6.1 Gender integration in the different Project stages

6.1.1 In terms of the logical framework

The logical framework of the PREFOREST Project must integrate objectives and indicators disaggregated by gender (the indicators will allow monitoring of progress over time, while following changes throughout the Project). The gender dimension must be crosscutting throughout all axes of intervention and should not only incorporate a few actions in favor of women. The results, indicators and activities should therefore already be pre-defined in the logical framework. This would force the Project implementation team to formulate actions in annual operational plans.

The Project will ensure that the stipulated institutional provisions take the gender issue into account and enable strategies to be implemented and gender integration to be measured in the proposed actions.

6.1.2 At implementation level

- Rely on the situational analysis (Gender Assessment) and other qualitative and quantitative data (disaggregated by gender), when evaluating the gender impact of the Project's interventions;
- Build the capacities of the Project team agents, as well as other partners, such as government agencies, the Steering Committee and the Technical Committee, on gender and development modules for effective gender mainstreaming in the different components of the GCF Project, as well as monitoring of action plan implementation;
- Recruit a gender expert in the Project team;
- Routinely disaggregate all data in the different activity reports and/or other Project documents in order to highlight the different situations of each of the targets (men/women/young people);
- Within the context of implementation of the GCF Project, routinely target the incorporation of the specific needs of men, women and young people in all the Project's interventions. To this end, the Project has set an objective of ensuring that 30% women are affected by all activities during implementation, as well as all support being provided to targets within the Project context (strengthening of land rights, support to mechanization...).

6.1.3 In terms of monitoring/evaluation

- Incorporate the gender dimension in missions to evaluate the performance and impact of the Green Climate Fund Project, including gender objectives within the framework of the terms of reference (factors to be taken into account in all evaluations);
- Include gender expertise in the Project team;
- Ensure that all data from the various evaluation reports is disaggregated by gender, specifying data in the "young people" category;

- The Project team must ensure the availability of reports on successes or failures of initiatives or the achievement of gender objectives.

6.2 Intervention axes

The actions proposed below are the results of an analysis of the assessment. They take into account the identified priorities, as well as relevance in terms of feasibility. Five axes of intervention have been identified including: 1) Training, 2) Women, forestry, agroforestry and climate change, 3) Access to land, 4) Women's empowerment, and 5) Collective actions and small-scale farmer's organizations.

6.2.1 Axis 1: Training

The assessment revealed that, due to their status as mothers and wives and constraints related to their domestic workload, women from the different districts visited did not always benefit from the training programmes offered to them, either as individual producers or members of a group.

Also, factors such as illiteracy and their low appropriation ability leads to self-stigmatization and prevent women from benefiting from capacity building programmes to increase their productivity.

To this end, training on agricultural and financial management techniques should be planned. All this should take into consideration not only the family constraints experienced by women, but also language difficulties.

Proposed actions:

- Incorporate functional literacy in the activities to be conducted with beneficiaries;
- Experiment with training women trainers to provide technical supervision of producers;
- Train women's and mixed groups in accounting management for farming (keeping records of sales, procurement, and other expenses related to farming) and entrepreneurial culture;

In terms of support teams:

- Build the capacities of the project team on gender concepts and gender mainstreaming in development projects;
- Build the capacities of PRONAR, SNR, MEF, MAEP, MTE (*Ministère du Tourisme et de l'Environnement* [Ministry of Tourism and the Environment]) on the gender and development approach;
- Build the capacities of the ASCs on gender and incorporation of gender in development so that they can act as supervisory agents in their communities and promote the rights of women.

6.2.2 Axis 2: Women, agroforestry, forestry and climate change.

Unfortunately, due to ignorance and a lack of information, women suffer the effects of climate change, while continuing to practice activities that jeopardize environmental conservation. Due to their daily interaction with ecosystems, women must be informed, trained and involved in discussions relating to climate change and associated thematic.

Proposed actions:

- Promote sharing of experiences and dissemination of good practices related to agroforestry and climate change developed with the participation of women within the context of the project;
- Educate/train women on agroforestry techniques to mitigate climate change

6.2.3 Axis 3: Access to land

Customary practices and norms negatively impact land access and control by women in rural areas. They recognize four methods of land acquisition in rural areas. These four methods of land allocation are all in the hands of men, leading to women marginalization. As a result, women find themselves in a situation of land insecurity which makes them even more vulnerable.

Proposed actions:

- Raise awareness of community leaders in terms of behavioral changes (mindsets) to promote access to land by women within the customary framework;
- Raise awareness and inform women about the existing legal mechanisms and procedures for land security.

6.2.4 Axis 4: Women's empowerment

The assessment revealed that sociocultural obstacles and some stereotypes are detrimental to the image of women and considerably limit their power and full participation in decision-making bodies at community and local levels. This leads not only to discrimination, but also unequal treatment.

Proposed actions:

- Build the capacity of women in leadership and citizenship, in order to improve the quality of their production and strengthen their negotiating power with men from the community, within their families and their environment;
- Organize educational sessions with community leaders and men on the role of women in the development process through their representation within community organizations in the project implementation areas (rural);
- Raise awareness of men and women on stereotypes linked to the gender-based division of labor/sociocultural obstacles, in order to combat the work overload of women at domestic level.

6.2.5 Axis 5: Collective actions and small-scale farmers' organizations

Various shortcomings were observed within the interviewed farmers groups. Apart from aspects related to their formalization, problems inherent in the operation, management and structure of these different entities were also noted. Furthermore, these groups find it difficult to grasp the need to organize themselves, form association and group together to become stronger and more empowered.

Proposed actions:

- Support to the structure and operation of women's and mixed groups, particularly family groups carrying out production and marketing activities (at least 30%);

- Strengthen the organizational and technical capacities of groups so that they can offer their members (men/women/young people) sustainable services (group marketing, sale of inputs, etc.) and ensure these services are equally accessible to men and women (at least 30%);
- Strengthen mixed farmers' organizations so that women can be represented in decision-making bodies and ensure that these organizations incorporate the strategic interests of women in their orientations and activities.

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