

Climate & forests

REDD+ and related initiatives

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From logging concessions to carbon concessions: What difference for communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

18 February, 2013

In 2011, the private Canadian company Ecosystem Restorations Associates (ERA) signed a management contract with the government of the DRC for a former logging concession of almost 300,000 hectares that adjoins the western reaches of Lac Mai Ndombe in Bandundu Province[1]. The aim of this agreement was to prepare the concession for sales of carbon on the international market. Up to 50% of this concession overlaps the customary lands of local and indigenous communities. ERA is now in partnership with Wildlife Works, a large REDD+ project development and management company.

A year prior to that another private company, Jadora International LLC, signed a partnership contract with the logging company SAFBOIS to implement a REDD project in the Isangi Territory in Oriental Province. This project covers 239,728 hectares of primary forest located on the 348,000 hectare SAFBOIS logging concession just south of the Congo River. The concession overlaps the customary territories of 33 villages, and thousands of indigenous people, and aims to generate carbon credits through forest preservation and enhancement.

In both places over the past year Forest Peoples Programme (FPP) and our local partner [CEDEN](#)[2] have been consulting with communities to assess the potential impacts of these projects on them, to provide information on DRC's REDD programme and the institutional and contractual arrangements of the REDD projects on their lands, and to support community engagement with these carbon projects. Our findings from recent visits to both concessions reveal that in both cases many communities remain uninformed about the objectives of these initiatives, and their timetables and plans.

Through our direct engagement on the ground we have determined that the great majority of local and indigenous peoples have been marginalised from discussions about the design and implementation of both carbon projects. Most communities were uninformed of the benefits they are entitled to as part of the management contracts of Jadora and ERA because they do not know the exact contents. While Project Design Documents for both projects suggest that they would provide benefits to communities in exchange for restrictions over their use of their traditional lands, the ideas about how this would be achieved have been brought in from the outside, rather than on the basis of communities' free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

There are therefore information gaps for communities that need to be remedied in order to comply with the DRC government's clear policy to respect the right to FPIC as set out[3] by the Secretary General of Environment, personal representative of the Minister of the Environment, in the high profile [Forest Dialogue](#)[4] organised by FPP with the government in May 2012.

During recent visits to the region, FPP and CEDEN raised these concerns with the managers of both carbon projects. Jadora project managers acknowledge that much work still needs to be done to improve the design and implementation of their project, and have asked to collaborate with FPP and our partners working on the ground to achieve this goal. During a recent meeting by FPP with ERA project managers, agreement was reached to collaborate on the ground to ensure communities have access to all the information they need to engage effectively and to maximise the benefits they will receive.



Community meeting to assess impacts of REDD projects on the village of Yabongengo (located within the Jadora/SAFBOIS concession) © Patrick Kipalu



Left to Right: Jacques Bolamba (CEDEN), Noah Herland (Director of Jadora in DRC), Patrick Kipalu (FPP) & Jose Mokaria (CEDEN) © Patrick Kipalu



Villagers in Isangi Territory © Patrick Kipalu

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The findings about information gaps raise some questions about the the CCBA certification process completed in both concessions. In order to comply with international standards, both projects need to engage communities on the basis of their FPIC. We are positive that both projects will continue to improve.

We welcome the openness of the Jadora and ERA projects to address these issues, and are looking forward to constructive engagement with project managers on the basis of mutual respect to improve collaboration among stakeholders. We will support both projects to engage with communities on a fair basis. FPP and CEDEN will continue to work with both project managers and affected communities to help them resolve these problems, and in the meantime will continue to share information about both projects publicly to ensure that DRC's REDD programme stays on track.

[1] For more information see: <http://www.forestpeoples.org/topics/redd-and-related-initiatives/news/2012/04/carbon-concessions-democratic-republic-congo-drc-ne>

[2] For more information about CEDEN, visit:
<http://www.forestpeoples.org/partners/cercle-pour-la-defense-de-l-environnement-ceden>

[3] See Opening remarks by the Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism:
<http://www.forestpeoples.org/sites/fpp/files/news/2012/07/Secretary%20General%27s%20Speech%20-%20English.pdf>

[4] For more information, see: <http://www.forestpeoples.org/topics/redd-and-related-initiatives/news/2012/07/drc-reaffirms-its-commitment-free-prior-and-informe>

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