TETRA TECH

Scope of Work

Project Name:	USAID Forest and Biodiversity Support Activity
Contract No.:	72060520C00001
Description:	Regional Political Economy Analysis of the Forest Sector in Central Africa

Background

The goal of USAID's Forest and Biodiversity Support Activity (FABS) is to assist the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) and other environmental stakeholders in Central Africa to implement strategies and actions that address the large-scale threats to biodiversity conservation and forest management. The Activity focuses on three interconnected Intermediate Results (IRs):

1. Leadership and participation of diverse local organizations and private sector strengthened;
2. Policy, regulatory, and enabling environment improved; and
3. Innovative and evidence-based approaches adopted and institutionalized within conservation and forest sectors.

FABS engages closely with a broad network of institutions including civil society, private sector, government, and other conservation and development practitioners across the Congo Basin to build sustainable local institutions with the capacity to generate new analysis and evidence to support policy reforms and implement innovative conservation approaches. Underpinning these objectives is the Activity's collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) approach to improve knowledge sharing, communications, and learning across conservation networks in the Congo Basin.

Context

The effort to end unsustainable forest management has had a modest track record. Mismanagement, deforestation, degradation, and illegal logging continue to be significant problems. Logging of tropical forests accounts for almost one-fifth of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide and threatens some of the world's most diverse ecosystems. (UMD - Modis)

Historically, industrial logging based on a concession model is a dominant mode of forest management throughout much of Central Africa. While many have questioned the long-term sustainability of industrial forest management as well as its ability to distribute benefits to forest-dependent populations living adjacent to logging areas, throughout the region the logging sector is considered an important economic contributor to GDP and source of revenue to the state[1]. In recent years, increased advocacy for rights of forest communities, shifts in export markets, and focus on new financing streams create opportunities to rethink Central Africa's Forest management paradigm. This includes both identifying governance and fiscal reforms needed to ensure that forest management activities achieve economic and social goals, strategies to improve governance of the sector including for small and medium-scale enterprises, as well

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[1] It is important to note that overall contribution of timber extraction to GDP varies significantly by country context. For example, while the Democratic Republic of Congo is home to over half of the Congo Basin's forests, its total log exports in 2018 equaled $110.38 million. Gabon, on the other hand, generated $639.32 million in exports in 2019.

as supporting emerging new models that better integrate community rights and diversify revenue streams. Key trends that will continue to shape the future of Central Africa's logging include:

- The September 2020 meeting of regional forest ministers convened by the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) announced the intent to establish a regional log export ban beginning January 1, 2022 and create new Special Economic Zones to support development of domestic wood industries and regional directives on forest fiscality.[2] While countries such as Gabon have previously established log export bans, implementation is more recent in the Republic of Congo and countries such as Cameroon and CAR have yet to fully implement the proposed ban. While the ban is designed to stimulate job creation and strengthen the domestic processing sector, some regional governments are hesitant to accept the short-term losses in revenue from exports particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The implications of such bans for long-term economic and ecological resilience of the sector requires critical analysis of current fiscal incentives and tax structures, and clear recommendations on needed policy reforms as well as improved governance and enforcement of existing policies.
- While the contribution of the artisanal logging sector varies considerably between country contexts, in some countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and, to a lesser extent, Cameroon, small permits represent a significant contribution to timber extraction for both export and domestic use (e.g., poles for construction, furniture). Small-scale logging generates jobs and household revenue that are often not captured in official logging statistics, and any efforts to strengthen forest sector management in the long-term requires improved understanding of the contribution of this largely unregulated sector to the economy.
- Throughout the region, new and updated forest codes create opportunities for strengthening the rights of forest communities to manage forests. Community forest efforts vary in the extent to which they enable communities to carry out timber management activities; for example, the DRC's community forest regulations allow artisanal logging but limit the types of equipment that can be used.
- Costs of operating a legal logging concession in many parts of Central Africa remain high, and some operators are exploring opportunities to convert rights to logging concessions or to diversify revenue streams. For example, in the DRC several concession holders have converted logging rights to conservation concessions with the aim of selling carbon credits.

The above dynamics are shaped by complex political, social, and economic factors, and will continue to evolve in the next decade. Control and access to resources remains highly political in many parts of Central Africa; in addition, increasing social and political conflict such as the deteriorating situation in Central African Republic is likely to further impact long-term forest health as well as social well-being of forest-dependent communities. The use of timber resources to fund and fuel conflict may also have critical implications for regional security.[3]

Objective

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[2] See for example: https://pfbc-cbfp.org/news-partner/export-timber.html. It is important to note that the DRC is not a formal member of CEMAC but participated in the meeting along with ECCAS and the Development Bank of the Central African States.
[3] For example, resource extraction is a critical motivator and funder for armed groups in several parts of Central Africa including CAR and DRC, with evidence of increasing control and influence of Russian mercenary group Wagner in CAR: https://www.earthsight.org.uk/news/russian-mercenaries-cash-in-on-african-timber.

Scope of Work

USAID's Forest and Biodiversity Support Activity is seeking expressions of interest from qualified individuals with a background in political economy analysis, forest economics, and experience in Central Africa to design and implement a Regional Political Economy Analysis (PEA) focused on the timber sector. The PEA will assess and developed targeted recommendations for USAID and other actors to effectively support governance improvements in Central Africa's Forest sector, with an emphasis on understanding the underlying power dynamics and interests that shape allocation and exploitation of forests, reviewing political and macroeconomic factors influencing forest fiscal frameworks, and crafting effective policy responses that strengthen economic, social, and ecosystem resilience. While each Central African country's sector is governed by a specific set of laws, regulations, and practices, it is critical to also understand how regional trends including infrastructure and special economic zones, trade agreements, and regional collaboration shape national processes. The PEA will therefore identify key regional trends and questions that shape the future of Central Africa's logging sector, and assess national policies, priorities, and influences for Cameroon, Central African Republic, DRC, Gabon, and ROC to guide future policy interventions.

Drawing on existing tools such as _USAID's Thinking and Working Politically Through Applied Political Economy Analysis Guide for Practitioners_ (revised 2018), the PEA Expert/Team Leader will work with country consultants in the PEA target countries. The PEA Team will work in close collaboration with relevant FABS staff to collect information through a literature review and interviews with key informants in national and local governments, regional bodies, civil society, the industrial and artisanal logging sector, and major forest sector donors. The analysis should point to the real incentive structures and obstacles for change and identify key actors at the regional and national levels. The analysis should identify who the power holders are, how they exercise their power, and who is likely to be a champion for addressing the underlying policy, governance, and economic challenges necessary to improve long-term sustainable management of Central Africa's forests.

Tasks

Task 1: Develop the PEA methodology

The consultant will meet with the FABS team and USAID to review priorities in order to develop a robust PEA methodology that is consistent with USAID CARPE and FABS objectives. Based on these discussions, the PEA team lead will propose a detailed work plan and methodology, including data collection tools to support power and network analysis for the forest sector in target countries. The consultant will propose a research methodology for the assessment, which is expected to include a comprehensive literature review, compilation and analysis of available quantitative data, collection and analysis of travel packages being offered online in primary source markets and by local tour operators, qualitative research through phone/video/in-person interviews, focus groups and/or other modalities, and field visits. The assessment is expected to cover, at a minimum, analysis of production, export, and trade data, an overview of the structure of the industrial and artisanal sectors including private sector beneficial ownership, review of forest fiscality including incentives, taxes, and how fiscal policy drives current trends in timber legality and trade, and an analysis of the major stakeholders involved in shaping policy.

Task 2: Conduct PEA analysis including fieldwork in priority countries

The consultant will conduct a desk review and synthesis of existing literature (journals, government documents, policy papers, studies, and news) on current trends in Central Africa's timber sector. The

consultant will identify a list of key informants, including government, private sector (e.g., concessionaires, small-scale artisanal loggers, regional and national timber associations such as International Tropical Technical Timber Association (ATIBT)), other donors, NGOs, and civil society engaged in forest monitoring and management such as Forest Legality Advisory Group. The consultant will carry out key informant interviews and/or focus groups to review the current state of play of the timber sector and the current incentives or disincentives to sustainable and equitable management. The consultant will summarize results of these discussions in a draft report summarizing the document review, stakeholder interviews, and recommendations on entry points for strengthening both policy and implementation. Based on the desktop analysis, the PEA Team Leader will carry out field work in at least 3 countries to generate country specific case studies detailing current timber sector trends and perspectives from local actors engaged closely in the timber trade.

Task 3: Complete the PEA report

The consultant will submit a clear, informative, and credible report (up to 50 pages, including an executive summary of no more than two pages) that reflects PEA Team's findings, conclusions, and recommendations focusing on short-term opportunities to strengthen forest sector governance as well as longer-term recommendations to support policy and institutional improvements. Additional details and analysis should be placed in an appendix. The consultant will integrate feedback from FABS and USAID, as relevant, to produce a final report that will include a summary chapter on regional trends, as well as country-specific chapters that present stakeholder analysis, policy and economic review, and specific recommendations for governance improvements.

Task 4: Develop policy brief with recommendations for regional and national stakeholders

Based on the PEA findings, the consultant will draft a policy brief summarizing major recommendations for regional and national stakeholders including policymakers, private sector, and donors.

Qualifications

- Advanced degree or equivalent in forest economics, social science, political science, or natural resource management;
- At least ten years of professional experience;
- Demonstrated prior experience conducting Political Economy Analysis focused on providing action-oriented recommendations;
- Experience working to strengthen policy, institutions, and governance practices in Central Africa's Forest sector;
- Good knowledge of the private sector landscape and economic, social, and political contexts in Central Africa;
- Strong analytical skills and experience using social science research methods;
- Ability to write concise, clear, and well-founded project descriptions and technical justifications;
- Proven interpersonal and communication skills, both oral and written;
- Fluency in written and spoken French and professional English.

Scope of Work

Application Process

Interested candidates are requested to submit an updated Curriculum Vitae (CV), a proposed methodology (no longer than 5 pages) including period of performance, level of effort, and associated budget to ard.fabs.info@tetratech.com. Please submit your application no later than December 15th. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Applications in French are also accepted.