

1. TITLE OF PROJECT

Beyond commitments – How can NDCs contribute to forest governance and resilient local communities

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

At the heart of achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement lies the successful delivery of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). NDCs describe each country's self-determined plans for curbing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, typically in five- or ten-year periods (currently until 2025 or 2030). In addition, all countries are expected to submit increasingly ambitious NDCs every five years, which is often described as a "ratchet mechanism". 2020 is the first year that countries are to submit new or revised NDCs to the UNFCCC Secretariat, following their original contributions in 2015.

Forests – and their protection, restoration, and sustainable management – play an important role in addressing both the causes and consequences of climate change. Several tropical forested countries have included forest adaptation and mitigation actions in their current NDCs. However, countries are at different stages in developing plans or strategies that will guide national implementation of their NDCs. Africa countries in particular are facing challenges for enhancing and rolling out their NDCs including capacity development/technical support, mobilising resources, setting up information base and monitoring systems, building institutional structures and coordination mechanisms for sustainable development impacts of NDCs, and strengthening awareness and ownership of NDCs at the national level.

As forest rich African countries revise or prepare new national climate plans, there is a major opportunity for them to increase ambition through strengthening the role of forests in proposed solutions and ensuring broader ownership. Long-term development strategies, which countries are also invited to submit in 2020, can provide a useful blueprint for achieving the milestones for such a resilient, net-zero-emission development trajectory by 2050.

Fern has been supporting its local partners in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ghana, Liberia, Republic of the Congo to engage effectively in climate related processes. It is therefore essential that Fern and its partners fully understand the state of play of NDCs and can advocate for stronger inclusion of forest governance, and communities' rights, those of women, in them and in the country's long-term strategies. It is also important to inform EU and international donors' support for climate action in these countries.

2. AIM OF THE REPORT

Fern would like to commission a report that will assess the current level of ambition for forests within the NDCs of targeted highly forested countries, and highlight what can be done further to fully harness the potential of forests in long term climate strategies going forward. The report will be used to support the increased uptake of forests and forest governance in future NDCs, as well stronger inclusion of civil society and local communities in climate action.

This assessment should be based on a previous study from Fern on ['Voluntary Partnership Agreements \(VPAs\) and NDCs, Sharing the Toolbox'](#) from 2018.

Objectives

The report will:

- 1) Analyse progress and challenges in enhancing forest contribution of the NDCs in targeted forested countries since 2018 including how recommendations from the previous Fern report have been addressed.
- 2) Assess the quality and transparency of the process and inclusion of civil society and community stakeholders.
- 3) Examine how gender considerations have been including both in the process and content of the NDCs.
- 4) Provide recommendations to national civil society organisations (CSOs) in target countries on strengthening their engagement in NDC processes, and to EU and national policy makers on how climate ambition within future NDCs can be raised through more substantive inclusion of forests and effective contributions of civil society and forest communities.

The report will present best practices and gaps for each of these objectives in the six countries examined.

Intended audience:

- Fern local partners and national CSOs working on forests and climate.
- EU & UK policy makers: Directorate General for International Partnership and EU Member State + UK policy makers supporting forest related work in the target countries.
- National governments and climate focal points in target countries.
- International institutions supporting climate programmes in target countries including Agence Française de Développement, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.

3. REPORT CONTENT/OUTLINE

- **Short introduction on what NDCs are, how they can contribute to forest governance and the role of civil society.**
- **Summary of overall progress since 2018 including gaps and challenges.**
- **Country ‘sheets’ covering the following aspects:**
 - **Current reality and progress on the ground in targeted VPA countries¹:** Any improvements in policies, governance, and stakeholder engagement since 2018 for climate action? New plans or targets on climate developed and forests/forest governance in them? Revised NDCs or plans to revise them and the contribution of forests?
 - **Process for preparing new or updated contributions in 2020: will the government engage a broader group of stakeholders in the NDC process and increase ownership of climate commitments?** This may be especially true for countries that rushed to submit contributions ahead of the Paris COP.
 - **Do the current NDC recognise women’s contributions to climate change adaptation and mitigation.** Will future NDCs and long-term climate strategies consider the involvement of women— both their vulnerabilities and their potential contributions—are essential for meeting the global target.
 - **From 2020, NDCs will be a key starting point for Paris processes that are meant to track progress and inform countries in updating their climate goals over time.** How are the countries

¹ Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ghana, Liberia, and Republic of Congo. Desk review for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

dealing with issues such a clarity, transparency, and understanding of future NDCs, as well as on NDC accounting, and adaptation components– with regards to the tracking of progress?

- **2020 NDCs can provide important long-term signals to donor countries.** This can serve to attract international support in the context of climate action. What is the current and planned funding support for revised NDCs?
- **Recommendations** for national CSOs and policy makers on ensuring that NDCs contribute to improved forest governance and stronger climate ambition.

4. THOSE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

The project will be overseen by members of Fern Forests and Development Campaign. An editorial group comprised of Fern campaigners and communications staff, and Fern’s partners in Congo will input the paper including providing contributions to help shape it and feedback on key outputs. The Communications Manager will supervise an external editor who will review the paper.

5. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the research will include 1) a desk review (including a review of relevant academic literature, relevant Fern and other NGO publications and programme materials, and material from other institutions such as CAFI, EFI, FAO, UNDP, UNFCC and World Bank); 2) key informant interviews with Fern staff in Brussels, partner organisations and civil society/forest community representatives, and government officials and donor agencies involved in supporting the NDCs and climate action; 3) in country validation meetings hosted by Fern local partners to provide feedback on the draft country reports, and shape the final recommendations.

6. TIMELINE

15 days of full-time work carried out over an 8-week period. The draft report will be available by October 2020. The final report will be published in November 2020. The consultant will need to submit timesheets for auditing purposes.

DELIVERABLES

- A draft work plan outlining timeline, refined methodology, clarification of conceptual framework, list of definitions to be used, list of key resources, and refinement of research questions.
- A refined structure for the paper, as well as list of key informants.
- An inception report, outlining preliminary findings of desk review of available data and analysis.
- A draft paper (12 pages maximum) providing answers to the 4 specific objectives of the paper country by country, as well as presenting concrete recommended actions that can be taken forward to ensure forests contribution and gender are properly integrated into NDCs and long-term climate strategies, and effective engagement of all relevant stakeholders.
- A presentation of the draft paper to the editorial group and Fern staff.
- A final paper feedback from the editorial group.
- A power point presentation of the findings.