

## SUMMARY REPORT

### FIRST PROVINCIAL FORUM<sup>1</sup> IN KISANGANI, ORIENTALE

DATE: 12 - 13 NOVEMBER 2009

#### *Objectives of Provincial Forums*

Provincial Forums are one of four levels of national dialogues being held on community forests. These include National Forums held in Kinshasa, Local Forums organised in the territories and community dialogues held in villages. Provincial Forums target social actors in the Provinces, in particular: the Provincial Parliament and Government, legal organisations, the private sector, the church and local associations and civil society.

#### *Participants*

The Forum was attended by about forty people including: members of the Provincial Parliament; representatives of Orientale Government (from the Ministry of Land and Environment, Interior Ministry and Governor); Provincial divisions of the Ministries for forests, agriculture and rural development; ICCN (Institute for the Conservation of Nature); education and research institutions; private sector; and civil society.

#### *Executive summary of discussions and points of consensus*

1. ***Presentation of the results of local dialogues held in Mambasa and surrounding villages:*** The coordinator for the site of Ituri presented the results of the Local Forum held in Mambasa. At this meeting the findings from the community dialogues were summarised. These dialogues had been held in 4 sectors and over 1,400 people, including more than 540 women, attended these meetings. The following four themes were discussed: the customary status of forests and the type and nature of customary land rights in forest areas in Bas Congo; artisanal exploitation of forests; customary decision-making processes in Bas Congo; and synergies between community forests and protected areas. The following points were highlighted:
  - The village or village grouping (*groupement*) is the foundation of a local community in the Bas Fleuve district.

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<sup>1</sup> Provincial Forums are meetings organised at the provincial level in order to complement and/or amend the content of debates and discussions held during National Forums and dialogues held at community level in the three pilot sites selected to study the concepts and notions of community forests.

- According to customary law, families/lineages and clans, who are the beneficiaries of traditional land rights, own or possess land and natural resources. Thus, they have the right to manage, administer and even transfer land to third parties.
  - In Bas Congo, resource management falls under the responsibility of the village leader who acts in consultation with his notables, who also represent land-right beneficiaries. This village council is thus responsible for the smooth running of community affairs.
  - Within the matrilineal context of Bas Congo in which power is passed down to men by women, community forest models must take into account the role of women. In some instances, women have the responsibilities of a village chief or even a “*groupement*” chief. It is important to maintain established rights and to prevent the marginalisation of women in decision-making processes related to land and forest resource management.
  - Artisanal exploitation of timber and wildlife conservation are both activities linked to the concept of community forests in Bas Congo. These activities need to be regulated in a way that is suitable to the context of Bas Congo where the rate of deforestation is high.
  - The boundaries of customary forests are defined through names given to these areas by ancestors and that are also known to neighbouring communities. In some parts of the Province, customary land is scarce since around two thirds of the land is under agro-industrial concessions, some of which have not been used for several decades.
2. **Presentation of the contents and debates of the National Forums:** A presentation was given on the topics and points of consensus of the four National Forums held in Kinshasa. This presentation was made by the NGO CODELT
3. **Contributions of provincial participants:** Participants in the Provincial Forum of Matadi reviewed and validated the content of the debates held at community, local and national levels. In addition, the following points were highlighted as new elements to take into account within the framework of community forests:
- The practice of slash and burn cultivation, which communities need to be involved in addressing.
  - Capacity building of legal organisations regarding customary issues, in order to take into account the duality of Congolese law and the importance of customary rules related to community forests.
  - The issue of fuel-wood as part of any community forest model in Bas Congo so that communities are involved in implementing environmental solutions in the Province.
  - The resolution of land conflicts as a key element, given their extent in Bas Congo.

Forests Monitor, CODELT and CEPECO, a reporter from the Provincial Parliament and one parliamentary representative contributed to a radio and television programme on community forests.

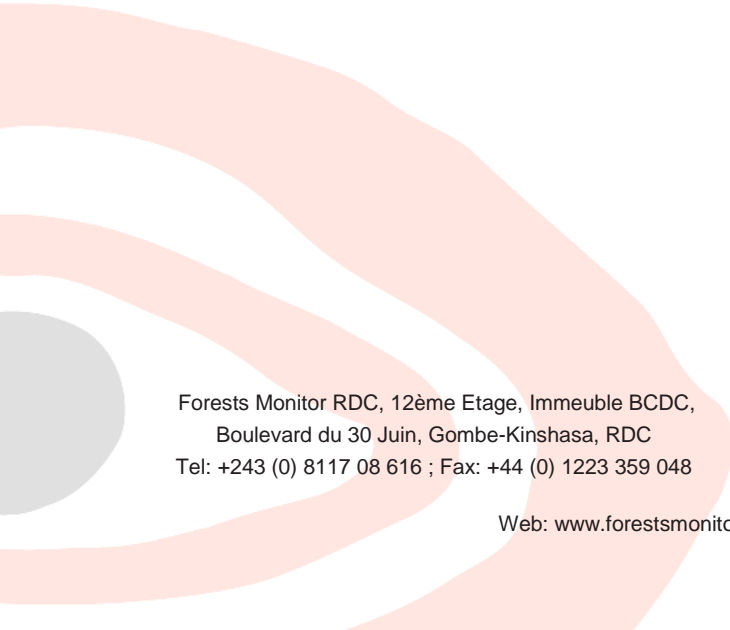
## **Conclusion**

The first Provincial Forum of Bas Congo was enriching and helped to raised awareness and support for community forests among various social actors within the Province. The Forum also served to identify a number of new elements that should be developed or taken into account in any community forest model. Local and Provincial Forums are also being held in Orientale and Equateur Provinces.

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